

EXPERIENCING THE BLUE CURTAIN: THE EFFECTS OF TOKENISM
ON MASCULINE IDENTITIES AMONG MALE BATON TWIRLERS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of Sociology

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Sociology

By

Trenton M. Haltom

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has investigated men in effeminized positions as “tokens,” finding patterns that suggest they receive privileges in their skewed position. Using data from 30 semi-structured interviews, I investigate how male baton twirlers who competed in one or both of the two largest American baton twirling organizations perform masculinity within the baton twirling world. Specifically, I analyze whether and how the status of men in competitive baton twirling as tokens contributes to the formation of their masculine identities within this effeminized sport. I draw upon the concept of tokenism from the work and occupations literature and apply it to an effeminized sport to compare how males fare in a females’ world. I find that men in baton twirling experience tokenism differently than what has previously been observed in the work and occupations literature. In what I call the “Blue Curtain,” male twirlers experience the effects of both the “glass ceiling” and “glass escalator” within the competitive twirling community. Further, as a result of intensified stigma because of twirling’s place as a youth sport, outside of the twirling community (i.e., beyond the blue curtain) men must negotiate their masculine identities in ways that incorporate both inclusive and hybrid masculinities, but do little for gender equality. I further posit a new way of categorizing sports and occupations in such a way that stigma may be further explained and introduce the concept of the “effeminized space.”

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INTRODUCTION

Within the gender and sport literature, an understanding of men in effeminized sports has become an important piece to the study of men, masculinities, and the formulation of gender identities. Through an examination of masculine identities within baton twirling, this study contributes to existing literature on sexually stigmatized sports (dealing with sexual orientation) like wrestling (e.g., Michael 2013); “secondary” stigmatized sports (female-associated, but masculine-oriented) like volleyball (e.g., Harvey 1996); and female-dominated effeminized sports such as cheerleading (e.g., Anderson 2005a), rhythmic gymnastics (e.g., Chimot and Louveau 2010), figure skating (e.g., Adams 1993), and dance (e.g., Fisher 2007). Specifically, I seek to explore whether and how the status of men in competitive baton twirling as “token” males contributes to the creation and maintenance of their masculine identities within this effeminized sport. Further, how do they define masculinity as a male in an effeminized space? Is there evidence of changing masculinities? And, what advantages or disadvantages do male tokens in baton twirling experience?

Within literature on men in effeminized sport, tokenism or token status is often touched upon briefly in the description of special treatment of male dancers (Risner 2002; Berger 2003; Mennesson 2009), but is never specifically used as a theoretical framework. Additionally, tokenism in youth activities or as it relates to identity maintenance has not been previously studied. In contrast, within the literature on effeminized occupations, studies are often developed around themes of token statuses (e.g., Dworkin, Chafetz, and Dworkin 1986; Williams 1992; Budig 2002). Accordingly, I draw from both areas in order to develop a theory on how masculine identities of men within effeminized sports are affected by their token position and privileged/disadvantaged statuses, what I call the “Blue Curtain.” This theory emerges from my

analysis of determinants of identity such as gender presentation, stigma management, and the structures of baton twirling competitions.

By taking the stance of men in baton twirling as a token status group within the larger female body of competitive baton twirling, I identify unique qualities in the maintenance of masculine identities and identify identity management techniques used by the gendered tokens. Furthermore, I find that because of the externally stigmatized nature of baton twirling, the experiences of male twirlers as tokens are different than that of other male tokens in effeminized spaces due to experiences surrounding what I have labeled as the “Blue Curtain.” This concept identifies the manner in which men in an effeminized space can experience visible, “front stage” privilege as a result of their token status, while simultaneously experiencing more subtle (and often unrecognized) forms of disadvantage behind the scenes. The experiences of twirlers, and more specifically male twirlers, are unique because of the closed nature of baton twirling competitions compared to the public image of baton twirling in parades or football halftime shows. Moreover, the place of twirling as a youth activity leads it to occupy a unique space within tokenism literature because much of the previous research in this area has been conducted on the topic of adult occupations.

More broadly, this study contributes to the growing body of work on “hybrid masculinities,” or masculinities that integrate characteristics that fall outside of those typified by hegemonic masculinity (Bridges and Pascoe 2014). Within this body of literature, there exists a tension over whether hybrid masculinities serve to reduce gender and sexual inequality (e.g., Anderson 2005a, 2009) or simply conceal, rework, and reinforce gendered power and privilege (e.g., Messner 1993). Moreover, it is also evident that the “winds of change” are redefining masculinity in a way that aligns with Bridges and Pascoe’s (2014) hybrid masculinities theory.

Additionally, while women still experience the “glass ceiling” in many areas, I seek to examine the ways in which men may experience the “glass escalator” (Williams 1992) in areas outside of the effeminized workplace. I propose that masculinities are changing and involve more inclusive attitudes with regard to gender presentation and sexual orientation (Anderson 2005a, 2005b, 2009). In this way, inequality may not be deteriorating, but rather is being reshaped and redefined by morphing into something new and perhaps inclusive, but just as unequal.

I contribute to this debate by developing a theory that specifically addresses the manner in which hybrid masculine identities are constructed and maintained within effeminized spaces, and the roles played by token status and privilege. Additionally, I address how those who utilize a hybrid masculinity to participate in effeminized spaces are affected by public stigmatization. These areas, what I call “effeminized spaces,” are areas where men may experience sexualized or effeminized stigma from outside, but feel safe or experience privilege within. These spaces have often been literally effeminized because they were once spaces occupied by men, but are now dominated by women (e.g., cheer, dance, nursing, and teaching). The concepts I discuss may apply to other effeminized spaces (i.e., sports, occupations, and other gendered institutions).

This research has implications for work on men in female-dominated sports and occupations (i.e., effeminized spaces). While baton twirling is a specific example, this research may reveal how gender identities are formed in particular settings such as, but not limited to, the effeminized workplace. By using tokenism and token status as a key concept of this research, I draw upon much of the literature available concerning men in the effeminized workplace because of its larger institutional effects on gender. While that research is crucial to an initial understanding of men’s involvement in effeminized spaces, the realm of theatrical arts remain a relatively untapped area of sociological research in many ways. This research seeks to contribute

toward understanding whether and how men experience tokenism differently within a feminized space that incorporates artistry, in contrast to prior research that has focused more on emotionally-charged professions such as nursing or teaching (Williams 1992).

In my thesis, I first include a brief history of baton twirling by utilizing what little written history is available in baton twirling instruction manuals, “how to,” and “who’s who” books as well as baton twirling organizations’ websites to embed baton twirling into a greater socio-historical context. In particular, I concentrate on the change masculinity has seen since the 1940s when baton twirling became a competitive sport. I then include an overview of relevant theory in the areas of gender, masculinities, and tokenism. I discuss several themes in the literature including men in effeminized sport, men in effeminized occupations, gendered differences in performance, hybrid masculinities, identity management techniques, and tokenism in the workplace. Through 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews, I explore these and other themes regarding the maintenance and management of masculinities for men in competitive baton twirling.

CHAPTER 1: BATON TWIRLING, A BACKGROUND

In this chapter, I outline a basic history of baton twirling from its origins to date. As a part of this history, I briefly explain how two of the leading baton twirling organizations came to be and what makes them unique. There are varied definitions of and explanations for baton twirling. The World Baton Twirling Federation's (WBTF) website explains that baton twirling is "a game involving the manipulation of a metal rod with the hands and body to a co-coordinated routine, similar to rhythmic gymnastics" (WBTF 2012). The days when baton twirling was primarily isolated to majorettes in parades are a thing of the past and have been replaced by a sport that is both physically demanding and artistic particularly because it "encompasses the physical stamina and agility of gymnastics and dance, the artistic expression and beauty of figure skating and ballet, and the technical skill of all these sports combined" (Smith 1985; WBTF 2012; NBTA 2014). Baton twirling is commonly referred to as both an art and a sport (Behringer and Wheelus 1970), thus placing it in an ambiguous category between theatrical art form and commonly accepted sports.

Background

The origins of baton twirling are somewhat unknown and the histories are often passed down through word of mouth. Without a true written text of baton twirling, it is difficult to pinpoint its exact inception or invention, although it can be easily traced through the military and the drum majors of marching bands. However, elements of baton twirling are evident at festivals in Eastern Europe and Asia where swords, guns, knives, torches, or sticks were used to toss or twirl (Orr 1981; WBTF 2012). In Siam, performers would manipulate spears with bells and would roll them around their shoulders, arms, and backs (Smith 1985). Samoan dancers or "Samoan Sword Spinners" (Robison 1980) would also spin cane knives or swords with long

handles made of bamboo and with sharp blades, sometimes lighting them on fire (Smith 1985; Orr 1981; Roberts and Scott 1958). Hawaiians have a similar tradition in spinning flaming torches or sticks (Robison 1980). There is also evidence of early twirling in the organized flag tossing contests among the Swiss who manipulated their colorful flags ordinarily used to send messages over long distances in the Alps (Atwater 1964; Robison 1980; Orr 1981). The Swiss flag bearer would also lead parades, tossing and spinning the flag (Robison 1980). Both Swiss and Samoan traditions were passed down generationally (Robison 1980), much like baton twirling today.

In terms of military engagement, Smith (1985) refers to the “Master Drummer” of the High Renaissance clearing a path for marching soldiers with a two-handed broadsword during the reign of King Edward VI. By the 1600s, this person became known as the “Drummer Major” and carried a “cat o’ nine tails,” a baton with leather strips tipped with metal used to keep soldiers in line (Smith 1985:136). The description of this tool is similar to the mace weapon and may be where we get the term “mace” in reference to drum majors’ spinning apparatus. Yet another theory is that the drum major was at first actually a drummer, but as more directional duties were assigned, the drumstick may have evolved into a more baton-like shape used for signaling (Roberts and Scott 1958). In a similar vein, Robison (1980) claims that in 1600 the baton, an instrument used for conducting, was a long rod struck on the floor at the appropriate tempo. Copying the “crescent pole” found in Turkish campaigns in the 1700s, the British Army’s Jainzery Band had a “Twirling Drum Major” who twirled or spun what the British called a “Jingling Johnny” with metal crescents and suspended bells attached to help keep time (Smith 1985:136).

In 1844, Queen Victoria abolished the Jainzery bands, but the drum major maintained a position in other bands, now carrying a pole without bells (Smith 1985). This early drum major did however continue to practice the tosses and tricks of Jinglyng Johnnies, thus preserving some of the original twirling practices (Smith 1985). Soldiers would also sometimes spin their guns and often a soloist was featured at the front of the band; eventually, the mace or baton replaced the gun (Smith 1985; WBTF 2012). The mace is longer than a baton and is unevenly balanced with one large ball-like end. The “mace barer [sic]” or “drum major” would spin the mace while leading the army or band (WBTF 2012). This tradition has been kept by some marching bands and can be seen most famously in The Ohio State Marching Band drum major.

In the United States, some twirling could also be seen among the wine carriers that accompanied marching bands in the 1800s (Smith 1985). With their long poles with barrels of wine for the marchers, they would spin, dance, and perform balancing tricks for the crowds (Smith 1985). Eventually, the jug was abandoned and smaller sticks were used for more intricate tricks without risk of spilling precious wine (Smith 1985). The World Baton Twirling Federation (WBTF) claims that the sport came to North America with Major Millsap who instigated the creation of baton twirling when Millsap College (1890) was established in Mississippi after the Civil War (Atwater 1964; WBTF 2012). Millsap called his majorettes “lady athletes” and perhaps this is the first use of the word “majorette” (a female derivation of drum major) and the origin of the high-stepping majorette (Atwater 1964). In the South, Minstrel dancers would also spin canes through their fingers (Robison 1980), something that may have influenced twirling in the area of Millsap College.

It is clear, however, that the twentieth century paved the way for the modern drum major (male), majorette (female), and baton twirler (male or female). Until the early 1930s, men

exclusively practiced baton (Sartell 1965). It was not until after World War II that the bandleader or drum major spinning the mace became popular in American Legion Bands and Fireman's Bands (WBTF 2012). Robison (1980) calls this the "Band Craze" era where people became accustomed to seeing some of the 10,000 military bands perform. It is unclear when the drum major became more of a performance act rather than his original practical use of leading and conducting (Robison 1980). Between 1935 and 1940, Chicago was the "twirling capitol" and where the first major baton twirling contest was held at the 1935 Chicagoland Music festival (Sartell 1965).

In order to make it easier to twirl and increase accuracy, eventually the mace was redesigned to resemble the baton of today: rubber ends, lighter, hollow metal, and evenly balanced. Now, batons are made of a hollow chrome metal with one larger end (the ball) and a smaller end (the tip), where the ball acts as a counter balance to the balance point in the center of the baton. Batons today come in many lengths and diameters. The length of one's baton is based on the length of the twirler's arm (Lee 1949; Behringer and Wheelus 1970; Miller 1980; Robison 1980; Finney 1982; Hawkins 1982; Smith 1985). There is, however, some contention as to whether the baton should extend past the middle finger or not. Several companies have developed versions of the baton, although no competitive organization determines which baton to use; this is often based on popularity or preference. American Baton Company, Star Line Baton Company, Sharp Baton Company, Kraskin Batons, or Heart Baton are a few of the companies that manufacture batons with variations in shaft (e.g., thickness, dimpled, colored), ends (e.g., stars, hearts, roses, ball shaped), and novelty batons (e.g., flag, fire, or glow stick batons, and Samoan knives).

There seems to be a correlation between the redesign of the baton and the introduction of females (“drum majorettes”) to baton twirling, indicating that as the batons got lighter, they became easier for females to wield. Miller (1980) and Orr (1981) attributed the changes in the baton to women’s growing interest in the sport in the 1930s and 1940s; thus, causally, the batons needed to be shorter and lighter. It is only Sartell (1965) who explicitly states that “when the majorette made her débute [sic], shorter and lighter batons became evident” (p. 5). Gaedke, Lester, and Boothe (1956) in their baton twirling instruction manual, added that the change from metal to rubber ends of the baton helped in the elimination of fear. They go on to explain that the baton can now be safely dropped as well. With a metal end, it was painful to hit oneself and the noise of the metal hitting the ground emphasized a drop.

Institutions in Baton Twirling

In 1947, the first attempt to organize baton twirling gave way to the birth of the National Board of Technical Advisors (NBTA) led by editor of *Drum Major Magazine*, Don Sartell (Sartell 1965; Sartell 1999; Orr 1981). Sartell gathered some of the top twirling authorities of the time to organize the sport and to take part in testing and approving baton products by giving them a seal of approval where previously there was little or no regulation (Sartell 1999). Eventually, NBTA became known as the National Baton Twirling Association and remains one of the leading baton twirling organizations in the United States (Sartell 1999). Sartell would go on to teach more national champions than any other coach, host multiple national and world competitions, create an annual “Who’s Who in Baton Twirling” publication for outstanding twirlers, and founded a baton company for reliable twirling supplies (Orr 1981; Sartell 1999).

The two leading organizations are the National Baton Twirling Association (NBTA) and the United States Twirling Association (USTA), each boasting larger participation and being

“first” in developing certain areas of baton twirling (the USTA was created by former members of NBTA). For example, the USTA is the first democratically-run organization wherein it is run by a governing Board of Directors: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, four other board members, and five Honorary Board members (lifetime members) (Orr 1981). The only organization of its kind in baton twirling, these board members are nominated by members within the organization, governed by a constitution, and set of by-laws (Orr 1981; USTA 2014a). Additionally, the USTA instigated the formation of the World Baton Twirling Federation (WBTF) to gain worldwide recognition for baton twirling; the first world competition was held in Seattle, Washington in 1980 (Orr 1981; WBTF 2014).

NBTA’s national competition, America’s Youth on Parade (AYOP), has been held every summer since 1970 at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana (though national competitions had been held for a number of years prior) (Sartell 1999). During this weeklong competition, contestants compete for national championship titles. The two biggest titles are the Grand National Twirling Champion (separate titles for men and women) and the Miss Majorette of America pageant. Miss Majorette of America (MMoA), founded in 1945, is an all-around competition in which the combined scores include modeling/interview (20 percent), twirling (40 percent and strut routines (40 percent) (NBTA 2015). A strut routine in NBTA is done with a floor pattern in the shape of an X (sometimes called “Super-X” or “Fancy” strut) and includes both basic marching steps and free style portions; the baton may not be lofted or twirled (NBTA 2015). Men are not allowed to compete in any of the MMoA or Grand National events, but rather compete in all-male individual events (solo events) and coed events (two-baton and three-baton).

It has been boasted that baton twirling is the second largest youth activity in America, although this statistic is likely outdated particularly since the passing of the U.S. Department of

Education's 1972 Education Amendment Title IX (Orr 1981; Sartell 1999). While talked about for a number of years, no baton twirling organization has been formed to regulate the sport for its entry into the Olympics. Many other organizations have begun since NBTA's inception and are still operating today (although some have been absorbed or disseminated): Drum Majors and Majorettes of America (DMA) in 1947, World Baton Twirling Federation (WBTF) in 1977, World Twirling Association (WTA) in 1960, Amateur Athletic Union (AAU-Baton), National Twirling Association (NTA), and Twirling Unlimited (TU) in 1981.

Another area of twirling not directly affected by these organizations is the twirling affiliated with schools or universities. Often, the public only sees twirling in settings like parades, football half-time shows, or half-time performances at basketball games. This makes twirling somewhat mysterious and inaccessible without proper assimilation into institutions like after school programs, dance schools, or marching band auxiliaries. Performances representing a school or university allow the twirler not only to impress crowds with the skills they have learned, but also create a leadership position as the face of an organization like the marching band. Orr (1981) reflects this in her introduction, where she speaks to the enhancement of children's self image and resilience in taking on the world thanks to the life lessons taught by baton twirling. With regard to this project, a male baton twirler in the public eye as the twirler for a school marching band acts not only as the token representative for baton twirling, but also men in baton twirling.

The military influences on the origins of baton twirling contribute toward some of the gendered dynamics within the sport. Many early participants in baton twirling were men until independent or school-associated bands became popular and a space was carved out for females as majorettes. While this was not initially the case, women eventually claimed the space as their

own. Although reasons for men's disappearance are unclear, I theorize these changes were brought about in part due to wartime and Title IX. As Atwater (1964) suggests, the 1930's majorette was "frequently...the only one of her sex in a parade" a "top banana of the campus, envied by the girls watching from the sidelines" (p. 16).

Perhaps men's representation in baton twirling may also be explained by changes in perceptions of masculinity throughout America's history such as during the Industrial Revolution, wartime, or as team sports came into popularity (e.g., Kimmell 1996). Nevertheless, baton twirling has become an integral part of American history and closely linked to archetypes of the ideal marching bands around the country.

With this background in mind, in Chapter 2 I turn to an overview of the theoretical frameworks that guide my study on the masculine identities of baton twirlers as tokens.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: GENDER, MASCULINITIES, AND TOKENISM

My research is informed by prior theoretical work in the areas of gender, masculinities, and tokenism. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the evolution of theories on the “umbrella” topic of gender. Relatedly, I include a background on theories of masculinities and how they have evolved over time to incorporate hegemonic, inclusive, orthodox, and hybrid masculinities. Finally, tokenism is discussed to explain its application to men in baton twirling.

Gender

The evolution of academic interest in gender is key to understanding masculine identity formation and maintenance. During the 1960s and 1970s, most research was concerned with ideas of “sex” and the term “gender” in its current form was not used. Sex differences, sex as a role, as well as Talcott Parsons’ concepts of emotional (female) versus instrumental (male) roles were dominant themes during this time (Lopata and Thorne 1978; Acker 1992). Ideas of gender as a stratification system were important in the 1980s and combated ideas of gender as a role, eventually moving towards a de-emphasis on childhood gender socialization (Acker 1992). Heading into the 1990s, conceptualizations of gender became more dynamic, particularly with West and Zimmerman’s (1987) work on the “doing” of gender. More recently, discussions of gender as part of the social structure (Risman 2004) or as an institution (Martin 2004) have occurred.

Contemporary academics have moved away from the “gender as role” concept and have embraced the notion of “doing gender,” now one of the leading conceptualizations of gender (West and Zimmerman 1987). Lopata and Thorne (1978) notably questioned gender’s achieved or ascribed status characteristics, while West and Zimmerman (1987) used the phrase

“accomplishment of gender” to emphasize whether or not it is “done” properly (1987:133).

Lopata and Thorne (1978) argued that social roles, assigned by “culturally patterned relations,” are based on sex categorization, but the term “roles” puts too much emphasis on the individual (Lopata and Thorne 1978:720-21).

Based on our gendered performance, we leave it up to others to determine our sex and therefore how to treat us; thus, we are accountable to our sex category membership (West and Zimmerman 1987). Any chances of uncertainty of a sex/gender assignment leave the observer confused and unsure as to how to interact with an individual. With our “yes, sirs” and holding doors open for women, men are constantly “doing gender” whether they realize it or not; it is the exhibition of maleness or femaleness that makes gender. Indeed, Risman (2009) makes the point that “we must know what we are looking for when we are looking for gendered behavior and then be willing and ready to admit when we do not find it” (p. 82). Similarly, this performance of gender also relates to sexual expression in which the gendered body regulates the performativity of sexuality as the surface representation of the core self (Butler 1990[2008]).

Following this idea, concepts of not only “doing,” but also “undoing” gender arose. By undoing gender, one behaves or exudes the characteristics of a gender opposite of that expected by their sex (West and Zimmerman 1987). For example, drag queens’ taking of feminine behaviors, mannerisms, and dress and applying them to a male body is a helpful way to see how men perceive femininity. On the other hand, it is this “cross-contamination” that challenges the social definition of what it means to be male (Butler 1990[2008]). In baton twirling, gender is “done” in two ways: the gender presentation of the twirler and the choreographed gender embedded within routines.

Range of Masculinities

Reflecting conceptions of gender as a fluid, malleable performance, masculinity cannot be reduced to a singular concept. Masculinity has been conceptualized as shifting across time, possessing hierarchical properties, and thus reflecting a competitive nature (Kimmel 1994). Kimmel (1994, 1996) described the American archetypes of the Genteel Patriarch (landowner), Heroic Artisan (farmer or craftsman), and Marketplace/Self-Made (entrepreneur) manhoods that developed among white men in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Genteel Patriarch, a concept borrowed from Europe, exemplifies the aristocrat, maintaining a high standard of honor, and refined etiquette (e.g., George Washington) (Kimmel 1996). The Heroic Artisan, illustrated by tradesmen like Paul Revere, is also borrowed from European ideals where hard work in his craft shows independence and honesty. Finally, the Marketplace or Self-Made Man is focused on attempts to climb social and pecuniary ladders, a man linked to the capitalist marketplace and its fickle moods; all newcomers to the New World were Self-Made men as they pursued the American Dream (Kimmel 1994, 1996). As the capitalist marketplace advanced, the entrepreneurial spirit of the new Marketplace/Self-Made Man displaced the civil arrangement between the Genteel Patriarch and Heroic Artisan (Kimmel 1994, 1996). No longer was it appropriate for men to show any feminine qualities because to be a man meant proving your manhood publicly and repeatedly.

Combining Kimmel's (1994, 1996) historical account of the development of masculinity with the development of men in dance generates an interesting intersection between masculinity and men in an effeminized profession. This intersection provides a nice parallel to the current study whereby workplace masculinities are compared to artistic masculinities. In seventeenth century Europe men were respected in Western theatrical dance, even going so far as to dance female roles in travesty (drag) (Crawford 1994). It was not until the creation of dance as a career

with the foundation of France's Royal Academy of Dance (1661) that women gained any respect in dance (Mennesson 2009). By 1840, participation of men in dance began to fade as critics like Jules Janin and Theophile Gautier wrote their scathing reviews (Crawford 1994; Fisher 2007). Men were labeled as clumsy and heavy in comparison to their female counterparts (Crawford 1994) and it was thought that only women should appear on the Romantic Era stage (1800s) (Fisher 2007). Gautier wrote of men, "for us a male dancer is something monstrous and indecent," and promoted the stereotype of masculinity that would last over the next century and many decades: "strength is the only grace permissible to men" (Priddin 1952:41). As women took over the dance world and men's participation declined, the stigma rose and stereotypes deterred men from dance.

Accordingly, one could not become a Self-Made Man by making a career out of dance. Men during the American Revolution (1765-1783) did not value effeminate professions as a growing critique of the aristocratic luxuries developed and the roles of Genteel Patriarch or Heroic Artisan diminished (Kimmel 1996). Instead, men were expected to prove their manhood and prove it constantly in the public arena (Kimmel 1996). Dance would not have been seen as a way to prove one's manhood, particularly in the eyes of other men where it mattered. Furthermore, because the dancer's goal is appearance rather than competition, the occupation is further stigmatized (Craig 2014).

It would not be until the twentieth century that a break from the academic and institutional circles propagated a shift away from traditional gender roles (Mennesson 2009). Men did not have a legitimate place within dance again until Ted Shawn created an all-male modern dance troupe established around themes in opposition to ballet where the female form was recognized as the ideal (Crawford 1994; Fisher 2007; Mennesson 2009). Many of the dances

Shawn created were in the image of hegemonically masculine archetypes (Greek statues, sportsmen, or rugged outdoorsmen) in order to present dance in a way to which a male audience might relate: “dance as work” (Fisher 2007:48). In a similar vein, the popularity of stars like Rudolf Nureyev in the 1960s and Mikhail Baryshnikov starting in the 1980s aided in the reformation of the validity of males in dance (Crawford 1994).

As Kimmel (1994, 1996) demonstrated in his historical overview of masculinities, the development of masculine identities is a complicated process involving a range of influences. David and Brannon (1976) provide several guidelines for masculine identity construction and maintenance: (1) “No Sissy Stuff:” The rejection of anything that could be labeled as effeminate because masculinity is the refuting of all things feminine. (2) “Be a Big Wheel:” The reference to masculinity’s association with the accumulation of power, success, wealth, and status; “he who has the most toys when he dies wins” (Kimmel 1994:125). (3) “Be a Sturdy Oak:” Masculinity means keeping emotions in check and keeping cool when under pressure. And (4) “Give ‘em Hell:” Maintaining characteristics associated with risk, aggression, and violence.

The fact that rule one, “No Sissy Stuff,” refutes participation in anything feminine indicates that male participation in a sport such as baton twirling or an artistic occupation like dance automatically opts one out of traditional forms of masculinity. To be sure, a key component of sports and masculinity is a flight from femininity in order to establish a valid masculine identity. Because of baton twirling’s inability to fulfill the requirements that it be violent and aggressive, rule four is challenged as well. However, “Be a Big Wheel” and “Be a Sturdy Oak” may still exist within sports like baton twirling. In particular, men in effeminized occupations often find that the “Be a Big Wheel” component is an easy one to achieve, as indicated by Williams’s (1992) concept of the “glass escalator” whereby men in such professions

are fast-tracked to promotion. Additionally, the components of “Be a Sturdy Oak” complement the attributes of a good competitor who remains calm and collected under pressure. This begs the question: If only half of these rules of manhood can be applied, are men in effeminized sports or occupations masculine?

This flight from the feminine concept creates the dichotomy in which many men in effeminized sport or occupations find themselves (Kimmel 1994). Because the dominant participants or cultural reputation is feminine, these men are not fleeing from the feminine like they are “supposed to” in order to conform to traditional forms of masculinity. By creating a version of masculinity from which to compare and rank all others in a gender hierarchy, those below the ideal are subordinated and therefore lesser (Connell 1992). Due to resistance to the ideal, men in effeminized spaces show a range of masculine identities formulated by their positions as subordinated masculinities (Connell 1992).

Connell describes this gender hierarchy as being dependent upon “hegemonic masculinity,” where hegemonic masculinity is the ideal and anything less is placed into a hierarchical arrangement where gendered identities are created or ranked in relation to one another (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985; Connell 1987). Indeed, this concept of hierarchical relationships between the genders masculine and feminine stem from gay men’s experiences with homophobia from heterosexual men (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). For example, Grindstaff and West (2006) utilize Connell’s (1987) hegemonic masculinity in their research on cheerleading and compare it with “emphasized femininity.” In doing so, Grindstaff and West (2006) contribute to Connell’s point of hegemonic masculinity as a creation of hierarchies contrary to femininity and subordinated masculinities. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) make it clear that, though hegemonic masculinity is the ideal, very few men will ever achieve it. To

this point, because of the placement of gay men in opposition to hegemonic masculinity and towards femininity, it is impossible for a gay man to conform to a hegemonic identity. To make up for this underachievement, multiple masculinities emerge as combinations of the requirements set forth by David and Brannon (1976) and with other factors such as race, class, and sexual orientation.

Bridges and Pascoe (2014) acknowledge these multiple masculinities, but describe them instead as hybrid masculinities, what they believe is a reincarnation of masculinity that simply reorganizes gender and sexual discrimination. They (2014) discuss the development of varied masculinities, or “hybrid masculinities,” that include “the selective incorporation of elements of identity typically associated with various marginalized and subordinated masculinities and – at times – femininities into privileged men’s gender performances and identities” (p. 246). This notion of hybrid masculinities may better apply to the historical scenarios described above. Instead, characteristics of other masculinities were utilized to greater legitimize this new form of masculinity that now includes participation in an effeminized space (for instance, Shawn’s use of Greek iconography).

In their theory, Bridges and Pascoe (2014) outline how young, heterosexual, white men appropriate aspects of “gay” identities, non-white masculine identities, or femininity to create a hybrid masculinity that on the surface seems to make them more inclusive. As Bridges (2014) finds, however, this cultural appropriation acts to “preserve their heterosexuality and simultaneously reinforce existing boundaries between gay and straight individuals and cultures” (Bridges and Pascoe 2014:252). For men in baton twirling, the opposite approach is true. As members of an effeminized group, these men are appropriating characteristics from more typically masculine identities to combat stigma in a way similar to Connell’s gay Australian men

in the workplace construct their identities as a form of safety (Connell 1992). Today, while safety may be of slightly lesser concern (see Anderson 2009), hybrid masculinities do little to combat gender-based inequality, but may have increased tolerance of sexual orientation (e.g., legalization of same-sex marriages).

As an example, the transition of masculinity in dance outlined above demonstrates that gender hierarchies evolve across time (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) and supports the argument that there may have been recent decreases in levels of homophobia, or rather a shift in emphasis from blatant homophobia toward regulating gender presentation (Anderson 2005a, 2009; Pascoe 2007 [2012]; Peterson and Anderson 2012; McCormack 2012). Anderson (2009) indicates that key to this decrease in homophobia is the increased acceptance of gay people and the uptick in self-identified heterosexual men participating in same-sex sexual acts (i.e. kissing, hugging, spooning). Additionally, Pascoe (2007 [2012]) finds that when calling each other “fags,” students were referring to gender presentation rather than sexual orientation. The use of the “fag” label is thus used as a means to regulate masculinity rather than same-sex desire, and Pascoe further observes that many students said they would never direct such overt name-calling toward someone they believed to be gay. A decline in overt homophobia could be indicative of an expansion of definitions of masculinity and, perhaps, a decline in the gender inequality that is a component of archetypical masculinity.

Role of Sports in Masculine Identity Formation

Yet another consequence of ever-changing masculinities is the inception of popular sport as an expected and masculine past time for English and American boys beginning in the middle to late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries during the Industrial Revolution (Gard 2003; Anderson 2009). As factory work became the norm, leisure time was introduced to working class

families (Rigauer 1981). For boys, part of this new leisure time were opportunities to participate in sporting activities which taught the qualities discipline, obedience, and sacrifice that were transferrable into work environments (Rigauer 1981; Anderson 2009). Today, youth sports are further connected to the workplace by businesses that act as financial sponsors (Anderson 2009).

A further consequence of this new form of labor was a change in the dispositions of both men and women. As men became the sole breadwinners, women were largely relegated to the home. Accordingly, men's love became expressed through their labor and women's through their caregiving (Cancian 1987; Anderson 2009). Because men's work was keeping them out of the home, their absence was depriving boys of "the masculine vapors supposedly necessary to masculinize them" and as a result, there was concern they were becoming "soft" (Anderson 2009:26-27). Gard (2003) argues that organized sports gained popularity as a way of combating non-heterosexual sex. Gard (2003) further asserted that participation in sports is a way of proving early and often a boy's masculinity, or rather his heterosexuality, to avoid being labeled gay. Gard's (2003) point coincides with Kimmel's (1996) description of masculine identity formation and maintenance.

Sports as we see them today, therefore, were "born out of the turn of the twentieth century notion that [they] could help prevent male youth from possessing characteristics associated with femininity" (Anderson 2009:29) because at this time avoidance of the feminine was paramount to proving one's heterosexuality. In particular, Anderson (2009) proposes that sport was created through "masculine and homophobic enterprise" that was "both deliberate and political" to create a docile and appropriate socialized workforce (p. 30). By the age of seven, girls and boys alike have developed their interests in sports (or otherwise) indicating that for most children, an interest in sport is a part of normal development (Gallahue 1996). However, in

reaction, those not interested in sport are labeled deviant (Gallahue 1996). It can be said that sports, much like occupations, must be labeled as masculine before men participate in them (Ehrenreich and English 1978); baton twirling is no longer one of those masculine areas, thus raising implications for the men who choose to participate within this sport.

In the next section, I examine the manner in which masculinity is shaped by gendered institutional structures, and how operating within an effeminized institution can produce particular masculine identities.

Tokenism

Though prior research on masculinities and effeminized occupations have employed the concept of tokenism, there has been a less conscious consideration of tokenism within research on effeminized sport. Disproportionate numbers of one group in comparison to another lends itself to effects of tokenism (Williams 1992). It is often assumed that any token group in a particular work setting may experience prejudiced treatment (Williams 1992). Often, tokens are identified by a group that represents less than fifteen percent of the total organization and thus, are likely to experience some forms of predictable discrimination (Kanter 1977).

Using Kanter's (1977) language, the "dominants," in this case female baton twirlers, ultimately control how the sport is viewed because they dominate the public image of twirling and, in doing so, create the appearance that it is a sport in which men should not participate. Should the ratio of women to men be 85:15 or less, men then become the token or skewed group (Kanter 1977). Kanter (1977) also notes that when there is only a single token in a group, they are relabeled as "solos." Additionally, even if two tokens are present, it is difficult for an alliance to be created that would eventually become the more powerful group (Kanter 1977). Therefore,

as tokens, it is difficult, but not impossible (Dworkin, Chafetz, and Dworkin 1986; Williams 1992) for this skewed group to gain power or privilege.

Continuing, Kanter (1977) elaborates on three tenets of token status: (1) visibility, (2) contrast, and (3) assimilation. In terms of *visibility*, there is a negative correlation between token status and attention. Though small in number, as a rule when tokens are noticed, they are given more attention because of their unique placement within a group that is their opposite. This is what Kanter (1977) called a “‘law of increasing returns’: as individuals of their type represent a *smaller* numerical proportion of the overall group, they each potentially capture a *larger* share of the awareness given to that group” (p. 210; original emphasis).

Contrast, the second perceptual tendency, produces an increased amount of self-awareness upon the token’s inclusion within the group. Whereas a uniform group enlists a group consciousness, when a token is added, the self-consciousness of the dominant group and the observers increases as instances of difference and commonality become more prominent (Kanter 1977). In reaction to this, the dominant group creates a barrier to exaggerate difference.

In the third category, *assimilation*, stereotypes or generalizations are applied to the skewed group based on social type. The actions of outsiders may work to support these stereotypes in what Kanter (1977) calls “status leveling.” In Kanter’s example, female employees were often mistaken as wives, mistresses, secretaries, or temporarily taking the place of a man. For male twirlers, status leveling comes in the form of assuming femininity or homosexuality. Kanter (1977) notes that tokens find it easier to conform to the stereotypes thrust upon them and are therefore, easily visible individually yet impermissible to be individuals.

However, in critique of Kanter’s use of numbers to define token status, it has been theorized that the effects of tokenism can be outweighed by sexism (Zimmer 1988; Yoder 1991).

Kanter's (1977) work focuses on women in the workforce, particularly women who represent a first wave of female workers. Yoder (1991) argues that Kanter (1977) minimizes the effects of gender as a master status, by questioning whether their status as women outweighed both the fact that men numerically outnumbered them and the effects of societal or organizational sexism. Instead, Yoder (1991) introduces the notion that men in token positions use their visibility as a way of getting ahead resulting in a "glass escalator" effect (Williams 1992). Indeed, it seems that token status may be given more weight if the token gender is ascribed a higher, more privileged status in opposition relative to the majority (i.e., men as tokens in effeminized spaces) (Dworkin, Chafetz, and Dworkin 1986; Yoder 1991).

CHAPTER 3: EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: NAVIGATING MASCULINITY IN EFFEMINIZED SPACES

Because it is consistently embodied and an essential part of the socialization process, gender is most certainly a social institution and one that can be applied to a multitude, if not all, aspects of society. Acker (1990) indicates that “[t]o say that an organization... is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine” (p. 146). Thus, the dominant gender within an occupation defines that space as either masculine or feminine and those who become the minority may qualify for token status. However, as in the case of baton twirling and other effeminized spaces discussed below, token status may also mean privilege. In this section, I examine prior literature on masculinities within gendered institutions, including female occupations and effeminized sport.

Williams’ (1992) work on male nurses, librarians, elementary school teachers, and social workers provides a look into spaces that were formally occupied by men, but are now dominated by women (i.e., effeminized spaces). Williams (1992) found that “often, despite their intentions, [men in female occupations] face invisible pressures to move up in their professions” (p. 256). In response to this and in opposition to the “glass ceiling,” men often encounter what Williams deemed the “glass escalator.” Typically in lower occupational levels (rather than administrative), men experienced the glass escalator effect as early as the hiring process and were “tracked” into positions deemed masculine that were also associated with higher pay or greater prestige (Williams 1992). Williams (1992) also found that, at times, female decision-makers shut out men. Key to this research, however, is that a majority of the discrimination Williams’ (1992) sample of men experienced emanated from outside of the workplace. For instance, male nurses

are assumed to be gay, librarians as “wimpy” or “asexual,” social workers are “feminine and “passive,” and elementary school teachers as pedophiles (Williams 1992:261). What Williams’ (1992) research suggests is that token status does not directly correlate with discrimination in the cases of the men she studied, but rather gender privilege precedes tokenism despite numeric tokenism. In other words, men experience tokenism in very different ways than do women.

Relatedly, within the literature on masculinities and sports, there has been examination of the manner in which operating within a feminized sport shapes masculinities. Anderson (2005a, 2009) examined multiple masculinities in his study of the institutionalized nature of masculinity in two American cheerleading organizations. He found what he termed *inclusive* and *orthodox* masculinities in heterosexual men who previously played football, but now cheer. Anderson found that cheer teams contributing to orthodox masculinity maintain hegemonic ideals largely by diminishing women and gay men. Meanwhile, inclusive-oriented teams refute orthodox masculinity by accepting the feminine aspects of their sport and gay teammates (Anderson 2005a, 2009). Not only do orthodox male cheerleaders support orthodox aspects of masculinity, but they also refute the feminized label given their sport and, in doing so, promote sexist attitudes, enlist a certain degree of homophobia, and objectify women. Orthodox masculinity is so institutionalized within the orthodox cheer association that in competition, any feminine technique utilized by the male team members is discounted and chastised by judges (Anderson 2005a). Needless to say, there is little to no cross-organizational competition because of the oppositional nature of inclusive and orthodox masculinities within male cheerleaders and their organizations.

In contrast to orthodox, inclusive male cheerleaders accept homosexuality and worry little about feminine expression compromising their masculinity. To this point, inclusive male

cheerleaders perform choreography in the same provocative way as their female counterparts (orthodox male cheerleaders maintain a stiff, rigid posture to their dancing). Heterosexual male cheerleaders of this group show high tolerance of homosexuality to the point of going to gay nightclubs or participating in same-sex sexual acts (Anderson 2005a, 2005b, 2009). However, Grindstaff and West's (2006) study of male cheerleaders did not mirror Anderson's findings of inclusive masculinity within the sport; rather, they found only instances of orthodox masculinity. Their findings, however, may be attributed to a smaller, more specific sample of only the orthodox cheer association. It can thus be argued that Anderson's study may be more generalizable because of his inclusion of both leading American cheer organizations.

It is because of this binary position (i.e., inclusive and orthodox) of masculinities suggested by Anderson (2005a, 2009) that such variance and fluidity of identities is allowed and thus contributes to Connell's work on the hierarchical arrangement of gendered identities. Those closer to the ideal hegemonic masculinity occupy a so-called masculine sport or occupation, while subordinated masculinities are found in effeminately stigmatized fields (often artistically oriented as in the case of dance, rhythmic gymnastics, figure skating, and ultimately baton twirling).

This hierarchy allows for a more varied pool of masculinities within subordinated groups because those closer to achieving hegemonic masculinity tend to gather in similar spaces (those places being hyper-masculine sports or occupations). However, other studies have shown that because of their subordinated status in effeminized terrains, men link their identities with aspects of hegemonic masculinity by emphasizing specific tasks as masculine much like Anderson's orthodox cheerleaders (e.g., lifting a female cheerleader; Anderson 2005a). In opposition to this, Anderson (2005a) argues that inclusive masculinity allows for effeminate behavior without the

stigma associated with it because of a within-group, culturally positive position on homosexuality.

Stigmatized Sports

Contrary to cheerleading, Harvey's (1996) study on men in volleyball and Michael's (2013) study on wrestling contribute to hegemonic forms of masculinity by subscribing to characteristics like strength, violence, and competition. In line with Anderson's (2005a, 2009) orthodox masculinity, Harvey (1996) found that the men he studied insisted that volleyball was just as aggressive and athletic as so-called masculine sports (i.e., football or baseball), yet his sample of volleyball players insisted it was a women's sport. For this reason, Harvey (1996) refers to volleyball as a secondary sport (football/baseball being primary). However, for Michael's (2013) wrestlers, emphasizing the physical demands and maintaining a "hard" (hard-working, disciplined, and tough)" persona was important despite ongoing sexual stigma because of the homoerotic nature of wrestling and required, skintight uniform (p. 7). Though both are framed as aggressive and "hard," stigma surrounds volleyball (secondary) and wrestling (sexualized).

Within volleyball culture, the players used demeaning sexual analogies and euphemisms, adopted masculine culture by drinking and scoring women, and subordinated their female manager. In an effort to make their sport more "manly" and attempt to compensate for their sport's secondary status, Harvey's (1996) male volleyball players upheld connotations of hegemonic masculinity and denied lesser masculinities. Michael's (2013) wrestlers however, used homophobic themed language (i.e., "fag"), but the social environmental context did not align with homophobia; rather, the term "fag" was used as a form of gender policing (McCormick 2011; see also Pascoe 2007 [2012]).

A great deal of the literature on men in effeminized sport supports Anderson's (2005a, 2009) inclusive masculinity theory, though Harvey's (1996) findings are the exception perhaps because of the "secondary" sport framing. The male participants in Harvey's (1996) study take extreme positions in regards to "Be a Big Wheel," "Be a Sturdy Oak," and "Give 'em Hell." Meanwhile, the only reason the male volleyball players do not qualify for fulfilling the "No Sissy Stuff" component of hegemonic masculinity are the volleyball players' assumption that it is an effeminized sport, a null point when actually considering the players' performances of masculinity. In other words, Harvey's label of volleyball as an effeminized sport does not conform to the characteristics of other effeminized sports. Instead, while it may be publicly stigmatized as effeminized, Harvey's (1996) findings suggest otherwise when considering the behaviors of his male volleyball players (i.e., the stigma outside does not match the behavior inside). Rather, Harvey's (1996) labeling of volleyball as a "secondary" sport holds true.

Sexually Stigmatized and Effeminized Sports

Baton twirling perhaps straddles the categories of sexually stigmatized and effeminized sports. I define an effeminized sport as one in which women are the dominant majority; as a result, men in these effeminized sports may experience gender or sexual-based stigma. A sexually stigmatized sport is one in which men or women may participate, but are often labeled as "gay" or "lesbian" for their participation (i.e., wrestling or softball). Both effeminized and sexualized sports participants may present inclusive behaviors and attitudes. As outlined above, I used Harvey's (1996) "secondary" definition to describe a third category of stigmatized sports. Secondary sports are those that are "second best" to primary sports such as football, basketball, or baseball (in America). An additional category may also exist at the periphery of this hierarchy of sports; this is where baton twirling would lay as both an effeminately *and* sexually stigmatized

sport. Needless to say, sexually stigmatized sports and effeminized sports can be one in the same. Men in all categories may fall victim to homophobia, the “fear of being homosexualized” (Anderson 2009:7).

Prior research on sports that might fall within both the effeminized and sexually stigmatized categories include those on activities such as dance and rhythmic gymnastics. For example, Chimot and Louveau’s (2010) study of boys in rhythmic gymnastics found that participants exhibited traits associated with inclusive masculinity. In rhythmic gymnastics, boys are accepted as part of the group and are able to express their identities openly, yet attempt to differentiate themselves from their female counterparts’ grace and artistry by emphasizing strength, muscle, and competition. Interestingly, while boys were finally allowed to compete in rhythmic gymnastics in France as of 1989, they are barred from the elite tier of competition in a form of reverse sexism (Chimot and Louveau 2010).

As one might guess, social and familial pressure were heavy influences on the boys and there was pressure to quit in order to enter the “man’s world” in an effort to conform to ideal forms of masculinity (Chimot and Louveau 2010). One respondent went so far as to state that a boy’s identity can be more ambiguous, but once he reaches adulthood it is necessary for a clear definition of masculinity. Chimot and Louveau’s (2010) work makes it clear that boys may be able to perceive the differences between what it means to be masculine as a boy, adolescent, or man particularly when challenged to decide whether or not to participate in a sport that contests hegemonic ideas of masculinity. Interestingly, Chimot and Louveau (2010) indicate that participation in an effeminate sport becomes easier as age increases because the more mature individual is better able to explain their participation. The stigma of being a young male in an effeminate sport often spurs a movement into a more masculine sport because they and their

cohort have not grown into their identities (i.e., peer pressure). Thus, when examining masculinities, it is important to consider the life course and the process of socialization as a determinant towards participation in effeminate or masculine sports.

Identity Management Techniques

As reflected in the above discussion, the embedded nature of males within the female-dominated sport of twirling produces a unique context that is likely to influence the maintenance of masculine identities. Within this context, it would be expected that male twirlers would employ techniques to manage, shape, and protect their identities. The stigma associated with many effeminized sports is certainly not unnoticed by those that participate, but there have been attempts at movement away from the negative association of men in effeminized spaces (e.g., Ted Shawn's work-related choreography). For instance, Fisher's (2007) poses alternate framings of men in dance by conceding that the male ballet dancer is absolutely athletic *and* manly because "he will always be something the Terminator is not—light, precise, and more delicately attentive to the music and the muses than a strictly macho man could hope to be" (Fisher 2007:63). Instead of "macho," Fisher (2007) suggests the use of the label "maverick" defined as a brave man who is able to deal with the stigmatized world in which he lives.

Fisher (2007) argues that a maverick label is appropriate due to several experiences common among male dancers: (1) The athletic boy who finds he is good at ballet accidentally and likes the unique and secure position this usually gives him [often as a token]; (2) the boy in a large family who stakes out an unusual territory because his brothers and sisters have already claimed other professions [form of tokenism]; (3) gay or straight men who do not worry about putting a macho reputation at stake; (4) gay or straight men who find the arts a welcoming environment for many kinds of people; and (5) secure men who do not worry what people think.

In other words, the maverick is a rebel, unconventional, irregular, unexpected, and independent not *just* athletic; he maintains a unique status because of his bravery in associating himself with an effeminized space. Fisher (2007) does however concede the possibility that making it maverick may just be replacing one stereotype of masculinity with another in a similar way to Bridges and Pascoe's (2014) hybrid masculinity. Nevertheless, this alternate framing of masculinity within feminized sport could serve as an identity management technique for men in baton twirling as well.

Prior research on men in effeminized sport has produced numerous other themes of identity management techniques including avoidance of women, gays, and peers (e.g., Risner 2002); participation in and comparison to other sports (e.g., Mennesson 2009; Haltom and Worthen 2014); over-justification of sexuality and actions (e.g., Risner 2002); and gendered differences in technical aspects (e.g., Adams 1993). Specifically, Risner's (2002) study on dance majors elaborated on five themes, each of which promote a negative environment for male dancers: homophobia in the form of stereotypes, orthodox definitions of masculinity, heterosexist justifications for participation, absence of positive male role models, and internalized homophobia. Haltom and Worthen (2014) also discuss young male dance majors utilizing heterosexist privilege particularly in earlier stages of their dance education (most likely for recruitment). They found that dancers put a positive spin on participation in an effeminized occupation by emphasizing their proximity to females and the opportunity to touch them while dancing (Haltom and Worthen 2014). Furthermore, respondents used the comparison of dance to sports by drawing parallels between dance as a sport and dance as an art to justify their positionality as masculine dancers (exactly what Fisher 2007 wishes would change).

Gendered Differences in Technical Aspects

Research on men in figure skating (Adams 1993), rhythmic gymnastics (e.g., Chimot and Louveau 2010), cheer (e.g., Grindstaff and West 2006), and dance (e.g., Fisher 2007) emphasizes certain embodied movements specifically done by men or where men tend to specialize. By highlighting higher jumps and leaps, and higher numbers of spins, lifts, or feats of strength, men in these sports considered “second string” or in the “margins” can better justify their involvement and place themselves in an arena separate from women (Adams 1993:97; Grindstaff and West 2006). Because of the similarities between baton twirling and these other effeminate sports, male baton twirlers might identify similar ways in which identities are managed through performance aspects.

In the figure skating world, men and women’s programs vary on several different choreographic elements (Adams 1993). For instance: men are required to perform triple jumps while women are only required to do doubles; men must have a spinning combination while women perform laybacks (a standing split position in which one leg is in the air with the back arched in such a way that the head is close to the ice); women also skate in spirals or arabesque. While a few of these elements do cross gender boundaries occasionally, what sets men and women apart within figure skating are the performance aspects that may be considered more powerful or athletic.

Men in figure skating tend to utilize stereotypical “manly” movements such as hip thrusts, snapping their fingers, or putting their hands into fists (Adams 1993). They also often wear leather or in some cases take off their shirts (Adams 1993). Meanwhile women, referred to as “ladies,” are required to have skirts on their costumes and, should they perform in such a way that may be misconstrued as masculine, the media does their best to re-feminize them by commenting on their bodies or appearance (Adams 1993). Commentators concentrate on the

technical elements of a routine with men whereas a woman's appearance is the topic of conversation rather than their talent. Unlike women however, men in figure skating are allowed greater gender fluidity within their performances (Adams 1993).

This greater fluidity may be attributed to the fact that as a "women's" sport any male's participation is rare, welcomed, or necessary for the promotion of the sport as athletic as in the case of male dancers (see: Crawford 1994 and Fisher 2007). Because men in figure skating occupy a secondary nature within the range of sports and are not jocks because they do not participate in a more aggressive violent sport (e.g., hockey), they do not challenge gender norms because of their relegated location at the perimeter of the gender spectrum (Harvey 1996; Adams 1993). They are allowed a greater fluidity of masculinity in such a way that they can perform both hard and soft choreography, but in a way that they still often accentuate their masculinity within their movements and dress while simultaneously interpreting the music artistically (a feminine characteristic).

In a similar vein Anderson's (2005a) and Grindstaff and West's (2006) studies of cheerleaders provide insight as to the aspects of cheerleading that are most emphasized for male participants. Grindstaff and West (2006) specifically emphasize the stunting (lifting) aspect of cheerleading. In an effort to recruit men into cheer, fliers avoid the use of "cheer squad" and instead use terms like "stunt team" in order to masculinize cheer to promote participation (Grindstaff and West 2006:508). The authors even mention instances of competition among male cheerleaders where beers are owed if you drop your girl. This follows closely with a "Give 'em Hell" attitude for competition (David and Brannon 1976; Grindstaff and West 2006). When comparing cheering in competition to football performances, male cheerleaders "[H]ate going to

games and standing there and doing motions or yelling. We just want to put the girls up [in stunts]” (Grindstaff and West 2006:508).

Gaps in the Literature

Considering the literature outlined above, there are several areas in which gaps have appeared. In particular, tokenism among youth has not been explored to date. While touched upon in the dance literature, tokenism is not used as a method of analysis specifically regarding the formation and maintenance of identities within the institution of dance. Research designed to specifically look at youth tokenism would prove a unique addition to the literature on stigma and identity formation. Relatedly, tokenism within the realm of sports and areas where artistry is required has not been the subject of study. Additionally, a stronger body of work on youth sports may also prove useful in analyzing the effect sports have on youth identities or perhaps sexualities.

Within the body of work I label as effeminized spaces, many areas have yet to be explored resulting in gaps in the literature. Other studies of men in effeminate and sexually stigmatized sports would add a more holistic approach to this area of study. As evidenced by the literature and this study, Acker’s (1992) gendered institution extends beyond the workplace and into other areas like sports and artistic-based activities. Looking at these spaces through the lens of tokenism has not yet been done and doing so would serve to gain a better understanding of the experience of those who are involved in them. Indeed, tokenism and masculine identities may play out differently in gendered spaces like sports and the arts compared to occupations, the literature on which focuses on nursing, teaching, etc.

Research Question

In order to address these gaps in the literature, I draw upon qualitative interviews to answer my research question regarding whether and how the status of men in competitive baton twirling as the “token” male contributes to the maintenance of their masculine identities within the effeminized sport of baton twirling. In an effort to gain insight as to the participants’ definitions of masculinity, I further ask how do they define masculinity as a male in an effeminized space. Moreover, as an element of tokenism and, relatedly, the “glass ceiling” and “glass escalator,” I ask what advantages or disadvantages male tokens in baton twirling experience. Much of this literature will be revisited again in the discussion in Chapter 8. Next, I review the research methods I utilized during the course of this study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODS

In order to answer my research questions, I conducted 30 in-depth interviews with male baton twirlers. What follows is a discussion of my population and sample including specific characteristics, recruitment, interview methods, a discussion of my positionality as an actively competitive baton twirler, and approaches to analysis. Throughout this section, I interject my experiences as a male twirler into my findings and methods in order to contextualize the process, as well as highlight my positionality.

Population and Sampling

Because no statistics exist on this unique population, estimates of the size of the male twirling community were generated through various approaches. Initially, I brainstormed the names of as many male twirlers as I could think of in order to get an idea of how many there might be. I also did an informal poll in a coaches and teachers Facebook group (also as a way of stirring up interest). Although there are no quality data, based on competitions there appears to be an approximately 1:100 ratio of males to females. This observation is based on both anecdotal experiences at competitions held in the Southwest region and a crude count of those listed for appearance at NBTA's AYOP nationals.. Ultimately, during their interviews I asked all participants to estimate the size of the population of male twirlers in the United States and worldwide. Approximately 70 percent (21) of the participants are currently active in the twirling community in some capacity; thus, their estimates of the current population size may be close to accurate purely based on their knowledge of the sport. On average, participants estimated that there may be 47 (range of 20-100) currently active or recently retired male twirlers in the United States. The estimate of the worldwide population was a bit more varied with, an average of 410 and ranging from 30 to 3,000. This variation may be due to lacking knowledge about male

twirlers around the world. Many times, those who attend world-level competitions have qualified for these positions to compete representing their country. It is unclear how many they may have competed against to obtain these positions.

Many participants reported there being much higher numbers in countries like France and Japan where the sport of baton twirling is viewed with much less stigma. For instance, in Japan, children are exposed to baton twirling in physical education classes in school. In France, club sports fully support male twirlers. Graph 1 shows that, among those who are aged between 40 and 50 years, one participant estimated that they competed against 12 other men. According to Graph 3, of those in my sample, 12 were competing around this time in the 1980s. It is possible therefore, that I was able to obtain participation from all or a majority of those competing during this time range.

I also had each participant estimate how many twirlers they competed against at the state, regional, and national levels. Included in Graph 1 and Graph 2, I use the contestant's current age and their estimates of other men they competed against at the state and national levels. These graphs also aid in estimating the population of male twirlers over time. As both Graph 1 and Graph 2 indicate, the younger a male competitor, the less likely they are to have competition. As reflected in Graph 2, participants estimated that they competed with between 1 (often themselves) and 20 men at the state level, with a positive linear relationship between age and number of competitors. Similarly, at the national level, Graph 1 reflects that participants estimated that they competed with between 2 and 25 other male twirlers, with a positive linear relationship between age and number of competitors. Thus, older participants reported a higher number of competitors than more recent participants. Regional level was not included because regional competitions are a relatively recent addition to competitive twirling and therefore the

data were incomplete given the multigenerational sample. Additionally, NBTA and the USTA define their regions differently and therefore may include different states. Several participants could not recall how many they competed against or provided a range. These ranges often were reflective of their competitive careers. Stephen in particular noted that there was a drop in male participants when he first started compared to his retirement in the early 1990s.

Interestingly, among those who are aged between 40 and 50 years, there appears to be a drop off in participation. Men competing in this age range would have been competing in the 1980s during the AIDS crisis, which I believe had some effect on men's participation in the sport of baton twirling as a way of avoiding anything associated with femininity and thus accused of homosexuality. This connection between the declining rates and the AIDS epidemic was brought up by several participants and was a correlation that I had not previously considered, but serves as a reasonable hypothetical explanation.

Recruitment

Requirements for participation in this study were simple: the male twirlers were to have competed in at least one NBTA or USTA competition. Though a participant may only have participated once in one or both of these organizations, I believe they would still be able to speak to potential stigma and identity management techniques utilized. Participants had to have been at least 18 to be considered for an interview. In fact, I believe it was crucial that I acquire an appropriate variation of generations because of the relatively short history of twirling and availability of early competitors. Additionally, all participants must have agreed to be recorded. A single exclusion was made for a potential participant who signed the informed consent document, but refused to be recorded. While their contribution would have been appreciated and

might have added a varied perspective, I wanted to be able to use direct quotations from recordings instead of reconstructed conversations based on notes.

A majority of the recruitment was done through convenience. As a current participant in baton twirling, I used my connections to current or recently retired competitors and judges. Facebook proved a fascinating resource for recruitment as well. Throughout the process of “friending” those male twirlers that I was not currently “friends” with, Facebook’s algorithm would suggest other male twirlers with whom I had mutual friends. A Facebook message was sent to each potential participant with the recruitment script (Appendix B) and recruitment advisement (Appendix C) attached. Upon responding with positive interest, participants were asked for their personal e-mail addresses where they were sent the informed consent document (Appendix D); scheduling was also discussed via e-mail. Primarily all informed consent documents were signed electronically (some printed, signed, and scanned back the document). No identifying information was kept such that a participant’s identity would match the assigned pseudonym. As an added level of protection, twirling organizations, certain events, locations, and citations have also been given pseudonyms.

Sample characteristics

The average age of participants was 41 with a range from 19-78. I believe this age range allows for a good cross section of generations of twirlers, particularly those who have seen change in gender norms both socio-culturally and within the twirling community. As an extra measure to preserve confidentiality, participants’ ages will be referred to by age range. My sample consisted of the following: 3 percent (1) teens, 33 percent (10) twenties, 10 percent (3) thirties, 13 percent (4) forties, 30 percent (9) fifties, 7 percent (2) sixties, 3 percent (1) seventies.

On average, participants began twirling around age 9, with a range between 3 and 19 years. The oldest of my participants began twirling in 1947. Graph 4 shows that within this sample, the age at which male twirlers start twirling has risen, with younger participants beginning their career at an older age. Twirling careers lasted, on average, 14 years and ranged between 5 and 25 years at the time of the study (a small number were actively competing). Age and length of twirling career varied greatly in a way similar to what Mennesson (2009) found in her study of male ballet and jazz dancers. Although Graph 5 indicates a decrease in the length of twirling careers over time, I believe this is due both to the fact that a few of my participants are still actively competing and twirling careers are often circumstance to the life course (e.g., Martin quit to becoming the breadwinner for his family after his sister became a disabled) or organizational rules (e.g., aging out after winning a top title).

In terms of race, an overwhelming percentage of this sample was white or Caucasian (90 percent; 27) and 10 percent (3) were non-white. Several other non-white men expressed interest in participating in the study, but did not communicate in a timely manner before the closing of recruitment. However, this pattern may closely represent the population of twirlers as a whole due to the extremely white nature of the sport of baton twirling among all organizations. Higher numbers of other racial groups might have been better represented if I had included those who twirl purely for recreation. However, because I use only competition twirlers, my sample is reflective of competitive male twirlers rather than male twirlers in the general sense (i.e., those who twirl recreationally). In an attempt to classify socioeconomic status, participants were also asked to report their highest degree obtained ranging from less than high school to a PhD. Three percent (1) had less than a high school education, 60 percent (18) had obtained a bachelor's

degree, 17 percent (5) high school diploma, 10 percent (3) Masters degrees, 7 percent (2) Associates, and 3 percent (1) PhD.

Regarding sexuality, participants were interestingly varied with 63 percent (19) identifying as gay, 23 percent (7) heterosexual, 10 percent (3) bisexual, and 3 percent (1) no answer. This variation brings into question the stigma of sexuality placed upon baton twirling. The fact that almost a quarter of participants identify as heterosexual is suggestive of the claim that masculinity has changed recently, particularly considering five of the seven heterosexual men were between the ages of 22 and 27 (though this may be a product of my sample). However, the fact that 63 percent (19) of those interviewed identified as gay suggests that the sport is still engaged in by predominantly non-heterosexual men (which is reflected in the stigma these men experienced).

All participants must have competed in at least one NBTA or USTA competition as inclusion criteria, but not all were currently active in baton twirling. Of the 30 men I interviewed, 30 percent (9) would be considered inactive in twirling with little or no participation. Of the 70 percent (21) that are currently active, they were active as competitors, coaches, judges, or board members (many of which overlapped, although a competitor may not also serve as a judge or board member but they may coach). Participants were from all over the continental United States, representing 16 states. I have organized them into regions in an effort to protect participant's identities: South (6 participants, representing 3 states), West (8 participants, representing 3 states), Mideast (9 participants, representing 3 states), Midwest (2 participants, representing 2 states), Northeast (5 participants, representing 5 states).

Interviews

Interviews took place in August and September of 2014 and I provided no incentives. Participants were given the option to conduct the interview via phone, Facetime, or Skype (the latter two being video-based calls). A majority of participants chose to conduct the interview via phone 93 percent (28) while only two chose Facetime 3 percent (1) or Skype 3 percent (1). The average interview lasted one hour and forty minutes (1:40) and ranged from thirty-four minutes to just over two hours (2:08). Due to severe hearing loss, one participant (Chuck, 60s) was given the interview guide ahead of time in case he was unable to hear over the phone. He read each question aloud and answered accordingly. Two other interviews (Hayden and Steven) were conducted via phone in two segments during their respective practice and work commutes.

The interview schedule (Appendix E) was organized in several categories: general demographics, twirling career, personal background and familial involvement, general questions, stigma, comparison to women and token status, technique, masculinity, and organizational differences. This interview guide was just that, a guide; several questions changed for clarification purposes, emphasis, or elaboration. Questions were also omitted entirely often in the interest of time or receptiveness.

The general demographics section included questions such as current age, race, sexual orientation, place of birth, and city/state of current residence. City and state of current residence was included because this is often how twirlers are identified or announced in competition (e.g., Trenton Haltom from Texas) and later as a judge (because judges at larger competitions must not be from that state or region). Also, because of state and regional competitions, competitors are often identified as state or regional champions (for females, this is even embroidered on a sash). Because there are so few male twirlers, often we are remembered as “that guy from Texas” (a result of tokenism). Because mentioning state residence may compromise participant’s identities,

I do not include the specific state for each participant; in situations where location was relevant, region is mentioned instead.

While sexual orientation may be an uncomfortable question for some, the participants were aware that they were not required to answer all of the questions and could stop the interview if they were uncomfortable with the content. The question was posed in a straightforward way, “What is your sexual orientation?” Participants were welcome to answer the question openly, using their own language (same with race). Only one participant declined to answer the sexual orientation question. Steven in particular was caught off guard by the question because it appeared so early in the interview (Appendix E). Gary asked for clarification of the meaning of “sexual orientation.”

Twirling career questions covered age when the participant started twirling, length of twirling career, what organizations they participated in, state or region they participate participation, and what titles they won during their career. The age at which the twirler started may have affected the amount of stigma the twirler experienced or perceived. For instance, Aaron commented on how at his first elementary school, his peers paid little attention to the fact that he danced and twirled. It was only when he switched schools and was forced to make new friends that his twirling became out of the norm to the extent that he experienced stigma. Achievement questions were included simply to give the interviewee an opportunity to talk about their accomplishments or participation in twirling to acclimate them to the interview process.

The questions on personal background and familial involvement delved into why the interviewee began twirling and whether they had familial support. Thus, the inclusion of this section of questions was important to assess the degree and type of familial influence. After this section, I included general questions involving twirling participation to make the atmosphere

more comfortable for the participant. From there, I touched on stigma, whether or not the participant felt it, and how he combated it. Stigma was included with anticipation that issues of homophobia and gender-based shame would arise (e.g., Pascoe's 2012 "fag discourse"). It is through the revelation of stigma, and the gender maintenance that occurs as a result of it, that I develop my theory. The next section examined competition against women and the effects of token status on the interviewee. This section prompted the participants to discuss how they compared themselves to their female competitors.

The technique section of the interview asked about gender-specific events and movements in order to better understand differences between masculine and feminine male twirlers. Next, the participants defined masculinity in their own terms. Last, participants were asked to describe differences between the leading twirling organizations and whether or not they view masculinity differently in reference to the male twirlers that participate in them.

Initially, I conducted 31 interviews were conducted due to a count and scheduling mishap. However, because of a corrupt audio file, I was only able to transcribe and code 30 interviews. The 30 interviews yielded 41.8 hours of recorded data (approximately 1,100 pages, double spaced). Interviews were recorded using Audacity, a free audio editing software program. Audio files were converted to MP3 files, uploaded to ExpressScribe, and transcribed by me using a foot pedal. Audio was reduced to 50-60 percent speed for ease. Audio recordings and transcriptions were stored on a password-protected external hard drive only accessed on a personal, password-protected laptop computer.

Researcher Position

Although positionality of a researcher may affect outcomes, analysis, and conclusions, many researchers fail to indicate the ways in which data can be influenced by researcher position

and privilege during the interview process (McCorkel and Myers 2003). Rather, researchers often omit identity in the research design or only fleetingly mention issues of race, class, or gender. Perhaps many “sociologists are hesitant to consider the effect of identity on their work because the groundedness of identity claims threaten to unearth those ghosts we are trained to ritualistically bury at the start of our research projects: bias and subjectivity” (McCorkel and Myers 2013:200). Nonetheless, master narratives can influence a researcher’s analyses and interpretations; these narratives originate from dominant groups that produce hegemonic ideals to initiate order in what is assumed as a natural way (Harding 1993; Romero and Stewart 1999; McCorkel and Myers 2003). Given the salience of my identity for this project, I believe it is important to carefully assess my position as a researcher.

My master narrative as a male baton twirler coincides with that of my participants and therefore the issue of my being an outsider is not a necessary consideration. However, much like my participants, I also fall victim to the masternarrative created by hegemonic masculinity as a young, white, middle class male. That being said, because of the specific nature of this topic, an invested knowledge of the sport of baton twirling aids in my understanding of the sport through my rapport as a competitor and shared commonalities in gender identity, race, socioeconomic class, etc. These similarities only serve to inspire a deeper analysis because of shared views and understanding of a niche social space (baton twirling). As a current competitor, I understand the dynamics of competition; I have intimate knowledge of the rules and of the gendered structure of baton twirling organizations. This topic of masculinity and gender presentation is a conversation that I have had with both coaches and other male twirlers. For this reason, recruitment for this study was relatively easy because the topics brought up in interviews were nothing new to the participants. Due to an understanding of the world of baton twirling as a male competitor myself,

I was able get at some of the issues that have been discussed for decades. In fact, several participants commented on how therapeutic our interview was and thanked me for doing research on this subject. That being said, an outsider's perspective may provide further and differing insight as to how gender and privilege is performed in baton twirling. Because I have participated in twirling for some time, it is possible I may not be as sensitive to some of the gendered issues that are embedded within the culture. Be that as it may, I attempted to be as objective as possible.

Analysis

Interviews were conducted and analyzed using thematic analysis combined with elements of grounded theory, “a set of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves” (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2014:1). I approached the subject of men in baton twirling as objective as possible in order to let the data and participants speak for themselves in an effort to actively construct theory. In doing so, I aim to construct abstract analytical categories that lead to the ultimate goal of theory development (Charmaz 2014). In addition to collecting new data, I use and build upon existing theories to create my own.

Coding, the labeling of segments of data to depict what each segment is about, was done in three phases. Memos were also written throughout the process of coding and transcribing to begin the analytic and theory development processes. First, coding occurred relying upon the patterns covered in the interview guide questions. Second, line-by-line coding was used to discover the initial 40 codes. As a third and final phase, I used focused coding that better allowed me to construct a theory around men's token status and masculine identities within baton twirling (Charmaz 2014).

Specifically combing through interviews to procure sets of codes implies an intimate relationship with the data, no preconceived notions (limitations previously discussed), and awareness that I am an instrument through which a theory may arise, all of which are aspects of grounded theory (Strauss 1987). All interviews were transcribed by me and uploaded to the qualitative data analysis software program, Atlas.ti, where they were coded. Atlas.ti is a licensed-based software program that works seamlessly with grounded theory because of the integrated uses of coding, memo writing, and analysis.

CHAPTER 5: PRIVILEGE AND DISADVANTAGE: EVALUATING THE “BLUE CURTAIN”

The topics of privilege and disadvantage were pervasive throughout the narratives of the twirlers I interviewed. Initially, it was difficult to parse out what may be perceived as privilege or disadvantage, but ultimately the concept of the “Blue Curtain” emerged. At the annual National Baton Twirling Association’s (NBTA) national competition referred to as America’s Youth on Parade (AYOP), major events are held in front of a blue curtain that takes up the length of the basketball court in the pavilion of the Joyce Center at Notre Dame University. The National Majorette Contest, also called “The Big One” for advanced contestants and “The Little Big One” for all other divisions, is the primary (or “marquee” event as Brian would say) held in front of the blue curtain. The weeklong competition begins with the National Majorette preliminary competition and ends with the final competition to determine the Grand National Twirling Champion in each age division — all taking place in front of the blue curtain. Most other competitive events are held in the field house (with two sides composed of a hockey rink and multipurpose courts) where up to 75 competitive lanes are run at the same time. Men’s participation in this key “blue curtain” event is only recent and participants perceived their previous exclusion as gender bias.

I use the blue curtain as a metaphor for the privileges and disadvantages experienced by the male twirlers I interviewed. In front of the blue curtain, male twirlers are given increased visibility by being showcased and are given the opportunity to compete in the same arena as the best of their female peers (i.e., the glass escalator). Behind the blue curtain, they are hidden and experience disadvantage by receiving less prestigious awards, awkward placement on the competition floor, and generally given differential treatment compared to female twirlers (i.e.,

the glass ceiling). Brad, in his early 20s, illustrates both the privilege and disadvantages of being a male twirler by saying:

[T]he perception from females I would say is that [men] are more privileged, however, as a male being involved in the male part of it, I can see it going both ways. We are provided with the opportunities they are not, but women are provided with the opportunities that we are not.

What follows is a discussion of the experiences of my participants in front of and behind the blue curtain that result in privilege and disadvantage, which ultimately make up the “Blue Curtain.” Further, I discuss the way in which these two spaces are not mutually exclusive in that men can experience privilege in the same space that they experience disadvantage, and vice versa; in this respect, privilege is often a double-edged sword for male twirlers.

Behind the Blue Curtain: Disadvantages

Participants made it clear that when it comes to competitive twirling, men and women have different experiences yet, because of their token status, men are seen as having more opportunities (i.e., contrast Kanter [1977]). According to Brad (20s), from the very beginning of their twirling careers, male twirlers may experience structural gender bias:

Being a male twirler, you go directly into the advanced division, which is something that is perceived... from the girls like, “Wow, that’s easy you just go right into advanced.” Well, as males we know... that you have to have a two minute and thirty second solo right when you start so that’s technically a disadvantage for some....

As Brad explains, from their first competition, men start at a disadvantage. Other than being separated into age divisions (0-6, 7-9, 10-12, 14-15, 16+ in NBTA; competition age is determined by age as of September 1) (NBTA 2015), male twirlers are automatically placed in the advanced division. However, women in NBTA are placed into their respective age divisions and are additionally required to move up through the ranks of Novice, Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced by winning a specified amount of first placements (three wins for advancement

out of Novice, five in Beginner, and eight in Intermediate) (NBTA 2015). This is typically the case for women, unless they are especially talented in which case they can begin in any division fit for their skill level; however, a contestant is not allowed to go backwards. Men are also not required to qualify for any national events whereas women must place top three or top six, depending on the event (NBTA 2015).

As a result of this forced advancement, a male just starting to compete must perform a two minute and thirty second solo rather than the thirty second to two minute solo of a Novice female (NBTA 2015). In this way, NBTA men must learn more material to fill that two and a half minutes or face a penalty of a tenth of a point for every second under time. Therefore, men may appear to be more advanced right away because not only do they stick out more as tokens due to the male/female ratio, but they are also forced to learn more material and more quickly than their female counterparts; this gives the illusion of faster technical advancement in contrast.

In the USTA, beginning male twirlers may choose their starting division. Divided into similar age divisions (0-8, 9-12, 12-16, 17-20, 21+; competition age is determined by age as of December 31) (USTA 2014b), if they do not begin in Advanced (which is typical), they compete with the women until reaching the Advanced division after moving through Novice, Beginner, and Intermediate. The reasoning for choosing between Advanced or starting from Novice is unclear based on rules and the experiences of those I interviewed. In order to advance in the USTA, a Novice contestant must never have won first place in that event, Beginners must have less than five wins, Intermediate must have less than ten wins, and Advanced must have ten or more (USTA 2014b). In the USTA, performances are done to timed music specific to each event (i.e., the routine should be choreographed to stop at the end of the music). In NBTA competition, the music is ongoing and the routine should be choreographed in such a way that the routine ends

at the appropriate time (too short or too long results in a penalty). For the USTA, Novice, Beginner, and Intermediate recorded music is one minute and twenty-nine seconds; Advanced is one minute and forty-four seconds (USTA 2014b). When comparing organizations, it is clear that the structure of the USTA allows for better equality among sexes, however it is unclear how many males choose to begin competing in Advanced or at a lower level though it was inferred by those I spoke to that many begin in the Advanced division.

In short, while girls are given the chance to hone their skills and advance by winning their events, boys are typically forced into technically advancing quickly and therefore may appear at an advantage. The structural gender bias in these two organizations enhances gender differences that may ultimately affect boys' gender maintenance as they are seen as being more privileged.

Brad (20s) and Aaron (20s) provide several more examples that they perceive as structural gender bias by bringing up the Miss Majorette of America pageant:

[E]specially with NBTA and AYOP, the big deal right now and for always has been College Miss Majorette of America and the Teenage Miss Majorette of America which [men] never take part in anything like that. The males never get to do a farewell performance. You know, there's highs and lows of both.... (Brad)

Aaron feels the same way:

[M]ale twirlers aren't taken as seriously as female twirlers. I think especially in NBTA there's such a focus on Miss Majorette, but there's no equivalent for men and there's no major title in the U.S. between USTA and NBTA that really highlights a male twirler... So, I feel like the advantage [is] that you don't have as many people to compete against so you can focus more on yourself, but you don't get the same opportunity.

Brian, a white male in his early 60s, is also "irritated" by men's underrepresentation in the larger events; he perceives the male twirlers at AYOP as "second-rate citizens... clearly because the marquee event is the Miss Majorette of America." Brian continues his thought by passionately explaining:

Everything... anything that a male would do at that competition is secondary in terms of focus or secondary in terms of prestige or honor or whatever to the Miss Majorette.... [L]et's face it, that entire organization NBTA is geared around the Miss Majorette of America and you know... I think in this day and age it is a little irritating.

Brian goes on to think of it from an advertising and outsider perspective:

Somebody comes off the street, they're gonna [sic] see Miss Majorette of America and they're going to see all of the glitz and the glamor that goes all along with that. Are they going to see who won the Grand National Men's Solo Championship? No, they're not paid that much attention.

This advertising idea Brian brings up is an important point; from an outsider looking in, one may never know boys also twirled at the NBTA national competition.

All of these men point out the structural disadvantage of being male by not being able to compete in the all-around competition that is the Miss Majorette of America (MMoA) pageant much in the same way Chimot and Louveau's (2010) male rhythmic gymnasts were barred from elite competition. Moreover, as noted by Brad, men are not given the supplementary opportunity for a farewell performance (the last performance of a MMoA before passing on their title and crown and presumably retiring), a perk of being the female champion. Additionally, Aaron brings up that for men there is no equivalent title to Miss Majorette of America that is held to the same standard and esteem in any twirling organization. Aaron continues by mentioning that while in the USTA there is a men's Grand National Solo Champion, there are also titles for other events like strut, two-baton, and three-baton. However, men and women compete against each other in these events and, because of the male-female ratio, the champion is often female. In NBTA, men may win a few more individual titles: Men's Grand National Solo, Men's World-Open Solo, Men's World-Open Two-Baton, Men's National Rhythmic, Men's Military Strut, and Men's Collegiate, but none compare to the prestige of winning the Miss Majorette. Brian agrees and wishes that there were "something that's at least going to bring a little bit more

limelight or a little bit more prestige and honor for the males who participate and achieve at this level.” Through these men’s comments, it becomes evident that although men are pushed into competing in the Advanced division from the start, they do not feel appropriately rewarded for their work.

This lacking reward system was the topic of conversation for several men. While it may be easier to place higher because of fewer competitors, there was no denying that even upon winning the boys were not placed in the limelight as Brian would prefer. Zeke (50s) recalls this gender preferential treatment where, after winning his division at one state competition, a girl was “standing over there with a trophy up to her hip. They get four feet trophies and the guy’s trophies are like maybe a foot” and realizes that “we were kind of like an afterthought.”

Paul (40s) mentions something similar when he commented that the trophies the boys were given did not always reflect their gender because “there were those small times that the trophy person or whatever would forget to have a male figure or whatever or, you know, a symbol or a star instead of the majorette and, you know and in the majorette boots.” Paul’s statement reflects that because of the higher numbers of female twirlers, the figureheads on the tops of the trophies were typically female-oriented and continues by saying how a boy taking home a winning trophy with a female figurehead may be problematic:

I mean [it’s] the small stuff, but the stuff that means a lot, you know what I mean? If you’re in a sport and you’re taking the trophies back to home and your dad already isn’t approving of it and you have a majorette on the trophy, you really couldn’t just know from my entry that I’m a guy and that you need to have a male figurehead?

Even upon winning, a male twirler may be shamed first by receiving a trophy with a female figurehead, and then (assuming their family was not fully supportive, as was the case with Paul) again discouraged at home. The trophy acts as a link between the twirling world and the greater

social opinions of male twirlers wherein the stigma boys experience outside of twirling seeps in to ultimately affect their experiences in twirling.

Even after overcoming odds to win, they still are set back. A white male in his late 20s, Uri ultimately became fed up with dealing with the trophy issue as evidenced when he, somewhat jokingly, says, “It’s like when they give you trophies and they have that weird like Valkyrie looking thing at the top and they’re like, ‘Oh we’re going to take that off.’ Like, don’t waste your time putting a male on top of that trophy. Just give me the damn trophy.”

In his final example, Brad brings up an issue that was mentioned on several occasions among competitors:

[M]y coach fought for the males to be in the blue curtain event which I thought was an awesome event and I always grew up thinking like, “Wow that’s so cool. They can do all of those solos....” You know that was just an exciting event where previously the men’s division, as you know, was like on lane 27 in the corner and let’s try to find a judge. And you know for our Friday night finals, it was “Oh wait, we forgot the men, let’s add them in.”

Brad explains how the men’s division was treated in comparison to the women who are competing for a similar national championship. “Lane 27 in the corner” refers to one of the up to 75 lanes arranged in the field house on either the ice rink or multipurpose sides during AYOP.

Hayden (20s) also mentioned his frustration of being placed “on the blue side of the floor on like a random night while all the girls got their time to shine in like the top six finals with everyone on Saturday... I think that blue floor has scarred me.” His comments highlight how men’s events were not held in tandem with women’s big events like the top six finals held in front of the blue curtain. When this blue curtain event is being held, nothing else is happening so that all contestants and audience members can watch the finalists. Instead of the men’s finals being scheduled at this same time, they are held in the field house that sports a rubberized blue

floor (which “scarred” Hayden) on a “random night” when many other events were also taking place resulting in little attention paid to the men’s finalists.

Even at state level, the placement of men’s events is questionable according to participants. Hayden mentioned a state competition held in a gym with a low ceiling where the men’s division was poorly placed on the competition floor:

Well, I’m trying to, you know, win a ... state solo and I toss three times higher than the junior women... so why in the world would you put them in, you know, lane one where there’s an open rafter and put me under the basketball hoop? And it’s gone back to that contest takes precedence and it’s sad because that contest involves, you know, modeling in a dress and an interview.... [I]t’s annoying when they stick the guys wherever they can.... You’re almost looked on as a nuisance.

Again, Hayden brings up the perceived favoritism given to the Miss Majorette competition and the lack of consideration for men’s events even at the state competition level. Chuck (60s) also remembers the men’s division being held during the competition’s lunch break and being placed under a basketball hoop. The poor location of the boys’ events was notable enough that, on a timeline included in the Who’s Who of Baton Twirling publications, it is noted that in 1966, the boys division was finally held indoors (Sartell 1965, 1999).

This treatment of men, however, becomes rather Westernized when considering Hayden’s experience at an international competition where “the senior men’s event is like the one everyone waits for” because it is what Brian (60s) calls “the marquee event”:

In USTA... they don’t have that obviously so the perception [of stigma] there, and ...the marquee event is the senior men’s finals. That’s the marquee event. People come just for the warm up because they’ll have the warm up, and there’ll be the crowd response and the whole atmosphere during the warm up is going to be crazy and it’s always like that. I mean they rock that house so it’s fine. And, it’s really cool for a male twirler to sit there and absorb that environment and to be a part of it. You get—you are just so proud to be there to do that.

This World Baton Twirling Federation (WBTF/USTA) world event brings countries from all over the world to compete, the strongest of which are France, Japan, and the United States—the

former two recently producing strong numbers of male competitors. To Brian's point, the men's events bring in audience members who perhaps are not otherwise associated with twirling.

Back in the United States, while the case may have been that boys historically did not participate in blue curtain events, Hayden recalls that within the last seven years male twirlers have been given more consideration—perhaps thanks to Brad's coach. Jason, a twirler who competed in the early 1990s, comments on his jealousy after seeing men now competing in front of the blue curtain in the arena, saying, "I'm like, how come they could not do that when I was twirling? I mean, I was so jealous and I'm like they should have done that like 20 years ago." Perhaps due to an increase in men's participation, they are now showcased in the larger events with the women. Certainly indicative of change within the twirling world, perhaps this change may also be a reflection of greater societal acceptance of men's participation in effeminized sport and an example of hybrid masculinity at work.

As these examples have made evident, behind the "blue curtain" lies a range of disadvantages to being a male within the twirling community. From structural and rule-based obstructions to a lack of consideration of men's events, these disadvantages may affect a male twirler's masculine identity or at the very least warrant identity maintenance due to the perceived gender inequality.

In Front of the Blue Curtain: Privileges

While participants reported experiencing bias and disadvantage within twirling as a result of their gender, they also enjoy certain privilege in front of the "blue curtain." While judging systems vary somewhat from organization to organization, the same basic principles of assigning a numerical score to a contestant based on a routine is consistent. However, as the interviewees note, boys may have some advantage over girls when it comes to judges. Furthermore, while

representing twirling outside the confines of the competitive twirling world and certainly in front of the blue curtain, the male twirlers I spoke to were able to describe times when they felt privileged to be a male twirler.

More often than not, male judges are assigned to judge men's events. On several occasions, participants mentioned that male twirlers receive higher scores than their female counterparts. Potential reasons for this varied, but ranged from using scores to encourage continued participation in twirling to something that resembled like-minded maleness, the idea of shared experiences. Often, however, the judges I spoke to also mentioned judging male twirlers a little harder, thus creating a sort of paradox. Andy, a judge in his late 50s, speaks to this point by saying:

I think men will judge the men probably a little harder. ...I try not to, but I'm sure that I expect a little bit more, um. ... Am I a little easier on the guys sometimes? Probably. I'm a little more forgiving of mistakes and I don't know if that's because... I don't know why. I think that sometimes young men have a harder time with coordination until later in life and I think there's probably some truism to that. Not all guys are well coordinated for baton twirling just like not all guys are going to be football players. You know? So. It's a hard sport! You know?

While admitting that he may judge men a little harder, at the same time Andy concedes that he may give certain allowances for men because of the way they might struggle with the "hard sport" that is baton twirling. He goes on to talk specifically about scoring in the USTA:

I also feel though that male twirlers, at least in USTA, tend to score higher at a lower level. They score higher than the women. If the women twirled like that they would not get that big score. ... You know, I can sometimes see men when they're just in the men's division and all of a sudden they're like getting a 7.5 or 8.5 in USTA competition and, you know, the poor woman just went out and did much harder material, much stronger, and only scored like a 6 and I'm going, "What?" You know, I don't think it's right. ... I think they are trying to encourage them. I think they get a—they get the um—what's that word I'm trying to think of? A sympathy vote almost.

Here, Andy further emphasizes the gendered bias that could be perceived as a privilege over female competitors (again, the tokenism tenet of contrast).

This issue of higher scores may see its roots in greater societal male privilege or perhaps, as mentioned before, a like-mindedness in the trials and tribulations of what it takes to be a male twirler if the judge is male. Aaron also believes male judges who are judging a men's event "try to give them the benefit of the doubt" and that the male judge is going to "pull for the guy twirler" as a way of contributing to this concept of "like-minded maleness." Taking it one step further, Steven (40s) believes this like-mindedness is helpful because "they understand the mechanics of the male physique and comment on just the way things are approached a little bit better because they are male."

Andy, however, attributes the difference to encouragement and a "sympathy vote."

Indeed, it was because of this sympathy vote idea that he preferred performing for female judges:

You kinda know where that person (the male judge) comes from, you know as far as their background. You kind of assume that if it was a male twirler then they probably have gone through some of the same things that you have gone through and so for some reason I always felt like... I wasn't convincing to that person enough. It was better if I was performing for a female.

Caleb (20s) felt similarly; he also preferred female judges because he never "had a judge around that was like 'This guy! He's a dude. He gets it. We both have penises. He's going to give me an 8.0.' You know? I mean like, um, if anything I feel like the female judges favor me more." As Caleb points out, from the contestant point of view, the like-minded maleness concept between the judge and contestant does not apply. However, Caleb and Andy prefer male judges for somewhat different reasons.

Uri (20s) on the other hand never saw any bias from male or female judges. Instead, he suggests that male judges could not afford to "give this dude any smidgeon of the benefit of the doubt because he's a male" to avoid being called out as having shown favoritism. Brad (20s) agrees because "some male judges prefer a feminine style and some judges prefer a masculine

style and when males judge males, it's very controversial." Brad understood that for judges, comparing male and female twirlers was like comparing apples to oranges and he therefore felt he had to stand out by "out-tricking competitors."

Paul (40s) however is in the encouragement camp when it comes to the speculation that men receive higher scores. He believes that judges are trying to keep men in twirling and thus may give more positive feedback on the score sheet. Paul continues by elaborating on why judges may be swayed to favor a male twirler:

They're going to keep you a little bit more—scores maybe a little bit higher than what they maybe should be, you know, just trying to keep a guy into twirling. You can tell he really loves it so why break the kid down when they're probably getting enough broke down out there in the world? You could at least tell them they're good and they're great and keep at it and can't wait to see you in a couple years and that kind of thing. I think I definitely had that more on my score sheets than my co—than my friends that were female twirlers, absolutely.

In his explanation, Paul introduces the idea of shared experiences to explicitly acknowledge his understanding of the stigma the contestant in front of him might have faced and use this knowledge to encourage the twirler through higher scores. Tim similarly encourages male twirlers he judges because ultimately he is "proud that there's he's boy out there [twirling]" and he wants them to succeed.

Relatedly, Hayden has experienced this as a competitor when he had a panel of judges "that were two women and a male panel and the male gave me a 9 and the girls gave me a 7.4." As an explanation for this difference, Hayden thinks the male judge is "more inclined to... give the male benefit of the doubt" because "it's going to encourage them to continue because I think male judges are on like the warpath to get more men twirling." Giving the male competitor the "benefit of the doubt" further implies that male twirlers, particularly when in front of male

judges, are provided that special privilege of like-mindedness that the female contestant may not similarly experience.

In sum, male judges because they were also twirlers themselves and because they typically judge men's twirling events, appear to give preference to male contestants. As evidenced by the anecdotes of these participants, it is a practice seemingly understood by both judges and by many contestants alike. Because of the shared experiences including the difficulties, hardships, and stigma of being a male twirler in such an effeminized space, both former and current male twirlers maintain a certain unspoken solidarity. Perhaps this twirling fraternity acts as a sort of organizational survival tactic and a system of checks and balances in which men look out for each other to encourage the next generation (in a way similar to that found in the occupation literature [see Kanter 1977 and Dworkin, Chafetz, and Dworkin 1986]).

"Kind of like a Unicorn": Male Twirlers as Privileged Tokens

Consistently outnumbered by women, male twirlers become tokens simply because of the male to female ratio. As a result of this numerical token status, certain themes arose within the interviews of the male twirlers with whom I spoke. Simply put, as tokens, men stick out and become obvious on a twirling contest floor (i.e., visibility [Kanter 1977]). Their uniqueness may also yield higher placements and scores (i.e., contrast [Kanter 1997]). Moreover, because there are fewer males, judges may be able to pick apart the style choices of the men whereas among a division of 40 women, this becomes more difficult.

As a male token in the female-dominated twirling world, it becomes easy to obtain a "celebrity" status (again, visibility). Jason (40s) jokes about this in respect to the male-female ratio:

You know, I kind of joke... but when I twirled, you know, everyone knew me, but I didn't know everyone because it's easier. There's only 20 guys versus 3,000 girls at

AYOP, you know, all the girls would see us 20 and know us or at least know of us, but I can't know all 3,000 girls just like, I think, just proportionately. I don't want to say we're treated as celebrities, but it's just easier to know our names because there's so few of us and we stand out.

Indeed, despite being relegated to an awkward lane on some random night as Hayden previously described, male twirlers are still able to experience the privilege of tokenism by becoming "celebrities." As Zeke says, "You're in the spotlight whether you like it or not." Hayden however, feels the spotlight and celebrity comes from male twirlers being "kind of like a unicorn." Using Hayden's analogy, men in twirling can be as rare as unicorns and experience all the privilege and responsibility that comes with being a novelty because, ultimately, all eyes are on you.

Nevertheless, this "celebrity" status may go beyond simple numbers. Jason proposes that because of their minority status, male twirlers are pitied in a way because, "I think everyone knows inside what we probably had to go through. You know, there's so few of us I think they realize how valuable it is to have a male twirler." Jason posits that others in the twirling world are aware of the potential hardship male twirlers experience in the public sphere and that this may be a reason they are given substantial support to the point of celebrity status.

Additionally, with celebrity status comes certain responsibilities. Being the token male, one may also be expected to serve as a role model for young twirlers. As Victor (50s) points out:

I think little kids are fascinated and I think again, they're not used to seeing as many men so little kids are—they kind of create that hero in their mind, but I think it's a responsibility that we all need to change you know in being a class act around little kids whether, again, whether you're a girl or a guy. I think that when you're a guy, because they watch you more closely.... You're a role model whether you want to be or not.

In spite of the stigma male twirlers may experience outside twirling, inside as tokens, their status comes with a certain responsibility to be a role model. This responsibility component to be a positive representative may also serve as a negative aspect of tokenism (e.g., one "bad apple" can

ruin it for the whole bunch). Nevertheless, the increased visibility does not come without its privileges.

Isaac, a white male in his late 20s, discusses the numerical differences and the results of the male-female ratio when he talks about how “the twirling community automatically puts guy twirlers on a pedestal”:

I mean, whether they're good or not, I mean, [people are] always going to make sure they go and be supportive just because there's not as many.

This pedestal Isaac speaks of is in line with Kanter's (1977) “visibility” component of tokenism. Because there are such few numbers, there is no reason to have a preliminary competition and therefore, men go straight to the final round of competition. Also, as a result of the “novelty” of the male twirler, Isaac mentions that people go out of their way to support them. He goes on to elaborate:

I always felt like people who didn't know me looked at me like I was some awesome twirler even in like the younger years... but I was a guy twirler so people still [showed me] respect. Maybe it's not privilege, maybe it's more respect, but I think that and people watch you closer, they support you more and I feel like to a girl twirler, that would probably look like being privileged in the sport. You're always in finals. There's [sic] never that many people to compete against. You're always getting titles, so on and so forth.

Almost in response to his “bravery” for facing the stigma of being a male twirler, Isaac reports that people felt compelled to support or respect him. The way Isaac grapples with privilege versus respect is intriguing. Because of the stigma of being a male twirler, perhaps it is easier for Isaac to reason that the privilege he experienced is respect rather than an advantaged position. Isaac goes on to observe that male twirlers seem to win the big titles, even if by default, and to the girls, boys are more privileged in contrast (Kanter 1977).

However, the privilege of tokenism may be limited to inside the twirling world with the exclusion of only a few instances (such as Isaac, Brad, and Paul's experiences as university feature twirlers). Isaac continues on this topic:

I think automatically there's more of a stigma and perception around a guy twirler that you have to combat with the general public. You're not generally privileged right off the bat where the guys [non-twirlers] are watching the girls because they're attractive and the little girls are watching the girls because they want to be them one day.... I think the general public probably puts more privilege on the girls than the guy because the guy kind of has to prove to the majority of the general public to kind of earn that privilege which then makes it not a privilege.

As Isaac indicates, outside of competitive twirling male twirlers may still be tokens because they have taken their craft into a public setting such as a parade or university football game, but they no longer have privilege because of the effeminized stigma twirling has acquired. Instead, women take on privilege as representatives of twirling by being what Gary called the "sex bombs" of his time (similar to cheerleaders today) or role models for young girls.

Either way, all eyes are on the guys whether in twirling competition or outside. Zeke calls it being "under the microscope;" Victor assumes the men will be more memorable at the end of the day; and Tim seems to think it never fails that the guys are being watched closely:

"Did you see that boy do that three-turn-around? Did you see him do that turn around, split-leap, catch under the leg? WOO!" I love getting applause. It helped my ego. I think it's good. I think when there's a boy twirler and he's the only boy twirler at the competition, every eye is on him and they cheer him on because the twirling community wants him to succeed. I've never seen it anything but.

For many, being the token guy at a competition was just part of the game. It was understood that it was a women's sport. That being said, Brad (20s) still got more attention:

It's um, I mean you definitely get more attention but I'm thinking at like local competitions I was the only [guy] and ... I just was always comfortable and, you know, fine with being the only male. I mean especially growing up, I didn't really think much of it.... [I]t wasn't anything, you know, out of the ordinary or something I wasn't comfortable with... You just definitely got more attention. More people were watching you.

Similar to Brad, Ian (40s) acquired a level of comfort with being in the female-dominated twirling world which prepared him for future life experiences where he now feels more comfortable working in all female settings:

Even to this day, I teach yoga, so I'm the only guy in the room full of women all the time. I've gone to work in businesses that are run by women and I like it. You know, I've—I don't know if this has something to do with my experience or my comfort level because of twirling, but it has made me comfortable being around women and, you know, I just—who the hell knows why I like [working with] girls! I don't know.

However, his predisposition of preferring female working environments may stem from his awareness of his privilege as a white male:

If you're the only guy in the group full of women, you get a privileged position. You get a little bit of an extra boost from just your privileged role. It's a good thing.

Well aware that he is the “rooster in the henhouse,” Ian uses his token male status to his advantage in the workplace.

Nevertheless, being the token male was not a great experience for everyone. While Brad was able to acclimate to the attention he receive in the twirling world, for Andy's son, maybe the attention was too much:

[W]e put him in baton classes and he loved twirling baton. He didn't like being the only guy in the class. He absolutely did not like that. That was just uncomfortable for him. It wasn't that it had anything to do with twirling the baton. It was being the only guy in a room of 12 girls.

Andy (50s) reported that he, too, experienced moments of panic related to being the male in a roomful of females when he would step out onto the contest floor:

[W]hen you step out on that floor, you're far more noticeable than the other eight lanes of girls in a lot of ways...and every eye is on you when you twirl.... If there was ever any moment when I thought about quitting, it was probably a couple of those times when you go, “I'm the only guy?”

Steven (40s), however, found it rather lonely being the only guy:

During my life there weren't a lot of men twirling ever and... I was just used to sort of being the lone guy and... if I saw a guy here and there that would twirl I'd be like, "That's cool" and whatnot. It was my secret wish that they'd twirl too just so there'd be more [male] twirlers.

According to Andy, he and his son viewed their token status as a rather scary position and did not care for the increased pressure put on them. In contrast, Brad was comfortable in this environment because it was just the nature of twirling; Steven, however, saw his token status as lonely.

As evidenced by the stories above, the visibility component of tokenism can be framed in several ways. One can achieve "celebrity status" while at the same time being lonely as a token in what Kanter (1977) calls the "solo" position. With this visibility, however, can come responsibility (e.g., becoming a role model). Similar patterns can be found among male teachers who are seen as holding positions of authority (e.g., Dworkin, Chafetz, and Dworkin 1986), but unlike male teachers who may carry privilege with them outside the workplace, male twirlers do not. Instead, they are generally stigmatized outside of the competitive twirling sphere, particularly at young ages.

Podium Placement as a Result of Tokenism

The numerical advantage of being a token in twirling, as Isaac mentioned above, extends to a perceived privilege in terms of winning (i.e., contrast [Kanter 1977]). For example, it is much easier to win a title as a competitor in a division of three men compared to a division of thirty women. Or, as Quinton says, "there's less of us and we don't have to fight as hard." Caleb describes this phenomenon when he talks about how "there's 40 [girls] in a category for them and then for me... even if I go out there and do a thumb flip I'm going to get third place." His suggestion for the times when only one person is present in a division is to require them to obtain a certain baseline score in order to move on or qualify. Nevertheless, the numerical disparity

between men and women's divisions make it appear that men win more, which is a sign of tokenistic privilege.

In terms of scores, Andy recalls seeing more scores of ten in the men's division compared to the women's:

I mean between Mark Nash [USA, mid 1990s], Seishi [Japan, early 2000s], and now Keisuke [Japan, current], you know, those are the only ten performances. I don't remember too many women until I think Jennifer Marcus this year [2014] at USTA nationals is the first time I ever remember a woman ever getting all tens ever at USTA nationals ever.

Andy's observation spurs many questions as to why more men might have received these perfect scores when more women are competing. It is unclear whether this observation is a form of institutional gender-based discrimination or a result of male tokenism.

Privilege and tokenism was also on Ian's side, however, in a similar situation in an all-men's event where his mother had to step in to help:

It was a world trial and I got some kind of food poisoning the day before and was vomiting all night violently.... Even though I probably put on one of the worst performances of my life, [my mom] told them, you know, this is what's happening. They were at least able to pull me through. Based on my performance, I should not have gotten through but basically they were like, we understand what's happening why your performance was so bad. I could barely stand up!

Ian's mother, who was highly active in twirling at the time, was able to use both her influence as a coach and his privilege as a token male twirler to send Ian through to the world championships.

This winning advantage can even be seen in divisions where both men and women compete against one another. Hunter and Uri experienced this in a state two-baton and national three-baton event, respectively:

I thought my routine looked like a hot mess and they gave me first against like ten other girls and I kind of felt as if they were a little upset and they probably thought I won because I was a guy. But on the other hand, my routine is pretty difficult so maybe they gave it to me because I was a guy, but I'm not sure.

For Uri, the fact that he was also on the world team might have influenced in his placement:

I like totally bombed my three-baton like at finals and I ended up like barely getting first. And I always knew...some people said it was because I was a dude and some people said it was because I was on the world team.

Although Hunter's routine was a "hot mess," Hunter attempts to qualify his win by mentioning the difficulty. While it is certainly possible to win even with a "hot mess" routine after subtotals and penalties total a final score, as Hunter mentions, this experience may not be unique to twirling because he has "heard that especially within the dance community... they place the male higher just so they can keep, you know, male dancer, male baton twirling relevant."

Alternatively, in Uri's case, he goes on to talk about how the privilege of being on the world team may be similar to being a male twirler because in both instances there seems to be favoritism.

Between the Curtains: A Foot on Either Side

While in many ways being behind the blue curtain results in disadvantage and being in front of the blue curtain elicits disadvantage, there are several ways in which male twirlers have a foot on either side of the blue curtain. In these situations, their privilege or disadvantage is twofold resulting in a kind of "double edged sword." For instance, to some, automatic Advanced placement may seem a disadvantage, yet to others, it is a privilege to experience this form of the glass escalator. In this way, age may play a factor. For younger male twirlers just starting off, learning the amount of material necessary for a complete Advanced routine might be difficult, yet for the older boy starting out, the Advanced division is a privilege. Placing boys in the Advanced division may act as a way of countering the stigma that surrounds boys who twirl as a way of legitimizing it in a way that complies with David and Brannon's (1976) tenet of

masculinity “Be a Big Wheel” which refers to the accumulation of power, success, wealth, and status.

The privilege versus disadvantage argument also depends on framing wherein female competitors may see it as a privilege while males do not like in Brad’s example above:

Being a male twirler, you go directly into the advanced division, which is something that is perceived... from the girls like, “Wow, that’s easy you just go right into advanced.” Well, as males we know... that you have to have a two minute and thirty second solo right when you start so that’s technically a disadvantage for some....

The same could be said for the spotlight men experience as the visible token. While the spotlight makes some males nervous (Andy), others use it to thrive (Brad). Meanwhile, because not all females make it to the advanced division, they may never see this spotlight.

Because of this duality and differences of perspective, there is not a clear line between behind and in front of the blue curtain. Instead, male twirlers as tokens are able to have one foot on either side of the curtain maintaining a position between the two spaces. This phenomenon may be a manifestation of male privilege in a female-dominated space.

In closing, tokenism seems to have a much different effect when considering men’s experiences in the Blue Curtain. In front of the curtain, they experience certain privileges because of their token status (i.e., the glass escalator). Behind the curtain, male twirler’s accomplishments are little celebrated, competitive events shunned, and they face institutional gender bias (i.e., the glass ceiling). In Chapter 6, I delve further into the stigma these men experienced growing up and conversely, the advantages they received as male twirlers.

CHAPTER 6: BEYOND THE BLUE CURTAIN: PRIVILEGE, STIGMA, AND IDENTITY MANAGEMENT OUTSIDE OF COMPETITIVE TWIRLING

Outside of the competitive twirling world, “beyond the blue curtain,” all of the men I spoke to experienced some form of stigma because of their twirling whether in the form of personal attacks or institutional discrimination. Although participants experienced stigma, both structural and peer-to-peer, many did not convey stories regarding female twirlers stigmatizing male twirlers. Rather, this form of stigma might be more covert. Thus, the focus of this chapter is primarily on stigma from those outside of the twirling community with the exception of lacking familial support as a form of stigma.

What follows are some of the personal narratives of those who experienced some of the more drastic forms of harassment because of their participation in an effeminized space. In reaction, many of them utilized certain techniques of identity management that will be covered more specifically in Chapter 7. However, despite this negativity, several of the men had positive experiences and could even be considered privileged under certain circumstances.

Stigma

The stigma surrounding male baton twirlers stems from the large numbers of women who are the representatives of baton twirling in the public eye. Because of the increased popularity of baton twirling after WWII and the amplified visibility of majorettes through the years, men’s participation in this newly effeminized sport was scorned. As an effeminized sport, much in the way of Williams’ (1992) effeminized occupations, men who participate are teased by being called “sissies” or “girls.” Similarly, the effeminized nature of twirling assumes that all male participants are gay, thus participant’s being called epithets like “fag” or “faggot.”

The stigma my participants faced begins with the assumption that baton twirling is “for girls” and extends to the assumption of homosexuality. Additionally, twirlers in general must explain the transition of twirling away from the marching majorettes of old, because twirling competitions are not seen publicly. As Uri (20s) puts it, “The rest of the world looks at baton twirling as the...people who march in the front of the parade and then [when] we have to convince people [it] only makes you dig the hole deeper.” Among those I interviewed, the range of stigma was vast, but as Chuck, Uri, and others’ stories illustrate, some of their experiences were life changing.

First and foremost, the societal notion that baton twirling is a “girl’s sport” is pervasive but inside and outside of the twirling world. The male twirlers I interviewed are certainly well aware of this view, as Zeke’s (50s) remark reflects: “[I]n my mind, most people’s perception of a baton twirler is that it’s a woman. It’s a girl, it’s a female.” Steven (40s) elaborated on this point as well while commenting on how few men twirled during the latter part of his career:

I think that what we all know is that it’s perceived as a sport for girls so it isn’t very likely for men to get involved, especially when I was most active in the 80s and early 90s. I think what played a big part of it is people didn’t want to be perceived as homosexual or whatnot so they didn’t want to participate.

Especially in the 1980s and early 1990s, Steven suggests that the idea of a male twirling was frowned upon due in part to the desire to avoid any association with homosexuality as the AIDS crisis loomed in the minds of Americans. Steven and other participants believed that this association with femininity, and therefore homosexuality, led to the decreased participation of men in twirling during this time (See Graphs 1-3) and fewer men beginning to twirl (Graph 4). As Ian (43) points out, “You know, this was in the ‘80s. This was before Ellen.” The famous lesbian TV show host and actress Ellen DeGeneres, now a prominent and generally accepted

household name, publicly announced her sexuality in 1997, which would have been unheard of from a celebrity at the time Ian was twirling in the 1980s.

As children, however, Steven and Hayden did not fully understand the gendered nature of baton twirling. To them, it was simply a fun past time. As Steven described:

[I]t never made sense on what was so wrong, even if it is about being for a girl. What is wrong with being a girl? Like, you know what I mean? I couldn't understand what was wrong with doing something that a girl does, like it's such a bad thing. What was making it such a bad thing to do? Not realizing it was so attached to sexuality.

Hayden (24) had a similar thought process as a youth:

No one really told me, "Hey, girls do this. Guys do this." So I was doing something based off what I saw as a young child and I think it's so unfortunate that gender roles are described the way they are later in life because had someone said to me, "By the way, the next eight years of your life are going to be pure hell," I probably wouldn't have done it.

Now a world champion, it is hard to think that the torment Hayden experienced in middle school would cause him to say such a thing, but because he was not combative in nature, he did not fight back against his attackers. For those who turned to twirling like Hayden, it became a safe space and for many an "I gotta be good" attitude grew out of the hate they experienced (expanded upon in the "I gotta be good" section, Chapter 7).

Steven, whose parents moved the family around regularly, managed to cope by making friends with the "rebel rousers" at each new school:

[I]t would be probably considered just a survival technique, but I think I intentionally made friends with the rebel rousers and things at school because I knew that they would bring a certain amount of protection....

His brother also stepped up to protect him:

I had a younger brother who was adopted. He's six months younger than me, who was a fierce—it was bizarre, he was younger than me, but he was insistent. We were alternate personalities, but he looked forward to getting in a fight so if anybody tried to say anything, it didn't matter if they were three grades above or whatever, he'd pick a fight because they were making fun of his brother. ... I'd say, you know, "I don't need you

fighting for me, I'm fine" and he was like "You should fight them because you should be proud of what you're doing" and it would make him so mad.

Hayden and Steven's reactions to their bullies were rather different, but both could be seen as methods of identity management. Hayden turned inward and looked to twirling for comfort with an "I gotta be good" attitude (outlined in Chapter 7) while Steven strategically chose his friends and reluctantly allowed his brother to step in when necessary.

Indeed, from the name calling to outright physical bullying, participants reported facing a full range of stigma. Chuck's story however is perhaps one of the more extreme. The stigma he went through as a young male twirler during the 1960s was truly unfortunate and would follow him well into adulthood. The son of parents whom today might be labeled "helicopter" or "stage parents," Chuck, a white male now in his early 60s, hated being forced to twirl only so that his parents could see their names in print next to his accomplishments. In one anecdote, Chuck recalls when a baton broke at a competition and pierced through his calf muscle:

So here are the stage parents off to the emergency room for stitches. I came back to the contest high as a kite on pain pills and they made me perform anyway because they said, "We came all this way and you're performing."

The abuse, however, was not exclusive to, but rather accentuated by, his parents:

[T]here were about 12 twirlers and we sat around the track ... and I remember sitting there waiting until it was time to perform and someone from the stands dumped popcorn on me and half of a soda. I felt ashamed and I told my mother, I said, "Do not make me go back there for the rest of the season, because I don't want to do it." I said, "Look what has happened," and she said, "Oh it's just a stain it will wash out." What she didn't realize was that that stain went to my soul and it didn't wash out ever, and she made me keep going back there because she got free admission to the football game.

These experiences prevented him from walking in his high school graduation and, at the first mention of twirling, Chuck quit several jobs. He even delayed going to college until he felt it was safe:

[I]nterestingly enough, that's why I did not go to college until I was mid-thirties because I knew my classmates were going to college and I first thought, "Ok, my senior class. I have to wait four years until they finish and then nobody will know who I am." And then it donned on me, "Oh wait, the juniors, and then the sophomores, and then the freshmen. I have to wait until all of those people get through school and then I will go" because I wanted to stay anonymous. So, I didn't start college until mid-thirties.

Ultimately, Chuck felt that his "experiences with twirling made me feel worthless as a person. It didn't matter about masculinity at all. I internalized everything and all the teasing made me feel that I was worthless, that I was a freak in the circus sideshow and that I didn't belong with the rest of society. So that's all I can say."

In the shadow of a brother who also twirled and was well liked at school, Chuck faced incredible humiliation because of his twirling. He retired from twirling as soon as he won a national title, which fortunately for him, was the requirement at the time. At last, he had escaped from twirling. However, that did not stop him from being curious. Through the years, he continued to wonder who was winning and how twirling had changed in the 50 years since he had left it. Eventually, he found his way to a contest where, to his surprised, he was recognized. After a panic-stricken moment, Chuck realized that in twirling he had a family, and a supportive one at that. Chuck is now a licensed judge for NBTA and even though he does not quite agree with how twirling has changed over the years, he is now active in the twirling world again.

While an extreme example, the themes in Chuck's story are not uncommon. Brian also recalls hiding his baton in his backpack if he had a lesson after school to avoid people seeing. Both Chuck and Jason considered suicide. Hayden's locker was taped shut, a bench scribbled on with profanity, and his books were knocked out of his arms. In addition, nearly all of my participants encountered name-calling; epithets like "fag" and "sissy" were commonplace.

While attending an all-male Catholic school, Uri (20s) was teased by his peers and teachers alike. In the beginning, twirling was a chance for him to get closer to a girl he was

attracted to, but in the end he felt trapped by it. Uri recalls that the second he started twirling “everything in life became that much harder,” his social life became “impossible,” and only made worse by a mother who kept him in twirling because of her close relationship with his baton coach. Uri described twirling as the “scarlet letter” because “people in my part of the country, they typecast you and you lose respect...” Uri would come home crying and complain to his mother who showed little sympathy:

Because I would come home crying from high school like, “Mom I don’t want to twirl baton anymore. They’re so fucking mean and I don’t want to do it!” and she’d be like, “Don’t let them hurt you. They’re just jealous” and I’m like oh my God. That was her go-to, “They’re just jealous.” “Jealous that I’m a fag? Come on Mom!” It was just so bad, but like I would have to say that like my involvement in baton twirling was highly not up to me; like I was in it to win it and there was no option.

Everyone at school knew he twirled baton, therefore it became his identifier and what Uri called a “free burn card” for anyone to use when they teased him:

No matter who you were, if you were “emo,” if you were a jock, if you were intelligent—making fun of the baton twirler was the free space.

The constant berating caused him much stress and he was unable to fully develop a sense of self because of it:

I went from fifth grade through high school not knowing whether or not my personality was good enough or like whether or not really knowing which way was up. Just kind of like I thought I was a good person, but because I had no reaffirmation from any of my peers, I didn’t know I was a good person.

Uri’s story indicates that he believed his inability to catch a break from the teasing prevented him from fully developing a sense of self.

As an escape, his last semester of his senior year of high school, Uri joined the wrestling team. Well aware that he was joining another stigmatized sport, he says he “traded up” from one effeminate sport to another “where you wear like less costuming than you did twirling baton to

wrestle guys in a sweaty heap.” While wrestling is what I would consider a sexually stigmatized sport rather than an effeminized one, Uri found that wrestling was a tremendous relief:

I decided that I was going to prove to all the kids in my high school that I’m not gay, that I’m like an athlete, that I’m a champion of any sort. It only lasted three months, but like the memories still to this day—because it was different beside baton twirling, it gets me pumped up just thinking about it. It’s just crazy.

During this break from twirling, he still found use for his twirling skills to intimidate opponents:

It was awesome and sometimes I would like show off and hold a split in between two chairs like Jean-Claude van Damme used to do just for intimidation purposes, but it was fun.

Luckily, Uri found more resolution when he entered college where he was able to reinvent himself. He kept his twirling past hidden and finally found affirmation in his peers and girlfriend.

In the end, Uri was able to come to terms with everything that occurred while he twirled:

I am the culmination of everything that happened to me. My dance and gymnastics lessons, my baton twirling, my gay coach, my psycho mother. You know, as much as I hate acknowledging that it happened, it happened and I really like who I am right now.... So like, I make fun and I definitely mock, but I think a little respect should be given. You know, I also thank baton twirling in my own private time for everything it did for me....

Unlike Chuck, Uri was able to express his appreciation for the experiences he had while twirling despite the hardship and ultimately was able to realize that it was the culmination of those experiences that made him into the person he is today. In his words, “I’ve evolved, but I’m a bro that also can do a mean jazz split!”

Most participants reported engaging in little or no response to these experiences of bullying. Many turned to twirling and found solace in twirling practice. Like Hayden, who while practicing at his university made sure to practice the harder and more impressive tricks in front of the basketball players:

I was in school and I would go practice at the gym like at the arena and people were playing basketball around me, I would start by doing cool things like back necks, triple walkovers, triple illusion.... I would do all of my hardest things first to eliminate any

comment or doubt in my ability.... I was just trying to prove to them that I didn't just you know, this morning, say, "Oh I want to find a baton somewhere and go play with it." No. I make sure I'm an athlete and this is what I do because I'm committed to be the best I can be at my activity.

In warming up his most impressive tricks first, Hayden legitimized himself as not only talented, but also an athlete all the while avoiding conflict and potential teasing. He feels he must legitimize himself in the eyes of the other athletes first and further comments that he never runs his free style routine in public for fear of what others might think. By taking this tactic, Hayden attempts to counter Kanter's (1977) third component of tokenism: assimilation. In attempting to prove he is an athlete too, Hayden tries to lessen the stigma associated with twirling by showing he is accomplished. In this way, Hayden is the solo token representative of both twirling and male twirlers and is expected to assimilate into the stereotype of the effeminate and perhaps gay male twirler. By attempting assimilation into a more athletic space, Hayden attempts to avoid the stigma that associate twirling with femininity because certain levels of athleticism are recognized as masculine even if twirling is not.

Paul (40s) took a similar approach in his all-male Catholic high school. Like Steven who made friends with the "rebel-rousers," Paul was a part of the popular crowd and hung around other athletes. Paul's perspective is interesting because in his experience, the teasing always came from the third- or fourth-string rather than the first-string athletes:

It always felt like an athlete at his top game understood and recognized an athlete and so I never had problems with the first string people. I always had problems with the people who were not first string and were trying to attack what they thought would be their equal, although I was never their equal because *I* was the first string twirler. [Emphasis added.]

Paul's outlook on teasing is unique because as the guy at the top of the school popularity hierarchy, those beneath him were the ones who attempted to cut him down. From his advantaged position, his view on the situation was much different. As a result of this power, he

was able to by and large avoid both confrontation and assimilation into the expected role of effeminate male twirler.

What is interesting about this assimilation piece is that it takes place outside of the twirling world. In competitive twirling, men are attempting to prove they are not feminine, but rather masculine. As Hayden exemplifies, this attempt at proving his athleticism makes use of recognized forms of masculinity like athleticism and accomplishment to form a hybrid identity, one in which he is able to comfortably twirl in this recognized effeminized space, but also feel acknowledged for his athleticism. In short, he is able to have one foot in an effeminized space (twirling) while simultaneously having a toe in a hegemonically masculine space (athletics) whereby a hybrid is created. By attempting to prove his athletic ability by aligning himself more with a primary sport like basketball, Hayden also contributes to Fisher's (2007) "make it macho" strategy.

One participant, however, reported a more direct response to bullying. While twirling in a parade, Walter, a white male in his early 50s, took matters into his own hands:

Well I was the feature twirler and he was staggering down the middle of the parade route and called me a faggot and I thought, "Hmm. Here I am with this metal stick and you're gonna call me a faggot?" Which really I don't mind because I use the word, but when it's out of hate like that it's different. So I smacked him up the wrong side of the head gracefully as I did a trick and the police came and took him away and, you know, after that affair, he came up to me and apologized.

An outspoken advocate for LGBT rights, Walter, an adult in this anecdote, felt empowered to do something about the teasing whereas many participants felt unable to do so as youth.

Nevertheless, bullying or harassment from peers or outsiders were not the only forms of discrimination of which my sample spoke. Brad (20s) reported institutional stigma from his high school band directors, as well as the greater school district. After contacting a hesitant band director and receiving reluctant approval to twirl, the problems began. Not allowed to twirl for

band competitions on Saturday meant also not being allowed to perform at the Friday night football games. This left one game: homecoming. However, he was told he was not allowed to twirl at this game either because of what alumni might think. On the rare occasion when he was allowed to twirl, the color guard would reroute their formations to be in his way. Because college twirling auditions were coming up and he needed field experience, Brad's parents presented the various issues to the school district and were told, "Which college do you think wants a male twirler? ... Where do you think you're going to be able to go with twirling? What college do you think you're going to be able to go to?"

The discrimination continued when Brad spoke to the principal of the high school:

I talked about all the schools that had male twirlers in the past and the principal of my school actually threw the papers on the desk and sat back and laughed and that like, you know, "You're wasting my time. This is so unrealistic." You know, "Find a more realistic goal." His quote was "Get real" at the end of that conversation, so it went nowhere and I wasn't able to twirl much in high school.

However, as student government president, Brad made a speech at graduation upon being accepted at a major university as feature twirler where he spoke of his experiences and told the student body to never "let somebody in that position tell you, especially a student that has... higher goals and aspirations, that that's not possible."

While their parents forced Uri and Chuck to twirl, all participants did not experience parental pressure or parental support. For Darryl, Steven, and Paul, their parents, namely their fathers, contributed to the stigma that "boys don't twirl." Darryl (50s) recalls getting home from school one day and his dad pulling him into the kitchen where he only had one thing to say, "You know people are starting to talk" and he left it at that." Steven's experience with his father was a little harsher; his dad would often ask, "When are you going to quit that damn thing?" For Paul (40s), his father would not pay for baton lessons. Instead, the stipulation was that lessons

would have to come out of his mother's pocket. Paul's grandmother bought him his first baton, but he could only use it under the rule that it stays at his grandmother's house. Stories like this were not uncommon. One or both parents typically fell into one of four categories: fully supportive (e.g., Hayden), unsupportive (e.g., Steven), semi-supportive (e.g., Aaron and Paul), or forceful (e.g., Uri and Chuck).

In closing, these men have encountered various repercussions of stigma, teasing, and bullying as twirlers. In the end, most were able to combat or abate the stigma in various ways. Steven had his bodyguard brother and "rebel rouser" friends. Likewise, Paul befriended the popular crowd and athletes to escape criticism. Uri "found himself" in college. Hayden turned to twirling to become a world champion. Brad "stuck it to the man" in his graduation speech. Walter literally fought back. And, though Chuck had the most difficult time coping, he seems to have finally found peace. Though perhaps a product of the sample, it is interesting to note that three of the straight participants (Brad, Hayden, and Uri) reported some of the most dramatic experiences. It could be that the gay men I spoke to have repressed or accepted that being teased is just a part of their subordinated sexual minority status.

Additionally, Kanter's (1977) three tenets of token status are evident in the stories of these male twirlers. Visibility as a male token in an effeminized space is twofold: they are ascribed as having both privilege and disadvantage within the realm of the blue curtain (i.e., the twirling world), but stigmatized beyond it. In contrast to the female dominants, men are perceived as achieving more in the form of podium placements and higher scores. Finally, beyond the blue curtain, men attempt to assimilate the best they can into more masculine spaces or identities (i.e., hybrid masculinities).

Sexuality as The "Free Burn Card"

“I think 99 percent of the world says, ‘That’s a boy twirler? He’s gay.’” Though perhaps not true throughout the world, Tim’s statement certainly aligns with the opinion of many Americans given the stigma many male twirlers face. Inspired by Pascoe’s (2012) “discourse of the fag,” for participants who mentioned being bullied or teased, I then asked them if, when they were made fun of, they believed that their masculinity or sexuality was being called into question. A majority of the time, the participant’s response was “sexuality.” While several understood that sexual orientation and masculinity are not mutually exclusive, the prevailing perception of male twirlers is that they are gay. Tim, a white male in his late 50s, just like many others, was told he was gay even before he knew what his sexuality was because of his association with baton twirling. Similarly, Victor (50s) explained:

I know so many twirlers that literally have questioned their sexuality because they—people assumed that they “should be gay” because they twirl. That doesn’t mean that they are, but that causes them to question themselves because that’s what people think.

For Victor, the public assumption that male twirlers are gay leads young male twirlers to question their sexual identities, but often, yet it is the bullying and harassment that leads to this questioning.

Isaac (20s) explains why sexuality may be the go-to form of teasing by saying, “Sexuality... that’s the easiest joke to make.” Isaac, however, takes a rather Freudian approach to his reasoning: “A guy holding a baton... I mean come on, the jokes are endless” because of the phallic nature of the baton. In Zeke’s (50s) experience with college fraternity brothers, he believes when they would make comments like, “Go twirl your sticks, little girl!” the comment was oriented towards his sexuality. Nate indicated that he believes bullies feel threatened and that’s why they turn to sexuality as their “free burn card,” to use Uri’s turn of phrase. In these instances, participants perceived that homophobia was the cause of the comments, what

Anderson (2009) calls “homohysteria.” Aggressors believe male twirlers are a threat to their masculinity and thus they turn to sexual orientation as a form of harassment.

Derek, a white male in his late 20s who came out after high school, did not pay much attention to what others thought about his sexuality. Rather, he thought the assumption that all male twirlers are gay was “weird.” Jason also did not make an association with the stereotype until later:

You know, [twirling] was entirely separate from any sexuality issues because... I didn't even come out to myself until my 20s. So, you know, [twirling] was completely asexual to me. Like, I just was taking a class at the dance studio for fun. My parents told me later they were a little concerned at first and they thought for sure [twirling] wasn't going to go anywhere like most kids play guitar for like a year and never do it again.... Kind of about the time I got to junior high and started figuring out some of the stereotypes. It was kind of too late. I just really enjoyed it too much to stop...

In Jason's eyes, twirling being just a past time, hobby, or after school activity is what made it asexual. Jason was the only boy in his first twirling class and he had two sisters, thus being the only boy was nothing new to him. Indeed, without full knowledge of sexual stereotypes or the effeminate nature of an activity, Jason's asexual idea is perhaps unsurprising. Similarly, Victor was not even sure he knew what gay was when he was being told he was gay. When Gary was growing up, sexuality was not even on his cultural radar yet and thus the question was not raised.

Eli, a Masters student in an effeminized field, however, distinguished between masculinity and sexuality. When prompted with the masculinity versus sexuality question, Eli was one of the few to answer that masculinity was the reason why male twirlers are teased:

I don't think that sexual orientation has anything to do with things like that. I feel like, honestly, if people were making fun of you for twirling it would be more for the physicality of it all.

Through his comment, Eli seems aware of gender presentation and its effects on the perception of sexual orientation. Kerry (50s) similarly comments that based on “mannerisms” and “twirling

style” an outsider might think a male twirler was gay because of his physicality. Nevertheless, it is Ian (40s) who more overtly makes the connection between effeminate gender presentation and assumptions of sexuality:

Yes, I think that everybody would judge somebody that is more effeminate as probably being gay. I think that’s a natural assumption [and] they’re probably right most times.

Martin (50s), however, disagrees:

I’ve met some pretty feminine straight men and I’ve met some pretty masculine gay men so I don’t think they relate to each other... it doesn’t seem to have a lot of pattern to it.

For Martin, the issue of sexuality and gender are unrelated because he has observed more variation on the gender spectrum. Because of these assumptions of sexuality (i.e., assimilation to the stereotype), the male twirlers I interviewed turned to managing and reconstructing their identities into hybrid masculinities to conflate these notions and reform the masculine hierarchy.

The difficulty in disentangling gender from sexuality was not isolated to the participants themselves. As Nate (30s) recounted, his mother felt strongly about opposing the stereotype of the gay male twirler:

[E]ven though my mom dealt with gay males all throughout life... in twirling and dance and winter guard, ...when I first started it seemed like my parents were so hell-bent on me not being gay. They used to always pride themselves on the fact that, “Oh look. He twirls and look how masculine he is and he’s straight, too” and so that was hard to live up to because I knew I wasn’t.... When I was um, 17 or 18 I came out to my mother... and I felt like I had let my entire family down because I felt like the trophy child of “look this guy can do this activity with a bunch of females and be straight” and I was completely smashing that dream. Um. So that was difficult to live up to.

Despite being aware that twirling was a female-dominated sport and working with gay males, at first Nate’s mother prided herself on having the rare token within a token – the straight male twirler – but Nate conveyed that this wishful thinking was “difficult to live up to.” In this way, Nate did not want to conform to the stereotype by assimilating (Kanter 1977).

As participants' stories reflect, twirling is seen publicly performed by women and because it is a women's sport and thus an effeminized space, all men who participate in it must be gay. Both Victor and Steven share an understanding that societal opinion of a group shapes the way we see it. As described by Victor (50s):

Either you are gay or you are straight. I think that there's a way you can appreciate both, but I don't think whether you like to twirl or dance that that's a gay lifestyle. Society creates that.

For Derek (20s), the definition of gender and sexuality is a little wider:

I think a lot of those people that would be making fun would see masculine in maybe different eyes than myself and would say that masculine was a football player or you know a baseball guy or even a golf pro, you know, but there's gay football players, golf pros, and baseball players, too.

And Eric (20s) felt the same way:

I think there are gay men that are in the army or, you know, that ride motorcycles just like there are straight men that do ballet, you know? I think your sexuality or your style or hobbies are just two completely separate things.

The debate about gender and sexuality is one that many male twirlers face, but by and large, sexuality is at the forefront of their minds because of their interconnected characteristics.

Because of the effeminized nature of twirling, from the perspective of the general public, the token male twirler must have assimilated into this female-dominated space and therefore must also be attracted to men resulting in sexuality being a "free burn card." In reaction, these men attempt to align themselves with more masculine-oriented spaces, but as Derek and Eric's comments allude, this is common outside of the male twirler identity as well and can be generalized to other subordinated identities. Here too hybrid masculinities can be seen as gay men ride their motorcycles and straight men perform ballet.

Privilege in the "Real World"

Outside of the twirling world, stigma certainly exists to thwart men's participation in a sport like baton twirling. However, the male twirlers I spoke to described specific instances where they felt or experienced privilege while representing twirling in greater social settings as evidence that gender may outweigh tokenism in some spheres. While representing his university, Brad (20s) was treated as a celebrity during his time as feature twirler and even held autograph signings before games. While perhaps an extreme example of privilege outside of the twirling world, both Brad's talent and token status as a male twirler aided in this celebrity. Paul (40s) experienced similar celebrity as the first non-white and non-female twirler, at his university. He recalls people seeing him carrying his baton bag on campus and exclaiming, "Oh my God, that's the twirler!" Isaac too enjoyed being "the guy" twirler on campus. For him, "it wasn't a nuisance, it was more of a positive thing to be the only one (male twirler)."

Isaac (20s) also found that his friends both in high school and the fans at university football games would stand up for him if they overheard snide remarks about there being a male twirler. This protecting of the male twirler was interesting to hear:

Honestly, I think it was probably a shock at first people seeing it because a majority of that crowd probably hadn't seen a guy twirler except for like in the 70s back when it was an all-male band and they had guy twirlers, but since then it's been all females. So, I think honestly I felt more of a sense of protection. ... [W]alking through the stands especially at away games we (the band) were always close to the [visitor's] section.... You know, [the opposing team's] fans would say something as I'm walking by. If [one of our fans] overheard it they would very quickly come to my defense. So I think at first there was a little hesitation and then it became, "Oh that's [Isaac], he's *our* twirler."

Isaac goes on to mention that on an online fan forum after lewd comments were made about his sexuality, others commented in support of Isaac's featured position. This sense of ownership by the fans of their university representative was interesting and is suggestive of the advancement of tolerance for men in effeminized spaces and recognition of hybrid masculinities.

Jason (40s) and Quinton (30s) had similar “Oh my God!” moments while starting new jobs. Jason experienced one of these moments during a job interview after the interviewers saw his twirling accomplishments listed on his résumé:

I’m starting a new job and at the interview I actually put all of my twirling accomplishments on the résumé and it came up and they were all like, “That’s so cool. That’s amazing.” Blah. Blah. Blah. You know, they didn’t really question it. When I meet new adults now, gay or straight, they’re really intrigued and fascinated by it.

Jason’s experience of being recognized for his twirling accomplishments more recently may be suggestive of a changing tolerance for men’s participation in effeminized spaces and maybe indicative of hybrid masculinities. As we will see, tolerance for men’s participation in these spaces was not always accepted.

Quinton had a similar experience after he started a new job as well:

I just started at a new salon and it was so funny, when I was teaching the um, the girls at [a local university], I was like, “Well I’m going to be gone teaching baton twirling.” She was like, “Were you really a twirler?” She was like, “I did that when I was little!” and I was like, “Well yeah, I’m a world champion baton twirler” and she was like, “Oh my God that’s cool!” So you know, I still have moments like that where people think it’s really cool. Sometimes I’ll take out my batons and twirl, you know, here at the house or something like that when people are over because they’re like, “Oh show me! Show me!”

Because baton twirling is in itself unique, the added distinction that a male could twirl and twirl well contributes to this “Oh my God!” reaction from people or rather, adults. No doubt, participants appear to appreciate being recognized for their accomplishments after experiencing the hardships that come with being a male in a female-dominated sport. Interesting to note however is that both Jason and Quinton are employed in effeminized occupations (teacher and hair dresser). Additionally, those that complimented were adults; similar comments among childhood peers were not mentioned among the interviewees.

On the local level, Gary experiences celebrity because he travels around the country judging twirling events. After being invited to judge at the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU)

Junior Olympic Games, Gary's brother "thought this was really something you know that I was judging the Junior Olympics. It was all over town! It created a sensation even at my high school... reunion this past week and everything. They did a whole thing about my baton twirling." Additionally, as a member of the military in the early 1960s, Gary experienced some incredible things while twirling in the band for a branch of the military. It was amusing to hear him describe the reactions of those around him after hearing of his experiences:

Yeah, so yeah, I think those are really privileged. You know, I've only experienced that and, you know, even twirling for the [Professionals football team]. Everywhere I went and all of that, people were just, "Oh my goodness, you twirled for the [Professionals]. Oh my goodness, you twirled at the [International Festival]. Oh my goodness, you met [the world renowned figure], you saw [him]." You know, it just goes on and on like I went to Twirl Mania (held at Walt Disney World) last year. You know, the people in my hometown are like, "Oh my God, you went to Disney World to a baton twirling contest." You know they just, you know this lady like introduced me and she said, "I want to introduce to you now someone whom all of you know and who leads one of the most fascinating lives on the planet Earth," she said.

Missing here is the opportunity Gary had to twirl with the military band on television's longest running variety show where a famous American Major League Baseball center fielder watched him warm up in the alley before the taping. Only recently have male twirlers been given similar attention on large media outlets with male twirlers being featured on two different seasons of *America's Got Talent*.

In closing, experiencing the "blue curtain" puts into perspective the advantages and disadvantages to being a male in the sport of baton twirling. While structural and organizational barriers along with little things like trophy figureheads may set male twirlers back, change is happening both in and outside the world of competitive twirling. As Isaac, Brad, Gary, and Paul's narratives illustrate, privilege for male twirlers pops up in unusual and unexpected places. Due to the numerical token status male twirlers maintain, "celebrity" status may occur. Though

stigma for male twirlers is inevitable, as collegiate twirlers Brad, Isaac, and Paul point out, there is support out there and unique opportunities to be had.

Finally, these men's token male status accentuates the formation of hybrid masculinities. As participants in an effeminized space where the dominant group is female, men become more visible by default. In contrast, men also are seen to have more privilege where that is not necessarily the case behind the blue curtain. Beyond the blue curtain, men experience stigma for their participation in an effeminized sport and are assumed to have assimilated into the dominant group (women), but rather the male twirlers I interviewed show that they attempt to assimilate into more masculine spheres or identities by emphasizing athleticism and accomplishment.

In Chapter 7, I focus more closely on examining the ways in which participants engage in identity management techniques to navigate the privilege and disadvantage felt both within and outside of competitive baton twirling. I further elaborate on some of the more unique identity management techniques the men used within this chapter.

CHAPTER 7: GENDER AND IDENTITY MANAGEMENT AMONG MALE BATON TWIRLERS

In the last two chapters, the male twirlers I interviewed described examples of the privilege and disadvantage they faced inside (in front/behind the blue curtain) and stigma outside (beyond the blue curtain) of twirling world. Through those experiences, some identity management techniques became obvious. Twirling for comfort, Brian and Hayden turned to twirling and intense practice as a way of combating the harassment. Steven and Paul used the strategy of “friending” those of their peers with power. Hayden made sure to “athleticize” his twirling while practicing in public and, similarly, Uri sought another sport to combat his image as the “gay” twirler. Others like Chuck internalized the pain they experienced as a result of being a male baton twirler or physically fought back as Walter did in the parade.

In this chapter, I further examine how participants’ manage and maintain their masculine identities in light of their experiences within and outside of competitive twirling. This chapter examines several identity management and maintenance techniques, including constructing a masculine twirler identity that includes them, gendered bodywork, and reactions to stigma from peers or parents. I further outline some of the less commonly articulated ways in which male twirlers managed their identities, including those mentioned in Chapter 6.

In an effort to gauge the ways in which the male twirlers I interview perceived masculinity, I asked them to first “define masculinity in their own terms.” For many, this was a difficult task and they were unable to find the words to accurately describe their outlook on gender presentation. For a few, a binary answer was given along the lines of “that which is opposite of feminine” (Gary) is masculine. Still others relied on stereotypes for their descriptions, including variations of strength to describe masculinity in a general sense. To more

directly apply gender and masculinity to twirling, I also had them describe characteristics of both a masculine and a feminine male twirler.

Jason (40s) was hard-pressed to avoid using stereotypes to define masculinity because he acknowledges that gender is fluid and in the end he did not have the language to describe masculinity:

You know, I mean, obviously masculine is having a male-defined style, but having a male-defined style means having all the male stereotypical characteristics, you know? I feel like there should be some kind of thing that goes beyond it, but I don't know if I can really pinpoint it. I don't know and that's kind of the best I can give at this moment.

For many of the guys I spoke to this was the case: either they were able to vaguely describe masculinity or not at all. For that reason, I assessed their perceptions of masculinity in a more roundabout way.

Chuck, a white male who grew up in the 1950s, described in his matter-of-fact way whom many might consider hegemonic because of the imagery of the mid-twentieth century man:

You have to remember I grew up in the 50s, so to me a masculine person was a strong person both in body and character. Um. You did manly stuff. You worked on cars. You did things with your hands other than twirl a baton and you got married. You had children and that was that, and so that really was my idea of masculinity....

Reminiscent of the *Happy Days*' character "Fonzie," this "strong person both in body and character" idea was not unique among the men I talked to. In fact, it was the most common concept that appeared.

Themes of strength whether in the form of musculature, being tough, and elements of physicality were brought up often, perhaps because of the physical nature of baton twirling. Paul (40s) began his explanation by saying a masculine man is "solid, very solid in stature":

When I think of masculinity I also think of maybe a little bit closed, not maybe quite as emotional. A little bit more—somewhat of a lack of emotion and a little bit more um

stoic, serious, you know what I mean, and definitely when I think of masculinity, the first word that comes to my mind is strong. Like powerful, like power.

To be sure, Paul hit the nail on the head in terms of some of the more pervasive societal characteristics of what it means to be a masculine man: solid stature, emotionless, strong, and powerful (see David and Brannon 1976). Darryl (50s) and Andy (50s) agree, with Darryl explaining:

I would think it's somewhat physical. Oh gosh. One who is fairly fit. He exudes, you know, maleness if you will. Um. I don't know to me it's more of a—almost a physical attribute.

Andy gets a little more specific with his definition of physical masculinity:

[W]hen I think of masculinity, I think of good fitness for a man. I think they have to be fit. They should have a toned body. They have comfort with themselves. I think they have strength. That doesn't necessary to me... I'm not necessarily defining bulk muscle strength, but they do have strong body functions and skills with their body. They are stronger build than, say, a female... Um, but yeah, I think that to me masculinity is body tone, fitness, strength, determination...

Daryl and Andy further elaborate on their requirement that a masculine male is obligated to have a certain physicality to their being.

After admitting it is a grey area, Nate (30s) adds a secondary aspect to strength in the form of elegance:

I think masculinity is looking strong and, like, I think the people, like the performers that you see on *So You Think You Can Dance*. They're strong and they're elegant and I think those are the epitome of masculinity and I don't really think that anyone can be pigeonholed into the definition of masculinity because there are so many variations.

Though perhaps unintended, Nate brings up the popular televised dance competition as a way of exemplifying how dance, in particular males dancing, has gained favor in popular media (see also *America's Best Dance Crew*, *Dancing with the Stars* and the *Dance Moms* franchise). In becoming more prominent in popular media, varied versions of masculinity are also introduced

(i.e., hybrid masculinities). Nevertheless, Nate notes that being pigeonholed into a specific definition of masculinity is not easy.

Contrary to the strength and physical-based definitions presented by Paul, Darryl, Andy, and others, Quinton (30s) prefers a softer masculinity opposite of the hegemonic ideal:

I feel like when I see men be sensitive and caring and like a father figure, a mentor, um, those types of things, I find that to be more masculine than being like macho and hard and not cry and things like that.

To Quinton, it was the ability to show vulnerability and emotion that make a man masculine rather than being “macho” and “hard”:

I think it takes a whole lot more of a man to be a father and a loving partner and things like that than it does just to be, you know, a macho pig head.

Hayden (20s) feels similarly. When he describes masculinity, he does so in a way that reflects how he sees his role and contributions in his new relationship:

For me, and it's funny that you ask this question because my girlfriend and I have been having a lot of talk about you know, the conventional marriage versus ... the modern approach to raising a family and to give gender roles in the house. For me, masculinity is that you're comfortable with who you are no matter what. If you like to do the cooking and cleaning and those type of things, then who's to say that's not masculine or who's to say that's feminine? ... To me, that's stepping up and being a man just as much as going out and chopping down a tree is or what's considered to be masculine.

While Hayden protests that his idea of a masculine man is “modern,” his description is simply a spin on the provider stereotype of the masculine father (see Townsend 2002):

What it means to be masculine to me is that no matter what adversity we have, whether it's like I said getting groceries or, you know, going shopping or whatever... If she needs the couch moved, then I'll move the couch. If she needs the dishes done, I'll do the dishes. ... I like to maintain the idea that I don't need help and that I can do it all on my own which is silly, but I guess that's my best answer I can give you.

While Hayden may be stepping up to do more around the house, his division of labor and insistence on independence does not fit the model of what might be considered a “modern”

relationship and instead supports the “conventional” marriage outline in a way that creates a hybrid masculinity (Bridges and Pascoe 2014), or as Ian calls it, “nebulous”:

[M]asculinity these days is such a nebulous thing... Masculinity in general is probably a physical and cultural affectation of what it is that we expect out of men, whether that be physical characteristics or just social role characteristics, but you know, people fight over this constantly so it’s like, who am I?

Ian (40s) goes on to give an example:

I’m not really qualified to answer this question because, you know you’ll see these days a video of guys doing a Beyoncé choreography and you think, “You know what? They’re doing feminine moves.” But they’re not. What they’re doing to me is they’re doing a female’s performance, but they’re clearly men. I don’t really—I’m not comfortable... defining those sorts of things anymore. I’m just not. I’m too open-minded for it.

In his “open mind,” Ian has no problem with gender fluidity and gives his Beyoncé music video reference as evidence.

Isaac (20s) too was able to describe a “nebulous” version of masculinity he sees as applicable today:

I think being confident is more of a masculine trait, but I also see that trait in women. So, masculinity to me is more—honestly maybe it is being... more traditionally feminine. I see that as more masculine because it’s easy being comfortable with whatever your definition of masculinity is, but I think it’s more of a sense of self rather what the traits of being feminine or masculine according to society.

The key word in Isaac’s statement is “comfortable.” Brian (60s) also requires a sense of comfort in his definition of masculinity:

I just think it’s comfort because I want to have a certain, a certain feminine side of myself or whatever that means in society at this point, you know? It’s like I want to have that sensitivity. I want to have that emotional connection that otherwise in the past was known as being feminine. So all of that has really changed and I remember growing up feeling, you know, having situations where that impacted me.

Being comfortable in one’s identity, whether displaying masculine or feminine characteristics, is key to both Isaac and Brian’s masculine sense of self even though it may be in opposition to society’s definition.

Or, maybe confidence makes the man. Confidence makes you “stand your own ground” and be able to “stand up for yourself if pushed to that.” Zeke (50s) believes this is a good definition, and perhaps it is a useful definition given the circumstances in which many male twirlers find themselves. As an example, Zeke mentions how he has a lot of friends who are drag queens and “I wouldn’t mess with them!” In mentioning his friends who do drag, Zeke comments on how doing something outside of the box that is gender norms requires a certain confidence and the ability to stand up for one’s self. To Zeke, this confidence took the form of physical and emotional strength to handle any situation that might come across the path of a drag queen or a male twirler. Like his drag queen friends, Zeke and others seek to create a gender identity that works for them as a way to manage or maintain, in this case, a masculine identity within the feminized space in which they are embedded.

Confidence was on the minds of many during our interviews. Isaac too made a comparison using confidence as an example when he mentions male dancers:

[I]t’s kind of the same as male dancers. Traditionally, I would say that they would, you know, most the ones I’ve met are more effeminate... but to me it was perfect because what person that’s not confident in their masculinity is going to walk out in front of 70,000 people in rhinestones.

The person walking out in front of 70,000 people in rhinestones could easily be a male dancer or Isaac himself at a university football game. Either way, Isaac believes that courage is necessary to step out in front of a large crowd wearing a costume embellishment that is typically seen as feminine.

Perhaps it is not a behavior or characteristic that makes one masculine, but rather one’s hobbies and extra curricular activities. Uri (20s) was so miserable when he twirled that in his opinion, a masculine male would be playing football or baseball—not twirling:

Back then masculinity was doing a male sport because I knew I already wanted the chicks. You know, getting to hang out with more guys to associate with and be accepted in a group of guys would have come off as masculine. Maybe even like being mean to girls would have come off as masculine. I mean I knew it was happening, but I had no idea why. Why would you be mean to girls? I just want one. I just want one, you know? And I'll never be mean to her like you guys would.

Uri was so desperate to feel masculine that he wanted to do what he saw other “masculine” men doing, even if he did not understand why it was happening. To him, those who were “doing” masculinity in this way sure seemed to have it all. Though certainly an extreme, Uri was miserable as a teenage male twirler. All he wanted was a girlfriend, but twirling was preventing him from getting one. In response, Uri did the only thing he could think of – he joined the wrestling team:

I went all the way to the other end of the pool and did baton twirling and then I swam to the other end and I did the antithesis of that. The “brute male sport” and I did okay in that and I was still pretty good, but once I gained the respect of my peers and other guys was when I started to feel like a man. When I got acknowledged for my candor by my peers or even the people who are not by peers, like strangers, was when I felt more masculine.

To Uri, twirling was a “blemish on your masculine record” and it prevented him from being a “man.” It was only when he joined the wrestling team, the “brute male sport,” that he felt he finally had accomplished manhood.

These descriptions work to support hybrid masculinity theory. In their own way, each of these men define their own version of masculinity, whether it be a hegemonic definition or one more applicable to their own identities. Some describe it based on physical attributes, others from non-tangible characteristics like “courage” and “bravery.” All of them, however, are constructing an identity within the space they occupy, based on their lived experiences, and ultimately, what may work best for them. In this way, they are constructing a hybrid masculinity that is comprised of both masculine and feminine traits.

Fearless, Powerful, and Fast: Describing the Male Twirler

Within this effeminized space, a line must be drawn between what characteristics make up a “real” masculine twirler and what does not. These men "redefine" masculinity within this space, yet their redefinitions often juxtapose "real men" in the general public or hegemonic sense. This is a way of coping or managing their identities by creating a masculinity that includes them.

As twirling has changed over time, so too have ideations of the masculine male twirler. Having been involved in twirling since the late 1950s, Brian saw much of the change occurring in the styling of the male twirler:

Like I said before, we twirled a certain way that was perceived as masculine back then. Hand on the hip and you weren't, you know, you didn't do more than a lunge with your body or whatever. There [were] just certain stupid rules that we had back then... I think all of that kind of shrouded me a little bit. As I became older and the society changed and I became a coach... I threw all of that away. I just kind of cleaned the cobwebs out of my head as to what all of that meant and now I just kind of took on a different attitude about it.

Brian's cleaning of the “cobwebs” allowed him to change with the times. As dance became more important in twirling, he took dance classes. As gymnastics skills came into fashion, he learned how to teach gymnastics. As showmanship and performance quality became crucial, he took his students to the theatre. Brian has seen firsthand how twirling has changed over the last 60 years and has paid specific attention to men in twirling. By adapting in this way, Brian was able to teach new generations of male twirlers the hybrid masculinity he created for twirling.

In Jason's eyes, the masculine male twirler comes in a package that is not so much physically embodied, but rather stems from the strength it takes to be a male twirler in an effeminized space (see Fisher 2007):

To be successful at [twirling], you have to have a pretty strong sense of who you are and your identity because I don't think I did have a strong sense of my identity for a long while.... I think nowadays if I twirl it's a little more from within.

In the same abstract way, Isaac's masculine twirler had confidence; recall his comment: "What person that's not confident in their masculinity is going to walk out in front of 70,000 people in rhinestones?" Indeed, many might view confidence as a necessary characteristic of a masculine in order to endure potential stigma.

Another way male twirlers utilized identity management was by seeking out male coaches to train them. When he started twirling, Martin's (50s) parents were told, "Maybe you better get him a male instructor pretty soon." The parents of Steven, Paul, and Jason also sought out male coaches to train them and to act as role models. While at his university, however, Paul's female coach studied masculine poses in Roman statues so that next to his "ultra-feminine" looking twirling partner, he would appear masculine in comparison. It seems Paul's coach has a two-fold approach: she seems to be combatting the stereotype of the gay male twirler by using Roman poses and further assumes that men are "naturally" more masculine in comparison to the "ultra-feminine" woman.

Similar to confidence, as a male twirler you must be fearless according to Victor:

I think he has to be self-assured.... You have to be sure of yourself and then I think you look and act strong and, when you're strong, I think you approach it differently. I think you have to be fearless and when you're [not] fearless, I think it portrays in people's eyes who [sic] might be questioning masculinity or femininity. When you're fearless, I think it goes into a masculine role....

Fearlessness, in Victor's eyes, is similar to confidence in that if a male twirler does not exude it, their masculinity is questioned. Nate also believed in an element of fearlessness that he called "pushing the envelope" because the male twirlers he idolized "weren't scared of doing something different."

In order to "push the envelope," for many of those I interviewed, "power" was a tool to be utilized and displayed by a masculine male twirler. A condition of the powerful male twirler

was also that he is fast and many commented on a male's ability to toss the baton extremely high. Aaron speaks to this point while describing one of his favorite twirlers:

[H]e never went for the artistry of twirling. He was all about, "I'm going to go out there and *twirl*." ... It's less about splits and leaps and pretty free hands and things like that and it's more about how many times can you spin. Can you do an illusion? How much power do you have behind your movement? So, I guess in twirling and dance, masculinity is more associated with the power behind your movement.

Twirling incorporates both body movement and baton to generate the power necessary to be considered a masculine twirler, according to Aaron (20s). Aaron uses Fisher's (2007) "make it macho" strategy to emphasize the power he deems necessary in his example in a way that aligns with previous literature on men in dance (Haltom and Worthen 2014) and rhythmic gymnastics (Chimot and Louveau 2010). Within dance and rhythmic gymnastics, men are also pressured to "push the envelope" with higher jumps and more turns. However, with this power comes speed.

Speed, in the form of both body movement and revolution of the baton, are important in masculine twirling for several participants. According to Steven (40s):

I think it has to do with the manipulation of the baton. I think that it has to do with the speed and rate or revolution.

Brian used the speed he developed from his father's training sessions as an advantage over other competitors:

I thought that I could have greater speed because I was stronger and I knew that I was stronger and I knew that that was my edge.... My father would have me twirl this iron bar and I would have to lift weights because I could spin the dickens out of that baton and make revolutions that I knew that were way faster than any girl could. ... Speed was my weapon because that was the thing that I knew was going to make me obviously better. ... I could be impressive with speed.

Used as a technique of differentiation from competitors (women in particular), Brian used the speed and strength he knew he possessed as a male to make him stand out. If he could "spin the

dickens” out of the baton, that might make up for other lacking parts of his routines and, perhaps, a non-masculine gender presentation.

Along with speed and power comes the high toss. A required element for any twirler (much less a masculine one), the high toss allows for more sensational and dynamic twirling: the higher the toss, the more opportunity for multiple body movements underneath it. Brian described the way in which the high toss becomes a signal of masculinity:

I mean, what’s more impressive than a high toss, right? So throw it as high as you can. Well, a guy can throw a baton way higher than a girl. You know, they can get it up there. You know, what you do underneath it now is what really counts, but back then, you know, it’s like the higher you threw it the better off you are so we could really get the baton in the air. So there’s [sic] a lot of guys that would spend most of their time just waiting for the baton, you know clear to the sky.

Hunter (20s) talks about the high toss and the strength it takes to “chunk it up there”:

I think once you start watching [a twirler who is masculine] twirl, I think it’s amazing the skill sets that they can do, how high they can throw it up, because ultimately you have to have the strength to do this and you have to put in the work, you know at the gym, you work out your arms. We can chunk it up there so high and do the main trick. I think that’s masculine and I think that, you know, really shows a guy’s strength.

While high tosses are a requirement for any advanced twirler, the higher the twirler can toss, the more masculine they may be considered due to the strength necessary to get it “clear to the sky” as Brian mentioned. In fact, Martin would order extra weighted batons to accommodate his strength. To summarize so far, many of these male twirlers imagine the masculine twirler to have courage and be fearless, powerful, and fast.

Beyond these masculine components, Quinton (30s) and Andy (50s) meanwhile see many of the same tricks among male and female competitors, but insist that the quality of movement is different among male and female bodies. As Quinton described:

I guess we all technically twirl the same way. We do a lot of the same. Everyone knows how to do a flourish-whip and everyone knows how to do a finger twirl and everyone knows how to do a back neck. It’s just—I feel like on a man it’s just different than it is on

a woman. It's like a male basketball player versus a female basketball player. They do the same thing, but it's two completely different things.

For Andy, the physicality was also very different:

I think that men and women are pretty much doing a lot of similar actual tricks. Um. I think the men pull off a more—I mean they do pull off more the strength performance, which draws audience appeal, which is different. I mean, a guy doing a triple walkover and a girl doing a triple walkover, I mean, you see a really toned body and he's just going to do it better to some degree, I think. ... I've seen at worlds that those guys can hike that baton up there too so it's easier for them to accomplish triples or whatever.

For Andy, the body of the person doing the walkover changes the quality of it. However, the initial point both Quinton and Andy make, that male and female twirlers are doing a lot of the same tricks, leads to a discussion of whether or not twirling is actually gendered.

A Twirl is a Twirl: Gendering Twirling through Bodywork

When asked if there are any tricks specific to boys or girls, few could come up with a trick exclusive to twirling. Instead, descriptions were of combinations of baton and body movement. None could give specific examples of what makes twirling a baton feminine, but rather they referred to embodiments of gender that revolved around dance and bodywork (Gimlin 2007), specifically the use of hands and arms (e.g., the “free hand” that is not in use during a baton routine). Their inability to describe a gender-specific trick challenges what makes baton twirling inherently effeminately gendered. Hayden (20s) also questions this relationship:

You know, I mean twirling a baton doesn't make you any less masculine than, you know, playing volleyball or playing Ping-Pong or wrestling with guys in spandex on a matt. I mean, let's put it in perspective. What's so feminine about twirling a baton? I don't see it, you know? So I don't, I guess I never looked at it as—I never saw it in the same light that everyone else did.

To be sure, there are masculine aspects to twirling like those listed previously, but it seems the association of twirling with dance and the bodywork that is incorporated into twirling today contributes to the stigmatization.

Combining the thoughts of Andy, Quinton, and Hayden, Isaac (20s) wonders if twirling presents more androgynous characteristics today:

[I]f you're going to do a free style, you're going to need more dance training. I think it's changing to be maybe more, this is going to go against my earlier answer, but maybe more androgynous so it really doesn't matter whether you're a guy or a girl.

Ian (40s) agrees when he says the gender gap in twirling style has “become more equalized”:

I feel like the separation of what girls do and what guys do have become less. It's become more flat, like the competition is more blended even though they still did separate the guys out. I feel like [judges] look at it as a whole and there's not so much differentiation about style or expectation.

Defining twirling today using androgyny assumes a combination of masculine and feminine characteristics. In this sense, dance is combined with twirling among men who may bring to it a masculine style thus making it seem androgynous.

Only in one instance did those I interviewed agree on a trick as a “boy trick.” This trick, known as the floor bounce is a flip off the thumb while angled at the ground. Upon hitting the ground, it bounces back up. The floor bounce requires incredible speed of rotation because of the rebound necessary for it to bounce off the ground (Newton's Third Law of Motion: Every action has an equal and opposite reaction). Gary's coach would also call certain tricks “boy tricks,” but either they have fallen out of fashion or women now do them:

Well we used to do what we used to call pretzels and I don't know if you—we would do circles under the leg wraps and that kind of thing. People don't do them anymore, things I would call boy tricks. I used to do the bounce off the ground. That was a boy trick. I used to pop it off my foot, turn, pop it off my foot again. That was what I called a boy trick, you know, that kind of thing. It would be just, you know, tricks that would look good on boys that certainly wouldn't look good on girls.

A coach of Nate's (30s) also tried to teach him “boy tricks,” but in his words they were “stupid”:

[H]e was one of the major pioneers of twirling, at the same time he would try to teach me what I call the usual boy tricks; I always thought they were stupid. Like I didn't care to do a split leap pull out and I didn't care to do a spread eagle or whatever the heck it was. I

wanted to—I wanted to create my own style. I didn't want to use the same tricks that people had already done.

A split leap pull out, also mentioned by many as a “throw back” trick, is when the twirler jumps into the air with his or her legs spread apart as if in a split to catch the baton under their legs in either hand (the movement required for a “spread eagle” was unclear). Even though some of these boy tricks “did not look good on girls” at the time Gary was twirling in the 1950s and early 1960s, he admits to teaching it to one of his female students recently. As for the split lead pull out, both girls and boys alike performed it. Perhaps it was mentioned with such frequency because of the athleticism that is required to accomplish both elements of the leap and the catch.

When asked if he thought there were any tricks that were specific to men or women, Hayden compared male dancers to male twirlers:

I don't think tricks are based on masculine or feminine. Like if you have an amazing *sissonne* (type of leap), you'd be stupid not to put it in there, you know? Or if you have an amazing turning hitch kick, why wouldn't it be in? I mean that's like saying male ballet dancers shouldn't leap. Well, then why are they ballet dancers? You know? So, no, I don't think tricks are gender-specific.

Hayden described nothing specific to twirling, but instead described dance technique. While both male and female dancers perform these movements, in twirling it is this element of dance that often characterizes a male twirler as feminine. A double standard is created: if a male were to take a ballet technique class, there are few movements that only one gender does. Yet, as Hayden points out, adding a dance element to baton routine renders it feminine. Several of those who expressed negative opinions about men adding dance to their baton routines were twirling in the 1960s and 1970s before dance movement became incorporated.

In the early 1990s when Steven (40s) was competing, the USTA began a competitive achievement system that required a sequence of programs called Movement Technique. If the twirler did not pass this, they were not allowed to move on. For that reason, Steven's coach, who

was privy to the requirements of this new system, knew the new role dance would take in men's twirling in particular:

So, really it came from my coach encouraging me to dance, certainly to learn to be better, to practice, and that type of thing. And as I mentioned before, he took me to performances and whatnot and what's happening on Broadway, on stage, or touring companies and we looked to other artistic sort of sports. You look at figure skating or rhythmic gymnastics or gymnastics and whatnot, I think it's the same thing... Even male gymnastics are required to do *pirouettes* and do them technically and on balance and whatnot. So I think it was happening in a lot of sports at the same time and as I mentioned to you earlier, I felt like I was always in competition with myself and others, but I wanted to be better than I was the time before.

At least in the USTA, this new system encouraged men to incorporate dance into their routines in order to be successful. In fact, Ian credits Steven for being a pioneer for dance the USTA events. Steven's point that perhaps other similar sports were incorporating dance around the same time is suggestive of the possible evolving nature of masculinity and the sports in which it is embedded.

Rather than describing whether a dance element was masculine or feminine, at times the topic became whether or not a boy or a girl was performing. Brad (20a) had a rather specific list of things he would never do:

There's no way I would ever do a leg hold or like be taught to do a leg hold because, first of all like my flexibility is different than a female and that's just like not as appealing on a guy than it is on a girl.

Under his coach's tutelage, Brad became aware that the body restrictions he experienced were different than those of the girls:

I was never taught to always have my feet together on everything. I was allowed to, you know, be catching between my legs and throwing it under my legs and kind of being more into that style versus the girls. Yeah, that was very, very different than any of the girls on my team or any of the girls that my coach had, you know. It was yeah, my routine was really aggressive and she always—it was like a surprise element that she would have.

Not being forced to keep his legs together and the other examples Brad gives made him stand out further. Even on a team when unison is required, Brad as the token boy was allowed to be

different to avoid femininity or looking “like a girl.” Moreover, Brad’s freedom to do bodywork as he pleased goes against the stereotype of the effeminate or gay male twirler and further distances him from the tokenism property of assimilation.

Aaron (20s) gets a little more technical with his description of the incorporation of bodywork into twirling:

[Men] tend to focus more on like lines and plain catches and like under the legs, but [women] go for the inside leg illusion catches, they will catch a trick in the splits. And I think it’s not so much the tricks anymore that are different. It’s how they’re presented at the beginning and the end. There’s a different style going into the trick, but the premise of the trick is the same.

The “style” that is added is dance. Paul (40s) echoes Aaron’s point:

Leaping instead of jumping is one good example. There’s nothing wrong with leaping, but if you’re only leaping as a guy, it’s going to come across as looking very feminine because the leaps are prettier because the way in which you land and the way in which you take off and the way in which you need to have this flexibility in the leap. When you jump, you’re coming from a normally stand still position and springing from the power of your body and your legs that are making you have the height that are making you—and then mixed with the flexibility will depend on how it strong it looks and when you land, you normally land it very solid with two feet. A jump, you’re normally not landing with one foot so right there, the strength of two feet versus landing on one foot is a very different look.

While technically a leap is a type of jump, Paul attempts to separate the two in order to gender them. The feminine aspects of the leap are the approach and landing on a single foot, whereas the masculine aspect of a jump is the power it requires to jump off and land on two feet (which is not the case in every jump). Paul’s argument is reminiscent of the “make it macho” versus “make it maverick” debate Fisher (2007) presents in regards to his emphasis on the physicality of twirling rather than the bravery and daring it takes to break the mold and be a male in an effeminized space.

Many of the male twirlers learned technique by watching their siblings or other girls twirl (Brad, in fact, twirled backwards because he was mirroring his sister). In this way, the style they

acquired from mirroring was not always met with praise. In Tim's (50s) case, he was permitted to do some dance steps, but the masculinity was in the details:

I tried my hardest to do that because when I first started twirling I was watching the girls and what they did so I mimicked all of that stuff not realizing that I needed to twirl like a boy. It took [my coaches] to say... you need to do it more masculine. It doesn't mean that you can't do [*cabrioles*] it just means that you need to stand up straight, place your hand a little bit different than a girl would because you're a boy which made sense. I just needed someone to teach me that because I'd only been watching girl twirlers. I don't think a boy shouldn't do that because he's a boy twirler. No, I disagree with that. That boy can do that *chasse*, [*cabriole*], split leap; they just need to do it in the proper carriage that's going to make you look strong and not feminine.

According to Tim's coaches, while they were okay with his doing the dance steps, the accompanying mannerisms must be masculine to support it. This idea was raised frequently with respect to the manner in which male twirlers should position the free hand.

The free hand: To fist or not to fist

Nearly all the participants mentioned the use of the free hand as an important consideration among male twirlers. In a single baton routine, a good portion of the time there is a hand not in use; that hand is referred to as the "free hand" (there may also be a free hand in a two-baton routine when one or both batons are in the air). Amongst twirlers, there is a debate on whether, in order to appear more masculine, a twirler should use a fist as their free hand or not. Among my participants, use of this freehand as an expression of gender was of great discussion.

Paul, for instance, is a huge proponent of the fisted free hand:

The way in which they use their free hand is softening the muscle tone versus popping the muscle tone, that when you make a fist, it's going to make our bicep, girl or a guy, punch out, you know, pop out. When you do a soft hand, it's making the line and the muscle relax which is then having it appear softer, and so if a guy's twirling with more of a balletic hand without making the tension in the hand strong, it's not going to pop the muscle that makes it look very male or very masculine and so the feminine style of a guy twirler is more softer.

In Paul's explanation, the tension created in the arm when the hand is in a fist and punched out is the epitome of the masculine freehand. Whereas, if any part of the arm is relaxed, it is seen as feminine or "soft." Paul goes on to describe what a guy who uses a softer free hand might look like:

He may be more turned out. His feet may be more turned out. Um. And... they are really just doing a lot of tricks that the girls do that accentuate the strength of the female body type versus doing the tricks that will accentuate the male body type.

Obviously, Paul disagrees that twirling may have moved into more of an androgynous setting as Isaac introduced before. To Paul, tricks or body movements deemed as feminine do not look good on a male because of his body type which in Paul's eyes seems singular.

As Victor says, "If you twirl in front of [Paul], you better have your hands in fists, but if you don't have him for a judge and you're twirling in front of, just off the top of my head, and [Brian] happens to be there, you don't need fists. You [just] need strong hands." Due to Paul's well-known position on the fisted free hand, Victor (50s) suggests that a male twirler might accommodate Paul's preference. Otherwise, Victor's comment about using strong hands in front of Brian suggests that the free hand be structured into the routine and not loose or weak.

However, Victor's idea of a good free hand extends beyond the hands:

I think that guys... should have strong hands and strong fingers so that your arms and your torso in your *port de bras* [carriage of the arms] are finished. I think arms that aren't finished off on a guy have a tendency to look feminine. On a girl, I think that it would look like it was not finished off.

Used as an expression of gender guided by dance technique, for Victor the use of the torso, arms, hands, and fingers must be calculated. Otherwise, one risks appearing effeminate or not "finished off."

Certainly, not everyone agreed with the fist as a free hand. After he was given the comment on a score sheet to fist his free hand, Aaron's coach told him to ignore it. Aaron cannot stand the fisted free hand:

Like you'll notice that like certain guys, their free hand is a fist and it bothers the crap out of me because if they were to go to a dance class you would never see a guy with a fist for a free hand, ever. So what I think people see as masculinity is not what matches for me.

Aaron's knowledge of dance has influenced how he sees the use of the free hand. Victor agrees:

I don't like when judges start talking about hands have to be in fists. I think that's ridiculous because we don't want them to be too soft, we want them to tell a story and that way you would never have your hands in a fist, so which is right? ... I think you should do strong hands. Dancers don't have sloppy hands.

Because of dance's infusion into twirling, both Victor and Aaron see no use for the free hand as a masculine identifier, particularly when a twirler is trying to tell a story in his routine as a dancer would.

What do participants suggest in lieu of the fist? Certainly not a "limp wrist" (Steven, Tim, Walter, Zeke), a "break in the wrist" (Jason, Walter), a "flip" (Gary) or "flex" (Nate) the wrist, or what Jason calls "wings." All of these terms refer to a bend in the wrist, an effeminate free hand. For a more masculine free hand, the drum major element of placing the hand on the hip was mentioned (Gary and Tim) though outdated. Quinton, Jason, and Hunter suggested the free hand be in a "blade" with fingers and thumb together. Nate and his mother finally decided that the fist as a free hand, much like the "boy tricks" discussed earlier, was "stupid":

[W]e were so worried about, "Oh well you don't want him to look like a girl when he's twirling." So I always had to hold my free hand while I was twirling as a fist and so I did the fist thing for a while and I just didn't like doing it. I felt stupid so I eventually opened my palm up and I asked them, I was like, "Does that look too effeminate?" and they said, "No, it looks fine," and so from then on I just kept my hand open.

In the end, the gendered association of the free hand was no big deal to Nate. He wanted to create his own style. Nate's attitude about the free hand also parallels hybrid masculinities. He wanted to alter the recommended (hegemonic) style of the fisted free hand, yet adopt a still masculine alternative (hybrid).

In sum, the free hand and the opinions surrounding it are used as a form of gender policing. Andy, who has been involved in twirling since the mid 1960s saw how dance changed the specific use of the free hand. Prior to the inclusion of dance, the free hand was pretty "straight;" now it is appropriate for a male to have a more expressive free hand. Calling out the simplistic use of a hand when what the baton is doing is infinitely more interesting emphasizes how crucial it is to be seen as masculine rather than feminine for male twirlers.

"I'll Show You!" and "I Gotta be Good": Coping Through Accomplishment

In reaction to this type of gender-based policing, one of the more prominent forms of identity management was in the form of pressure to be an accomplished twirler. This manifested in two ways: "I'll show you!" and "I gotta be good." Participants demonstrated an "I'll show you!" identity management technique when it became important for them to become accomplished in the face of stigma. Because of the stigma many of the men experienced, they felt that in order to be respected or to avoid teasing, they had to be impressive twirlers (e.g., Hayden's practice sessions). When parents were involved, they contributed to the "I gotta be good!" mindset through support and encouragement via training (particularly fathers). In cases where parental support was lacking, the "I gotta be good" frame was used to communicate to their sons that it would not be easy to be a male in such an effeminized space.

"I'll show you!": In the face of stigma

In the “I’ll show you!” category, many of the participants who experienced stigma at school or elsewhere reacted by improving their skills under the mindset that if they were good, there would not be room to make fun. This was true for Martin (50s), who “took a lot less heat when I won my first national title, which I did when I was ten just because I was in the local newspaper and so the kids had a lot tougher time convincing their parents that I was an aberration.” Martin was confident in his abilities at a young age and used his skills as leverage to keep the bullies at bay.

Hunter () was told by his coach that in “choosing to step out of the comfort zone” he’s “choosing to be put under scrutiny... because if you want respect outside of the twirling world and if you want to be recognized then you have to be, you know, a show stopper because that’s how people are going to stop and watch and say, ‘Oh okay, this kid does know what he’s doing.’” This idea was pervasive throughout many interviews. For example, Andy (50s) said, “You can make fun of me, but I’m also really good... I was determined that I am not going to look like a girl when I twirl. You know, I am going to be good and I’m going to be really good.” Andy elaborated by adding the male component of, “If you’re going to be a male twirler, I would definitely think the expectation would to be a good twirler.” Luckily, for male twirlers there are institutional advantages that aid in this goal through automatic Advanced placement.

Then again, the disadvantage of this automatic advancement was evident in Darryl’s (50s) comment:

[I]f you were just [to go] out there half-assed, if you will, ...you’re just going to get made fun of a lot more. Anybody would, even girls if they’re just slopping around. I just had to be better and try harder and faster and stronger and more spins and more rolls and you know.

Steven (50s) was also aware of how good one must be before qualifying for legitimization:

I think when I was made fun of all it made me do was practice harder so that I would be so good that they couldn't say—you know, I didn't want to be average. If I were average then it would be easy to make fun of, but if I was better than the girls or better than other people, then how could they make fun of it even if it was a girl thing. They'd be like, "Oh, well he's better than they are." So that was my goal.

Darryl and Steven's comments make evident that one cannot be simply be a male twirler; because of the stigma that surrounds twirling, male twirlers must be good, impressive twirlers rather than "half-ass" and average.

For those who had the privilege of having male role models in twirling, it would seem even if he were a "half-assed" twirler, the fact that a male is twirling might be encouraging. For Hunter, Hayden and Brad were not half-assed role models:

It makes me work harder especially when you watch Hayden or Brad. The skill level that they're at just makes you work harder and work on different skills.

Gary felt the same way when he first started twirling:

Well, just the fact that they were a guy twirling [sic] influenced me and inspired me to continue and just do it too.

On the rare occurrence that they were able to see male twirlers, whether at a competition or "out in the wild" during a football halftime show, Hunter and Gary found it encouraging to see that being a male twirler could be done and, in many cases, done successfully.

In one specific example while twirling for his university, Isaac had just heard someone was making fun of him in the stands while he performed at halftime and continued to do so. In reaction, while twirling in the post-game show, Isaac twirled harder. He embodied the "I'll show you!" attitude and he wanted to "be impressive so you forget about the sexuality piece." Isaac wanted to show the heckler that twirling, more specifically a male twirling, could be impressive.

For Brian, it was a release to put everything into twirling. It was a way for him to release those bottled up feelings and emotions that come with the stress of being the butt of jokes:

I would just practice hours, and hours, and hours, and hours, until I would drop over only because I didn't want to think about going to school then next day, didn't want to think about not being picked for the next dodge ball class or didn't want to think about all those other things. So yeah, [the teasing] did affect me quite a bit. And as a result, you know, what happens is the other part of it, the flip side is you get... because you practice so much and you throw everything into it, you get good!

In Brian's mind, the stigma he experienced was perhaps only a means to an end; he was able to achieve his dreams because he could concentrate on his craft due to being cast out from school peers.

"I gotta be good": Family matters

Unlike "I'll show you!" which was in reaction to public stigma, the "I gotta be good" attitude stems from parental support or lack thereof. Some parents were limited in their support while others aided in the training of their sons. Based on their parents' opinions about twirling, the male twirlers reacted by feeling that they had to be accomplished twirlers to show their parents how much twirling meant to them.

Paul's (40s) story is perhaps one of the more powerful narratives regarding pursuing success. Because his father did not support his twirling (recall his mother had to pay for all lessons), Paul exuded the "I'll show you!" attitude with resilience:

It totally pushed me to prove to my dad and my grandfather and everybody else who said, "Guys shouldn't do it. Black men shouldn't do it;" everything from all of the ethnicity, race component of not doing it to the gender, male, homophobic way of not doing it... I literally wrote that as a child, "I will make history twirling. I will be a world champion. I will be the best in the world." I wrote that in like a diary in that I got from like a friend that was girl... I remember writing, "I will show my dad that I will be the best in the world" and "I will be the world champion" you know, before I ever really knew competition existed.

Paul never really saw why the gender component of twirling was such a big deal and because his dad was not supportive, this only spurred him to work harder towards his goals.

Nate's mother, while supportive, attempted to safeguard him from twirling by telling him at age ten how difficult it might be to twirl as a male:

I went to her and I told her, you know, I want to do this and then she also sat me down and she said, "Well if you do this, because society doesn't really accept guys twirling, you cannot only be good, you have to be great" and that's the mantra that I always lived by. I was like, ok if I'm a guy and I twirl, I have to be great and so it took off from there.

Prior to his coming out, his mother also boasted about his presumed heterosexuality alongside his success in such an effeminized space. The pressure to be straight was severe. Nate was stuck in this grey space between two worlds: the greater social world where one is straight until proven gay and the twirling world where one is gay until proven straight. In denying his mother's bragging rights by coming out, he was merely conforming to the predisposed assumption of the gay male twirler. Regarding tokenism, Nate felt that he had fallen victim to the stereotype rather than being the exception to the rule (i.e., assimilation).

Victor's dad, a minor league baseball player, was also supportive, but gave a similar caveat of, "Well, you're not going to be a baseball player so I'm going to challenge you.

Whatever you're going to do, just be the best at it."

[M]y dad was on the top level of the house looking down on the backyard and I was practicing and I was having trouble with a trick and he was like, "Well, why? You've got to figure that out because that's part of the game..." He said, "You're not going out there and dropping the baton. You know, if we're going to twirl, we're not going out there to drop the baton. Nobody wants to see that."

Victor's dad came to help him train by breaking down his tricks and helping him to succeed in his chosen sport.

Hayden, who was tormented at school for his twirling, was lucky enough to receive support at home. Like Victor's father, Hayden's father helped him in one instance by standing in the place of his duet partner for a trick until Hayden had mastered it:

[M]y dad made me stand out in the driveway and he would stand in [my duet partner's] spot and he'd make me do that first flip to her ten times in a row every single day and I don't know if he ever caught one....

The youngest of four, Hayden was told by his parents that they did not care what he wanted to do. As long as he had a passion for it, they would support him:

So he wasn't...like a hard person to have around when you're trying to accomplish something, but he wanted you to succeed. He wanted you to work hard, and he wanted you to care about what you were doing because he used to tell me all the time, "The day I have to tell you to go practice is the day you're done because you should want to win from the inside, because you're not going to win because I want you to."

Although Hayden was bullied at school, at home he found comfort in his supportive family, especially his dad. On one the rare occasion when his father was able to come to a competition, he became enraged when he saw the only men's restroom had been converted to a dressing room for the girls:

I remember we were at a contest one time and the women had taken over the men's bathroom to use as a dressing room and he came unglued. I thought we were going to get kicked out of the gym because he flipped out so bad. He ripped down all of their dressing room signs and we went into that bathroom and we changed and that was that. He was—he was undoubtedly the picture of what I needed as a young male growing up in this sport....

Hayden was extremely thankful and grateful for the support and encouragement he received from his parents.

Brian, much like Hayden, felt stigma from his school peers, but was also supported by his father after being given "the speech":

"Well, if you're going to do this, then I'll get you lessons, but keep in mind that if you're going to do this, you're going to have to be good because you're going to be... You have to be good in this sport if you're going to be a boy twirler." And that's always resonated in my head from the very beginning....

Somewhat influenced to be good because of stigma, Brian's fathers' words and support encouraged Brian because he truly wanted to be perceived as good quality and accepted"

because:

That was a really big deal to me because if I was accepted, that means that my dad would look favorably upon me and I had done my job and I would feel really good about that and it really wasn't about winning or losing to me. It was nice when I won, but I really wanted that whole element of acceptance like, "Ok, you belong here; this was good. You were really good." So, that was really important to me and I worked for that. It was... I thrived on that. Even when I was little, I still remember that.

Because it was important to his father that Brian twirl fast, in order to increase his speed, his father would make him lift weights, twirl a lead or iron bar to strengthen his wrists, and made sure Brian was training and conditioning appropriately. Brian's father studied the sport and became an expert on baton pattern (keeping the baton either a horizontal or vertical plane of rotation). By using his knowledge of other sports, Brian's father became an expert baton trainer.

However, not everyone was as lucky as Victor, Nate, or Brian. Recall also Chuck's parents who made him twirl for their own accolades; Uri's mother who pushed him to keep twirling despite his misery; and the comments Steven's father made about "quitting that damn thing." Though few parents took extreme positions in favor or against their son's twirling, those that took the negative approach did so in rather hurtful ways. Meanwhile, the support from fathers was refreshing and positive. Quinton's mother was standoffish about his starting twirling and gave him the same speech:

She finally agreed to let me do it, she said, "You know, you are a boy and you will probably be one of the only boys" you know, in this sport and "You better damn make sure that you are better than all the girls."

After permitting him to twirl, Quinton's mother showed little support, even after he medaled at a world championship event:

I actually won the compulsory round and I called her. I stayed up all night to call her when it was in the daytime here in the US and I was like, “Mom I’m going to win a medal!” ... And she was like, “Well that’s good” you know, kind of like not excited like, you know and it kind of tore me to pieces. But then I kind of learned over my years of being independent from my family doing twirling, um, that you know, my success only should and only does matter to me....

In the end, though Quinton learned the lesson of independence, he felt he did it the hard way.

Other Identity Management Techniques

In Chapter 6, other forms of identity maintenance came to light when these men were describing the stigma they experienced as a result of being a male twirler. These other techniques manifested in five particular ways including (1) *athleticizing* either their twirling or identities, (2) strategically *friending* at school, (3) finding twirling to be *comforting*, (4) *internalizing* the effects of stigma, and (5) *fighting back*. These ways of coping with stigma were less prominent than the “I gotta be good” and “I’ll show you!” strategies, but worth mentioning here.

Hayden and Uri in particular *athleticized* their twirling in two different ways. Uri (20s) turned to wrestling as a way of legitimizing his athletic abilities and himself in the eyes of his peers. When in the presence of other athletes, Hayden (20s) would warm up his more impressive and often athletic tricks first also as a way of legitimizing his participation in an effeminized sport. In a similar vein, Hayden, along with Brian (60s), found twirling to be *comforting*, an escape from the stigma they experienced at school. However, some twirlers like Steven (40s) and Paul (40s) used their peers at school as resources to manage their identities by strategically *friending* the popular kids (Paul) or the bullies who would stand up for them (Steven).

Meanwhile, Walter (50s) took matters into his own hands by *fighting back* in such a way that he hit an aggressor upside the head during a parade. Contrarily, some managed their identities like Chuck (60s) who delayed going to college and Uri who managed to find his sense of self in college.

Although not discussed in detail, quitting may be a sixth form of identity maintenance, one not discussed among those that are still active in twirling like those in my sample. Because of the way they have distanced themselves from twirling, quitting as an act of identity management may be better represented by those I was unable to recruit.

“What the Hell Does it Matter?”: Changing Masculinities

A common thread among the interviews was that of change. Not only was change referred to in the sense that twirling has changed, but also in definitions of masculinity and views on sexuality. Jason, now in his mid 40s, refers to the “metrosexual times” that we live in:

Oh well, you know, I think it could be changing now. I think nowadays we’re in such like a metrosexual time that I don’t think it’s nearly as big of a deal now.... When I meet new adults now, gay or straight, they’re really intrigued and fascinated by it.

As described in Chapter 6, Jason was also praised during an interview when he put his twirling accomplishments on his resume. Jason, however, concedes that most of the new people he meets are adults and therefore might have “a bigger sense of understanding of how all of what I probably went through.” Nevertheless, Jason acknowledges, “even in the younger generation, there’s some sort of fluidity in sexuality in general with bromances.” Though this “fluidity” Jason refers to may be a result of a more educated understanding of sexuality and an increase in the public presentation of varied sexualities, there is no doubt that this is a change from the social climate of Jason’s youth in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Ian (40s), who also agrees that sexuality is more fluid today, speaks to how society in general has changed when he refers to how “black and white” gender roles used to be:

I think it just comes from the same kinds of—the same kind of assumption about a man’s a [breadwinner] in the home or should be the one to be a doctor... or just the societal rules that were black and white before that aren’t so black and white anymore. They were social expectations that people had to fall into and because we’ve managed to break down those sorts of social expectations these days that the roles that people play or the things that they do or the way that they act isn’t defining of who they are.

In his explanation, Ian refers to more traditional gender roles that, according to him, have been “broken down” where being gay, for instance, is a secondary characteristic rather than a defining one.

Ian is also extremely optimistic that society has changed to the point where stigmatization of men in effeminized spaces has lessened. In high school, Ian recalls not being “defined” by his twirling:

They knew me. I had girlfriends in high school, so people weren’t like, “You must be gay,” but I think that there’s always, you know. When you’re a teenager and you’re developing your own sexuality, there’s always questions about what other people are doing. Things just changed so much that I don’t know the common perception of anything that somebody does these days is the defining factor. ... You could be a ballet dancer and be perfectly straight. You could be a baton twirler and it’s not the first thing that people.... It’s moving in a direction that that’s not the first thing that people will assume about you.

And Brian (60s) expresses his opinion that it is no longer “cool” to be the bully in school:

You know, it’s not cool to make fun of other kids in school because it’s bullying. It’s not cool anymore and so there’s a certain societal freedom that little boys have now in order to be self expressive and I think that for some, they need to have one person that will help them discover who they are at an earlier age.

The assumptions Ian refers to are sexual orientation, but in his mind sexuality-based stigma is lessening and people are becoming more inclusive. Similarly, Brian’s comment about bullying also notes a movement towards inclusivity wherein excluding or harassing others is not “cool” and acceptance is the way to go.

Steven () also eloquently talks about how society as a whole has changed from his youth in the 1980s:

When I was young and there was expectations on what a male did and what a female did and what you were supposed to do, and I mean it wasn’t just delaying baton, it delays your life. What kind of job you were supposed to have and how you were supposed to stick to that job forever and get promoted and that’s how you’re successful and you’re attempting to have a family and I think, gratefully--and I think still [we were] hindered

sometimes to be honest, but mostly I'm positive that the world is changing and becoming more accepting and understanding that we're complex humans.

The restriction Steven felt growing up in the 1980s, he feels, has been lifted by a changed society.

Ian and Jason are certainly not alone in their views that social opinions on what it means to be masculine have changed and thusly the stigma surrounding men's participation in effeminized sports has waned. As Darryl observed:

I would say they we're looked at differently. It would be like saying, "Oh, you 're a twirler? Oh ok, that's nice." It's a novelty thought so to speak. It's a different world now, so I would say they're probably not looked at anything differently.

Similarly, Caleb (20s) stated:

Outside of twirling, male twirlers... I guess we've seen a change. Early, early 2000s it was still, I feel in my area, it was uncool to dance, uncool to twirl for male twirlers. ... [T]hat's what I felt like it is, but now I've talked to high schoolers about what I've done and they're like, "Wow you got to travel and you got to represent the United States in a sport? Like, that's amazing!" You know? And it's definitely more accepted than it was.

According to Caleb's experience, children today do not have the reference to say twirling is "gay" or for girls because twirling publicly is not as popular as it once was.

Paul (40s) has even created his own social experiment at his local Boys and Girls club that has resulted in the boys displaying more interest in twirling than the girls:

I mean, you talk about a blank slate. Those kids are a blank slate. They've never seen baton twirling and they only mostly see it through me. So, when I come in my army fatigue and my cutoff shirts and my wrist band and whatnot and I'm twirling my one, two, three-batons and my swords and I've got my hip hop music on, there's no perspective of majorette boots. There's nothing with a, you know, feminine soft arm. It's nothing they see as girly, so I always normally have more boys signing up than I do girls because for the boys it just looks so cool.

In Paul's twirling classes at the YMCA, he has presented twirling in a way that is perceived as masculine. He has marketed twirling in such a way that boys want to participate. It is their

fathers who have preconceived notions of what twirling is, however, that he indicates prevent the boys from continuing to twirl.

Where do participants believe that this change is coming from? Brian attributes it to the increased visibility of males on television shows like *So You Think You Can Dance*, where producer and judge Nigel Lythgoe tells dancers about how important it is to be comfortable in their own skin. Both Tim and Brad comment on how so many men twirling at universities around the country have changed the national image of male twirlers. As Brad explained:

I think that there's a lot of us right now just are going through college or went through college with the feature twirler positions or just even representing a university. I think that that was huge for male twirling and I think that looking back on past years this has been the largest representation of males in college and that I think is so important for the younger generations.... I think that there is a higher standard set and I think because of that we've seen more, younger twirlers and it's awesome.

Tim's comment echoes Brad's (20s):

It is becoming more socially acceptable for boy twirlers to be boy twirlers hence [Hayden], [Brad], and you, you feature twirlers at your universities.... It is changing. It will continue to change and it's just the fact that there are more boy twirlers going to competition. It's changing.... It's not just, "Oh, look at that cool drum major." It's "Wow, did you see what that boy feature twirler just did!"

Based on these examples, it is possible that the stigma for men in effeminized space is decreasing.

Furthermore, participants observed that attitudes about sexuality are changing, evidenced by the comments of Walter, Brian, and Martin who are in their 50s and early 60s. Walter notes:

You know, today the kids are so much more...I mean... you know everybody should have their gay friends and so many do, you know. Athletes, jocks. I think they all know somebody that's gay so I really think, you know, it's changing a bit.

Not only are gay friends common, but Brian also sees more role models:

I think that it's easier than it used to be and I think that it's nice when these kids can have role models that are solid role models that are really positive that they don't have those hang ups about their own sexuality which is very cool.

Martin remarks on the great change society has seen with regards to sexuality:

I think that [twirling], along with society, has changed. The gay thing is not an issue anymore. I actually wore my wedding ring to the competition which, as I said, when I was competing that would have been grounds for a lobotomy or electro shock therapy so things have changed that much. I never thought that I would get married, that was just unthinkable when I was younger and now no big deal, which is quite a change.

What is interesting about Walter, Brian, and Martin's views is that these men have seen change within the twirling environment from a more longitudinal perspective and can attest to how attitudes on sexuality have evolved over time.

On the twirling side, twirling has evolved from the "boys don't do that" mantra Brian grew up with in the 1960s or the "misunderstood world" Victor knew in the 1970s. Men are seeing more competitive events as well not only by being included in the blue curtain events at NBTA's AYOP, but also the USTA now allows men to enter dance twirl events. Twirling in general has also grown with the inclusion of three-baton events in the 1990s and free style or rhythmic twirl routines growing in popularity not to mention the attention that European and Asian countries have given to twirling. Aaron is a proponent that things are changing in twirling:

So I think that the definition of masculinity is changing in twirling, it's becoming more acceptable to have the artistic and pretty costumes, but they're letting the twirling speak. I'm hoping that's the road we're going down.

Steven agrees twirling has evolved:

Well because there were so few involved in the past and like I said twirling has evolved.... I think that the role of twirlers in the world today is a lot of what we talked about, being comfortable in their own skin and being who they are and displaying their skills as best they can is more of the focus.

For men, the incorporation of dance in twirling is more accepted according to Brian:

Now, back in the day, you know, for a male to do the splits in the solo or to do a jazz roll or to do any of those, you know, a fan kick, I mean, you know, back then it was considered... that was like *avant-garde*, you know, whatever, but those days are all gone.

Thank God. I'm thrilled and grateful for the guys doing whatever they can do and do it well whether it be perceived as being feminine or not to be real honest.

Hayden believes the men's divisions are growing, too:

[I]n the United States, I think that it's growing exponentially. I mean, this is the first time that our junior team for NBTA, our junior men's team, was fully stocked. So, I think that's kind of cool and not fully stocked with the same kids every time for all three events. So I'd say globally it's growing. I think that's partly in part to just the way the world works now. People aren't caring as much with differences and whatever and they shouldn't because what the hell does it matter?

Indeed, what the hell does it matter? While gender inequality has not gone away, perhaps sexual equality and greater acceptance is on the rise.

All of these examples contribute to hybrid masculinities wherein there has been a redefinition of masculinity. While this new definition may be more inclusive and perhaps less homophobic, it may also simply realign the hierarchical relationship of masculinity. For instance, by redefining the masculine male as someone who is inclusive of homosexuality and effeminate characteristics, he is "othering" the man that is homophobic whereby a hierarchy has simply been rehashed. While there may be greater acceptance of men in effeminized spaces, effeminate behaviors, and gay men, this realignment does little for gender-based discrimination. Men may be interacting in more homo-social ways by kissing, cuddling, or dancing together (Anderson 2009; Pederson and Anderson 2012), but that does not mean they do not experience higher levels of privilege than women or men who fall outside of these definitions of masculinity. Nevertheless, if men are increasingly able to show emotions and inclusiveness, this may also translate into the home where family structures could become more equal. As for the gendered institutions and organizations, it will not be so easy.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Through 30 in-depth qualitative interviews, I present a theory related to token status and identity management among male baton twirlers in the two leading American baton twirling organizations. The effects of tokenism on the identities of male baton twirlers I interviewed show variation from that of other tokens. Because of the age at which many males begin twirling, the stigma surrounding this effeminized space, and institutional disparity, male twirlers simultaneously experience the glass escalator and the glass ceiling within the competitive baton twirling sphere in what I refer to as the “Blue Curtain.” In front of, behind, between, and beyond the blue curtain, male baton twirlers must construct a hybrid masculine identity by choreographing gender (e.g., the free hand) and managing their identities (e.g., the “I’ll show you!” and “I gotta be good” attitudes). The Blue Curtain may be further extended to occupations and other sports wherein tokens of any sort may experience elements of both the glass escalator and glass ceiling.

Moreover, my results support the notion that masculinity is changing in a way that is more inclusive (Anderson 2009), but perhaps in such a way that hybrid masculinity theory (Bridges and Pascoe 2014) readily applies. I also introduce a new way of categorizing stigmatized sports (and occupations) into two categories: sexually stigmatized and effeminately stigmatized. I further suggest there is a hierarchy upon which levels of stigma may be based: primary, secondary, and peripherally stigmatized. Finally, I also introduce the concept of the effeminized space.

Under the Microscope: The Importance of Age among Tokens

Behind the blue curtain, men experience organizational disadvantage in the form of automatic placement in advanced divisions, poor competitive environments, and receiving less

acclaim for accomplishments. This pattern does not coincide with tokens in other effeminized spaces where they instead often experience the effects of the glass escalator (Williams 1992). Because baton twirling is typically a youth activity (average starting age for those I interviewed was nine years old), I believe this youth aspect amplifies the stigma the men faced, what Zeke referred to as being “under the microscope.” The experiences these male twirlers face *behind* the curtain may be described more along the lines of Williams’s (1992) glass ceiling.

The higher level of discrimination these men experienced perhaps occurred because of twirling’s role as a peripheral extracurricular activity both for youth and adults rather than primary like baseball, football, or basketball. Young men who participate in twirling are stigmatized because it is not a typically masculine space within which they are to receive the required “masculine vapors” (Anderson 2009:26). For older male twirlers, participation is further stigmatized from the standpoint of its perceived association with non-heterosexual sexuality. because of this peripheral status, opting to participate appears more of a transgression on masculine norms.

In comparison with effeminized occupations, male twirlers may experience greater “glass ceiling” effects because their participation is viewed as a matter of choice rather than as a career. Within effeminized occupations, successful men might find their violation of masculine norms is somewhat offset by their engagement in work that enables them to perform as “the breadwinner.” Furthermore, baton twirling does not lead to a professional occupation in the way that other primary or secondary sports might, and scholarships are rare and coaching or instructional positions are independent of a primary occupation. Without this ability to counterbalance their presence in an effeminized space with a monetary reward or other more

visible compensation, male twirlers might experience greater stigma than those men in effeminized occupations.

Much in the way that sports became popular to provide a source of masculinity for boys as proof of heterosexuality in the decades following the Industrial Revolution (Anderson 2009), sport is still seen as a past time through which gender is constructed. As Gallahue (1996) finds, children establish their interest or non-interest in sports by age seven, and those not interested are labeled as deviant. The same could be said about those who select a sport that is at the periphery—they are deviant because they do not directly challenge non-heterosexuality in the same way as those within sports like football, basketball, or baseball. Though unclear when the transition occurs between youth and adolescence/adulthood, the focus is no longer on gender but rather on sexual orientation where it becomes a matter of homophobia or homophobia (Anderson 2009). The youth component may be important because it is during this time that gender identity becomes more solidified. Prior to middle school, gender policing is done by parents and adults. In middle school, peers also police.

If Gallahue's (1996) finding holds true, this time in a young boy's life is crucial in the formation of his masculine identity and may serve to follow him the rest of his life, as evidenced in the case of Chuck who was haunted by his experiences well into adulthood. For this reason, my findings suggest that the stigma a young male twirler faces is much more critical to their identities than what a male nurse might experience in or out of his workplace. This idea is evidenced by the fact that many of the more dramatic and intense moments of stigmatization occurred while the male twirler was in school: Hayden's bullies who knocked the books out of his hands and taped his locker shut; Chuck's life-altering experience at the professional football game where food was thrown on him; Brian hiding his baton in his backpack for his lesson after

school; Brad's band director and other administrative faculty barring his ability to twirl at his high school football games, and so on. Though Isaac experienced some forms of stigma in college and Walter taught a heckler a lesson during a parade, incidences of outright bullying post-high school were rare.

Nevertheless, *in front* of the blue curtain, male twirlers experience privilege as tokens that better aligns with glass escalator patterns. These privileges include increased visibility, higher scores, and perceived better placement. These experiences with both glass ceiling and glass escalator effects evoke certain questions about how tokenism works specifically in this effeminized space. These questions can begin to be answered when considering how twirling has catered to the female-dominant over the years and the place of baton twirling as a youth sport.

This dichotomous relationship, however, is limited when considering how male twirlers also maintain a position *between* the Blue Curtains. In this way, placing into the advanced division and the increased visibility male tokens experience can simultaneously act as privilege and disadvantage. It is possible that even in this sexually stigmatized and effeminized space, male privilege has found a way to make itself known. Regarding this visibility component, male token tends to stand out even more and become more of a "threat" to masculine spaces. The greater visibility because of the unusual nature of a male twirling thrusts male twirlers into the limelight, which some love (Brad) and others hate (Andy). In a sense, they are "on stage" and, while this may be seen as privilege to some, it also produces much more opportunity stigma and harassment. Everyone I interviewed experienced some form of stigma because they twirled. While societal attitudes towards men in effeminized occupations may be questioned (Williams 1992), male nurses for instance, do not appear to experience public harassment at the level of male twirlers because there is an obvious difference between scrubs and a sequined costume.

Prior studies rely on effeminized occupations that require nurturing or emotional skills. This study is different because it examines tokenism within a more artistic sphere. Perhaps this is part of why there is a different experience. In the same way that it is becoming increasingly accepted for men to be emotional and nurturing, perhaps men are further allowed to express themselves in terms of physical performances of artistry such as dance or twirling (thus inclusive or hybrid masculinities). Despite this allowance, in comparison to men in effeminized occupations, male twirlers publically experience higher levels of stigma. By highlighting this distinction, I posit that men in artistic effeminized spaces such as twirling experience tokenism much differently because much of the stigma they face comes from their young peers during a time in their lives when their gender identities are being formed.

In short, my findings suggest a way in which age is a catalyst for experiencing stigma and tokenism. In competition, tokenism acts as a way of providing privilege (in-front), disadvantage (behind), and sometimes both simultaneously (between) as a result of the Blue Curtain experience. At young ages, male twirlers experienced heightened stigma as a result of their token status beyond the Blue Curtain. This is different from other instances of tokenism because such experiences and the accompanying identity management techniques may have a greater effect on the life course.

Inclusive-Hybrid Masculinity

Beyond the blue curtain, at times male twirlers face stigma in the “real” world. However, I further posit that based on the evidence I have provided in my interviews, that masculinity has and is changing. Participants exhibit elements of modified, or hybrid masculinities; hybrid masculinities are defined as “the selective incorporation of elements of identity typically associated with various marginalized and subordinated masculinities and – at times –

femininities into privileged men's gender performances and identities" (Bridges and Pascoe 2014:246). As baton twirlers, the men I interviewed may be seen by others to be "marginalized and subordinated" because of their involvement in a sport that is seen as effeminized. However, though 90 percent (27) of those interviewed were white men, a privileged group in many senses, their marginalized masculinities, I believe, allows them greater gender fluidity. More specifically, as a youth activity, these gender differences are emphasized earlier thus male twirlers are simultaneously aware of hegemonic masculine (i.e., fisted free hand) and also emphasized feminine (i.e., limp wrist) ideals of gender performance in such a way that may be heightened because of their awareness of their performance of gender through choreographed routines (Connell 1992). In this way, they contribute to hybrid masculinities by constructing a masculine identity that works for them as men embedded in an effeminized space.

The descriptions of the men I provide in Chapter 7 work to support hybrid masculinity theory. Each of these men, in their own way, define their personal vision of masculinity, whether it be a hegemonic definition or one more applicable to their own identities. Some describe it based on physical attributes, others from non-tangible characteristics like "courage" and "bravery." All of them, however, are constructing an identity within the space they occupy, based on their lived experiences. Though looking to aspects of the hegemonic ideal to compose their version of masculinity, they have simultaneously chosen to stay within the stigmatized and effeminized space of baton twirling. In this way, they are constructing a hybrid masculinity that is comprised of the masculine traits that are greatly idealized by society (e.g., strength) and inescapable feminine traits brought forth by their involvement in this effeminized space (e.g., dance).

Steven (40s) eloquently formulates his thoughts on this topic using a metaphor resembling hybrid masculinities:

I think it's that way in society, that society wants us to behave in a certain way and there's a road that you're supposed to travel and if the road isn't very wide and you step off of it... depending on how far you go... depends on the reactions you get from people in general.

Using Steven's metaphor, the gendered spectrum for men he calls a "road" is not very wide, but yields a question: can a male twirler get back to the asphalt or create another pathway that is still considered masculine? The male twirlers I interviewed would agree that the answer to the latter question is, "it is possible." The narrow, hegemonic road can give way to a wider, hybrid highway that includes their participation in twirling.

As further evidence, unlike Anderson's (2009) male cheerleaders, male twirlers do not seem to refute the fact that their sport is feminine in the same way. This is likely because the cheerleaders were heterosexual former football players, whereas the dominance of women in twirling cannot be denied nor can twirling be made as "macho" as cheer (Fisher 2007). Furthermore, Anderson's ability to recruit such a sample indicates its inclusivity and move towards masculinizing the sport. Twirling has moving in the opposite direction in many ways by supporting the inclusion of dance. While Anderson's orthodox male cheerleaders are severely discouraged from displaying effeminate behavior, in twirling there is a greater acceptance and inclusivity of softer masculinities as dance has become more prominent. With the majority of participants in this study being non-heterosexual, it is clear baton twirling remains a safe space for non-heteronormative masculinities. However, the fact that five of the seven heterosexual men who participated in this study were in their 20s may be indicative of acceptance of heterosexual men's involvement in non-heterosexual spaces.

Despite acknowledging that twirling is a female-dominated sport, there are only slight attempts to “make it macho” (e.g., Paul’s fisted free hand) (Fisher 2007). Instead, there is more movement towards “making it maverick” (Fisher 2007). The maverick male twirler upholds several of the tenets Fisher (2007) presents: (1) The male twirler is the athletic boy who finds he is good at twirling and perhaps dance accidentally and likes his position as a token (Hunter); (2) the boy in a large family (Steven) who stakes out twirling as their territory; (3) gay or straight men who do not worry about putting a macho reputation at stake (Walter); (4) gay or straight men who find the arts a welcoming environment for many kinds of people (Brian); and (5) secure men who do not worry what people think (Brad). The maverick male twirler is *rebellious* against gender norms; *unconventional* because he is participating in a peripheral sport; *irregular* because twirling is not commonly seen in the public eye; *unexpected* because few anticipate seeing a male twirler; and often *independent* as a token—he is not *just* athletic. The maverick male twirler maintains a unique status because of his *bravery* in associating himself with an effeminized space that contributes to his hybrid identity.

As Bridges and Pascoe (2014) note, the challenge to masculinity research today is whether or not the changes occurring in masculine identities are preserving or contesting gender and sexual inequality. Bridges and Pascoe (2014) outline three different ways in which scholars begin to answer this question: (1) they wonder if masculinity is being changed “beyond local variation” (p. 247) (e.g., Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Regarding men in twirling, it is likely that the evidence presented in the narratives of those I interviewed is limited to “local variation” because of the specificity of the topic of men in baton twirling. However, the rumors of high levels of support for Japan and France’s male twirlers is interesting and contests Connell and Messerschmidt’s (2005) argument that “hybrid masculine forms have not significantly

affected the meanings of masculinity at regional or global levels” (Bridges and Pascoe’s 2014:247).

More broadly, the existence of hybrid masculinities indicates the potential pervasiveness of hybrid masculinities if considering a trickle-down effect (i.e., greater acceptance of varied masculinities at higher levels of the masculine hierarchy have paved the way for lower ranked masculinities to take on these attributes). However, because of the place of baton twirling at the periphery of sports and because the masculinities within it are subordinated, it may be true that hybrid masculinities may be a movement occurring from the ground up. To this point, it has become clear that achievement of the hegemonic masculine identity is impossible for most men and they therefore have accepted this impossibility and opened up to more varied options with which to identify. More comparative study on men in effeminized and masculine spaces is necessary.

In their second point, Bridges and Pascoe (2014) cite previous research that has argued that hybrid masculinities have become so widespread that inequality is waning and therefore men’s interactions and identities are no longer affected by it (e.g., Anderson 2009; McCormack 2012). In twirling, male twirlers’ masculine identities *are* affected by this inequality, but not necessarily as a result of the Blue Curtain which is limited to the competitive sphere. The ideations of gender the male twirlers I interviewed presented along with their experiences of stigma as youth indicate that men’s interactions and identities can be greatly affected by gender (and sexual) inequalities. Again, the torment Chuck experienced as a result of his non-conformity to preconceived notions of masculinity highlights this point.

In their third point, Bridges and Pascoe (2014) refer to a significant amount of research that supports the prevalence of hybrid masculinities, but instead of suggesting increasing levels

of gender and sexual equalities, this research may describe “the flexibility of systems of inequality” (p. 247). Thus, hybrid masculinities may illustrate changes in the way we see structures of power and inequalities, but do not quite challenge them. I suggest that a mixture of hybrid and inclusive masculinities is a more applicable way of describing this flexibility wherein varied gender presentations and non-heterosexuality is accepted creating a newly defined hegemonic masculinity. To elaborate, hegemonic ideas of masculinity have been combined with subordinated masculinities to create hybrid masculinities. These hybrid masculinities include inclusive properties such as greater homosocial interactions (e.g., Peterson and Anderson 2012), acceptance of non-heterosexual sexualities (e.g., Anderson 2009), and participation in spaces that are effeminately stigmatized (e.g., Williams 1992). In terms of inequality, I agree with Bridges and Pascoe (2014) that these redefinitions fall short of challenging gender inequalities, but at least for men, there is a more widely accepted notion of sexual equality. Although women do adopt masculinities (e.g., Pascoe 2007[2012]), this process of hybridization and inclusivity is largely among men trading their masculinities to create an inclusive-hybrid that may include gay men, but still excludes all women. While this study presents only a limited slice of men and masculinities, I believe it supports the *existence* of hybrid masculinities and the *importance* of inclusive masculinities, but is limited in terms of determining prevalence. Additionally, more study is needed on inclusive and hybrid masculinities among women.

More broadly, what might a new inclusive-hybrid masculinity mean for greater gender inequality? As men exert more hybrid masculine characteristics that open up effeminately stigmatized spaces, perhaps in reaction, women will be able to occupy even more masculine spaces through a version of hybrid femininity. Pascoe (2007 [2012]) begins to describe this effect among some of the female students in her study who wore masculine clothing or referred

to themselves as using masculine vernacular. Though larger institutional inequality still exists, if inclusive hybrid masculinities are pervasive enough, over time they may infiltrate these institutions. On the other hand, this inclusivity could be one-sided because of the homosocial nature of inclusive and hybrid masculinities wherein men may be less stigmatized upon entering effeminized spaces, but women may still not be welcomed in masculine spaces.

Bridges and Pascoe's (2014) second point as to whether or not hybrid masculinities challenge inequality in the form of Anderson's (2005a, 2009) inclusive masculinity is a noteworthy discussion. As the men who twirled at the collegiate level (Isaac, Paul, Hayden, and Brad) detailed, they largely received support from their peers particularly in comparison to the stigma they experienced as youth. This is telling of acceptance of hybrid masculinities or, at the very least, greater support of men's participation in effeminized spaces. As my and Anderson's research indicate, perhaps incidents of homophobia and levels of homophobia are on the decline as men's attitudes about gender and sexuality become more inclusive. This nonetheless does little for gender inequalities. Instead, men are becoming more homosocialized because, after all, this inclusivity still excludes women.

I argue that while there is more acceptance of gay individuals and the inclusive-hybrid masculinities created as a result, homophobia nor homophobia has by any means been eradicated. The experiences of multiple generations of male twirlers in my sample can attest to that. From Chuck's experience of heckling while twirling at the professional game in the 1960s to Hayden's bullies in the early 2000s, all of those to whom I spoke experienced some form of stigma. That being said, this stigma was often experienced at young ages while "under the microscope" in school settings. The positive experiences of those who continued to twirl in college, as well as the positive reception of twirling accomplishments in the workplace indicates

that perhaps a more inclusive attitude can be found among adults who are no longer under such close watch. It should be noted, however, that those twirlers mentioned receiving praise are employed in effeminately and/or sexually stigmatized occupations: hairdresser and teacher.

The small numbers of male twirlers and few public exhibitions (e.g., television appearances or featured twirler positions at universities) of twirlers more generally do not allow for large audiences to see twirling. The position of baton twirling at the periphery of not only sports, but also artistic forms may work to further subordinate the masculine identities of those involved. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of university twirling positions alongside marching bands at football games, a primary (i.e., hegemonic) sport does little to make twirling masculine, but instead may work to effeminize it further in contrast as Kanter (1977) suggests. Being at the “bottom of the totem pole” of both sport and masculine hierarchies does little to fight gender and sexual inequality, but at the very least, male twirlers challenge suppositions of heterosexual, hegemonic masculinity while reframing masculinity in such a way that both hybrid and inclusive masculinities apply.

In closing, in the case of my sample, a majority of white and *gay* men in a peripheral, sexualized, and effeminized space, elements of both inclusive and hybrid masculinity can be combined to allow these men to navigate between the expectations of both the twirling world and public eye. In a sense, they create *inclusive-hybrid masculinity*. In short, male twirlers pick and chose the elements of masculinity or femininity that works for them as men embedded in an effeminized space to create a hybrid masculinity that is reminiscent of changing attitudes toward what was once thought to be hegemonically masculine, but is now also inclusive. My contribution is thus unique. In doing so, they are also challenging what it means to be a straight man in an effeminized space and diminishing the deviance of gay men with whom this space is

shared. Though homophobia has not been eradicated in the way Anderson (2009) idealizes, there is evidence of this movement occurring and during this process, new masculinities are being created that are simultaneously inclusive of softer masculinities and understanding of sexual orientations, but do little to lessen inequality between men and women.

Categorizing and Labeling Spaces

Defining and labeling stigmatized sports may aid in our understanding of the complexities of those sports specifically in regard to gender and sexuality. Through only slight expansion, these definitions may be applied to both stigmatized sports and occupations; therefore, “space” may be used in place of sport or occupation. Drawn from this work and from broader literature, I introduce the categories of two stigmatized space groupings: sexually and effeminately stigmatized (see Figure 2, Appendix A); and a hierarchy of stigmatization: primary, secondary, and peripheral (see Figure 1, Appendix A). Finally, I define an umbrella term for spaces that were formerly occupied by men, but in which women now maintain a majority, the “effeminized space.” Much of the stigma that surrounds these spaces stems from gender, but is not limited to it, as it may also be a product of homophobia or homophobia (Anderson 2009).

I define a sexually stigmatized space as those that are stigmatized as “gay” because of the outward appearance of homosocial interaction, but the actions and behaviors of those within may not in fact present gendered behaviors that match this “gay” labeling. These spaces may be seen as sexualized, but not necessarily effeminately stigmatized or, both sexually and effeminately stigmatized. As an example in the sport literature, I use wrestling, a sport in which the appearance of two men wrestling may be homoeroticized, but the “hardness” of being a successful wrestler is considered masculine (Michael 2013). While Michael (2013) found his group of high school wrestlers to show inclusive attitudes towards gay men being a part of their

team, some limits were placed on this acceptance as Michael's (2013) title suggests ("Just don't hit on me and I'm fine").

Other sports that might be included in this category are women's softball or basketball where the athleticism in the sport stigmatizes it as masculine. Identity management techniques may be put into place to combat this stigma and thus, from the inside, it may not mirror this label. As Anderson's (2005a, 2009) research on cheerleaders shows, there may also be variations within a sexually stigmatized sport (i.e., inclusive and orthodox masculinities). In terms of occupations, male dancers, actors, or artists as well as female sports coaches, mechanics, law enforcement officers, and military service women may also qualify. Those sexually stigmatized spaces that perhaps do live up to the label because of a "gay" or "lesbian" majority would render a second derivation of a sexually stigmatized space.

Effeminately stigmatized spaces are first and foremost those in which females are the dominant gender a ratio to men. These spaces may be seen as feminine, but not necessarily sexually stigmatized or, both effeminately and sexually stigmatized. For instance, participation in baton twirling may be seen as either "girlie" or "gay," but as I have proven, within the competitive twirling world, men are often subordinate to women as gendered tokens because of the "skewed" nature of twirling (Kanter 1977). In a way similar to nursing and teaching, men in effeminately stigmatized occupations may experience a certain amount of privilege as the gendered token aligning with "glass escalator" characteristics (Williams 1993). Other sports that might fall under the effeminately stigmatized label are dance, color guard, or rhythmic gymnastics. Occupations that qualify for an effeminately stigmatized space status may be hair dresser/esthetician, florist, male fashion designer, nurse, or teacher.

Moreover, I believe there is a hierarchical relationship among sports (see Figure 1, Appendix A). I take the label of “secondary” sport from Harvey (1996). Under Harvey’s definition, a secondary sport is that which is secondary to primary (i.e., hegemonic) [American] sports like football, baseball, or basketball. For this reason, Harvey (1996) calls the volleyball team he studies a secondary sport because it is secondary to those listed previously. Some secondary sports might include golf, lacrosse, rugby, soccer (in America), swimming/diving or track and field.

However, I believe there is a third level of hierarchy among sports, those at the periphery. Particularly for men, these may include baton twirling, rhythmic gymnastics, color guard, dance, etc. In terms of occupations, these become harder to define, but tests of status using a socioeconomic index may indicate a hierarchical relationship between occupations. For example, a doctor holds more status than a teacher and therefore teaching may be a secondarily stigmatized occupation, and becoming a hairdresser is a peripherally stigmatized occupation.

The relationship between these spaces can be interconnected and layered (combining Figure 1 and Figure 2, Appendix A). For instance, a secondary sport like volleyball can also be effeminized just like the peripherally stigmatized sport of baton twirling can be both sexually and effeminately stigmatized. The categories of sexually and effeminately stigmatized spaces are not mutually exclusive. Contrarily, the hierarchical relationship of primary, secondary, and peripheral spaces are exclusive. A primarily effeminized space cannot simultaneously occupy a peripherally stigmatized space (at least with the same culture [e.g., soccer]), thus the hierarchical nature.

Finally, I propose the concept of the effeminized space, an umbrella term that may encompass all of the above. The occupations Williams (1992) studied that resulted in the glass

escalator theory were all effeminized spaces: nursing, teaching, social work, and librarian. Similarly, baton twirling and cheerleading are unique in the way that they have truly become effeminized spaces. Where once men were the twirlers and cheerleaders, now women are the representative gender. In this way it has become effeminized. A feminized space may be sexually or effeminately stigmatized and align with primary, secondary, or peripheral spaces.

Limitations and Future Research

As with any empirical study, there were limitations specifically in the forms of race, generalizability, and sampling. Due to the qualitative nature, limited sample size, and obscure population on which this research is based, my findings are not generalizable to greater populations of either tokens or male twirlers. Nevertheless, I believe that the theory I have developed is malleable enough to be applied to men in effeminized spaces beyond baton twirling.

In terms of race, though specific demographic data on the male baton twirling population does not exist, I believe that proportionally, the sample I was able to recruit is reflective of the male twirling community in the United States. However, I acknowledge that the experiences of many male twirlers may have been different due to racism, socio-economic class, social environment, and other areas of society in which I did not focus my interviews. Male twirlers that are able to compete are privileged in the sense that they have access to coaching, are able to pay coaches, are able to pay contest entry fees, and are provided with the ability to travel to competitions. Additionally, among various ethnic groups, definitions of masculinity are a mixed bag and vary culturally even within the United States where I drew my population. In sum, the experiences of white male twirlers may be very different than that of black or Hispanic male twirlers.

Moreover, many of those I spoke to are still heavily involved in baton twirling; if they were not involved, they were not very far removed (with the exceptions of Ian, Martin, and Zeke). Those that are not involved in twirling anymore and not included in this sample, may have had an experience that led them to disassociate from the sport completely. I also predict that perhaps some twirlers, male and female, only see baton twirling as a childhood extra curricular activity and therefore leave it behind them completely upon reaching adulthood.

As a further limitation, I only included competition baton twirlers and was further limited by only including those that competed in NBTA or USTA organizations. Moreover, other male twirlers may not have been associated with competition twirling, but instead may have been part of neighborhood groups, recreation center or dance studio classes. It would also be interesting to see if the sexual orientation among those I was unable to reach was proportionally higher than the sample I was able to obtain. It may be that sexual orientation is correlated with separating one's self from twirling (e.g., straight men distanced themselves from the stigmatization). While my sample represented male twirlers from 16 states, I further limited participation in this study by only including those that live in the continental United States (Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the U.S. Virgin Islands also have competitive twirling). As many of the participants mentioned, twirling in European and Asian countries is seen very differently. Male twirlers overseas and even in Canada may experience other forms or no stigma at all. Therefore, their experiences may disprove the tokenism framework, limiting it to male twirlers in the United States.

While I am proud of the cross-country representation of my sample, conducting a majority (28) of my interviews via phone call may have been limiting. Without in-person interviews, observing body language is impossible and gauging comfort level is difficult. That being said, the subject matter of the interviews was relatively noninvasive and many provided

feedback that our interview was “cathartic” or “therapeutic.” Additionally, my position as a male twirler was both limiting and beneficial to this study. However, I do not believe that an outsider to twirling would have been able to deeply analyze these interviews without extensive knowledge of twirling, its histories, and complexities.

As for future study, expanding this topic to include not only more American, but also international male twirlers would make way for a more complex analysis. Additionally, adding a quantitative survey might get at other issues in twirling (prejudice, inequalities, gender differences, etc.), gain a better sense of the population, and reach a wider audience. Moreover, inclusion of women into the study and how they perceive the male twirling experience would provide a richer data set. I believe elements of the “Blue Curtain” may further be applied to men in dance, gymnastics, and color guard (flag spinning) because of its close relation to twirling. Other sports where the definition of secondary or peripherally stigmatized spaces might include golf, tennis, badminton, swimming/diving, or soccer. Additionally, some other occupations may qualify for the effeminized space label: hair stylist/esthetician, medical professions other than nursing (e.g., gynecology, pediatrics, etc.), maid, actor/opera performer, etc.

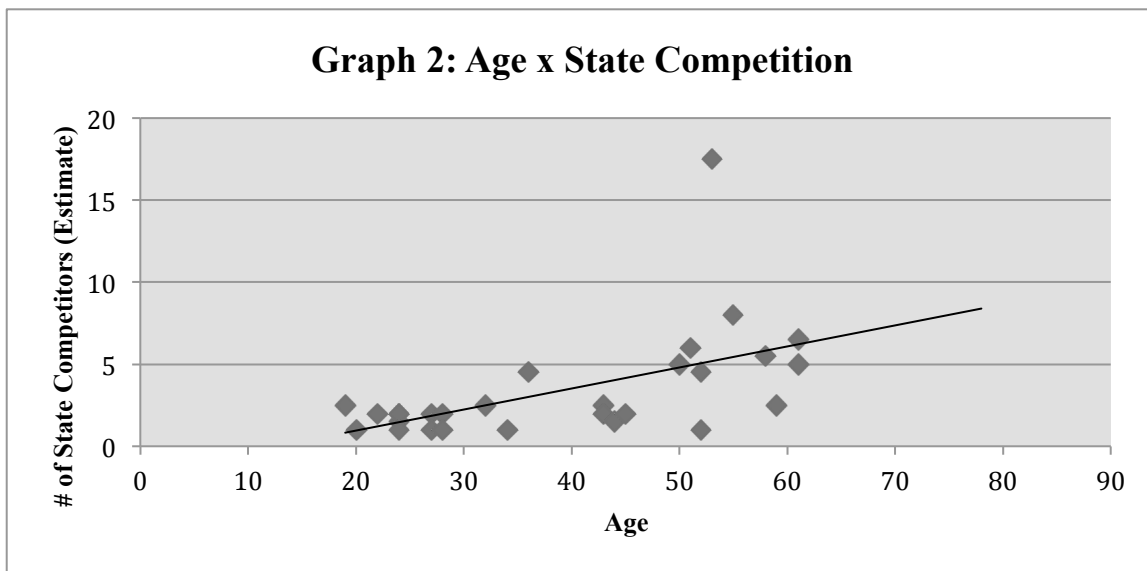
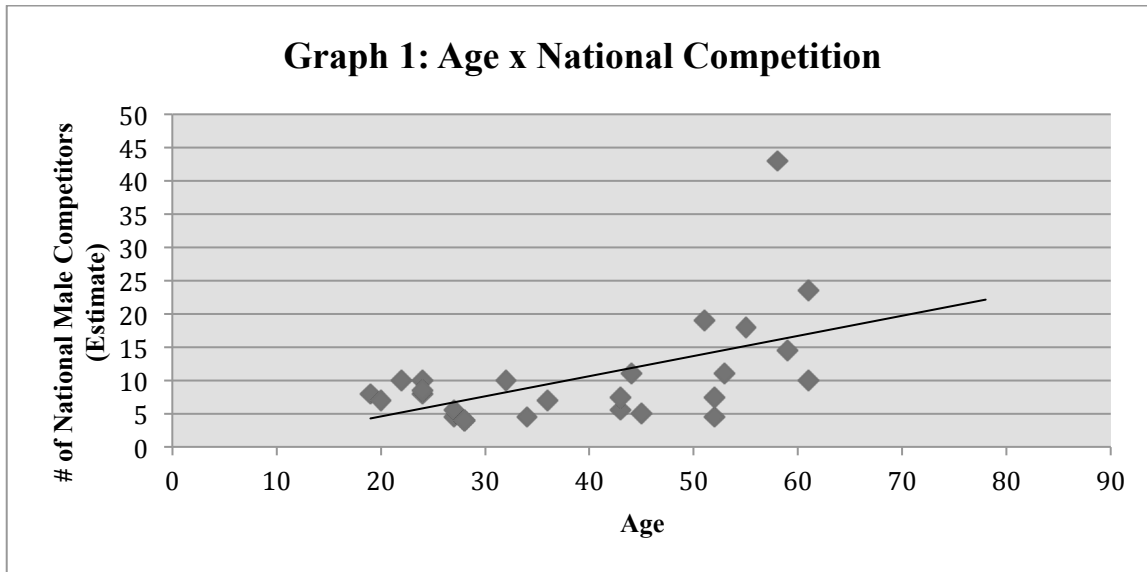
Closing Remarks

Based on the analysis I have conducted, I propose a theory in an attempt to answer my research question regarding whether and how male twirlers’ status as tokens influence masculine identity management. I use the metaphor of the blue curtain used at NBTA’s national competition (AYOP) to evaluate the privilege and disadvantage inside the twirling world, what I call the “Blue Curtain.” I further consider how stigma affects male twirlers beyond this blue curtain outside of the competitive twirling sphere. The place of twirling as a youth activity may also put it in a unique position with regard to tokenism, stigma, and identity management.

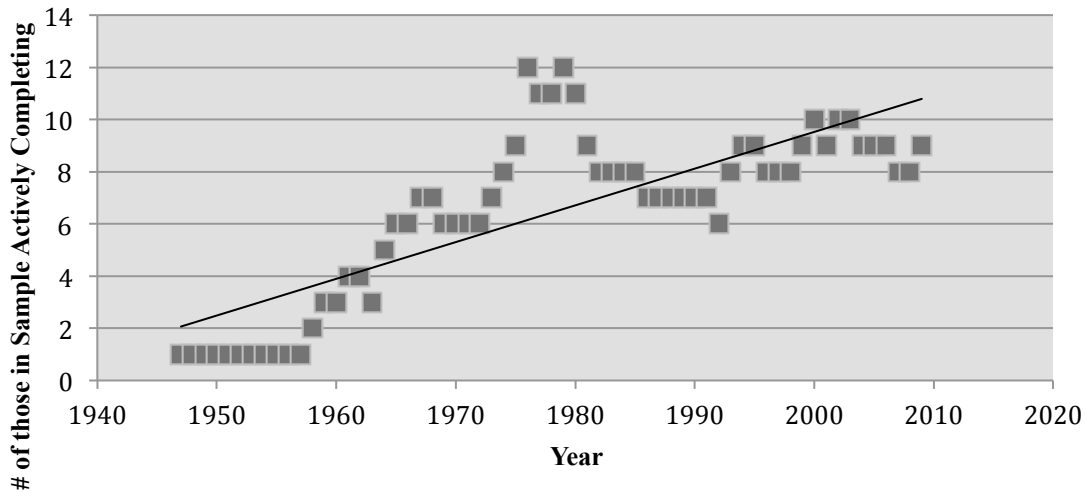
Despite presenting characteristics of inclusive masculinity, these newly constructed hybrid masculine identities challenge perceptions of hegemonic masculinities and homophobia, but do little to combat gender inequality. Instead, perhaps they promote a new inclusive-hybrid masculinity that includes more gender and sexual diversity, but is limited only to men contributing to more homosocial groupings. As a new way of thinking about gender and stigma in effeminized spaces, I also propose a way to categorize spaces like sports and occupations that are seen as effeminate or sexually stigmatized. I further posit a hierarchical structure among both sports and occupations that may relate to how stigma is produced. Finally, I introduce the concept of the effeminized space, which proves to challenge men's privilege, as they become tokens in a female-dominated skewed group.

APPENDICES

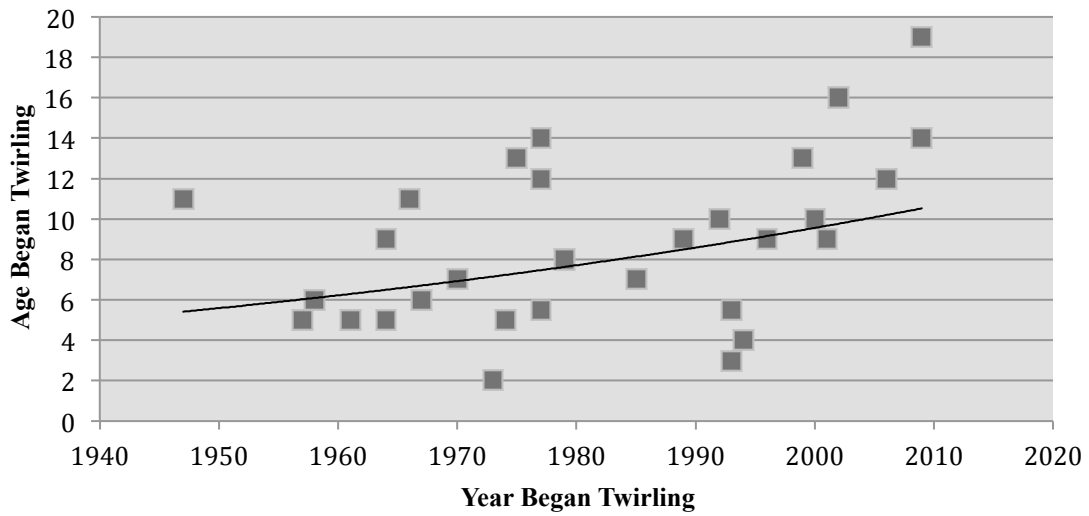
Appendix A



Graph 3: Year x Sample of Competitors



Graph 4: Year Began Twirling x Age Began Twirling



Graph 5: Year Began Twirling x Competitive Career

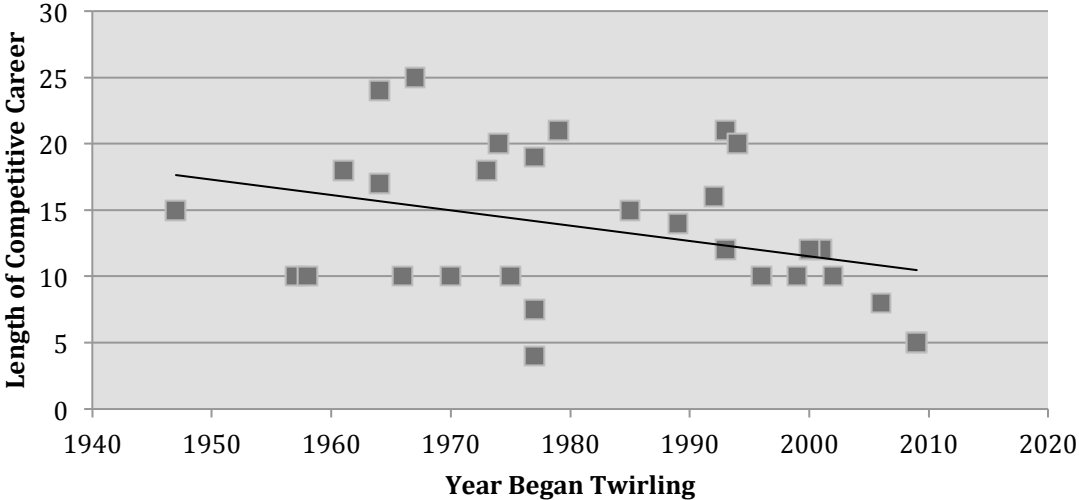


Figure 1: Hierarchy of Spaces

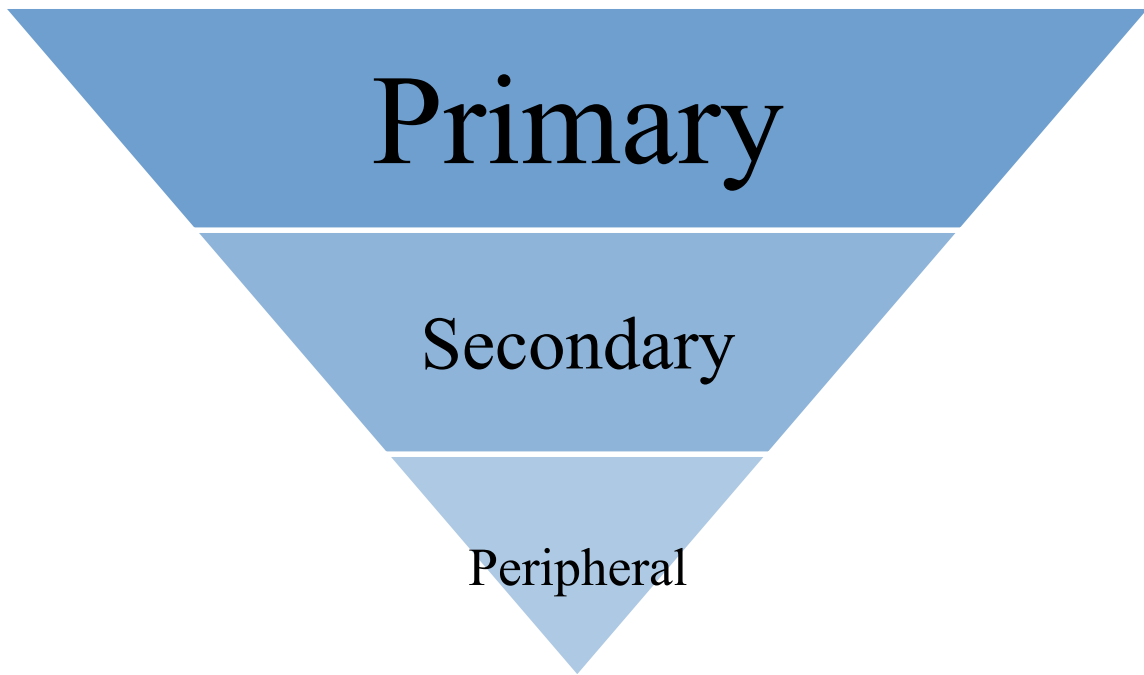
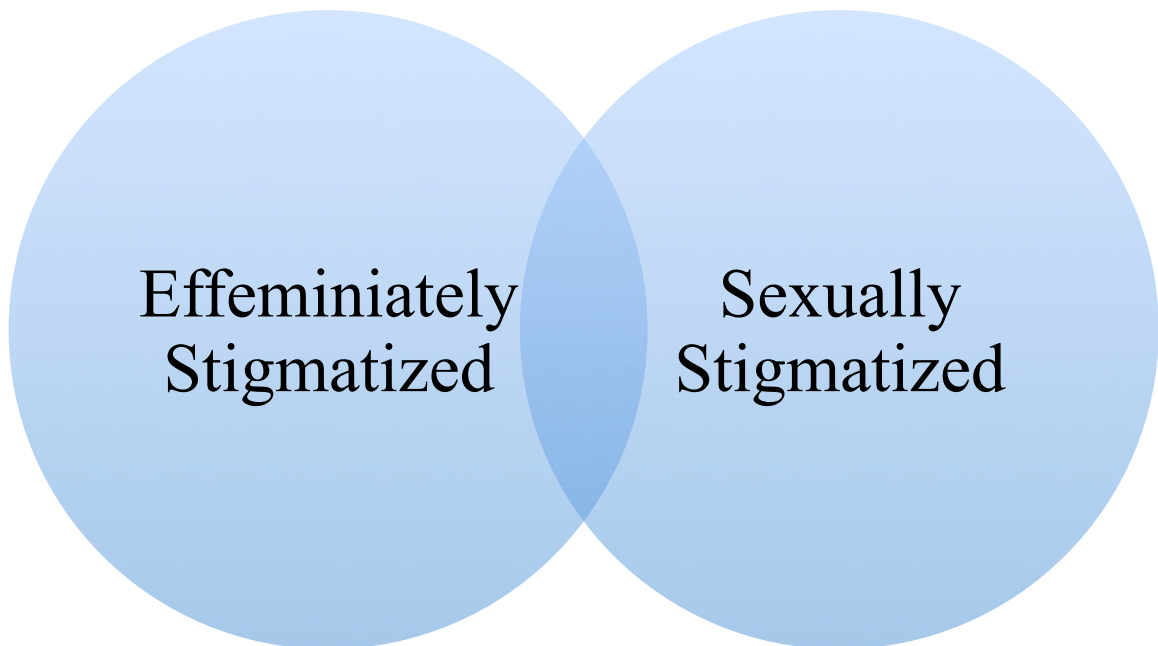


Figure 2: Framing Stigma



Facebook and E-mail Recruitment Message

Note: Each of these to be copy and pasted into the appropriate place with adjustments to accommodate the participant's name. Additional alterations may be made should a participant respond to the Facebook post; this adjustment may be as simple as adding, "Thank you for your interest!"

E-mail and Facebook Private Message Template:

Hello, [Name of Recipient]!

I am currently working towards my thesis for my Master's degree in sociology from the University of Houston and I was curious if you might be interested in participating in an interview with me concerning your participation in the sport baton twirling.

The interview consists of questions asking about your experiences in twirling as a male competitor, reflection on the associations between twirling and your masculine identity, and the differences between twirling organizations. In addition to contributing to academic knowledge on men in baton twirling, I also hope to aid in the documentation of baton twirling's history.

For more detailed information regarding the interview and this project, please see the attached document.

Please reply to this message or call to confirm your participation and to schedule your interview.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Trenton M. Haltom

tmhaltom@uh.edu

XXX-XXX-XXXX

Facebook status or group post:

ATTENTION: Male twirlers, eighteen or older, who have competed in NBTA and/or USTA. I am writing my masters thesis on men in baton twirling and would love to hear from you! Please private message me for more information and to schedule your interview.

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON
COLLEGE of LIBERAL ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES
Department of Sociology

****SUBJECTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY
ON MEN IN BATON TWIRLING****

Research Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which men's participation in baton twirling affects their masculine identity. As a secondary aspect to this study, I seek to examine whether or how organizational differences affect masculine identity.

Research Process:

If you agree to be a part of this study, the principal investigator will voice record an interview with you face-to-face or via phone, Skype, or Facetime at a time of your convenience.

Eligibility Criteria:

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are a male who, at one time, competed in competitions sanctioned by the National Baton Twirling Association (NBTA), the United States Twirling Association (USTA), or both*.

Risks:

I believe there to be minimal risk associated with participation in this study. All identities of subjects will remain **confidential**, which thus addresses any unlikely risk from disclosure of identity.

Benefits:

While you will not directly benefit from participation, your participation may help the investigator better understand how men in baton twirling construct their masculine identities as a minority group within the greater sport of baton twirling. This knowledge will contribute to the understanding of the formulation of men's masculine identities, roles as token objects, and participation in effeminate sports.

Principle Investigator:

Trenton M. Haltom
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Faculty Supervisor:

Amanda K. Baumle
Associate Professor
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(xxx) xxx-xxxx

The University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (713) 743-9204 has reviewed this project.

* Organization's pseudonyms used here, real names were used in original document.

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

PROJECT TITLE: Men in Baton Twirling: Effects of Tokenism on Masculine Identities

You are being invited to participate in a research project conducted by Trenton M. Haltom from the Department of Sociology at the University of Houston.

NON-PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any question.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which men's participation in baton twirling affects their masculine identity. As a secondary aspect to this study, I seek to examine whether or how organizational differences affect masculine identity. I anticipate the entire study, from collection of interviews through analysis of data, will last nine months.

PROCEDURES

A total of 30 subjects located in the United States will be asked to participate in this project.

If you agree to participate in this study, I will interview you in a location of your choice or, if this is not a viable option, through a technology of your choice. The interview will last approximately one to two hours, depending on your level of interest and your desire to continue the interview. The interview will cover basic demographic information (sex, race, education, etc.); your history and experiences in baton twirling (length of competition career, titles won, current participation, first experiences, etc.); how you define masculinity (in terms of personal identification and how you view masculinity within the twirling community); stigma you may have experienced as a male twirler; your experiences as a minority in twirling; and finally, the differences you see in the two leading baton twirling organizations.

I will use a digital voice recorder to record your voice during the interview and will also take handwritten notes. After the completion of the interview, your part in the study comes to an end.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your participation in this project. Each subject's name will be replaced with a pseudonym by the principal investigator. This pseudonym will appear on all written materials and voice recordings. The list pairing the subject's name to the assigned pseudonym will be kept separate from all research materials and

will be available only to the principal investigator. Confidentiality will be maintained within legal limits.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

I believe there to be minimal risk associated with participation in this study. All identities of subjects will remain **confidential**, which thus addresses any unlikely risk from disclosure of identity.

BENEFITS

While you will not directly benefit from participation, your participation may help the investigator better understand how men in baton twirling construct their masculine identities as a minority group within the greater sport of baton twirling. This knowledge will contribute to the understanding of the formulation of men's masculine identities and participation in effeminate sports.

ALTERNATIVES

Participation in this project is voluntary and the only alternative to this project is non-participation.

PUBLICATION STATEMENT

The results of this study may be published in professional and/or scientific journals. The results may also be used for educational purposes or for professional presentations. However, no individual subject will be identified.

AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF AUDIO TAPES

If you consent to participate in this study, please indicate whether you agree to be audio taped during the study by initialing by your choice below. If you agree, please also indicate whether the audio tapes can be used for publication/presentations.

_____ I agree to be audiotaped during the interview.

_____ I do not agree to be audiotaped during the interview.

SUBJECT RIGHTS

1. I understand that informed consent is required of all persons participating in this project.
2. All procedures have been explained to me and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
3. Any risks and/or discomforts have been explained to me.

4. Any benefits have been explained to me.
5. I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Trenton M. Haltom at (xxx) xxx-xxxx, or Dr. Amanda K. Baumle at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.
6. I have been told that I may refuse to participate or to stop my participation in this project at any time before or during the project. I may also refuse to answer any question.
7. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING MY RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (713-743-9204). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.
8. All information that is obtained in connection with this project and that can be identified with me will remain confidential as far as possible within legal limits. Information gained from this study that can be identified with me may be released to no one other than the principal investigators. The results may be published in scientific journals, professional publications, or educational presentations without identifying me by name.

I HAVE READ (OR HAVE HAD READ TO ME) THE CONTENTS OF THIS CONSENT FORM AND HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED TO ASK QUESTIONS. I HAVE RECEIVED ANSWERS TO MY QUESTIONS. I GIVE MY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I HAVE RECEIVED (OR WILL RECEIVE) A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR MY RECORDS AND FUTURE REFERENCE.

Study Subject (print name): _____

Signature of Study Subject: _____

Date: _____

I HAVE READ THIS FORM TO THE SUBJECT AND/OR THE SUBJECT HAS READ THIS FORM. AN EXPLANATION OF THE RESEARCH WAS GIVEN AND QUESTIONS FROM THE SUBJECT WERE SOLICITED AND ANSWERED TO THE SUBJECT'S SATISFACTION. IN MY JUDGMENT, THE SUBJECT HAS DEMONSTRATED COMPREHENSION OF THE INFORMATION.

Principal Investigator (print name and title): _____

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Interview Schedule

1. **General Demographics:**
 - a. Current age:
 - b. Race/Ethnicity:
 - c. Sexual orientation:
 - d. Where did you grow up?
 - i. Where do you currently live?
 - e. Education level (highest degree obtained).
 - f. Current occupation?
2. **Twirling Demographics:**
 - a. Age when started twirling
 - b. How long did you twirl?
 - i. If different, how long did you compete?
 - c. Organizational participation
 - d. Regional participation
 - e. Titles
 - f. Are you currently active within the twirling community in any capacity (coach, judge, parent, etc.)?
3. **General questions:**
 - a. What were your favorite events to twirl in?
 - b. If you could name some “star” male twirlers, who would they be and why did they stand out to you?
 - i. Did they have any influence on you (personally or your twirling style)?
 - c. Did you participate in other sports?
 - i. If so, which ones?
 - ii. What ages?
 - iii. Would you say you participated in those sports more or less than twirling, or about the same?
 - iv. What was appealing about those other sports? What did you like or dislike?
 - v. Why did you quit?
4. **Personal background and familial involvement:**
 - a. How did you get started in twirling?
 - b. Tell me about your family’s involvement.
 - i. Mother?
 - ii. Father?
 - iii. Siblings?
 - c. What about your peers, were any of them involved in twirling?
 - i. If so, were they friends from school?
 - d. Why did you quit or retire?
5. **Masculinity**
 - a. Define masculinity in your own terms.
 - i. What does it mean to be masculine?

- ii. How does being a male twirler fit within your understanding of masculinity? (Can it fit? If so, how?)
 - iii. Have you felt it was easy to be a both masculine and a twirler?
 - b. Can you describe a masculine twirler?
 - i. What might he look like, dress like, what personality characteristics, etc.
 - c. Can you think of or describe a male twirler you think is particularly masculine? What is it about him that you consider to be masculine?
 - i. How about a male twirler you view as more feminine?
 - 1. What is it about him that makes him more feminine?
 - ii. Would you say you feel more comfortable around masculine twirlers or feminine twirlers? Why?
 - iii. How does sexuality factor into whether you view a male twirler as masculine or feminine?
 - 1. Do you think a gay man can be a masculine male twirler?
 - 2. In your own experience, has being a male twirler had any effect on how you express your sexual identity? What about others' perceptions of your sexual identity?

6. Stigma

- a. Were you ever made fun of for twirling?
 - i. From whom?
 - ii. How did you respond?
 - iii. Why did you think you were made fun of?
- b. Did it change your twirling in any way after being made fun of?
- c. Did you participate more or less because of it?
- d. Are more of your friends men, women, or about equal?
 - i. Why do you think that is?
- e. When you were twirling did you date anyone or were you in a relationship?
 - i. Did you bring that person to twirling events? Why or why not?
 - ii. Did your teammates interact with your dates/partners?

7. Comparison to Women and Token Status

- a. Were you the only guy competing in your state?
 - i. Region?
 - ii. National level?
 - iii. If so, what was this experience like, being the only guy?
- b. Did you compete against women?
 - i. Were you compared to them?
 - 1. If so, did you do anything to differentiate yourself from them? (Style of dress, performance techniques, etc.)
 - 2. Did you see other guys doing the same thing?
 - ii. Did your coaches tell you to do anything differently in comparison to female twirlers?
- c. Did you feel like your female competitors supported you?
 - i. Can you give examples of when you felt supported?
 - ii. Examples of when you were not supported?
- d. Did you feel pressure to be better than the female twirlers?
 - i. Why? From whom?

- e. Did you feel you were treated more or less favorably than female competitors, or about the same?
 - i. Can you give an example of when you felt you were treated more favorably?
 - ii. Can you give an example of when you felt you were treated less favorably?
- f. If you think about twirlers you love to watch in competition, would you say they were mostly male, female, or a mixture of both?
 - i. Why do you think that is?

8. Technique

- a. What are the differences between a male and female twirler?
 - i. What makes a male twirler effeminate?
 - ii. Did you do anything to avoid being viewed as feminine?
- b. Are there events only women compete in?
- c. Are there tricks specific to women or men?
 - i. Were there any tricks you decided not to do because a female did them?
 - ii. Did you add any tricks because a male did them?
- d. How did you select your costumes?
 - i. Were they your ideas?
 - 1. What did you like about them? What did you not like?
 - ii. Did you do anything to make them more or less masculine?
- e. How did you select your music?
 - i. Did you personally have any requirements?
 - ii. Did your coach have any requirements?
 - iii. Did you cater it to a particular group (e.g. coaches, audience, judges)?

9. Organizational Differences

- a. Explain the differences between USTA and NBTA.
- b. How did you select your organization(s)?
- c. Which do you think is more supportive of their male twirlers?
 - i. Which do you think best represents male twirlers?
- d. Do you think there is more freedom of expression in one versus the other?
 - i. How does the twirling vary between the two organizations?
- e. Do think there are differences in how they perceive male twirlers?
 - i. What do you think causes those differences?
- f. Are there rules in place that might emphasize any differences?
- g. Have you ever had male judges?
 - i. How do you think having a male judge is different than having a female judge?
- h. Are there different score sheets for men?
 - i. If not, do you find this problematic?

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