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'I Cheer, You Cheer, We Cheer': Physical Technologies and the Normalised Body

Abstract

Located within a cultural space situated firmly in the political, technological and historical context of our contemporary moment, and predicated on the contention that all texts are dialogic (Johnson et al., 2004); I read physical cultural technologies as constituents of the powerful techniques of self regulation and self surveillance of the young female body. "We Cheer" acts as a discursive technology; a non-centralised, capillary-like force which works to 'conduct the conduct' (Rose 2000a) of subjects. Emanating from these media are digital discourses through which young girls are learning, not only how to move their bodies appropriately, but how they *have to be* in order to fit the mould and 'join the squad'. As a powerful and pervasive public pedagogy "We Cheer" (re)establishes the position of the neoliberal *girl norm*; that is a girl whose body is representative of her being (hetero)sexy, middle class, white and a young consumer-citizen.

'I Cheer, You Cheer, We Cheer': **Physical Technologies and the Normalised Body**

While cultural technologies that initiate whole-body experiences and notions of physicality are indicative of our conjunctural moment, it is important, as Miller (2006) reminds us to locate these within historical power configurations, critically musing on the concerns and problems they supposedly conceal or erase. These emergent media technologies, as ever, are invested in/with power relations and create new consequences for human beings: human bodies.

The Nintendo Wii has captured the media gaze as a deliberately 'active' addition to a typically sedentary activity. Utilising wireless Wiimotes (Schlomer, Poppinga, Henze & Ball, 2008) movement is detected by sensors in three dimensions, allowing for the initiation of expressive physical endeavour. As such the formerly static, sedentary living room (Biddle, Marshall, Gorely & Cameron, 2009) is filled with moving bodies as they row, run, hurdle, play tennis, golf, volleyball, amongst a multitude of other games in the Nintendo Wii range. Accordingly, as of December 31st 2008 the Wii was leading the new generation of games, over the Playstation 3 and the Xbox 360 in European sales (BBC, 2008) and thus contributing to the massive growth in the United Kingdom gaming markets (NPD Group Inc, 2009).

Whether *experienced* as innovation, novelty, play or entertainment (Altheide, 1996) these discursive technologies need to be *read* as being encapsulated within wider iterations of power, allowing a connection between the domestic living room and the rest of the globe (Livingstone, 2009). As such, issues of subjectivity, representation and identity are "manifested, challenged and rewarded in the virtual world of the video game" (Hayes, 2007, 24). Somewhat reworking Best (2004, 195) the Nintendo Wii console, and the "We Cheer" game that forms the essence of this analysis, offer a contemporary research space "where girls are expected to be deeply invested because they can use this site to solidify and display their feminine identifies".

Drawing upon scholarly work on the female cheerleader (Adams, 2005; Barnett, 2006; Grindstaff & West, 2006; Merten, 1996); the digital territory of cheerleading in "We Cheer" appears to emanate the idealist representation of girls (Adams, 2005) in games, speaking to notions of "racial performativity. . .neoliberalism, identity politics

and white" (Andrews & Giardina, 2008, 403) femininity. Subsequently, "We Cheer" can be interrogated within the cultural and political context of new, interactive, media technologies and the implications it has on hyperreal depictions of the normalised female body can be discerned.

Cultural Studies and Cultural Technologies

In light of the growing concerns over global health care; or specifically rising obesity levels (Campbell, 2003; Crawford, 2002; James, Leach, Kalamara & Shayegh, 2001; Prentice & Jebb, 1995), the Nintendo Wii and its constitutive 'content' are being harnessed for their weight loss capabilities (BBC, 2007; Graves, Stratton, Ridgers & Cable, 2008). Whilst acknowledging the potential for increased activity levels amongst those who would ordinarily be categorised as sedentary— ironically a partial result of the time spent on activities such as computer games—I am more concerned with the normalising capacity of such physical technologies. The virtual world of the video game can be interrogated as a complex and congealing digital fortress, a cultural space situated firmly in the political, technological and historical context of our contemporary moment.

Historically, then, the conjunctural moment is imagined upon an epochal shift (Andrews & Silk, forthcoming) in the role of the state (Rose, 1999) "from authoritarian government to individual responsibility; from injunction to expert advice; and from centralized government to quasi-governmental agencies and the media" (Sender, 2006, p. 135). Simply put by Giroux (2000; 2001; 2003; 2004a/b/c; 2005), it is the death of the social, the ascendency of de-regulationist policies (McRobbie, 2008) and the birth of a culture of surveillance and cynicism; a culture whereby neoliberal normality is celebrated and those disconsolate 'other' bodies are sanctioned for their inability to invest in the capitalist regime, blamed for society's ills and pathologised as immoral (McMurria, 2008). Following Peck and Tickell (2002, p. 384). This paper focuses on the "purposeful construction and consolidation of neoliberalized state forms, modes of governance, and regulatory relations", of which these new media products are indicative. Accordingly, Rose (1999) notes that we are talking about products, practices, techniques that contour the corpus and forms of life.

Ouellette and Hay (2008a/b) consider products such as this as cultural technologies, educators (Leonard, 2009; Lugo-Lugo & Bloodsworth-Lugo, 2009; O'Riordan, 2007), or portable professors (Freeman, 2005), that work as forms of public pedagogy (Giroux, 2004), instructional technologies (Hayes, 2007), or even as 'edutainment' (Dijck, 2006) teaching about appropriate, normalised, bodily conduct and form. I locate "We Cheer" as immersed in the modes and instigation of self regulation, self surveillance and self monitoring of the young female body and as a game that elucidates the nuanced power issues pertaining to female normality when engaged in body movement of any kind.

"We Cheer" acts as a discursive technology; a non-centralised, capillary-like force which works to 'conduct the conduct' (Rose, 2000a) of subjects: following Hamann (2009), the subjectification and subjectivation of (neoliberal) citizens/consumers, operates as a form of biopower (Foucault, 1978; Milchman & Rosenberg, 2005) in which the proliferation and augmentation of cyber and digital interfaces act as a conduit due to their "capacity to reach large populations, whilst at the same time offering the tools through which those populations can *self regulate*" (Rich & Miah, 2009, 167 Italics in original). In this sense, the import of the physicality of the human body is now suggestive of a gaming era that allows for the interface of "We Cheer" to articulate not only the digital, but the social, and very *real* experiences of being a girl.

Wii (We) Cheer

The pervasive preoccupation with the simulated or corporeal 'girl' that populates the mediascape, resonates and interjects into these "experiences of being and having female bodies" (O'Riordan, 2007, 243). Thus, "We Cheer" *entices* the female girl to morph into a digital display of cheerleading (hyper)femininity through the utilisation of the entire body to perform "various choreographed routines" (NAMCO BANDAI GAMES Inc, 2008). Utilising Wii motes as virtual pom-poms the aim is to trace the glittering arrows and perform the routines to the established standard of "*cool*". Providing the participant with an "authentic cheerleading experience" (NAMCO BANDAI GAMES Inc, 2008) means endless character customisation— choosing hair colour, skin tone, cheer uniform and squad members— and bodily modification by burning some "calories in Exercise Mode" (NAMCO BANDAI GAMES Inc, 2008).

Engaging with a variety of dancing platforms (from championship, to a captain 'cheer off' and four player party mode) "We Cheer" becomes the epitome of hyperfeminine and heteronormative ideals, complete with giggling girls dancing to impress surfer, baseball and skater boys in settings bejewelled with flowers, hearts, stars and sparkle. Within this context, the physical body connotes an embedded discourse that invites the normalised girl to embody this prescribed image in an effort comply with heteronormative discourse, thus gaining satisfaction, even contentment, at performing '*appropriately*' for the on looking white boys (hooks, 1995). Respecting the allegorical impression of white women and black men "doing it for daddy" (hooks, 1995), the cultural narrative of this new interactive media technology auspiciously captures the popular representation of white, slender, (hetero)sexy women dancing, cheering and "competing for the acceptance and affection of white "daddies" (Boyle et al., 2006, 106) in an implied discourse of supportiveness, enthusiasm, glamour, sexual attractiveness and American girlhood (Barnett, 2006; Grindstaff & West, 2006).

Embedded within these new interactive media technologies, such as "We Cheer", is discourse connoting to the camouflaged, yet exhibited, conservative celebration of normalcy afforded to some girls at the expense of others. Critical work, in this instance, needs to move away from homogenous and universal notions of equal opportunities (Bordo, 1993) within game play and movement (Drother, 2000; Hayes, 2007; Heeter et al., 2009; Reid-Walsh & Mitchell, 2004) and attempt to comprehend how the media texts of such games efface structural inequalities which work to 'hold-up' normative girlhood over the '*other*' (Guerrero, 2009). Via technologies of governance a normalised, feminised body politic functions to extend, morph and authenticate the notion of the 'Future girl', 'Can-Do Girl' (Harris, 2004) and contemporary 'Top Girl' (McRobbie, 2007) towards that of the *girl norm*. Recognising a shift in focus onto bodily values and the social inscription of the body (Butler, 1989), the figure of the *girl norm* represents and is identifiable as a young white, slim, middle class, (hetero)sexual, hyperfeminine, productive neoliberal citizen.

I Cheer: I Play

Envisaged as an organic exploration into digitally mediated movement, rather than an investigation of game play and/or techno-wizardry, I have, to a certain extent, fashioned my own path of analysis through "We Cheer". Informed by Aarseth (2003), and fully immersed in the cultural artefact, I played the game, watched the demonstrations, I logged onto the website and viewed the advertisements, different performance stages and squad profiles. Constituted around the acuity that "informed research involves play" (Aarseth, 2003, 3) I became deeply absorbed in the games pedagogic discourse and have drawn on these player experiences and techniques in this paper. By acknowledging the positionality of *me,* my own body, self and theory, I am "actively constituted as knowing" (Johnson, Chambers, Raghuram & Ticknell, 2004, 44): it is a dialogic *reading* (Johnson et al., 2004) of a media text from the pose of a white, English, middle class, 23 year old female with a political agenda to heighten the critical consciousness of young girls. Indeed technologies of governance such as "We Cheer" are susceptible to more than one reading, there is, and can be, no pretence of validity or generalisabilty, rather it is crystallised (Richardson, 1994; 1997; 2000), partial and political.

Pace Rich and Miah (2009), studies such as this which are founded upon computer mediated physical movement; diverge from those which regard the realm of the cyber as detached from reality. Instead there is a conjoining of what is real and what is cyber; a blurring between the embodied and the digital, the physical and the virtual, the active and the static, the epistemological and the ontological (O'Riordan, 2007). In this sense the surveillance, monitoring and sculpting of the digital avatar's body becomes inescapable from the surveillance, monitoring and sculpting of the physical self of the player- a girl who is at once fleshy and digital (Jones, 2008).

The concern is that these cultural 'tools' are visible and textualisable and they convey public pedagogies with regard to the body and computer mediated movement into living rooms and into the consciousness of young girls. In essence "We Cheer" could be termed as an 'actually existing space of neoliberalism' (Brenner & Theodore, 2002); as a cultural artefact that is engrossed in power struggles this text can speak to social debates and articulate dominant discourses surrounding the normative female

body and normative femininity. Thus, as the technological, commercial and media environment that surrounds us evolves, girls have been targeted as consuming citizens (Harris, 2004; Hayes, 2007), and whilst this may not be considered a new phenomenon, McRobbie (2008) points us towards the need to focus on how the heightened visibility of the young female body within the commercial domain is connected to the logic of current neoliberal "economic rationalities . . . Which has as its ideal subject the category of 'girl'" (531). Therefore, "We Cheer" locates the place of digital technologies within capitalist consumer markets as well as situating them within the gendered production of fictional neoliberal consumers/citizens deployed throughout the Empire— in Heywood's (2007) parlance.

Bring on the Cheer: Bring on the Girls

As a site of critical intellectual engagement, "We Cheer" is literally shot through with gendered and sexual politics that are consumed via this aforementioned neoliberal logic of instruction. Positioned centrally with regard to discussions over the apparent post-feminist era of freedom (McRobbie, 2004; 2007; 2008) and the new visibility of girls across the mediascape, technologies of regulation such as this, (re)produce the category of 'girl' as a subject (McRobbie, 2008) whilst implying that feminist concerns as seemingly redundant and responded to. Whilst this may bolster the representation of the girl within the public domain, this narrative of disavowal concurrently overshadows gender inequality and inter-gender power imbalance. In gesturing towards Gill's (2009) contemplation of the metaphorical midriff girl that occupies the gaze "We Cheer" evokes the body of the *girl norm* as the foci; that is it is a commentary on how these corporeal technologies normalise girls towards the idealised cultural body (Ferris, 2003); a figure (Tyler, 2008) that is young, attractive, heterosexual, active and middle class.

As a predominantly white, youthful, able-bodied display of feminine norms (Giardina, 2009), the on-screen squad and the playing, participating, active girl (through selection, customisation and digital representation of the super cute cheerleader) are suggestive of the sexually agentic— and indeed angelic— figures found across global media and advertising (Gill, 2008; 2009; Kim & Lowry, 2005; LaTour, Pitts & Snook-Luther, 1990; Lavine, Sweeny & Wagner, 1999). The focus inevitably falls on

the stylised oversized breasts, long flowing hair, endlessly long legs, sparkling smiles, made up lips and huge flirtatious eyes (O'Riordan, 2007; Piran et al., 2006). It is fair to propose that these girls are watching and ultimately enacting within a (hetero)normative digital economy, whereby the digital currency is conformity to the feminized corporoeconomicus (Silk, Batchelor & Francombe, forthcoming).

This cultivation of the female body and the efficacy of the digital image transmit the gendered logic of the cheerleading body as the focus of this physical technology. The cheeleader's *feminine features* are accentuated as an effect of the clothes they wear, the dance moves or routines they perform, the stances the girls adopt (chests forward and central to the shot/frame), as well as the cornucopia of 'camera' angles that emphasise the voluptuous breasts and endlessly long legs of a body that is unfathomably skinny (Loland, 2000; O'Riordan, 2007; Piran et al., 2006) yet all the while muscular (Boyle, Millington & Vertinsky, 2006). Considering the insidious conflation of beauty with slenderness and muscularity, Guerrero's (2009, 189, emphasis added) work on Bratz dolls is instructive. For the doll involved in physical activity (Bratz Sportz) the objective is to "show the world that it's not just about how you play, but how '*hot*' you look when you win". As with Bratz, "We Cheer" positions the physically active female as '*hot*' and '*sexy*', a consumerable/consuming (Drother, 2000) feminine figure in herself.

From the floral patterns, in pastel colour that decorate the computer/television screen to the customisation of 'your' cheer uniform, hair colour, skin tone, and squad members, "We Cheer" is a virtual world of (hyper)femininity. Via strategies of normalisation, containment and literalisation (O'Riordan, 2007) discursive technologies such as this reproduce dominant discourses surrounding the depiction of girlhood. As such, "We Cheer" can be read as emblematic of the "violent generalizing logic" (Gill, 2009, 139) capable of rendering "differences invisible" (Gill, 2009, 139) and concealing power differentials that are representative of class or race (Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008). Consequently, the visual images (that become embodied) can be read as virtual expressions of the systems of oppression (Piran et al., 2006) that may congeal around cultural spaces (such as sport and physical activity (Andrews, 2008)). Through tactful intercession, the distinguishing dimensions of difference are normalised in "We Cheer" vis-à-vis a (hetero)sexually provocative *girl norm*.

The Girl Norm as Middle Class

"We Cheer" and the Nintendo Wii console itself are located within a cultural space constructed for the purpose of family entertainment and allowing, or rather facilitating, a semblance of middle class interactivity (Nintendo, 2009). Therefore, new media technologies such as "We Cheer" are framed as respectable family fun— the result is a middle class ethos of respectable sexiness and the normative female body that is, quite literally, being played-out, normalised and expected as part of familial relations.

In this instance the body is no longer simply a display of prevalent femininity, it is a display of the responsible neo-liberal citizen whose body is representative of her ability to invest in the capitalist regime and subsist as an independent girl. Conversely, lack of self-responsibility (Skeggs, 2005), and the ensuing pathologised '*other*' or abject body (Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008) that results from this, is a signal of those who are disconsolate and not able to self-govern— the working class:

> Loud, white, excessive, drunk, fat vulgar, disgusting hen-party woman who exist to embody all the moral obsessions historically associated with the working class now contained in one body; a body beyond governance (Skeggs, 2005, 965).

"We Cheer" is a discursive space in which physical movement is utilised or encompassed within an insidious discourse of normalisation, not only does it illuminate working class sexuality as relationally disparate to the midriff girl, or *girl norm* (Gill, 2009; Gordon, 1997), it calls for *grotesque* sexuality (Skeggs, 2001; 2005) to be sculpted towards middle class, bourgeois, reputable sexiness. As female subjectivities are fostered and fashioned the cultural currency differentiates between the socially powerful norm and the body of the 'other'. For those bodies that do not 'fit' a visit to the calorie busting workout mode is required; by replacing the winning of cheer points with the loosing of calories "We Cheer" locates the incentive for reinvention with the individual; the aim is to get into shape and mould a body that is conducive to the standards of normalcy devised in new interactive technological discourse. Irreducible from the analytic contentions of the gaze, self surveillance, monitoring (Bordo, 1993; Grimshaw, 1993), and invested with a disciplining bodily

discourse, this 'optional' element of the game becomes a 'requirement' of conformity, a mechanism of sculpting and a means of conducting the corpus.

Through her embodied position as the digital cheerleader the corporeal girl becomes the workout instructor fully equipped with a calorie counter and a digital figure which highlights the area of the body being exercised. Embedded with notions of governance of the body and instruction; the expert is met by an abject '*other*' looking for help (see Lewis, 2007). In what turns out to be an almost shocking display of 'us and them' (Johnson et al., 2004) the blonde, slim, sexually powerful figure of the cheerleader meets an array of neoliberalism's disposable populous: in an explicit case an obese black male who is low in self confidence, defeated, immoral, a figure of fun (Gill, 2008) and "not good at doing things by myself. I want to get more fit and get back at my teammates" (audio from the game). Framing the talk of the '*other*' as differing from the expected, anticipated, middle class demeanour heightens the '*othering*' gaze and focuses it on how his speech patterns are not invested with a middle class habitus. Equally, the visual images are imbued with the notion of middle class superiority— the pathologised body representative of being out of control has to not only acknowledge that they are incapable of doing things for themselves; but they turn to the neoliberal citizen-expert for advice.

"We Cheer" is a constituent cultural technology of a moment in which the abject are deemed to be in need of governance and surveillance. As a technology of regulation "We Cheer" is able to operationalise political agendas (Macleod, Raco & ward, 2003; Rose, 2000b) on health, obesity, physical activity and ultimately normality via workout modes and explicit representation of the middle class normal being in direct opposition to the working class '*other*' (Bonner, 2008; McRobbie, 2004; Ouellette & Hay, 2008a/b; Silk et al., forthcoming). As if to categorically ascertain its position as a cultural technology or normalcy, this workout mode ends by re-establishing the neoliberal family and resulting prerequisite for heterosexuality. In uttering the words; "I feel much lighter now. I think I can get to first base now" the game is not only playing on the double entendre of first base (as a baseball phrase and as American vernacular for the phases of dating) but is furthermore noting that the only sexually attractive and sexually successful body is the thin, toned, middle class body.

The Girl Norm as White

"Governing less through the dissemination of ideology" (Ouellette & Hay, 2008b, p. 472) and rather more through freedom to choose, participatory games (Ouellette & Hay, 2008b) such as "We Cheer" enhance the capacity for shaping subjectivities; crucially, in this instance, shaping the socially constructed narrative of race (Oliver, 1999). "We Cheer" operates as yet another example of the normalised legitimacy of whiteness (Ouellette & Hay, 2008a/b; McMurria, 2008; Sender & Sullivan, 2008). With Leonard (2009), and while these games do not overtly dwell on the supremacy of white cultural values, they reinstate existing power struggles over which bodies 'matter' when invested in the digital domain of physical movement. The pluralising imaginary that discounts race as an issue to be addressed (McMurria, 2008) is evidenced in the game's utilisation of physical phenotypes (Oliver, 1999) to distinguish between girls. The notion that one out of the five cheerleaders available to captain the team in the early rounds of competition is Black and the one is Asian, compounds and obfuscates structural inequalities that reduce race to "a clichéd design motif" (McMurria, 2008, p. 322), one that can be altered and adapted in "We Cheer". Sender and Sullivan (2008, p. 577) contend that we might welcome the "casual inclusion of people of colour as an overdue alternative to racial difference being a narrative problem to be resolved, but the costs of this include a reinstatement of implicitly white norms". Rather than contending with the actuality that race and ethnicity are remarkable contingencies of social life (Roberts, 2007 quoting Paul Gilroy) racial diversity is made seemingly redundant, not mattering and these media are thought to have gone beyond race. However, following Guerrero (2009), "We Cheer's" paradoxical investment in racialised identities and depictions are suggestive of difference on the one hand, and racial stereotyping on the other.

Moreover, and perhaps more disturbingly, "We Cheer" provides the white *girl norm* with the opportunity to "play the exotic…..from the security of their largely suburban lifestyles" (Guerrero, 2009, 193). At once I am troubled by these positions; the notion of playing the exotica (Bordo, 1993) instantly conjures ideas about *playing* with difference and *playing* the '*other*', the implication becomes 'us and them'— something unhealthy, unproductive and potentially dangerous (Strong, 2009). Besides, and building on the "hierarchies of femininity which privileged Whiteness

and derogated Blackness" (Weekes, 2004, 143), the potential for difference to be digitally displayed in the cheer squad is somewhat undermined by the overall depiction of normality as being white. Thus, the occurrences of racial diversity are actually cemented by the inescapable impression of difference, as epitomised by Guerrero (2009, 45 Italics in original) "difference is always *different*" and in this sense "We Cheer" can be read as serving race according to hipness, style and accessorising. Constituting an 'embodied urbanite' (Andrews & Silk, forthcoming), the racially diverse '*other*' cheerleader can be consumed by the white palate (Davis, 2009; hooks, 1992) "without incurring the cost and consequences of real world signification" (Guerrero, 2009, 190).

I Cheer! You Cheer! We Cheer": Physical Cultural Technologies as Corporate Paedophilia

> **PEGI 3**+ - The content of games given this rating is considered suitable for all age groups. Some violence in a comical context (typically Bugs Bunny or Tom & Jerry cartoon-like forms of violence) is acceptable. The child should not be able to associate the character on the screen with real life characters, they should be totally fantasy. The game should not contain any sounds or pictures that likely to scare or frighten young children. No bad language should be heard and there should be no scenes containing nudity nor any referring to sexual activity" (Pan European Game Information, PEGI, 2009).

My own interactive 'play' not only left me somewhat sore, but worryingly invested, if not captivated, by the virtual images of the cheerleaders, their looks and their 'moves'. Yet, at the same time, this visual and synaptic seduction is precisely the predicament; the phantasmagorical bodies on display are the normalised images of the female media-body, they are by no means total fantasy as proclaimed by PEGI (2009). Far from not being able to associate the characters on the screen with real life characters, the portrayals of the cheerleaders in "We Cheer" are the digital embodiments of the images that proliferate media depictions of young girls; slim, sexy, provocative and all the while innocent, young and blissfully unaware. This notion is encapsulated by O'Riordan (2007, 239) when she claims that; "the realization of virtual physical female bodies, through digital culture, is used to transform these images from fictional or metaphorical signs to simulations with ontological status".

The contradiction or discrepancy of traditionally adult female figures alongside the accompanying audio of childlike giggling and other speech patterns indicative of youthfulness is suggestive of the complex and ambiguous negotiations and representations that may be implicitly recognised and taken up by young girls. "We Cheer"— a site that provides us with the digital yet real, (hetero)sexy yet angelic, young yet old— promotes a marketing and visual ethic conducive to Rush and La Nauze's (2006, Vii) metaphorical depiction of corporate paedophilia:

> Images of sexualised children are becoming increasingly common in advertising and marketing material. Children, who appear aged 12 years and under, particularly girls, are dressed, posed and made up in the same way as sexy adult models. 'Corporate paedophilia' is a metaphor used to describe advertising and marketing that sexualises children in these ways. The metaphor encapsulates the idea that such advertising and marketing is an abuse both of children and of public morality.

"We Cheer" constructs the innocence of girlhood as in congruence with sexiness and (hyper)femininity— nowhere is this notion more omnipresent that in "Toy Park". As a girl navigates her way through the cheerleading championships she will dance on different stages and dance for different boys in support of different sports. Toy Park is a scene of ambiguity, shrouded in images of teddy bears and model trains, and branded by *Claire's Accessories* sponsorship, the stage is set for the target audience: girls (Clairestores, 2009) and tweenies (Renold, 2006; Russel & Tyler, 2002). Contrast this focus on playful innocence with provocative routines indicative of dirty dancing in nightclubs and song choices that range from That's the way (I like it) by KC and the Sunshine Band to C'mon N' Ride It (The Train) by Quad City DJ's and the perplexity— render perversity— becomes apparent. "We Cheer" normalises the sexually elusive young female body as the *girl norm*, juxtaposing sound, image and action into what becomes a complex and congealing site of movement and being. In this sense the (physical) cultural technology under analysis is seen to conduct the corpus towards particular normalising ends; worrisome ends that seemingly further contribute to, if not constitute a normalised sexualisation of tweenies/girls.

Coda

The virtual female body populates the realm of popular culture, specifically with regard to visual media forms (O'Riordan, 2007) and as such these technologies carry

significant cultural value as mechanisms for delivering contemporary messages concerning female normality and the physically active body of young girls. "We Cheer" has been mobilised as a new, innovative, dynamic, virtual construct capable of expressing the neoliberal notions of self-surveillance, individualisation, monitoring and sculpting the corpus towards those ends deemed as normal by the dominant discourses and heteronormative rhetoric (O'Riordan, 2007) that is invested in these sources of power.

By way of tentative conclusion/closure new interactive media technologies such as "We Cheer" are recognised, regarded, and harnessed as unique, morphing the terrain of the digital and the physical. Emanating from these media are digital discourses through which young girls are learning, not only how to move their bodies appropriately, but how they have to *be* in order to fit the mould and 'join the squad'. Their bodies, quite literally, become the site on which the social is inscribed (Butler, 1989); representing much more than cheerleading, these digital and physical displays of active femininity are locating the normal as (hetero)sexual, middle class, white, young and a productive neoliberal citizen. This reduction to **the** 'body that fits' allows homogenous images of normality to infiltrate the living/playing rooms, all the while rendering those as '*other*' outside of these spaces. The result is a very active model of how the body should look, be, act and move "through the power of a generalized concept of normality" (O'Riordan, 2007, 240). The negotiation of difference and power imbalance no longer resides issues of gender inequality alone, it has spread and is infiltrating into modes that distinguish between females, establishing a measure of what counts as normal when girls are moving.

"We Cheer" carries and conveys a cultural currency which does more than operate as a construct of entertainment and/or initiate a healthy lifestyle, rather it secures credibility (Johnson et al., 2004) for the neoliberal, post-feminist, *girl norm.* These new interactive media technologies are not simply examples of existing cultural technologies (Himes & Thompson, 2007; Lewis, 2008a/b; McMurria, 2008; Palmer, 2004; Sender & Sullivan, 2008); instead the changing landscape of digital interaction and physical activity alludes to the freshness, inventiveness and pervasiveness of "We Cheer". Public and private conceptions of female bodies in-action are influenced by the 'truth effects' (Foucault, 1980; Walkerdine, 1990) encapsulated and delivered by

"We Cheer". The virtual visions of what is normal and '*other*' when a girl is involved in computer mediated movement expose that the impetus is with the young girl to mould her body; through makeovers and workout modes, into the digital and internalised image of the ideal girl (Piran et al., 2006).

I have only just begun to engage in any form of sustained academic critique so therefore— and indeed if we are driven by the muted voices of protest— this reading of "We Cheer" is merely the first step. "(T)o change the disruptive impact of these controlling visual representations in multiple ways in educational settings" (Piran et al., 2006, 229), requires the deployment of Freirenan (1972) sensibilities and the development of a collective critical consciousness among the young girls invested in new technologies of self-surveillance. Working with girls, and their families, to employing digital ethnographies of their playing experiences, opening up spaces for conversation and heightening awareness of critique are all aspirations for the future development of this project. Exploring media texts in conjunction with how these texts are consumed privately and publically (Silverstone & Hirsch, 1992) elucidates the unifying, holistic and double articulated (Livingstone, 2007) nature of any prospective work: allowing for exploration of the articulation between a girls' body when involved in computer mediated movement and constructs such as gender, sexuality, race and class.

Such critical work on new regulatory, embodied, physical (fleshy and digital) technologies matters, because social justice and social inclusion matter. The moving images of female bodies that are present on the screens of televisions and monitors up and down the country "actualize templates for physical normality in the field of digital vision" (O' Riordan, 2007, 248). As digital images become conjoined with actualised hyperreal physical movement these cultural spaces cannot be left untouched by scholarly critique: "It has never been "just a game". It has always been lives, livelihoods, injustice and a desire for much, much more" (Leonard, 2009, 269).

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