“I Cheer, You Cheer, We Cheer”: Physical Technologies and the Normalized Body

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Abstract
Located within a cultural space situated firmly in the political, technological, and historical context of the contemporary moment and predicated on the contention that all texts are dialogic, the author reads 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 noncentralized capillary-like force that works to “conduct the conduct” of subjects. Emanating from these media are digital discourses through which young girls are learning not only how to move their bodies appropriately but also how the have to be 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 (heterosexual) middle class, white, and a young consumer–citizen.

Keywords
“We Cheer”, (physical) cultural technologies, female body politic, self-regulation

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.

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The Nintendo Wii has captured the media gaze as a deliberately “active” addition to a typically sedentary activity. Utilizing wireless Wiimotes (Schlomer et al. 2008) movement is detected by sensors in three dimensions, allowing for the initiation of expressive physical endeavor. As such, the formerly static, sedentary living room (Biddle et al. 2009) is filled with moving bodies as they row, run, hurdle, and play tennis, golf, volleyball, among a multitude of other games in the Nintendo Wii range. Accordingly, as of December 31, 2008, the Wii was leading the new generation of games, over the PlayStation 3 and the Xbox 360 in European sales (BBC News 2008) and thus contributing to the massive growth in the U.K. gaming markets (NPD Group 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 2007). 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 on scholarly work on the female cheerleader (Adams 2005; Barnett 2006; Grindstaff and West 2006; Merten 1996), the digital territory of cheerleading in “We Cheer” appears to draw on the idealist representation of girls (Adams 2005) in games, speaking to notions of “racial performativity . . . neoliberalism, identity politics and white” (Andrews and 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 normalized 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 et al. 2001; Prentice and Jebb 1995), the Nintendo Wii and its constitutive “content” are being harnessed for their weight loss capabilities (BBC News 2007; Graves, Stratton, Ridgers, and Cable 2008). While acknowledging the potential for increased activity levels among those who would ordinarily be categorized as sedentary—ironically a partial result of the time spent on activities such as computer games—I am more concerned with the normalizing 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 within our political, technological, and social context.

Historically, then, the conjunctural moment is imagined on an epochal shift (Silk and Andrews, 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, 135). Simply put by Giroux (2000, 2001, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2005), it is the death of the social, the ascendency of deregulationist 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 pathologized as immoral (McMurria 2008). Following Peck and Tickell (2002, 384), this article 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, 2008b) consider products such as this as cultural technologies, educators (Leonard 2009; Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo 2009; O’Riordan 2007), or portable professors (Freeman 2005) that work as forms of public pedagogy (Giroux 2004a), as instructional technologies (Hayes 2007), or even as “edutainment” (Dijick 2006) teaching about appropriate, normalized, 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 noncentralized, capillary-like force that works to “conduct the conduct” (Rose 2000b) of subjects: with Hamann (2009), the subjectification and subjectivation of (neoliberal) citizen–consumers operates as a form of biopower (Foucault 1978; Milchman and Rosenberg 2005) in which the proliferation and augmentation of cyber and digital interfaces act as a conduit of normalization due to their “capacity to reach large populations, whilst at the same time offering tools through which those populations can self regulate” (Rich and Miah 2009, 167). 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 also 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 the “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 utilization of the entire body to perform “various choreographed routines” (Namco Bandai 2008).

Utilizing Wiimotes 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 2008) means endless character customization—choosing hair color, skin tone, cheer uniform, and squad
members—and bodily modification: “Burn some calories in Exercise Mode” (Namco Bandai 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 decorated and accessorized with flowers, hearts, stars, and sparkle. Within this context, the physical body connotes an embedded discourse that invites the normalized girl to embody this prescribed image in an effort to comply with heteronormative discourse, thus gaining satisfaction, even contentment, at performing appropriately for the onlooking 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, Millington, and Vertinsky 2006, 106) in an implied discourse of supportiveness, enthusiasm, glamour, sexual attractiveness, and American girlhood (Barnett 2006; Grindstaff and West 2006).

However troubling it may be, 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 and Mitchell 2004) and attempt to comprehend how the media texts of such games efface structural inequalities that work to “hold up” normative girlhood over the “other” (Guerrero 2009). Embedded within these new interactive media technologies, such as “We Cheer,” is discourse connoting the camouflaged, yet exhibited, conservative celebration of normalcy afforded to some girls at the expense of others. Via technologies of governance, a normalized, feminized 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) toward that of the girl norm. Recognizing 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, (hetero)sexual, hyperfeminine, middle-class, white, slim, 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 artifact, I played the game, watched the demonstrations, logged onto the web site, 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 article. By acknowledging the positionality of me, my own body, self, and theory, I am “actively constituted as knowing” (Johnson et al. 2004, 44): it is a dialogic reading

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(Johnson et al. 2004) of a media text from the pose of a white, English, middle-class, twenty-three-year-old female with a political agenda to heighten the critical consciousness of young girls. Indeed, these discursive spaces of regulation are susceptible to more than one reading; there is, and can be, no pretence of validity or generalizability; rather, my analysis of “We Cheer” is crystallized (Richardson 1994, 1997, 2000), partial, and political.

Pace Rich and Miah (2009), studies such as this, which are founded on computer-mediated movement, diverge from those that 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 ontological (O’Riordan 2007). In this sense the surveillance, monitoring, and sculpting of the digital avatar’s body becomes somehow inescapable from the potential 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 textualizable and that they are conveying 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 “actual existing space of neoliberalism” (Brenner and Theodore 2002); as a cultural artifact that is engrossed in power struggles, this text can speak to social debates and articulate dominate 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 although this may not be considered a new phenomenon, McRobbie (2008, 531) points us toward 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.’” Therefore, this article holds “We Cheer” as one of many components in the (re)constitution of a “normal” female body; these are components that locate digital technologies within capitalist consumer markets as well as situate them within the gendered production of fictional neoliberal consumer–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 postfeminist era of freedom (McRobbie 2004, 2007, 2008) and the new visibility of girls across the mediascape, technologies of governance such as this (re)construct the category of “girl” as a subject (McRobbie 2008) while implying that feminist concerns are seemingly redundant and responded to. Although this may bolster the representation of the girl within the public domain, this narrative of disavowal concurrently overshadows existing gender inequality and intergender power imbalance. In gesturing
toward 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 normalize girls toward the idealized 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, customization, 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 and Lowry 2005; LaTour, Pitts, and Snook-Luther 1990; Lavine, Sweeney, and Wagner 1999); the focus falls on the stylized oversized breasts, long flowing hair, long legs, sparkling smiles, made-up lips, and huge flirtatious eyes (O’Riordan 2007; Piran et al. 2006). It is fair to propose that girls are watching and ultimately enacting within a (hetero)normative digital economy, whereby the digital currency is conformity to the feminized corporeconomicus (Silk, Batchelor, and Francombe, forthcoming).

This cultivation of the female body and the efficacy of the digital image transmit the gendered logic of the cheerleading body as central to this physical technology. The cheerleaders’ feminine features are accentuated as an effect of the clothes they wear, the dance moves or routines they perform, the stances they adopt (chest forward and central to the shot or frame), and the cornucopia of “camera” angles that emphasize 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, and 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 or consuming feminine figure in herself.

From the floral patterns, in pastel colors that decorate the computer or television screen, to the customization of “your” cheer uniform, hair color, skin tone, and squad members, “We Cheer” is a virtual world of (hyper)femininity. Via strategies of normalization, containment, and literalization (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 a “violent generalizing logic” (Gill 2009, 139) capable of rendering “difference invisible” (Gill 2009, 139) and concealing power differentials that are representative of class or race (Ringrose and 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 congeal around cultural spaces (e.g., sport and physical activity). Through tactful intercession, the distinguishing dimensions of difference are normalized 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. Therefore, new media technologies such as “We Cheer” are framed as family fun, and the result is a middle-class ethos of respectable sexiness and the normative female body that is, quite literally, being played out and expected as part of familial relations.

Furthermore, the body is no longer simply a display of prevalent femininity, it is a display of the responsible neoliberal 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 pathologized “other” or abject body (Ringrose and Walkerdine 2008) that results from this, is a signal of those who are deficient 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 cultural space in which physical movement is utilized or encompassed within an insidious discourse of normalization; 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 toward middle-class, bourgeois 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 (re)constituted in new interactive technological discourse. Irreducible from the analytic contentions of the gaze, self-surveillance, and monitoring (Bordo 1993; Grimshaw 2003) 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 that 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 (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 one instance 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 demeanor 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 pathologized bodies representative of being out of control has to not only acknowledge that they are incapable of doing things for themselves but also turn to the neoliberal citizen–expert for advice.

“We Cheer” is a cultural technology of a moment in which the abject is deemed to be in need of governance and surveillance. As a technology of governance, “We Cheer” is able to operationalize the political agendas (Macleod, Raco, and Ward 2003; Rose 2000a) on health, obesity, physical activity, and ultimately normality via workout modes and explicit representation of the middle-class normal as being in direct opposition to the working-class “other” (Bonner 2008; McRobbie 2004; Ouellette and Hay 2008a, 2008b; Silk, Batchelor, and Francombe, forthcoming). As if to categorically ascertain its position as a cultural technology of 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 also 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 and Hay 2008b, 472) and rather more through freedom to choose, participatory games (Ouellette and 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 normalized legitimacy of whiteness (McMurria 2008; Ouellette and Hay 2008a, 2008b; Sender and 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 pluralizing imaginary that discounts race as an issue to be addressed (McMurria 2008) is evidenced in the game’s utilization 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 one is Asian compounds and obfuscates structural inequalities that reduce race to a “clichéd design motif” (McMurria 2008, 322), one that can be altered and adapted in “We Cheer.” Sender and Sullivan (2008, 577) contend that while we might welcome the “casual inclusion of people of colour as an overdue alternative to racial difference being a narrative problem to be resolved. . . . The costs of this include a reinstatement of implicitly white norms.” Rather than broaching 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 somehow gone beyond race. Accordingly, and following Guerrero (2009), “We Cheer’s” paradoxical investment in racialized identities and depictions are suggestive of difference on one hand and racial stereotyping on the other.

“We Cheer” can be read as providing white girls with the opportunity to “play the exotic . . . from the security of their largely suburban lifestyles” (Guerrero 2009, 193). At once I am troubled by the notion of playing the exotica (Bordo 1993) as it 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). Beside, 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 epitomized by Guerrero (2009, 194) “difference is always different,” and in this sense “We Cheer” can be read as serving race according to hipness, style, and accessorizing. Constituting an ‘embodied urbanite’ (Andrews and 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 Pedophilia

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 and 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, emphasis added)

My own interactive “play” left me not only somewhat sore but also 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 normalized 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 are suggestive of the complex and ambiguous negotiations and representations that may be implicitly recognized 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 pedophilia:

Images of sexualized 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 pedophilia” is a metaphor used to describe advertising and marketing that sexualizes 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 being in congruence with sexiness and (hyper)femininity—nowhere is this notion more omnipresent than 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 (Claire’s Stores 2009) and tweenies (Renold 2006; Russell and Tyler 2002). Contrast this focus on playful innocence with provocative routines indicative of “dirty dancing” 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” normalizes 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 toward particular normalizing ends, worrisome ends that seemingly further contribute to, if not constitute, a normalized sexualization of tweenie–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 mobilized as a new, innovative, dynamic, virtual construct capable of expressing the neoliberal notions of self-surveillance, individualization, monitoring, and sculpting the corpus toward 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 or closure, new interactive media technologies such as “We Cheer” are recognized, 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 also how they have to be 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 a (hetero)sexual, middle-class, white, young, and productive neoliberal citizen. This reduction to the “body that fits” allows homogenous images of normality to infiltrate the living and 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 in 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 that 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 girl norm. These new interactive media technologies are not simply examples of existing cultural technologies (Himes and Thompson 2007; Lewis 2008a, 2008b; McMurria 2008; Palmer 2004; Sender and 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 internalized 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. “To 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 (Freire 1972) sensibilities and the development of a collective critical consciousness among the young girls invested in new technologies of surveillance. Working with girls, and their families, to create 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 and Hirsch 1992) elucidates the unifying, holistic, and doubly articulated (Livingstone 2007) nature of any prospective work: allowing for exploration of the articulation between a girl’s 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 actualized 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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