

Abstract

Title of Thesis: From Sidelines to Center Stage:
The Development of Collegiate Competitive Cheer

Sarah E. Olson, Master of Arts
2008

Directed by: Dr. Jaime Schultz, Assistant Professor Department of
Kinesiology

Cheerleading has undergone a number of significant transformations since its nineteenth century, collegiate, male-dominated roots. Tracing its genealogy through the twenty-first century, one finds a unique set of co-mingled processes including institutionalization, feminization, commercialization, sexualization, and sportization. In this project, I seek to understand competitive cheerleading's current transition in the athletic community. In the past four years the University of Maryland and the University of Oregon have created varsity women's competitive cheer teams and their decision to recognize competitive cheer as a sanctioned sport has caused much debate. While many of those within the cheer community push for its varsitization, others from both inside competitive cheer and the larger women's athletic community dispute its status as an organized sport. In this project I will analyze why competitive cheer is making this transition at this historical moment and how Title IX has propelled this process.

**FROM SIDELINES TO CENTERSTAGE:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF COLLEGIATE COMPETITIVE CHEER**

By

Sarah E. Olson

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master's of Kinesiology
2008

Advisory Committee:

Assistant Professor Jaime Schultz, Chair
Professor David L. Andrews
Assistant Professor Damion Thomas

© Copyright by
Sarah Elizabeth Olson
2008

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisors and mentors at the University of Maryland, Dr. Jaime Schultz and Dr. David Andrews. Thank you to the interview participants involved in this research project. I would also like to acknowledge the help of my fellow graduate students who aided with the development of this piece through the Reading and Writing Seminar. Finally, thank you to my family who has supported me throughout everything. Without the time and guidance of all who have helped me, this work would not have been possible.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
From Sidelines to Center Stage: The Development of Collegiate Competitive Cheer. 1	
<i>THE VARSITIZATION OF COLLEGIATE COMPETITIVE CHEER</i>	1
<i>METHODOLOGY</i>	3
<i>FINDINGS</i>	11
<i>Historical Shift</i>	12
<i>Potential Benefits to the University</i>	18
<i>PROBLEMATIZING VARSITIZATION</i>	24
<i>Competitive Cheerleading’s Contested Status as “Sport”</i>	25
<i>The Promotion of Emphasized Femininity</i>	28
<i>The Title IX Controversy</i>	30
<i>CONCLUSION</i>	33
THE CHEERLEADING EMPIRICAL: CHEER AS A SITE FOR INVESTIGATION.....	35
<i>Origins of Cheer</i>	35
<i>Varsitization</i>	41
<i>The University of Maryland Model</i>	42
<i>Interview Themes</i>	47
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: EXPLORING THE FEMINIST DEBATE.....	50
<i>Cheerleading is a Sport</i>	52
<i>Cheerleading is not a Sport</i>	58
<i>Personal Analysis</i>	65
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH: UTILIZING MIXED METHODOLOGIES.....	68
<i>Why Collegiate Competitive Cheer?</i>	69
<i>Research Structure</i>	71
<i>Why Multiple Qualitative Research Methods?</i>	72
<i>Historical Analysis</i>	74
<i>Interviews</i>	75
<i>Overall Success and Final Thoughts</i>	78
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	80

From Sidelines to Center Stage: The Development of Collegiate Competitive Cheer

THE VARSITIZATION OF COLLEGIATE COMPETITIVE CHEER

Sport studies has made tremendous progress and gained acclaim in recent decades and research from this field has brought the social and political significance of physical culture to the attention of academics. At the same time, there are still sports and physical activities that remain relegated to the margins of the field and overlooked by scholars. Cheerleading certainly falls into this category, thus explaining its limited academic consideration. The cheerleader has served as an icon of white, heterosexual, middle-class, and American girlhood and cheerleading, as an activity, has functioned as feminine support for the male preserve of sport since the mid-twentieth century (Grindstaff & West, 2006). The symbol of the cheerleader is synonymous with high school popularity contests and homecoming queens, and many both within and outside of the academy assume that cheerleading “is and always has been a naturally ‘feminine’ and female activity” (Davis, 1994, p. 150). Ironically, it evolved from a male-dominated, all-American collegiate pastime beginning in the late nineteenth century to today’s activity, with over 97% female participation (University of Maryland Athletic Department, 2007). The cultural practice and history of cheerleading reflects shifting understandings of ideal and normative gender in American society (Adams & Bettis, 2005) and is an important site for investigation.

Most of the academic research on cheerleading explores these gender constructions, focusing on the symbolic importance of the cheerleader and her

influence on feminine ideologies (Adams & Bettis, 2005; Adams & Bettis, 2003; Hanson, 1995). Other work, such as that of Laurel Davis (1994), considers the “postmodern paradox” of cheerleaders at women’s sports, while Gary Alan Fine and Bruce Johnson (1980) and George Kurman (1986) explore the meanings and mythology associated with the history and activity of cheerleading. Aside from the works of Laura Grindstaff (2003, 2005) and Emily West (2003), there has been little research conducted on the evolution of today’s cheer community and its link to athletic physicality.

In addition to demonstrating the fluidity of American gender constructions, collegiate competitive cheerleading is also going through a process of what I have termed *varsitization*, or the process of promoting a sport to varsity status within an institution’s athletic department. Influenced by Elias’s (1971) explication of *sportization*, or the transition of a physical activity into a formalized, bureaucratically controlled and officially recognized sport, varsitization is a unique process in that it involves administrative and economic support, heightened community status, and greater power and influence to the sport’s overall program. The sportization of cheerleading has been occurring at the youth and high school level since the mid 1970s, but has only recently emerged at the collegiate level and reflects the complexities involved in the struggle for gender equity in sport today. Varsitization, led by the University of Maryland, is becoming an option collegiate institutions are utilizing as part of their efforts to comply with Title IX standards. There are several controversies surrounding this new direction in collegiate athletics, involving everything from competitive cheerleading’s qualification as a sport to its promotion

of emphasized femininity (Connell, 1987; Messner, 2000). Concomitantly, this process is proving to be a popular and sound financial investment for the athletic departments leading this trend.

Although this development raises multiple issues, it is important to first understand why this is happening. My primary concern in this thesis is to identify the relationship between these changes and the social context in which they occur. After describing my methodological approach, I examine competitive cheer within the late capitalist context to illustrate how the influence of processes including commercialization, corporatization, and spectacularization are evident within the overall competitive cheer community. Second, I discuss the findings of this research concerning the varsitization of collegiate competitive cheer. I identify two major reasons for the current varsitization: the first is based on the changing function of the collegiate cheerleader in the athletic community; the second involves the potential benefits that varsity competitive cheer teams bring collegiate athletic departments. After explaining these two factors, I discuss the controversies surrounding this trend and conclude by contending that the varsitization of cheerleading is both a consequence of and a reaction to Title IX legislation.

METHODOLOGY

Influenced by a critical cultural studies perspective, I employ the theory-method approach of articulation to understand the varsitization of competitive cheer.

Samantha King (2005) describes the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of articulation:

In its manifestation as a theoretical sensibility, articulation offers for scholars in cultural studies a model of society as a 'layered complex of elements' - including [physical cultural] phenomena in all their variety- 'all intricately and dialectically interrelated with one another.' As a methodological ethos, articulation provides strategies for undertaking a cultural study of sport, that is, for contextualizing one's object of analysis. (p. 24)

Due to its recent appearance in 2003 and subsequent rise in popularity, there is virtually no academic information concerning the development of competitive cheer at the university level. Therefore, in order to explore the context of this process and to understand its complex implications, I sought information from the populace involved with its promotion to elite status. Interviews were vital to this research process because they allowed me to speak directly with the individuals responsible for pushing the development of varsity competitive cheer programs. As John Amis (2005) argues, interviews

offer a depth of information that permits the detailed exploration of particular issues in a way not possible with other forms of data collection. For this reason, interviews have been described as critical to understanding what has happened, how it has happened, and why. (p. 105)

Perhaps most importantly, interviews focus on the voices of the participants, allowing researchers to co-create work with the members of a community, in this case, members of collegiate athletic departments. Conducting research *with* participants allows their experiences and understandings of reality to emerge.

Because my primary interests lie in tracing the development of varsity programs, I chose to speak with administrators and coaches, those individuals who make the decisions and implement the models for this trend. I spoke with five administrators and three coaches from four Division I institutions. I chose these schools based on the various ways in which they choose to recognize competitive

cheer within their athletic departments. These schools included The University of Maryland, The University of Oregon, The University of Kentucky and The University of Louisville. Both The University of Maryland and The University of Oregon recognize competitive cheer as a varsity sport, making them the first and, to date, the only institutions to acknowledge this distinction. The University of Kentucky and The University of Louisville have two of the most successful competitive cheer teams in the nation, with sixteen and twelve national championship titles, respectively. But unlike Maryland and Oregon, they are emphatic in their resistance to promote their programs to varsity status.

I subscribed to the general interview guide Amis (2005) outlines by asking broad, open-ended questions about their women's athletic programs as well as questions specific to competitive cheer. This type of structure allowed the interviews to stay focused on the themes in which I was interested, specifically Title IX compliance, the characterization of competitive cheer as a sport, and the individual recognition of each institution's competitive cheer team. While guiding the interviews toward the type of information I sought, this structure also allowed for fluidity and for each participant to highlight issues she or he felt were important. I asked participants about their individual cheer teams, the different cheer teams that their respective institutions offered, why or why not cheer has been recognized as a varsity sport, and how cheerleading fit into the overall mission of their athletic program. In accordance with the consent form approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), all administrative and coaching participants' identities must remain

anonymous. Therefore I refer to participants throughout this thesis by general descriptions such as Administrator A, Coach B, etc.

In addition to interviewing administrators and coaches, I felt that it was important to include the thoughts and opinions of those outside of competitive cheer. In my preliminary research, it was evident that many sport scholars were critical of this process. As part of my efforts to articulate the context of this trend it was necessary to include voices of dissent. Therefore, I consulted two experts in the field of women's sport, Dr. Christine Grant and Dr. Susan Cahn, in order to understand the effects of cheer's varsitization on the larger women's athletic community. Dr. Grant, a former Division I Athletic Director and distinguished authority on Title IX, provided insight into the complexities surrounding the use of competitive cheer for Title IX compliance. Dr. Cahn is among the most respected scholars of gender and sexuality in North America, and her insightful work concerning the history of women's sport provided valuable resources for this project. Both opinions helped bring out the varying arguments for and against competitive cheer's varsitization.

COMPETITIVE CHEER IN THE LATE CAPITALIST MOMENT

This project has emerged through my graduate research within the Physical Cultural Studies program at the University of Maryland, where we take a cultural studies approach to understanding physicality, "in its myriad of forms" (Andrews, 2006). While this work "is characterized by multiple theoretical influences, research methods, and sites of analysis" (Andrews, 2002, p.111), cultural studies scholars agree with Lawrence Grossberg's (1997) assertion that radical contextualization is at

the field's definitional core (see also, Andrews, 2002). By radical contextualization, I refer to the analysis of a process, phenomenon, or representation of cultural significance not in isolation, but in the larger social context. As cultural studies scholars, we are most interested in understanding the intricate connections between the site and its social, historical, political, and economic context because as Jennifer Slack (1996) states, "context is not something *out there, within which practices occur or which influence the development of practices. Rather, identities, practices, and effects generally constitute the very context within which they are practices, identities, or effects*" (emphasis in original, p. 125). In other words, sites for investigation do not exist within a vacuum, but are both shaped by and influence local and global social superstructures. According to Andrews (2002), "The structure and influence of sport in any given context is a product of intersecting, multidirectional lines of articulation between the forces and practices that compose the social context" (p. 116). A focus on understanding multiple axes of articulation reveals the function and effects of systems in relation to communities and individuals.

In the case of collegiate competitive cheer, its popularity at the youth and high school levels has extended to the appearance of collegiate varsity programs. In order to understand this phenomenon, we must first understand how this activity developed in its particular cultural context. Especially salient in this situation are the influences of late capitalism – the dominant economic and social structure of the second half of the twentieth century characterized by globalization, neoliberalism, and the commodification of culture. Sport has clearly been affected by these characteristics, demonstrated in countless ways, including the changing function of the professional

athlete in society, the ever-increasing presence of the media in the sport spectacle, and the hyperspecialization of the athletic body. As a result of the influence of late capitalism,

virtually all aspects of the global sport infrastructure (governing bodies, leagues, tournaments, teams, and individual athletes) are now driven and defined by the inter-related processes of: commercialization (the exploitation of an object or practice for capital gain); corporatization (the rational structuring and management of sporting entities according to profit motives); and, spectacularization (the production of entertainment-driven experiences). (Andrews, 2008)

Commercialization, corporatization and spectacularization have direct links to the development and popularization of competitive cheer. Each process can be seen at work at the youth and high school levels, and have also emerged at colleges and universities.

Perhaps the most apparent of these three processes affecting competitive cheerleading is that of commercialization, specifically at the youth and high school levels. Many sports scholars have highlighted the rampant exploitation of childhood through the vehicle of organized sport in American and abroad (Anderson, 2001; McKendrick, Bradford, & Fielder, 2000; Schor, 2003; Woods, 2006). Several of the themes concerning the structuring of children's extracurricular time and creating a new consumer market can be directly related to youth and high school competitive cheer. Cheerleading, however, provides the more specific commercialization of girlhood. Dorie Geissler (2001) touches on this issue in her article, "G Generation" stating that, "The Girl Culture- consumer culture alliance is also...an exercise of global capitalism and its ever-increasing ability and need to produce new markets and

popular trends” (p. 327; see also Cole, 2002; Heywood, 2000). Participation in youth and high school cheerleading not only trains girls to strive to approximate the All-American-Girl-Next-Door ideal; it does so through the guise of physical empowerment. I would argue that cheerleading, more than most other athletic activities (with the notable exceptions of gymnastics, figure skating, and dance) commercializes girlhood by selling the image of the new American girl (fit, happy, empowered) by interpellating girls into the commercial-sport industry.

The second late capitalist process of corporatization is arguably one of the factors responsible for the tremendous growth and success of competitive cheer from a commercial standpoint. The creation of the cheerleading industry occurred concurrently with the development of late capitalism in the second half of the last century. The development of the cheer industry has been called, “an American capitalist tale” (Adams & Bettis, 2003, p. 112) because one man, Larry Herkimer, is solely responsible for the creation of both cheer camps and the mass production of cheer uniforms and accessories. Through his entrepreneurship, Herkimer founded the National Cheer Association (NCA) with a \$600 loan and subsequently bought a Texas clothing mill for \$100,000, building the first cheer uniform factory (Adams & Bettis, 2003, p. 113). Since that time, the cheer industry has grown into a major part of the athletic market. The largest cheer corporation, Varsity Spirit, brought in approximately \$150 million in revenue in 2002 on an annual growth of about 8% (Brady, 2002, sec. A, p.1). At roughly 1,500 All-Star programs, children as young as six years old begin intensive training for competition and more than 200,000 high school and college students attend cheerleading camps each year; at least 15 % of

those participate in the more than 70 national and regional competitions (Allen, 2005; Brady, 2002, sec. A, p.1). These statistics illustrate that cheerleading is big business and the addition of varsity competitive cheer programs will only help the growth of this area of the sport economy.

Finally, just as all sports have experienced the effects of spectacularization, competitive cheer has thrived on the increased presence and promotion by the media. The combination of overt athleticism, flashy choreography, and the ultimate fit-fem image found in a two-and-a-half minute competitive cheer routine makes the activity attractive for media coverage. Only two years after the first National Cheerleading Championship in 1981, ESPN began televising the event and today broadcasts about a dozen different national competitions (Grindstaff, 2005, p. 71). These programs are similar to other ESPN sport coverage because the focus of the broadcast goes beyond the competition itself, presenting compelling narratives about the team's training and path to the current competition. Grindstaff (2005) describes a typical broadcast stating,

The cameras also frequently go backstage, where a satellite commentator interviews team members and coaches about their school's cheer program or about the team's past competition record—another sports-coverage convention. Some interviews are intercut with preshot footage of the team training in its home gym, with the cheerleaders on-camera providing the voice-over narration (p. 71).

In addition, the spectacularization of competitive cheer deviates from a typical sport script to focus on the performance of emphasized femininity.

The spectacularization of cheer is also present at a global level, as illustrated by the use of cheerleading in the promotion of the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics.

According to the Games' official website, cheer performances will be included during seventeen sporting events. The use of cheerleading as part of the Olympic spectacle illustrates the influences of American athletic practices on the global sporting community and demonstrates the power of Western capitalism.

As illustrated through these examples, the larger processes of late capitalism are evident within the practice of competitive cheer. I contend that these processes have contributed to the development of collegiate competitive cheer as well. As I will demonstrate in the following section, the first generation of young women who have grown up identifying as cheer athletes is now entering the university level, contributing to the development of collegiate varsity competitive cheer teams. The university itself is highly influenced by these same processes and competitive cheer's presence is one of innumerable examples of how the university is also becoming commercialized, corporatized and spectacularized. In an effort to provide an example of one way late capitalism has changed the educational system, the following sections of this thesis will outline the major factors for varsitization within the collegiate athletic framework.

FINDINGS

By situating competitive cheer in the late capitalist moment and conducting interviews with those involved in the varsitization process, I have identified two major factors in the development of collegiate varsity competitive cheer teams. The first factor pushing this trend is that the function of the cheerleader shifted after the passage of Title IX in 1972. There has been a distinct transformation of cheerleading from a *social* to a *physical* activity. As a result, the cheerleader is often identified as

an athlete, rather than part of a larger (male) sporting spectacle. The second factor behind the varsitization involves the potential benefits varsity competitive cheer programs offer the university. As the university is not immune to the affects of late capitalism (to put it mildly), we see commercialization, corporatization, and spectacularization motivating the decisions of administrators and ultimately changing the framework of collegiate athletics. Varsity competitive cheer teams offer athletic departments solutions to issues concerning Title IX compliance and financial development, though these solutions are problematic as will be fleshed out later. This section explores these two factors in depth and explains how they have contributed to the varsitization of competitive cheer.

Historical Shift

Cheerleading's roots date back to late-nineteenth century American universities and, reflective of the contemporaneous make-up of college students, cheerleaders were white males who actively led college football crowds in encouragement and excitement. Though today, as Grindstaff and West (2006) argue, male cheerleaders are frequently stereotyped as somewhat effeminate, those who participated during cheerleading's infancy were perceived as exceedingly masculine—the embodiment of the All-American man. As illustrated by a 1911 guide to cheerleading, to be a cheerleader was the social equivalent of being a member of an elite sport team:

The reputation of having been a valiant “cheer-leader” is one of the most valuable things a boy can take away from college. As a title to promotion in professional or public life, it ranks hardly second to that of having been a quarterback. (“Organized Cheering,” 1911)

By leading the crowd, these young men participated in the flourishing early American sporting spectacle.

Cheerleading remained male-dominated throughout the early part of the twentieth century for two main reasons. First, it was predominantly men who attended higher educational institutions, with women making up only 36% of collegiate enrollment in 1900 (Snyder, 1993). Second, Victorian notions of female's physical inferiority to men lingered in the American psyche during this time. Women were socially conditioned to avoid physical activities that were not domestic in nature, which, at the time, included cheerleading. In the United States, middle and upper class women were often not encouraged to participate in competitive or vigorous sport until the 1910s and 1920s, and even then the activity was supposed to be "appropriate," that is, not too taxing and preferably performed in a skirt (Cahn, 1998).

Female cheerleaders began to appear on team rosters in the 1920s because they could adhere to the "skirt theory" while demonstrating an appropriate level of vigor (Adams & Bettis, 2005). Although women who entered the activity prior to World War I were seen as treading on the male preserve of sport, female cheerleaders slowly became integrated into the college and high school football scene (Davis, 1994). In fact, according to Adams and Bettis (2005), by the 1940s over 30,000 U.S. high schools and colleges had cheerleaders, many of whom were girls and women (p. 76). Women slowly made their way into this traditionally male practice until the beginning of World War II, at which time a significant percentage of men left

school to join the armed forces and the vacancies they left on cheerleading squads were populated by female coeds. By the time the soldiers returned home, cheerleading had been transformed from a masculine pastime to a more passive, social, and supportive activity—a peripheral component of the larger sporting spectacle.

The 1950s and 1960s saw the nearly complete feminization of cheer and by 1970, “cheerleading was considered a ‘natural’ female activity” (Davis, 1994). Attitudes toward the activity changed as well, and many believed that girls and women were better suited than men to encourage a crowd because of their physical beauty and charisma: “Girls, it was assumed, could lead a crowd to cheer because they were attractive” (Hanson, 1995, p. 23). As it became a predominantly female activity, it also transitioned into one that required little physical exertion, strength, or ability. According to James McElroy (1999), author of *We’ve Got Spirit: The Life and Times of America’s Greatest Cheerleading Team*

Cheerleading in the sixties consisted of pom-poms, cutesy chants, big smiles and revealing uniforms. There were no gymnastic tumbling runs. No complicated stunting. Never any injuries. About the most athletic things sixties cheerleaders did was a cartwheel followed by the splits. (p. 58)

By replacing athleticism and vigor for charisma and a performance of emphasized femininity, cheerleading became an appropriate, often encouraged pursuit for collegiate women.

It was not just cheerleading that regressed in terms of required physicality or of social value. Women’s athletics received little attention,

funding, or support between the end of World War II and the early 1970s. Some attribute this to the “crisis of masculinity” of the white middle- and upper-classes. According to sport sociologist Michael Messner (1994), sport became more important to men post World War II because it linked them to a patriarchal past.

The development of capitalism after World War II saw continued erosion of traditional means of male expression and identity, due to the continued rationalization and bureaucratization of work, the shift from industrial production of physical labor to a more service-oriented economy, and increasing levels of structural unemployment. (p. 70)

After the end of World War II, there was great pressure for white middle- and upper-class Americans to regress to traditional gender roles. Women from these backgrounds were often pressured to return to the home and become wives and mothers instead of devoting time to sport and physical activity. Like female athletics in general, cheerleading received little attention from the dominant male athletic community until the passage of Title IX in 1972. This law heralded an explosion in the realm of women’s sport. According to the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, the number of high school girls participating in varsity athletics increased from 294,015 in 1972 to 2,784,154 in 2001; the number of collegiate women increased from 29,977 to 150,916 during the same period (National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, 2002). Between the late 1960s and the early 1980s, girls’ participation in high school sport increased more than 500 percent at the high school level and between 300 and 500 at the collegiate level (Cahn, 1998).

Title IX created more sporting opportunities for girls and women than ever before and, consequently, cheerleading saw a dramatic change in its number of participants. Because cheerleading offered few of the benefits of traditional sports, women abandoned it as new opportunities opened. The administrators of U.S. cheer organizations, such as the National Cheer Association and Universal Cheer Association, recognized that cheerleading would become a practice of the past unless dramatic changes were made. Therefore, the heads of cheerleading's governing bodies decided to make it a more athletic and competitive activity for women. According to Adams and Bettis (2003), at this time

Tight athletic motions, difficult jumps, and pyramid building began to be emphasized in the hundreds of cheerleading camps offered throughout the country. These new cheerleading techniques required girls who were not only strong, but also were agile, were well-coordinated and possessed athletic prowess. (p. 48)

This new competitive type of cheerleading became wildly popular at both the high school and collegiate levels. In 1981, the first national high school cheerleading competition took place, and in 1983 the event was first televised.

Following the passage of Title IX, competitive cheer has experienced rapid growth and has once again become a physically demanding activity.

According to the National Federation of State High Schools' 2005-2006 National Athletic Participation Survey, competitive cheer ranked tenth in the number of schools that offered programs and ninth in terms of the number of girls who participate. Even more popular at the high school level are private

competitive cheer or “All-Star” programs. Currently, over 1,500 All-Star programs are available across the nation, which are run like other athletic club teams practicing, competing twelve months a year (Adams & Bettis, 2003). Cheerleading has also exploded at the collegiate level with Varsity Spirit, the largest cheerleading corporation, listing over 350 colleges and universities that offer full and partial cheerleading scholarships (“College Squad Information Search Results,” 2008).

The growing popularity of competitive cheer is undeniable and, as a result of cheerleading’s place within the athletic community, it has transformed its function from a feminine sporting auxiliary relegated to the sidelines to become its own athletic entity (Grindstaff & West, 2006). While cheerleaders are still a part of the sporting experience in terms of leading spectators in excitement and displaying the gendered social connotations of the activity, there are more and more girls and women cheerleaders who refer to themselves as athletes. Wearing shirts boasting, “If Cheerleading Was Easy They’d Call it Football,” this generation of cheerleaders devotes their extracurricular time and money to developing their sport. With close to four million participants according to the National Cheer Association official website the dominant shift of cheerleading from a social to physical activity that is a part of the sporting spectrum is one of the main factors pushing today’s varsitization process at the collegiate level.

Potential Benefits to the University

I identify 2002 as the start of the official process of the varsitization of collegiate cheer, because it was then that the NCAA's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) granted the University of Maryland special use of competitive cheerleading toward their Title IX compliance efforts beginning in the 2003 season. This marked Maryland as the first school in the nation to promote competitive cheer to this elite status, for although other schools such as University of Kentucky and University of Louisville have long awarded their cheerleaders scholarships, none have recognized or governed their teams as a varsity program. In order to understand the ramifications of this decision, it is necessary to outline the how Maryland created and implemented their varsity model.

During the 2002-2003 academic year, the University of Maryland's athletic department came together to choose two women's teams to promote to varsity standing for the following school year. This was a regular occurrence for the school; every few years, the athletic directors and staff promoted between one and two women's teams to varsity status as a part of their Title IX compliance. According to the federal law, there are three ways for federally funded schools to comply with Title IX requirements in regard to athletics. In a letter written by Gerald Reynolds, the Assistant Secretary of Education for the Office for Civil Rights (2002-2004), the three "prongs" of compliance are clarified:

In its 1979 Policy Interpretation, the Department established a three-prong test for compliance with Title IX, which it later amplified and

clarified in its 1996 Clarification. The test provides that an institution is in compliance if 1) the intercollegiate- level participation opportunities for male and female students at the institution are "substantially proportionate" to their respective full- time undergraduate enrollments, 2) the institution has a "history and continuing practice of program expansion" for the underrepresented sex, or 3) the institution is "fully and effectively" accommodating the interests and abilities of the underrepresented sex. (Reynolds, 2003)

The University of Maryland complies by using guidelines set for the first prong (Administrator C, personal interview, February 13, 2008). This means that the percentage of female and male athletes mirrors the percentage of female and male undergraduate students at the institution. Unlike most universities, Maryland had a greater percentage of males than females in its student body, making it easier for the school to comply in this way (Administrator C, personal interview, February 13, 2008). In addition, Maryland's Athletic Director, Deborah Yow, feels that the second two prongs are too vague and that compliance through either can leave a school legally vulnerable (Brady, 2002).

During this decision-making process, Maryland's administrators considered four different sports for promotion to varsity status: ice hockey, rowing, water polo, and competitive cheer. In the end they chose water polo and competitive cheer. According to one administrator involved in the promotion and implementation of Maryland's varsity cheer team, there were two reasons the administration selected cheer over ice hokey or rowing. First, both cheer and water polo had a history of club teams seeking this recognition and support at the University of Maryland (Administrator A, personal

communication, April 10, 2007). Second, the necessary varsity facilities were already available for cheer and water polo, whereas those for ice hockey and rowing necessitated construction, significantly contributing to their start-up costs (Administrator A, personal communication, April 10, 2007).

As a result of the administration's 2002 decision, Maryland's cheer program was split into two separate teams: the Spirit Squad and the competitive cheer team ("University of Maryland Cheerleading Overview," 2007). Deborah Yow (2003) specifically outlined the difference between the school's competitive cheer team and the spirit squad in a letter to the Office of Civil Rights writing that, "the sole purpose of [sideline cheer] will be to provide support for Maryland's varsity athletic teams on the sidelines of the field or court in much the same manner as the band." Comparatively, competitive cheer functions as a traditional athletic team, existing to compete against other teams in physical contests ("University of Maryland Cheerleading Overview," 2007). According to the supporters of competitive cheer, this distinction is vital. These women are not focused on the social function or performance of traditional sideline cheerleading, but instead center their training on their competition schedule. Competitive cheerleaders are held to the same standards as all University of Maryland varsity teams in regard to issues such as recruitment, academic eligibility, and student-athlete codes of conduct and the team has access to all varsity training facilities ("University of Maryland Student Athlete Handbook," 2007).

Besides creating this model, Maryland faced another challenge when seeking permission to use their competitive cheer participation within their overall Title IX compliance numbers. This was difficult because prior to the development Maryland's team, the Office of Civil Rights ruled that cheerleading did not qualify as a sport due to the lack of competitive opportunities. However, after Maryland illustrated that competitive cheer's sole purpose was to compete against other squads, would not perform at other sports' competitions, and would follow all regulations and standards upheld by the athletic department, the OCR approved their request to use their participation numbers. This decision proved to be pivotal and has encouraged Maryland to push the popularization and varsitization of competitive cheer more aggressively.

Currently, administrators at Maryland and other pro-varsitization schools are seeking for competitive cheer to be formally named an NCAA sport, a process that can take up to a decade. First, competitive cheer must be promoted to "emerging sport" status. This is a status that was created for women's collegiate athletics in 1993, after the NCAA acknowledged how historic oppression had deterred the development of girls and women's sports ("NCAA Emerging Sports History"). Since that time, women's sports that have gained popularity at the youth and high school level such as rugby, bowling, archery, and synchronized swimming have earned this recognition.

Emerging sport status provides several benefits for institutions: the most immediate being that they are allowed "to use emerging sports to help meet the NCAA minimum sports-sponsorship requirements and also to meet

the NCAA's minimum financial aid awards" ("NCAA Emerging Sports," 2008). Although these sports are not NCAA sanctioned, they still may be counted as part of the college or university's Title IX compliance. While competitive cheer is not yet an NCAA emerging sport, Maryland was granted permission to use cheer participation toward the compliance numbers and the OCR will continue to review this privilege on a "case by case basis" according the NCAA Gender Equity Manual (2005). Administrators at Maryland and other schools interested in creating varsity programs have not made it a secret that their intent behind promoting it to varsity status is to encourage other schools to do the same and to gain NCAA emerging-sport status within the next five years (Administrator B, personal interview, February 8, 2008; Coach C, personal interview, March 4, 2008).

Maryland's decision and model have turned out to be successful; the competitive cheer team has won the last three consecutive National Cheer Association (NCA) national titles in the all-female collegiate division. Maryland's achievements have inspired other schools to consider similar action. With the low annual budget of \$85,000 the school has added a veritable powerhouse to their athletic department in the short span of six years (University of Maryland Athletic Department, 2007). Constantly pressured to achieve athletic success, NCAA compliance, and financial stability, collegiate and university athletic departments are forever in the market for innovative strategies that help them meet the demands of their programs, which competitive cheer can potentially and successfully answer. With this in mind,

Maryland's model is a shrewd addition to its athletic department. It is no surprise that schools have followed Maryland's lead and have moved to add competitive cheer teams to their programs. The University of Oregon announced in the fall of 2007 that they would be creating a varsity competitive cheer team based on of the competitive/spirit squad model designed by Maryland. According to one administrator I interviewed, other schools such as West Virginia's Fairmont State and Morgan State in Baltimore, Maryland are rumored to be making similar announcements in the near future (Administrator C, personal interview, February 13, 2008).

Those advocating this trend are not just taking the immediate gains into account; they are looking to the future for possible benefits as well. By creating one of the first varsity competitive cheer teams, these schools will have more time to establish strong programs, which will help them to monopolize the virtually untapped recruiting market available at the youth level. Throughout my interviews, administrators emphasized the importance of plugging into this untouched athletic realm and to create opportunities for young women. One administrator who supports the varsitization of competitive cheer teams stated, "I think that is all about education and it's about understanding that Title IX is about meeting interests and abilities and that there are four million participants across the country" (Administrator E, personal interview, Feb. 22, 2008).

In addition, administrators recognize that an investment in competitive cheer can produce financial benefits. The \$150 million cheer industry is booming with hundreds

of competitions nationwide and millions of participants, and collegiate-level administrators see the potential to make money through their varsity cheer programs: “It is a female sport that could actually become a revenue earning sport if your school hosted several of these competitions” (Administrator E, personal interview, February 22, 2008). With ticket prices for competitions ranging between \$10 and \$30 per spectator, and competitions bringing in up to 12,000 people at national competitions according to the NCA official website, hosting competitions would be a sound monetary investment for universities. If these schools add varsity teams now, they can get a head start on other schools to taking advantage of this relatively ignored (at least by collegiate athletic departments) sector of the athletic market.

PROBLEMATIZING VARSITIZATION

Ignited by the gendered implications and meanings of cheerleading in American society, the creation of varsity collegiate competitive cheer teams is contested by sport studies academics, such as Women’s sport Foundation President Donna Lopiano, and even some within the cheer community. Those against its advancement look to the societal connotations of cheerleading as a major reason not to promote it as a sport in the collegiate athletic community. There are several issues raised by the varsitization process including the disputed status of competitive cheer as a sport, the promotion of emphasized femininity, which is inherent in the activity, and finally the (dis)ingenuous use of competitive cheer for Title IX compliance. However, each of these powerful arguments is met with equally compelling counterpoints from those on the pro-varsitization side of the debate. This section explores these controversies and explains the rationale of those involved.

Competitive Cheerleading's Contested Status as "Sport"

First, at the center of this debate is the assertion that, according to many within academia and within the competitive cheer community, the activity does not qualify as a sport according to the NCAA definition:

An institutional activity involving physical exertion with the purpose of competition versus another team or individuals within a collegiate competition structure. Furthermore, sport includes regularly scheduled team and/or individual, head-to-head competition (at least five) within a defined competitive season(s); and standardized rules with rating/scoring systems ratified by official regulatory agencies and governing bodies (Shaul, 2000).

While it is rare that anyone argues against the physical demands of competitive cheer, many question its purpose and its qualification as a sport through its competitive element. Despite the push from supporters to be differentiated from sideline cheer, there are still some important figures in the community who hold onto the origins of cheerleading and believe that the true purpose of cheerleading should always be to support other athletic teams. Martha Elrod, the director of marketing and communications for the National Spirit Group states

I don't understand the necessity for separating [sideline and competitive cheerleading]. I think it's wonderful to acknowledge their athletic achievement because I think anyone who is new to the world of cheerleading, it's easy to have a preconceived notion about that cheerleading is and not recognize how athletic cheerleading is today. I just question how's that going to work if they make it a varsity sport, what that really means. It seems to be moving away from the real basic foundation of what cheerleaders have always meant to schools. (Quoted in Rosenberg, 2003)

In other words, cheerleading was not originally created as a sport, and although it has become more athletic and competitive, cheerleading should remain a sporting supplement.

Those in charge of two of the most successful competitive cheer programs, those at The University of Kentucky and The University of Louisville, agree with the assertion that cheerleading must stay true to its historical roots. Both teams have long-standing, winning traditions in the competitive realm, but their administrators have expressed that cheerleading's first and foremost responsibility is to support sports such as football and basketball. Kentucky's head coach, Jomo Thompson, has stated that, "going to games is part of the fun" (quoted in Rosenberg, 2003). University of Kentucky is not interested in creating a varsity competition team because, "cheering for games is the focus" and because of this, "cheerleading does not qualify as a sport" (Coach B, personal interview, February 22, 2008). On top of game performances and national competitions, the cheerleaders participate in numerous events and act as public relations ambassadors. In fact, one administrator estimates that 80% of the team's time is devoted to cheering at games and community events, while only 20% is devoted to competing (Ibid.).

The University of Louisville has also declined to create a varsity competitive cheer team. Their three cheer teams, including an all-girl, a large co-ed and a small co-ed squad, have access to the varsity facilities and support services and also receive scholarships. However, they still believe that it is important to include all three groupings of cheerleaders at sporting events. Furthermore, the school is already in compliance with Title IX requirements which means, according to one administrator,

that, “There is no real motivation to change the program... We already have a successful model in place” (Administrator D, personal interview, February 19, 2008).

Other strong oppositional voices on this issue come from feminist scholars and advocates of girls and women’s athletics, who contend that cheerleading does not meet the NCAA requirements of a sport. Donna Lopiano, director of the Women’s Sport Foundation, has called the naming competitive cheer as a sport “disingenuous”, arguing that there is no official competition model or unified rules to which the cheer community adheres (quoted in Siegel, 2005). A consideration of University of Maryland’s competition schedule supports Lopiano’s point. Although the Terps have ten scheduled competitions, they were the only university squad to appear at their first four contests of the 2007-2008 season (University of Maryland Athletic Department, 2007). In looking at the results of each of the first four competitions of the 2007-2008 season, which include the Charm City Dress Rehearsal (Baltimore, Maryland, December 1, 2007), The University of Maryland Championships (January 19, 2008), The Maryland Cup (Upper Marlboro, Maryland, January 26, 2008), and the American Championships (Baltimore, Maryland, February 2-3, 2008), the University of Maryland was the only team in their division and therefore “won” those meets uncontested. This means that rather than head-to-head competitions, Maryland used these match-ups as elaborate dress rehearsals for their main competition at the NCA National Championships in April 2008. Because head-to-head competition is one of the main requirements in the NCAA definition of a sport, this discredits Maryland’s model. Dr. Christine Grant cites this lack of competition as the major reasons she has “real reservations” against varsitization because “there are almost no competitive

cheer teams across the country”, which obviously limits the competitive potential (personal interview, May 1, 2008).

The Promotion of Emphasized Femininity

While opponents question the authenticity of competitive cheerleading as a sport, a dominant theme centers on the performance and promotion of emphasized femininity (Connell, 1987) in competitive cheerleading. According to David Whiston’s (1994) definition

“Femininity”...is not an essence that all women have naturally or even that some have more than others. It is, rather, a product of discourses, practices, and social relations that construct the situation of women in patriarchal societies in ways that typically dis-able women in relation to men. (p. 355)

In other words, femininity is the social construction of what a woman is supposed to be, think, and how she is supposed to act. Emphasized femininity refers to an exaggerated, gendered performance acted in complement to hegemonic masculinity. Competitive cheer promotes these notions of gender through its competitions and its spectacularized image, most noticeably through the dress and physical appearance of female contestants. Part of the competition is subjectively judged on presentation, and participants must adhere to the norms and expectations of femininity. In competitive cheer, teams must present themselves in identical clothing, hair, and make-up. The uniforms are most often two-piece and consist of small shell tops, which expose the mid drift, and short skirts which, “fall at least 1.5 inches below boy-short briefs or 2 inches below standard briefs” (“National Cheer Association Collegiate Uniform Requirements,” 2007). Although there are regulations against “excessive” or “sexually provocative” bodily exposure (“National Cheer Association Collegiate

Uniform Requirements,” 2007), physically revealing uniforms are a part of the culture.

Tightly curled hair and thickly-applied make up are other overtly feminine signifiers displayed by the majority of athletes, though those within the cheer community argue these elements serve practical purposes. For example, hair is styled to be kept out of competitors’ faces in order to perform stunts; make-up must be heavy and strategically fixed in order for the audience to pick up on their facial expressions. However, these regulations do not contribute to the physical achievement of the athlete but rather, contribute to the distinctly gendered, performative elements of cheer. Basing a portion of the scoring on a performance of emphasized femininity takes the focus off of the physical demands of the competitions, which should be the sole concern of both the athlete and the spectators.

The performance of femininity goes beyond what participants wear; as highlighted earlier, the spectacularization of the activity promotes the image of the cheerleader across the globe. When a competition is broadcast on ESPN, viewers are not only consuming that performance, but also the mediated image of the cheerleader. This image is what I have termed the “fem-fit body” – a corporeal appearance that is, at once, toned, firm, and decidedly feminine. This image is something that Dr. Grant sites as one of the limitations the varsitization of competitive cheer faces today.

Cheerleading at one point seemed to be the exploitation of women’s bodies. There are people who still think that in some ways that is still being done and therefore they just don’t want to move in that direction. They want to move toward women being viewed as strong, I mean physically strong, and using the body not as a beauty statement, but as a strength and skill statement. These original concepts about cheerleading are pretty negative to a lot of people and do not entice

them to think about cheerleading as a real sport. (Personal interview, May 1, 2008)

Although competitive cheer demands incredible strength, discipline, and athleticism, its liberatory potential is somewhat compromised because it promotes emphasized femininity which, as feminist scholars argue, remains inherently oppressive (see, for example, Theberge, 1994). The emancipation of girls and women through sport and physical activity is bound up with not just the experience of the individual, but also with how society perceives that activity. So, while cheerleading may encourage physical strength and power, the activity is not free from oppression associated with patriarchal control because its performance of emphasized femininity inherently limits its liberatory potential.

The Title IX Controversy

Finally, in addition to competitive cheer's disputed sport status and gendered performative elements, many argue that promoting it and naming it an NCAA sport goes against the strides made in women's athletics since the passage of Title IX. Opponents believe that the time and effort put into its promotion takes away valuable resources that other *already* sanctioned sports could receive. An example of this was illustrated in the case of the University of Maryland, in which administrators had the option to promote ice hockey or rowing—sports that already have NCAA recognition, sanctioned competitions, and national championships in place. Instead, to establish a competitive cheer program required additional time and effort because a varsity model did not exist. Although Maryland administrators insist that their decision was based on a number of factors, including a lack of facilities for both ice hockey and

rowing and the desire to provide opportunities for a women's activity that has traditionally been oppressed, many accuse Maryland as "doing an end around Title IX" (quoted in Siegel, 2005). As Sharyn Tejani, a lawyer with the Feminist Majority Foundation, stated, "More opportunities in those sports would have been in line with the purpose of Title IX" (quoted in O'Keefe, 2003).

The pro-varsitization side of this debate argues that the benefits of creating opportunities for women outweigh the drawbacks. Advocates of this development argue that its promotion to varsity status represents the best influence and utilization of Title IX and they are leading the efforts to ensure the popularization of varsity competitive cheer programs. Throughout my interviews, administrators insisted that they are increasing options for young women to continue in the athletics in which they have specialized. In their eyes, this action is in the full spirit of Title IX. As one administrator stated, "Title IX is about meeting interests and abilities and that there are four million [competitive cheer] participants across the country" (Administrator E, personal interview, February 22, 2008). Indeed, they believe that they are providing an opportunity for an athletic activity that has been oppressed because of social stigma. Maryland Athletic Director Deborah Yow has cited a general "prejudice against cheerleading" that motivates the questioning of its promotion (quoted in Siegel, 2005). These administrators believe that their support of competitive cheer will help eliminate the negative stereotypes that surround it. Administrators at Maryland and Oregon argue that they are utilizing Title IX and gender equity guidelines to their full potential and believe their promotion of

competitive cheerleading and desire to seek emerging sport status illustrates their commitment to gender equity.

Although Title IX has played a clear role in the development of competitive cheer, many question if this has been the “appropriate” or even intended utilization of the law. Is this what the original defendants of Title IX had in mind when they sacrificed themselves in their fight for gender equity in sport? Once, at a dinner with some of the “godmothers” of women’s collegiate athletics, I explained my interest in researching competitive cheerleading and why I believe it to be an important site of study, to which one of the women responded, “I didn’t work hard for Title IX for it to get cheerleaders scholarships.” This statement illustrates that cheerleading continues to be stereotyped as a non-serious, non-athletic activity. Despite these connotations, competitive cheerleading has exploded as a highly athletic activity worthy of attention. As my research has uncovered, this is clearly an athletic activity that millions of young women are interested in and one would guess that its popularity will only increase in the following years with the creation of varsity collegiate opportunities. Although collegiate competitive cheer’s varsitization is contested and brings with it questions of its potential to empower those involved, its increasing presence should not be a surprise. It is an example of the dramatic affects of Title IX on the American sporting community and the development of opportunities for girls and women.

CONCLUSION

After tracing the origins and current developments of the collegiate competitive cheer, it is evident that this cultural phenomenon has been created and influenced by the overall social, economic, and political processes at work during the second half of the twentieth century. The aim of this thesis is to explore and problematize the varsitization of collegiate competitive cheer. Until now, there has been little discussion of the complex workings and issues of this trend from the academic community. It is imperative that scholars and those dedicated to the advancement of women's athletics understand the multiple opinions and issues raised by the creation of varsity competitive cheer teams. This is a multifaceted issue and there are examples of how these programs both add and deny opportunities for women. Scholars and members of the athletic community must examine all sides of this issue before forming their opinion or making any decisions about it.

Only time and the decisions of more institutions will determine the course of competitive cheer's varsitization; however, as Maryland brings home its third NCA national championship I can only assume that the program's success will bring more attention to the varsity model. It remains to be seen if competitive cheer will be named an NCAA emerging sport and, if this occurs, this trend will need to be revisited in order to understand how it has changed and how the moment in which it is happening has evolved.

At the moment, what is known is that the varsitization of competitive cheerleading is something that will continue to elicit debate among those in

the athletic and academic communities. Although almost everyone involved recognizes the tremendous athletic skill and prowess demanded by competitive cheer, its historical roots and social stereotypes will continue to complicate the promotion of the activity. Former University of Maryland head competitive cheer coach Lura Fleece perhaps summed up the precarious position of competitive cheer in the athletic community stating,

You know what the problem is? We do all these difficult athletic maneuvers, we compete, we're a team and the university declares us a sport, but people say we're cheerleaders and everyone thinks of the Dallas Cowboys' cheerleaders... That's the problem. It would be a while lot easier if we were just called something else. (quoted in Pennington, 2004)

It is highly unlikely that competitive cheer will be renamed in the near future and doing so would still not erase its historic roots. Therefore, the promotion of this socially stigmatized activity will continue to be met with resistance as its presence grows in the collegiate athletic community.

THE CHEERLEADING EMPIRICAL: CHEER AS A SITE FOR INVESTIGATION

This appendix focuses on the empirical information collected throughout the past year and a half and highlights information gathered both through a historical analysis and through interviews. I will begin with the historical data because this was the most in depth part of my research. This section is based off of a term paper written for the history seminar course I took in Spring 2007. I will then move to a summary of the information that I gathered from the interviews I facilitated with those involved in the administration and promotion of collegiate competitive cheerleading. This section will examine the themes that emerged through the interviews, which helped my research.

Origins of Cheer

Cheerleading's roots date back to the late nineteenth century at American universities. From its inception, it has demonstrated U.S. gender, class, and racial roles as well as hegemonic relations. Reflective of the make-up of college students, at its beginning, cheerleaders were privileged white males who led college football crowds in cheers and encouraged excitement in the game. Unlike today's stereotypes of male cheerleaders as feminized men or gay (Grindstaff & West, 2006), men who participated in cheerleading at this time were perceived as masculine and fit the definition of the All-American college student. The emergence of industrial capitalism and the popular value of "the strenuous life" dictated that the ideal young man with intentions of success was to attend college but balance class work with physical activity (Dyreson, 1999). Cheerleaders did just this by incorporating

football, an important part of American sporting identity then as well as now, into their college lives. Being a cheerleader was the social equivalent of being a member of an elite sport team, as illustrated by this quote from a 1911 guide to cheerleading:

The reputation of having been a valiant “cheer-leader” is one of the most valuable things a boy can take away from college. As a title to promotion in professional or public life, it ranks hardly second to that of having been a quarterback (“Organized Cheering,” 1911).

Cheerleading remained male-dominated throughout the early part of the twentieth century, reflecting the make-up of the student bodies of institutions of higher learning as well as popular ideas concerning the effects of physical activity on girls and women. At this time it was widely assumed that women were physically inferior to men and, more specifically, ruled by their reproductive organs. Doctors at the time believed that “Given evidence of women’s poor health- chronic fatigue, pain and illness, mood swings, and menstrual irregularities-experts theorized that the cyclical fluctuations of female physiology caused physical, emotional, and moral vulnerability and debilitation” (Cahn, 1998, p.13). According to Colette Dowling (2001), author of *The Frailty Myth*, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century there was a major campaign by medical doctors to protect pubertal girls from too much physical and mental strain. Dowling writes,

In a widely quoted 1879 medical textbook, Thomas Emmet advised that girls, ‘spend the year before and two years after puberty at rest.’ Each menstrual period should be endured in, ‘the recumbent position,’ until their systems could adjust to the, ‘the new order of life’ (p. 14).

It was vital that girls take measures to protect their reproductive organs in order to later become a mother and take their place in the gender order.

Although this theory was perpetuated through the early twentieth century and its residual affects are still present today, doctors eventually began understand that this was more hurtful than helpful to girls and women in terms of their overall health. Because Victorian girls were socially and medically pressured to avoid physical activity at all costs, they soon began to show signs of constitutional weakness (Dowling, 2001, p.15). Dowling again states, “suddenly medicine did an about face,”(p. 15) and doctors began to recommend girls became moderately physically active in order to prepare for childbirth and eventually motherhood (Cahn, 1998, p.13 & 21). It was at this time that a popular new idea called “the skirt theory” was developed. It was believed that physical activities women could perform in a skirt, such as golf and tennis, was not only socially appropriate, but also beneficial to her health (Cahn, 1998, p. 23). First promoted within upper class sporting environments, such as newly popular country clubs, this attitude encouraged women to participate in socially sanctioned sports while also still maintaining the proper feminine image (Davies, 2007). Coincidentally, the first female cheerleaders simultaneously emerged up at colleges and universities (Adams & Bettis, 2005).

Although women who entered cheerleading prior to and during World War I were seen as treading in the male territory of sport, female cheerleaders slowly became integrated into the college and high school football scene (Davis, 1994). In fact, according to Adams and Bettis, by the 1940s over 30,000 colleges and US high schools had cheerleaders, many of whom were

girls and women (Adams & Bettis, 2005, p. 76). Women slowly made their way into this traditionally male practice until the beginning of World War II. Just as in the industrial and sporting worlds, men left cheerleading to fight in the war and women took their places. When men returned home, they attempted to reclaim their positions within society both in the workplace and as athletes. This trend was also seen in cheerleading; however, by the early 1950s cheerleading had shifted from a male activity to a female activity. While men were successful in reclaiming their positions in most other places, this was not true for former male cheerleaders. This was mainly due to the equalization of female cheerleaders between the 1930s and the end of World War II. Within this period it became social belief that girls and women, “could lead a crowd to cheer because they were attractive” (Hanson, 1995, p. 23). This attitude changed the function and make-up of cheerleaders for the next several decades.

The 1950s and 60s saw the complete feminization of cheer and by 1970 “cheerleading was considered a ‘natural’ female activity” (Davis, 1994, p.150). As cheerleading became an exclusively female activity it also transitioned into an activity that required little physical talent, strength, or ability. According to James McElroy (1999), author of *We’ve Got Spirit: The Life and Times of America’s Greatest Cheerleading Team*,

Cheerleading in the sixties consisted of pom-poms, cutesy chants, big smiles and revealing uniforms. There were no gymnastic tumbling runs. No complicated stunting. Never any injuries. About the most athletic things sixties cheerleaders did was a cartwheel followed by the splits” (p. 58).

It was not just cheerleading that regressed in terms of being physically demanding or socially accepted. Women's athletics received little attention, funding, or support between the end of World War II and the early 1970s. This can be attributed to several trends of the time, but most specifically to the middle and upper class white crisis of masculinity experienced during this period. According to sport sociologist Michael Messner (1994), sports became more important to men post World War II because sports link men to a patriarchal past (Messner, 1994). Messner states,

The development of capitalism after World War II saw continued erosion of traditional means of male expression and identity, due to the continued rationalization and bureaucratization of work, the shift from industrial production of physical labor to a more service-oriented economy, and increasing levels of structural unemployment (p. 70).

After the end of World War II there was great pressure for certain privileged Americans (white, middle class, suburban) to return to traditional patriarchal gender roles. Women's sports and physical activities did not fall into these traditional gender roles. Women from these backgrounds were often pressured to return to the home and become wives and mothers and give up and forget about sports.

Just as female athletics in general, cheerleading made little progress as a physical activity until the passage of Title IX in 1972. This law heralded an explosion in the realm of women's athletics. Between the late 1960s and the early 1980s, participation in high school girls' sport increased more than 500 percent and it is estimated that at the collegiate level participation grew between 300 and 500 percent during the same period (Cahn, 1998, p. 246).

New avenues opened up to women, allowing them to participate in many sports at the high school and collegiate level.

Consequently, cheerleading saw a dramatic change in the number of its participants. Because cheerleading offered few of the benefits of traditional sports women abandoned it as new opportunities opened up, allowing them to compete in formerly all-male forms of athletics. The heads of US cheer organizations, most specifically the National Cheer Association (NCA) and later the Universal Cheer Association (UCA), recognized that cheerleading would become a practice of the past unless dramatic changes were made. Therefore, cheerleading governing bodies decided to make cheerleading more athletic, competitive, and satisfying for women as a physical activity. According to scholars Natalie Adams and Pamela Bettis (2003) who have written several books and articles on adolescents girls and the constructions of gendered identities, at this time,

Tight athletic motions, difficult jumps, and pyramid building began to be emphasized in the hundreds of cheerleading camps offered throughout the country. These new cheerleading techniques required girls who were not only strong, but also were agile, were well-coordinated and possessed athletic prowess (p.76).

This new competitive type of cheerleading became wildly popular at both the high school and collegiate levels. In 1981 the first national high school cheerleading competition took place, and in 1983 the event was first televised (Adams & Bettis, 2005).

Since that time competitive cheer has seen rapid growth with close to four million participants nationwide according to the National Cheer

Association official website. Programs are available all over the nation for year-round competition. These cheer programs, called All-Star teams, are run like other athletic club teams. They are not affiliated with a school but are instead private teams to which cheerleaders commit often twelve months a year. In most respects these teams are run like traditional athletic teams. However, there are also elements of performance incorporated, which accentuate idealized notions of femininity. These performative elements have been equated to those in gymnastics and figure skating. Like gymnastics and figure skating, cheer competitions are judged based on a combination of athletic and performance criteria.

Varsitization

Overall, cheerleading has gone through tremendous changes as demonstrated through its history. At the center of this transformation is the shift from it being a social female activity to a physical female activity and this is being harnessed and commodified. This transition into a competitive and bureaucratically recognized activity can be called sportification, a term used to describe the transformation of pre-modern ritualized play into modern rationalized sport (Von der Lippe, 2001). Most often when an activity goes through this process it is motivated by the potential economic and social gains for dominant classes. Other examples of sportification include activities such as ultimate disk, free running, BMX biking, snowboarding, etc., all of which have been commodified by corporations as demonstrated by the emergence of

events such as The X-Games (Rinehart & Grenfell, 2002). As a result of the sportization of competitive cheer at the youth and high school levels, we see the varsitization, or the naming of a sport as a varsity athletic entity, at the collegiate level today. Cheerleading's collegiate varsitization can clearly be traced to the University of Maryland in 2002, which lead me to carefully examine the events surrounding its promotion to varsity status at this institution. University of Maryland's decisions, rational, and model represent the potential future for competitive cheerleading and also provide insight into the use and influence of Title IX in collegiate athletics today.

The University of Maryland Model

During the 2002-2003 academic year the University of Maryland's athletic directors and staff came together to choose two women's teams to promote to varsity standing for the following school year. Every few years, University of Maryland's athletic directors and staff promote one or two women's teams to varsity status as a part of their Title IX compliance. According the federal law, there are three ways for federally funded schools to comply with Title IX requirements in regard to athletics. In a letter written by Gerald Reynolds, the Assistant Secretary of Education for the Office for Civil Rights (2002-2004), the three "prongs" of compliance are clarified:

In its 1979 Policy Interpretation, the Department established a three-prong test for compliance with Title IX, which it later amplified and clarified in its 1996 Clarification. The test provides that an institution is in compliance if 1) the intercollegiate- level participation opportunities for male and female students at the institution are "substantially proportionate" to their respective full- time undergraduate enrollments, 2) the institution has a "history and continuing practice of program expansion" for the underrepresented sex, or 3)

the institution is "fully and effectively" accommodating the interests and abilities of the underrepresented sex. (Reynolds, 2003).

The University of Maryland complies by using guidelines set for the first prong. This means that the percentage of female and male athletes mirrors the percentage of female and male students at the institution. Unlike most other universities, Maryland had a greater percentage of males than females in the student body and this makes it easier for the school to comply through this prong. Also, Maryland's athletic director Deborah Yow feels that the second and third prongs are too vague and compliance through either can leave a school legally vulnerable (E. Brady, 2002). However, Yow has made Title IX compliance one of her main goals and under her leadership Maryland has also followed the guidance set out by the second prong. This prong, as written above, strives to expand the number of programs for the historically underrepresented sex. This means that there must be evidence that the school consistently makes efforts to increase the number of opportunities for women to participate in varsity athletics, which Maryland has done (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008).

During this decision process, administrators chose between women's ice hockey, rowing, water polo, and competitive cheer. In the end they chose water polo and competitive cheer to satisfy their Title IX compliance requirements. The administration states that these two teams were promoted to varsity standing for two reasons. First, these sports both had a history of club teams attempting to be promoted to varsity status at University of

Maryland (Administrator A, personal correspondence, April 10,2007).

Second, the facilities for both teams were already in place as opposed to the facilities for ice hockey and rowing (Administrator A, personal correspondence, April 10, 2007). This decision made Maryland the first school in the nation to have a varsity cheerleading team and it has turned out to be a successful one. The team has won back-to-back NCA national titles in the all-female collegiate division in 2006 and 2007 (“University of Maryland Competitive Cheer Media Guide”, 2007; Kestler, 2007).

Consequently due to the administration’s 2002 decision, Maryland’s cheer program was split into two separate teams: the Spirit Squad and the competitive cheer team (“University of Maryland Cheerleading Overview”, 2007). The Spirit Squad cheers for football and basketball games and the competitive cheer team refers to the new varsity sport. The University defines the differences between the two programs in the Cheerleading Overview document provided on the official University of Maryland Competitive Cheer website. According to the media guide, “The primary focus of the Spirit Squad is to support the University of Maryland athletics by cheering for both football and basketball games” (“University of Maryland Competitive Cheer Media Guide”, 2007). Conversely, “The primary focus of the Competitive Cheer team is strictly to compete” (“University of Maryland Cheerleading Overview”, 2007). While there are specific differences between the two teams, the most important is the recognition of one, the competitive cheer team, as a varsity sport. Because of their status as a varsity sport, competitive

cheerleaders receive such benefits as full scholarships, privileged academic status, and priority housing (University of Maryland Athletic Department, 2007).

Focusing strictly on the competitive cheer team, we can see that tensions within gender relations and equality are exemplified in the newest forms of cheerleading as they were in its original forms. In its first few years as a varsity sport cheer has faced struggles in verifying its legitimacy. In most aspects its organization and regulations are identical to other varsity sports. Competitive cheerleaders are held to the same standards as all University of Maryland varsity teams in regard to issues such as recruitment, academic eligibility, and student-athlete codes of conduct (“University of Maryland Student Athlete Handbook”, 2007). Also, the team runs practices, including conditioning and weight training session, with comparable frequency and intensity as other varsity sports.

However, one major difference between competitive cheer and other varsity sports concerns its competition schedule. Although they train according to the same standards as other varsity teams, they compete less frequently than most other varsity teams with the exceptions of such sports as track and field. For example, in 2006-2007 the team competed 11 times. However, they were the only college competing in their category at more than half of the competitions (“University of Maryland Competitive Cheer Media Guide”, 2007). Critics of competitive cheer sight this as one of the major faults of the sport. Executive Director of the Women’s Sport Foundation Donna Lopiano called competitive cheer “disingenuous” as a sport

because of its lack of competition from other comparable teams (quoted in Siegel, 2005, sec. A p.1).

The other most obvious struggle competitive cheer faces concerns the physical image of the cheerleaders. As stated, the performative elements of the sport demand that participants display a provocative feminine image. This type of image would be labeled the “heterosexy” image by such scholars as Pat Griffin (1998), author of *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*. Heterosexy refers to presentations of the body that play up hetero-normative ideas of beauty and sexuality (Griffin, 1998). For example, cheerleaders wear small, tight, usually themed costumes that bear skin. During competitions, cheerleaders are required to wear stage make-up that accentuates facial features such as eyes, lips, and cheeks. Team members’ hair is always identically and ornately styled in curls and off the face. While this image is constantly presented through the media, according to Griffin this a dangerous image to encourage through women in sports. Men are not held to the same expectations concerning appearance within sport, including competitive cheer. Griffin states, “(men’s) sport performances alone are taken as evidence of their masculine heterosexuality. Women athletes also should be respected for their sport accomplishments without apology” (Griffin, 1998, p. 23). In fact, some argue that the increased presence of men in some collegiate competitive cheer teams in recent years has helped propel its image as a “legitimate” sport (Grindstaff, 2005, p. 3).

Even within the feminist community there is a counter argument to the case made against the cheer’s performative elements. Some say that rejecting performance

characteristics seen in women's sports such as in competitive cheer and gymnastics privilege traditional structure of athletics. Again, this illustrates conflicting views on the body and presentation within the feminist community and larger society. The theory appendix of this thesis will flesh this controversy out more through a feminist analysis of this process.

Interview Themes

In addition to using historic research, I included interviews to inform this project. These interviews helped to clarify and expand on the information that I had found through historic analysis. I spoke with three coaches, eight administrators involved with collegiate competitive cheer and its varsitization. I also spoke with two feminist academics including Dr. Christine Grant and Dr. Susan Cahn who helped highlight opinions from those outside of the collegiate athletic community. Three strong themes emerged during these interviews, which included the defense of competitive cheer's physicality/ athletic demands, its importance as a part of the collegiate athletic community, and its general underestimation as a viable entity of the sport commerce market. As anticipated, each participant had varying opinions and ideas concerning interview topics based on her/his personal experience and institutional affiliation. However, in every interview these three ideas revealed themselves in some form.

The first idea that permeated each interview was that competitive cheerleading is a fiercely difficult and demanding athletic activity. No matter what the participant's opinion on its qualification as a sport, she/he made it very clear in the opening minutes of the interview that cheer was a rigorous physical activity.

Although my questions focused on broad issues surrounding Title IX and their institution's governance/recognition of competitive cheer, coaches would often discuss the different parts of their training and conditioning schedules. More often than not I was asked if I had attended competitions or watched televised competitions. The participants made it clear that you had to witness cheer competitions to truly understand the physicality involved in the activity. This defense of cheer's physical demands led me to believe that the participants had obviously encountered many people who did not consider cheerleading to be a difficult athletic activity.

The second strong theme that emerged through the interviews was the defense of cheerleading's place within the athletic community. The participants who argued for competitive cheer's varsitization made mention throughout the interviews that it deserved attention, time and money just as the other recognized sports in the athletic department. They believe that competitive cheer's function in their program was as a varsity sport. Those against its collegiate varsitization argued that its function is instead to support athletics. Although they do not think it qualifies as a sport, they reiterated that it plays a vital role setting the tone for athletic events and by representing their institutions as "public relations ambassadors" (Coach C, personal interview, Feb. 26, 2008). While these opinions certainly highlight one of the major rifts in the cheerleading community, it illustrates the expansive realm of the athletic community. All of the participants recognized that the collegiate sporting experiences is made up of many different types of teams, administrators, and spectators and competitive cheer fits into that overall experience no matter if it is a varsity team or club program.

Finally, the last theme that was present throughout the interview process was the emphasis on how powerful cheerleading is as an athletic market. During each interview the participant would bring up facts and figures concerning the number of competitive cheer participants nationwide. They would talk of the success of cheer corporations such as Varsity Inc. During one interview with a participant who was against the sportization of collegiate cheer he stated the his team participated with the UCA because up to fifteen competitions were televised on ESPN annually. Administrators often discussed how they had not known of the competitive cheer world and how to cash in on the surplus until recently. It was obvious that these individuals saw great potential for financial gain by investing in competitive cheer teams because of their undeniable corporate success.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: EXPLORING THE FEMINIST DEBATE

Although the bulk of this project historically analyzes the factors behind competitive cheer's varsitization, I have relied on concepts from feminist sport theory to inform my overall project. So, while much of the article deals with historical trends in collegiate athletics, the project and more importantly my future research is motivated by feminist theory through the lens of physical cultural studies. Therefore, this section will focus on the feminist debate that surrounds the promotion of competitive cheer and the naming of the activity as a legitimate sport. I will first explain the feminist theoretical approach in sport studies. I then will analyze both sides of the debate including the pro-varsitization side, mostly made up of those within the competitive cheer community, and those against its varsitization, which includes some sport studies scholars and also those in collegiate athletics who do not believe that cheerleading qualifies as a traditional sport. I will close with my personal analysis of the trend.

Before exploring the separate sides of the competitive cheer debate, I must define what I mean by feminist sport theory. At its simplest, feminist sport theory, as with any feminist research, places gender and its societal implications at the center of analysis. Focusing on gender issues within sport and physical culture also motivates feminist researchers to explore larger societal structures that create disparities in power and privilege. In Pirkko Markula's *Feminist Sport Studies*, she begins the anthology with the definition, scope and method of feminist theory in sport studies. Markula (2005) cites Susan Birrell's (1988) definition of the aims of the approach

stating, “feminist sport studies became, ‘a theoretically informed, critical analysis of the cultural forces that work to produce the ideological practices that influence the relations of sport and gender’” (Birrell, p. 492 as quoted in Markula p. 3). Feminist theoretical analysis of sport is imperative because we acknowledge that sport is a male preserve, meaning it is a socially sacred space that fosters values, characteristics, and power associated with masculinity (Dunning & Sheard, 1973). Feminist inquiries into sport began by exploring the social implications of girls and women infringing on this space. This research exposes the how patriarchal power is manifested through physical activity and onto the female sporting body. Susan Birrell (2000) writes that feminist analysis of sport,

focuses on the patriarchal control of women through the control of women’s bodies, seen in a variety of sporting practices, most obviously the attempts to exclude women from sport, which, if successful, deny women the opportunity to experience power and physicality in their own bodies (Birrell & McDonald, 2000, p. 5).

Feminist theoretical influence helped to propel the government sanctioning of women’s admittance into sport through the passage of Title IX in 1972.

As women have gained entry into the sporting world, feminist analysis has evolved and focused on how the perceived access is still limited and controls women. Limits on the female sporting experience are innumerable and can range from compulsory heterosexual societal expectations, to lack of resources, to less or sexualized media attention, and to relegation to marginal, innately feminine physical activities. It is this ghettoization of women into certain sports “less serious” sports that I am most interested in for this project (Feder-Kane, 2001, p. 212). Cheerleading is arguably one of these activities that the public identifies as less serious and

representing a feminine essence. As stated by Adams and Bettis, cheerleading represents the symbol of, normative American girlhood (Grindstaff & West, 2006). Although, as I explore through my article, cheerleading has evolved into a competitive and physically demanding activity, the controversy that surrounds its naming as a sport is tied to its historical societal significance as a activity that was created to support the sporting male preserve. In other words, cheerleading's history bleeds into the present and the although some believe that it should be considered a varsity collegiate sport, many feminist scholars argue against its promotion because of its representations of femininity and the objectification of the female body. It is this controversy that I place at the center of my feminist analysis of the varsitization of competitive cheerleading.

Cheerleading is a Sport

Because of cheerleading's history and its subsequent societal connotations, most people identify cheerleading as a social activity. However, as examined in the article and the empirical appendix, in the late 1970s and early 80s the world of competitive cheerleading emerged, transforming the cheer community immensely. The introduction of competitive cheer moved cheer from its status as a social activity to a physically demanding activity. Since competitive cheer's introduction many argue that the activity has become so physically demanding, popular, and competitive that it has earned the title of sport. How do those who argue for cheer's sport status define sport? Why do they seek this status? And, most importantly for this appendix, does the recognition of sport help the female athletic community?

Those who seek the naming of cheer as a sport use the definition of the highest sport governing bodies in our nation. In almost any interview, defenders of competitive cheer evoke the NCAA's definition of sport, which is,

An institutional activity involving physical exertion with the purpose of competition versus another team or individuals within a collegiate competition structure. Furthermore, sport includes regularly scheduled team and/or individual, head-to-head competition (at least five) within a defined competitive season(s); and standardized rules with rating/scoring systems ratified by official regulatory agencies and governing bodies (Shaul, 2000).

According to this definition, advocates of competitive cheer believe that their activity qualifies as a sport.

Firstly, there is little argument that competitive cheer is an intense and highly athletic activity. The girls and women who participate have been found to have the same elite fitness levels as other collegiate athletes according to multiple exercise physiology studies (Goodwin, K. J. Adams, Shelburne, & DeBeliso, 2004; Thomas, Seegmiller, Cook, & Young, 2004). Lura Fleece, University of Maryland's first competitive cheer head coach argued in one newspaper article, "It's about strength and gymnastics and teamwork. We're athletes and now we compete. Just because cheerleading is all female and we're not mimicking some recognized men's sport, that means we're not a sport?" (Pennington, 2004, p.25). Even those against competitive cheer's promotion to varsity status acknowledge its physicality. For example, Donna Lopiano, President of the Women's Sport Foundation, does not argue against competitive cheerleading being called a sport based on its physicality (Siegel, 2005, sec. A, p.1).

Secondly, competitive cheer advocates argue that it is a purely competitive entity. As explained in the article, competitive cheerleading is defined differently than sideline cheerleading, which functions as a supplement for athletic events, such as football and basketball games. University of Maryland's Athletic Director Deborah Yow specifically outlines the difference between the school's competitive cheer team and the spirit squad in a letter to the NCAA office of Civil Rights writing that, "the sole purpose of [sideline cheer] will be to provide support for Maryland's varsity athletic teams on the sidelines of the field or court in much the same manner as the band" (Yow, 2003). Comparatively, competitive cheer functions as a traditional athletic team, existing to compete against other teams in physical contests. According to the supporters of competitive cheer, this distinction is vital. These women are not focused on the social function or performance of traditional sideline cheerleading and instead center their training on their competition schedule. This overall goal of competition is what supporters cite as making them the same as any other sport.

As stated above, the NCAA's definition demands that a sport have regularly scheduled competitions with a minimum of five throughout a team's season. Competitive cheerleaders argue that they more than meet this requirement, with the most developed teams having ten or more scheduled competitions a season (University of Maryland Athletic Department, 2007). In a document to the Office of Civil Rights, the University of Maryland cited over seventy-five competitions NCA sanctioned competitions available to college and university teams every year nationwide (University of Maryland Athletic Department, 2007). Not only that, but

also these teams competes on average as much or more than other NCAA sanctioned sports such as track and field, cross country, and gymnastics.

The final qualification to be a sport according to the NCAA is to have standard rules and regulations that are determined and supervised by non-profit governing organizations. Competitive cheerleading has for-profit organizations in the form of the National Cheer Association and the Universal Cheer Association. However, the divide in the competitive cheer world between these two organizations is one of the most pressing issues surrounding competitive cheerleading's recognition as a sport by the NCAA. Unlike other sports that are in the process of gaining NCAA sport recognition such as bowling, which is currently named an NCAA emerging sport as I will explain in a moment, competitive cheerleading has more than one central governing body. In 1953 the "Father of Cheerleading", Larry Herkimer, founded the original cheerleading club the National Cheer Association (NCA), which grew into a hugely successful corporation making the first cheerleading uniforms and other gear (Adams & Bettis, 2005). The NCA continued to be the only cheerleading corporation and governing body until 1974 when one of Herkimer's employees, Jeff Webb, left the company and founded the second and equally successful Universal Cheer Association (UCA) (Adams & Bettis, 2005). This division created the two governing bodies that are still in existence today. The rules and philosophies are not noticeably different from an outsider's perception, but those within the cheer community recognize that there are differing performative elements between the two competition formats.

The NCAA cites this division in the community as an obstacle for naming it as a sport. In the past the NCAA lifted the rules and structure presented by the central governing body of a sport when promoting it to sport status as in the cases of sports such as badminton and rugby (“NCAA Emerging Sports”, 2008). Having two structures makes it more difficult to create the eventual NCAA structure. However, in 2004 the two leading cheer companies and owners of the NCA and UCA, Varsity Brands Inc. and the National Spirit Federation, merged (“Varsity Brands acquires Athletic Championships and Premier Athletics”, 2005). Although the two bodies are still operating and running separate championships series, many predict that the two governing bodies will be joining forces within the following years (Coach B, personal interview, February 22, 2008; Coach C, personal interview, March 4, 2008). Even if this merge does not happen in the immediate future, supporters of the promotion of competitive cheer insist that this should not be a stumbling block in its NCAA recognition. Both the University of Maryland and Oregon have opted to compete under the NCA and the rules and regulations of the NCA have allowed the schools to mirror the overall sport structure of their other varsity programs for their competitive cheer teams. Administrators at these institutions are confident that their model is replicable and will help to promote varsity competitive cheerleading across the country (Administrator B, personal interview, February 8, 2008; Administrator C, personal interview, February 13, 2008; Administrator E, personal interview, February 22, 2008).

Although competitive cheerleading is not yet recognized as an emerging sport, administrators at Maryland and Oregon have not made it a secret that their intent

behind promoting it to varsity status is to encourage other schools to do the same and to gain NCAA emerging sport status within the next five years (Administrator B, personal interview, February 8, 2008; Administrator C, personal interview, February 13, 2008; Administrator E, personal interview, February 22, 2008). Both schools have received special permission from the Office of Civil Rights to use their competitive cheer model and numbers as part of their compliance. This is an excerpt from the NCAA Gender Equity manual, which outlines how the schools are allowed to utilize competitive cheer:

The Office of Civil Rights has taken then [*sic*] position that cheerleading squads, for example, are support services and not varsity programs. This view has begun to change as competitive opportunities for cheerleading have increased nationally and as schools offer coaching, practice facilities, equipment and scholarship opportunities to squad members who compete against squads at other colleges and universities. It should be noted that the OCR and its regional offices have not uniformly accepted competitive cheerleading as a sport under Title IX, but rather continue to evaluate each program on a case-by-case basis (“NCAA 2005-2006 Gender Equity Manual”, 2005).

In other words, the steps that the schools are taking are with the end goal of being named an emerging sport and eventually an official NCAA sanctioned sport. These administrators argue that their actions are promoting Title IX because they are going to great lengths to add opportunities for women at their institutions. They note that cheerleading is the fastest growing women’s athletic activity at the youth level and is one of the top ten sports that is both offered and are participated in at the high school level according to the National Federation of State High School Associations (National Federation of State High School Associations, 2006). Throughout my interviews these participants insisted that they are trying to increase options for young women to continue to compete in the athletics that they have specialized in

throughout their youth. In their eyes, this action is in full spirit of Title IX. In fact, they believe that they are providing an opportunity for an athletic activity that has been oppressed because of social stigma. Debbie Yow has cited a general “prejudice against cheerleading” that motivates the questioning of competitive cheerleading’s legitimacy or authenticity (quoted in Siegel, 2005). These administrators believe that their support and promotion of competitive cheer will help to eliminate the stigma surrounding it and they hope that its eventual recognition as an NCAA emerging sport and later a sanctioned sport will expand the realm of possibilities for these women who have devoted their lives to the athletic activity.

Cheerleading is not a Sport

After being exposed to the arguments of the competitive cheerleading advocates, it may seem difficult to imagine that supporters of women’s athletics would have any arguments against the recognition of it as an NCAA emerging and sanctioned sport. However, many voices of the feminist sport studies community as well as others familiar with the competitive cheerleading have articulated the repercussions associated with the recognition of competitive cheer as a collegiate sport. Many of the arguments against its promotion are counter-points to the same facts that those pushing its promotion utilize such as its qualification as a sport based on the NCAA definition of a sport and its advancement in the name of Title IX. Those against its advancement also look to the societal connotations and meanings of cheerleading as a major reason not to promote it as a sport in the collegiate athletic community.

Firstly, at the center of this debate is the assertion that, according to many within academia and within the competitive cheer community, the activity does not qualify as a sport according to the NCAA definition. While it is rare that anyone argues against the physical demands of competitive cheer, many do question competitive cheer's purpose and its qualification as a sport based on its competitive element. Also, despite the push from many competitive cheer supporters to be differentiated from sideline cheer, there are still some important figures in the community who hold onto the roots of cheerleading and believe that the true purpose of cheerleading should always be to support other athletic teams. Some business administrators at cheer organizations feel that the activity should hold onto its past. They question the need and motivation behind promoting to varsity status. Martha Elrod, the director of marketing and communications for the National Spirit Group states,

I don't understand the necessity for separating [sideline and competitive cheerleading]. I think it's wonderful to acknowledge their athletic achievement because I think anyone who is new to the world of cheerleading, it's easy to have a preconceived notion about that cheerleading is and not recognize how athletic cheerleading is today. I just question how's that going to work if they make it a varsity sport, what that really means. It seems to be moving away from the real basic foundation of what cheerleaders have always meant to schools (quoted in Rosenberg, 2003).

Two of the most successful competitive cheer programs, University of Kentucky and University of Louisville, agree. Both teams have long winning traditions with sixteen and twelve national championship titles respectively. These teams not only share successful histories, but the heads of their programs also share the same point of view that cheerleading's purpose, both sideline and competitive, is

to cheer for other sports specifically football and basketball. Kentucky's head coach Jomo Thompson has stated, "going to games is part of the fun" (quoted in Rosenberg, 2003) and is not interested in creating a varsity competitive team because the focus of their program is not competing, but being active within the University of Kentucky community. This means that cheerleaders not only cheer at athletic events and compete in UCA competitions, but they also participate in numerous events and according to the team's official website, act as "public relations ambassadors of the University of Kentucky and the entire Commonwealth of Kentucky". In fact, University of Kentucky claims that 80 % of the team's time is devoted to cheering at games and community events, while only 20 % is devoted to competing (Coach B, personal interview, February 22, 2008). Louisville's coaches and athletic directors share the sentiment that cheerleading should be to support athletics and that it is not its own competing entity.

Along with the opposition from within the cheerleading community, there are strong voices of resistance to competitive cheerleading's formal sportization from feminist scholars and advocates of girls' and women's athletics. Many of these individuals agree that cheerleading does not meet the NCAA requirements of a sport. Donna Lopiano, director of the Women's Sport Foundation has come out against naming competitive cheer as a sport, arguing that there is no official competition model or unified rules that the cheer community adheres to and because of that the sportization process is "disingenuous" (quoted in Siegel, 2005, sec. A, p.1). An example of this forced construction is evident through University of Maryland's competition schedule. Although the Terps compete ten times during the season, for

close to half of these competitions they are the only collegiate team in their category (University of Maryland Athletic Department, 2007). This means that there is no head-to-head competition and instead Maryland uses it as an elaborate dress rehearsal for their main competition at NCA Nationals April in Daytona. As stated before, head-to-head competition is one of the main requirements in the NCAA definition of a sport and opponents of varsitization argue that these competitions are deceptive to an extent.

Not only do opponents dispute competitive cheer's ability to fit the definition of an NCAA sport, but also they argue how promoting it as a sport actually goes against the strides made in women's athletics since the passage of Title IX. Its promotion takes away from time, money and attention that other *already* sanctioned sports should receive. For example, when University of Maryland promoted competitive cheerleading in 2003 the school chose between four women's sports including water polo, competitive cheerleading, ice hockey, and rowing. Instead of promoting ice hockey and/or rowing, which already have NCAA recognition, and sanctioned competitions and national championships in place, they chose to promote cheerleading, which required added time and attention because a varsity model did not exist. Although Maryland administrators insist that their decision was based on a number of factors including a lack of facilities for both ice hockey and rowing and the desire to provide opportunities for a women's activity that has traditionally been oppressed, many accuse Maryland as "doing an end around Title IX" (quoted in Siegel, 2005). As Feminist Majority Foundation lawyer Sharyn Tejani stated, "More opportunities in those sports would have been in line with the purpose of Title IX"

(quoted in O'Keefe, 2003, sec. C. p.12).

While opponents do question the authenticity of competitive cheerleading as a sport, the majority of the discourse from these voices centers on the representations and sexualization of girls' and women's bodies that is demanded from cheerleading. The sexualization of the female athletic body is a common problem in the sporting community and it is a direct reaction to women's infringement on the male preserve. As women have gained access to the male centered space of sport, they have had to overcompensate in their appearance and presentation in order to fit patriarchal gender roles. Women must apologize for their athleticism because society equates physical talent with masculinity (Felshin, 1974). Women apologize for their athletic ability and this infringement through an exaggeration of femininity, which is often achieved through making themselves sexual objects. As Abigail Feder-Kane (2001) writes,

In order to compete, women athletes must strive for strength, speed, and competitiveness -all those qualities which our society codes as masculine...So in order to avoid being coded as overly masculine or a lesbian, the athlete will participate in her construction as a hyperfeminine creature (p. 210).

When discussing femininity in this section, it is important to define it. Using David Whiston's (1994) words,

Femininity' here is not an essence that all women have naturally or even that some have more than others. It is, rather, a product of discourses, practices, and social relations that construct the situation of women in patriarchal societies in ways that typically dis-able women in relation to men" (p. 355).

In other words, femininity is the social construction of what a woman is supposed to be, think, and how she is supposed to act. Being female, athletic and strong violates the strict codes of femininity and there are many examples of attempts to reconcile that violation in women's athletics (Balsamo, 1994). There are examples of this

reconciliation seen in women's figure skating, gymnastics, synchronized swimming, and especially cheerleading.

One way in which female participants in these sports mask their athleticism is through the physical movement. As in sports such as gymnastics and figure skating, female participants are scored on such physical movement that society has deemed "feminine" such as gracefulness and flexibility (Feder-Kane, 2001). For example, the NCA scoring grid for collegiate cheer competitions has a category entitled "motion/girl's dance". In the beginning of this section it is suggested that men not take part in this portion and if they do that females should be "more front and center" ("National Cheer Association Scoring Guidelines 2007-2008", 2007). The scoring criteria of this section are then based on fast pace, technique, precision, footwork, and body movement ("National Cheer Association Scoring Guidelines 2007-2008", 2007). Instead of flexibility, precision, grace, or even tumbling, male cheerleaders are scored on strength and power. In fact, some scoring sheets do not even refer to males as cheerleaders, but instead refers to them as "lifters", which articulates the difference between physical expectations of female and male cheerleaders ("Bethel College Co-Ed Cheer Team Tryout Score Sheet", 2007).

In addition to physical movement, female cheerleaders are gendered through the requirements on participants' appearance. Part of the competition is based on presentation and participants must adhere to the rules and expectations of feminine appearance and this encourages a performance of emphasized femininity. In competitive cheer, teams must present themselves in identical clothing, hair, and make-up. The uniforms are most often two-piece and much of the participants'

bodies (“National Cheer Association Collegiate Uniform Requirements”, 2007). Although there are regulations which restrict “excessive” or “sexually provocative” exposure, teams are expected to present their bodies in traditionally feminine ways. Interestingly, these same regulations are not placed on male cheerleaders. According to NCA collegiate uniform rules, men are *required* to fully cover shoulders, complete midsection, down to the mid-thigh with uniforms (“National Cheer Association Collegiate Uniform Requirements”, 2007). Hair and make up also contribute to this performance of emphasized femininity because both are overtly “feminine”. Hair is always up and tightly curled and make-up is thickly applied and those within the community argue that these conventions serve practical purposes. For example, hair must be pinned back and curled so it is out of the face so the cheerleaders can see in order to perform stunts. Also, make-up must be full face including foundation, eyes, and dark lipstick in order for the audience to pick up facial expressions from their seats. Although logical, these same restrictions are not placed on male cheerleaders. Men have no make-up or hair requirements based on NCA regulations or individual school rules (“National Cheer Association Scoring Guidelines 2007-2008,” 2007, “2007-2008 University of Maryland Cheerleading Tryouts”, 2007). Also, they do not contribute to the physical demands of the competition.

These are only two examples of how cheerleading promotes patriarchal values, they illustrate vital points for the counter argument in the overall debate concerning the sportization of competitive cheer. By basing part of the competitive cheer scoring on societal expectations of femininity, this automatically genders the activity and with this comes oppression. So, although competitive cheer demands

incredible strength, discipline, and physicality, the physical liberation of cheerleading is restricted by its sexualization. Feminist scholars argue that its liberatory potential is severely limited or eliminated completely because of the oppression associated with the gender roles that cheerleading reinforces. As articulated by Nancy Theberge (1994),

It is argued that the potential for sport to act as an agent of women's liberation, rather than their oppression, stems mainly from the opportunity that women's sporting activity affords them to experience their bodies as strong and powerful and free from male domination...women's sporting practices can challenge gender inequality by challenging sexual stereotypes and patriarchal control of women's bodies" (p.191).

The liberation of girls and women through sport and physical activity is bound up with not just the experience of the individual, but also how society perceives that activity. So, while cheerleading may sponsor the first component of liberation by encouraging physical strength and power, the activity is not free from oppression because patriarchal values and ideals influence the foundation of the activity and it is this control that feminist scholars view as a main reason cheerleading should not become a sanctioned sport.

Personal Analysis

As demonstrated in this appendix, both sides of this debate have credible and strong arguments. On one hand some argue that promoting competitive cheerleading adds opportunities for women in collegiate athletics and that this is an important utilization of Title IX. On the other some argue that these opportunities cannot truly liberate women because of its performance of emphasized femininity. The questions remain; should cheerleading be named a sport and is the process and

formality of naming it as such truly in the best interest of girls and women? The answer is that both sides are right and although taking different approaches, those for and against the promotion of competitive cheer are making decisions and action in support of girls and women's athletics. In other words, this debate illustrates the different voices of feminism and both are correct because they attempt to improve opportunities for females.

As mentioned in the introduction, feminist theory places gender issues and equity at the center of thought and action. Those who support the promotion of competitive cheer represent feminists who work from within the system to make changes. These supporters tend to be female athletic administrators, coaches, and athletes who are already a part of the larger athletic community and who believe that oppression will be eliminated with the creation of new opportunities within that system. Those against the promotion of competitive cheer tend to be feminist scholars who recognize that the overall system is deeply flawed and opportunities for girls and women can also simultaneously oppress if they promote male domination.

Jennifer Hargreaves (2007) names these two different approaches as liberal and radical sport feminist,

The liberal sport feminist position, which argues for equality of participation and resourcing on par with men through the removal of the social impediments that prevent female participation, has failed systematically to challenge the established and destructive principles of mainstream sport (M.A. Hall 1996: 90-1; Hargreaves 1994: 26-9). Liberal feminism, then, implicitly supports the creation of commodified and glamorized heroines of sport, a position which is opposed by radical sport feminists who question sport's global relations of power and exploitation and the values upon which the production of modern-day sport heroes and heroines is based....Working outside the mainstream facilitates the creation of

new models of sport authentically connected to power, knowledge and emotional life (p. 4).

In other words, liberal feminists, in this case those who support the promotion of competitive cheerleading, care most about creating opportunities in the framework which they are familiar with and which currently has the most influence. Radical feminists, or those against competitive cheer's promotion, acknowledge that because cheerleaders are oppressed by the current structure, the opportunity is artificial. In actuality, most radical feminists would agree that the ultimate goal would not be to create opportunities within the existing athletic system, but instead would be to abolish the existing structure and create a new collegiate athletic framework based off of equality. While this distinction is obviously important and reflects vital feminist ideological differences, the point remains that these are *both* feminist views and approaches to the same problem. These different approaches reflect the nature of feminism in that there are multiple voices, truths, and processes to solving the same problem of gender inequality. The fierce debate occurring between the sides demonstrates that there is a strong social consciousness contemplating the considerable gender inequalities that exist within our social systems, specifically the collegiate athletic system.

The past academic year I have immersed myself in this debate and it has taken me this time to finally come to a personal conclusion on this subject that I am not only comfortable with, but that also reflects the place that I am at as an academic and as a feminist. At this time, I would most likely align with the liberal side of this debate. This is not because I do not agree with, understand and believe in the

arguments and ideas of the radical feminist side. It is because I do not foresee the collegiate athletic structure changing or being abolished in the near future and if this does not happen, than I strongly agree with offering as many opportunities for women as possible. In future research I will research how cheerleaders' identities are shaped and formed based on the liberation and oppression they experience through their physical activity and I hope that after participating in that research I will be able to revisit this ultimate question and be better prepared to answer it.

In conclusion, the debate surrounding the promotion and recognition of competitive cheerleading illustrates the practical application of feminist theory. The fact that cheerleading has evolved into an athletic and possible sporting entity illustrates the effects of the feminist movements in our society. But more than that, the debate on the future of collegiate competitive cheerleading discussed in this appendix illustrates that the feminist theory continues to be apparent.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH: UTILIZING MIXED METHODOLOGIES

As explained in the article, I utilized two different types of qualitative research methods for this project. These two approaches, which included historic contextual analysis and interviews, allowed me to understand the reasons behind the varsitization of collegiate competitive cheerleading. In this section I will begin by explaining why I chose to investigate collegiate competitive cheerleading and my logic in choosing these qualitative research methods. I will then discuss how these methods were applied and what happened when applied, specifically in regard to my interviews. I will conclude with a short reflection of the success of my chosen

research methods and thoughts on how I will approach future research projects differently.

Why Collegiate Competitive Cheer?

After choosing to explore the varsitization of competitive cheerleading for this project, I took the advice of sport historians David Wiggins and Daniel Mason (2005) who state, “one thing to keep in mind when formulating a topic is that, if using good primary sources, and examination of a small, obscure topic can truly shed light on broader social phenomena and should not be trivialized” (p. 51). I needed to narrow my research to in order to adequately explain the varsitization process and what it means to the athletic community. Therefore, I determined that I would either explore competitive cheer at the collegiate or the high school level. I chose to investigate collegiate competitive cheer for two reasons. The first is that the central athletic governing body for most university institutions, the NCAA, is one of the most powerful sporting organizations in the United States and its policies and sanctions influence sport governing bodies at all levels. Besides the International and United States Olympic Committees, there are few sport governing bodies that affect as many participants as the NCAA and I believe that the example they set in terms of how they deal with gender issues is vital. It is clear that the NCAA has made efforts toward providing equal access and opportunity for female and male athletes as demonstrated through the Gender Equity division and the Gender Equity Manual (“NCAA 2005-2006 Gender

Equity Manual”, 2005; “NCAA Emerging Sports History”, 2008). These attempts toward creating gender equality been influential and motivated other organizations, such as the National Federation of State High School Associations, to also take action. I feel responsibility to examine this power from a feminist perspective because of the value PCS places on emancipatory research (Andrews, 2006).

I also recognized that the NCAA has a clear nationwide impact. If I were to explore the varsitization of high school competitive cheer in depth I would have had to intensely examine each state’s recognition of cheerleading within their individual governing bodies. On top of this, I would have had to investigate the private cheerleading gyms and teams that sponsor All-Star teams. Not only was this not practical because of the time limits of this project, but I felt that the actions of the NCAA and individual collegiate institutions ultimately reflect the popularization of competitive cheerleading at the youth and high school levels.

The second reason I chose collegiate competitive cheer is more practical. I have greater access to collegiate institutions and the critical resources and documents that describe competitive cheer’s varsitization. As a student at the University of Maryland, I knew that I would be able to schedule interviews, obtain documents, and conduct research with the school’s competitive cheer team, which is held up as the model for NCAA varsity collegiate competitive cheerleading. This access was important because of the time restrictions of a Master’s thesis. I would not have been able to travel

extensively for this project and by choosing to examine collegiate competitive cheerleading I had a wealth of information at my fingertips.

Research Structure

In order to understand collegiate competitive cheerleading I explored four institutions that recognize competitive cheer in varying ways. I chose to look at the programs at The University of Maryland, The University of Oregon, The University of Kentucky, and The University of Louisville based on their varying competitive cheer teams. As stated, the University of Maryland and Oregon both recognize competitive cheer as a varsity sport. Maryland began in 2003 and their success is unarguable as they are reigning NCA National Champions. In contrast, Oregon's program will not officially begin until the 2008-2009 academic year. I also wanted to understand why schools opt not to create varsity programs. This led me to research The University of Kentucky and The University of Louisville, which have dominant teams and consistently are contenders at NCA and UCA national championships. Neither team, however, has created a varsity competitive cheer program and the coaches and school administrators are against its varsitization. This is for multiple reasons, but mainly because they believe that the primary purpose of cheerleading is to support intercollegiate athletics. These teams also receive special funding from the athletic department and the president's office so neither team needs the additional resources that accompany varsity status. It was beneficial to compare these schools because

while the teams have relative success, each team fits in to their school's athletic community differently and it has allowed me to more fully understand cheer's varsitization.

After settling on these institutions, I decided to use multiple qualitative research methods to study the varsitization process. I knew that I needed a deep understanding of cheerleading's past and its social significance. I also knew that competitive cheerleading was and is currently going through varsitization and this means that the available material is current media information, official NCAA commentary on this process, and official correspondence between institutions and the NCAA. Finally, I wanted to seek out the opinions and experiences of those pushing varsitization. Taking these needs into account, I chose to use historical analysis and interviewing research methods.

Why Multiple Qualitative Research Methods?

Because of my cultural studies background, I value a multi-method approach to research. I believe that a question cannot be understood from one perspective and in order to understand a phenomenon or trend, one must take multiple avenues to come to that understanding. According to Micaela di Leonardo (2006), "mixed methodologies, providing varying optics on the same phenomenon, act as a check on and a test of the validity of particular interpretation" (p.112). It is important to continuously test the validity of

one's conclusions and utilizing multiple research methods constantly demands that the researcher questions their work and findings.

Sport and physical culture is complex and therefore the methods to understanding it must be multifaceted. Michael Silk, David Andrews and Daniel Mason (2005) comment on this need for thorough research methods in sport studies stating,

To capture the essence and contexts of the sporting empirical, research needs to recognize the fluid and intricate interactions between people and the socio-historical worlds in which they exist. This recognition speaks to a deeply entrenched, and at times quite bitter battle within the field of research design- the debate over legitimate, or 'valid,' research designs and methodologies- often manifested in a crude paradigmatic positivism versus interpretivism (p. 5).

Despite the possibility of my research being taken less seriously because I did not follow an established or "legitimate" academic research design I knew that I had to take multiple approaches to come to any conclusions concerning my question. I also understood that this is the only way to truly perform articulation.

In addition to carefully choosing different research methods, I also made attempts to consciously perform my research in ways that would help me understand my research question while also promoting social equality. Throughout my research I paid special attention to the structure and language I utilized because both are central to creating equality. According to Beth Humphries, Donna M. Mertens and Carole Truman (2000), "feminist research has exposed androcentrism in research language which excludes women, which also separates researchers from the people they are investigating and

which facilitates male control” (p. 8). I strived to use similar feminist research methods because it is important in emancipatory to create a research environment based on principles of equality.

Historical Analysis

In order to employ the methodological tools (King, 2005) that would best enable me to answer why the varsitization of collegiate competitive cheer is occurring now, I went to work on using my two chosen methods. I approached the first method, historical analysis, because I wanted to focus on the marginality of cheerleading and the power relations that shaped it, which according to Samantha King is one of the definitions of historical contextual analysis (King, 2005). I viewed my overall historical contextualization as two distinct sections; the first explores the history of collegiate competitive cheerleading from the late 1880s through 2002 and the second traces the current history post 2002 when it began to be recognized as a varsity sport.

I began with researching the established academic material on cheerleading. Wiggins and Mason (2005) acknowledge the importance of secondary sources stating, “they allow the researcher to obtain background information on a topic and have an understanding of what is known with regards to a given topic” (p. 51). I had limited experience in historical research so I enrolled in a graduate women’s history seminar last spring. Through this class I learned how to conduct historical research by utilizing both University of Maryland and United States archives, seeking out primary

and secondary sources, and learning to write a historical research paper. Through the process of researching and writing the term paper, I became familiar with the majority of the historical research on cheerleading, its origins, its evolution, and how it became the athletic activity it is today. I also combined this knowledge of cheerleading with my foundational American sport history knowledge and by melding the two I was able to understand how cheerleading became the athletic activity it is today.

This historical analysis was vital for the foundation of my research because I needed to apply it in order to research the current developments in collegiate competitive cheer. I drew on the historical background knowledge to seek out and interpret pertinent current resources for the second section in order to understand the more recent history of collegiate competitive cheer. These sources included mostly primary sources such as newspaper articles, correspondence, and official NCAA statements.

Interviews

John Amis (2005) quotes, “Understanding various interpretations of social life requires a position of relativism: the realization that realities are multiple and exist in people’s minds (quoted in Sparkes, 1992). The most logical way to access these realities is to talk to people” (p.105). This logic convinced me to conduct part of my research through interviews. I interviewed athletic the administrators and coaches involved in cheer at each school and I subscribed to the general interview guide outlined by Amis by

asking broad questions about their women's athletic programs as well as questions specific to competitive cheer. Amis (2005) highlights the major benefit of this type of interview by writing,

The utility of this type of interview is that there is a structure that ensures that certain themes will be covered and helps to keep the individual focused on particular issues, but there is also the flexibility to develop questions as new themes emerge in the course of the interview (p.105).

I believed that interviews would aid my research by highlighting common themes that would emerge from encounter. I also needed to have the freedom to ask specific questions about each competitive cheer team and how it fits into its school's athletic community. I asked each participant about their institution's cheer teams, the recognition of these teams as either club or varsity status, and about their school's Title IX compliance measures.

While this fluid interview style was the best choice for this project, I knew that I would only be able to anticipate the outcome of each interview to a certain extent. Therefore, there were some unexpected results that emerged through these interviews. The first was that scheduling interviews was more difficult than I had planned. My interviews were during the competitive cheer season and it was difficult to get a response and schedule interviews with those from the community. However, I did plan for twice as many interviews than I needed for the scope of this project. I planned for twenty interviews and actually was able to conduct 9 interviews. Although this was disappointing, I was satisfied with the quality of information that I received through the interviews.

On top of altering the amount of interviews, I also had to adjust the content more than I had anticipated. I went into the interviews believing that coaches and administrators would have the same working knowledge of Title IX and its role in the promotion of collegiate competitive cheer. I found out that coaches were not as familiar with the language of Title IX in regard to competitive cheer. This is not to say that they did not understand the importance of Title IX; their working knowledge of Title IX and NCAA status was different than that of the administrators. Therefore, I learned how to ask questions about Title IX without using the technical jargon with coaches and would then use formal language with the administrators.

The final adjustment I had to make during the interview process was to engage in more conversation with the participants than I had planned. I prepared for the participants to be much more guarded and less willing to help, specifically the athletic administrators. I thought that the participants would think that I was asking about sensitive issues when I asked about Title IX and their recognition of competitive cheerleaders. Instead, I found that all of the participants were excited to share their knowledge and they offered much more information than I expected. In fact, I received helpful primary sources from many administrators in addition to their thoughtful and insightful interviews. I therefore allotted more time during the interviews to ask specific questions about each institution's team. Through informal conversation I built trust with the participants and often learned more than during the structured questions.

Overall Success and Final Thoughts

As I reflect on this research project and the methods I employed, I am pleased with the outcome and experience. I believe that the two methods of historical analysis and interviews helped me to understand the state of competitive cheer and the varsitization of collegiate competitive cheer. This is not to say that I achieved everything I want to with this project. If anything, this initial portion of my research has motivated me to take this base knowledge and then expand on it. However, for the limits of a thesis, I feel confident that this experience has helped me to learn how to perform cultural studies research through articulation.

In the future I want to study the identities of cheerleaders and I plan on devoting much more time to interviews with collegiate cheerleaders. I want to know if and how different recognition of cheerleading (varsity vs. club status) affects cheerleader's self-identification. For this next step I will need to develop my interview skills. Although I only conducted a small number of interviews for this portion of the project, I think that this experience gave me the confidence and the basic knowledge to take on more interview research.

Overall, I am satisfied with the methods I used because they allowed me to understand collegiate competitive cheer. My best methodological decision was to take time in the beginning of the project to formulate my research question and decide which qualitative methods would be most appropriate to answer this question. I learned through this process that asking a focused research question and creating a practical methodological structure is the most important element of success in research. I also learned that using multiple research methods helped me to understand

my question more fully. In the future I will use multiple research methods and hope to combine qualitative and quantitative methods in order to understand even more complex issues.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2007-2008 University of Maryland Cheerleading Tryouts. Retrieved March 18, 2008, from <http://www.marylandcheerleading.com/tryoutsfemale.html>.
- Acosta, R. V., & Carpenter, L. J. (2008). Women in Intercollegiate Sport: A Longitudinal, National Study Thirty-One Year Update. Retrieved from <http://webpages.charter.net/womeninsport/>.
- Adams, N., & Bettis, P. (2003). Commanding the Room in Short Skirts: Cheering as the Embodiment of Ideal Girlhood. *Gender and Society*, 17(1), 73-91.
- Adams, N., & Bettis, P. (2005). *Cheerleader!: An American Icon*. (First Edition), 208. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Amis, J. (2005). Interviewing for case study research In M. L. Silk, D. L. Andrews, & D. S. Mason (Eds.), *Qualitative Research in Sport Studies*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Anderson, S. (2001). Practicing children. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 229-250.
- Andrews, D. L. (2002). Coming to terms with cultural studies. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 26(1), 110-117.
- Andrews, D. L. (2006, November). Toward a physical cultural studies, 1-38. Vancouver, Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.sph.umd.edu/KNES/courses/knes689p/>.
- Andrews, D.L. (2008: in press). Sport, culture, and late capitalism. In I. McDonald, & B. Carrington (Eds.). *Marxism, Cultural Studies and Sport*. London: Routledge.
- Balsamo, A. (1994). Feminist Bodybuilding. In S. Birrell & M. G. McDonald (Eds.), *Women, Sport and Culture*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.
- Bethel College Co-Ed Cheer Team Tryout Score Sheet. (2007). Retrieved from www.bethel-in.edu/sports/ScoreSheet.doc.
- Biehl, J., Good, B., & Kleinman, A. (2007). *Subjectivity; Ethnographic investigations*. . Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Booth, D., & Loy, J. (1999). Sport, status, and style. *Sport History Review*, 30, 1-26.
- Bourdieu, P. (1978). Sport and social class. *Social Science Information*, 17(6), 819-840.

- Bourdieu, P. (1998). The state, economics and sport. *Culture, Sport, Society*, 1(2), 15-21.
- Brady, E. (2002, April 26). Cheering in the USA: A sport and an industry. *USA Today*, 1.
- Brady, E. (2002, December 17). Major changes debated for Title IX. *USA Today*. Retrieved March 21, 2008, from http://www.usatoday.com/sports/college/2002-12-17-1a-title-ix-cover_x.htm.
- Burton Nelson, M. (1994). *The Stronger Women Get, The More Men Love Football: Sexism and the American Culture of Sports*. . New York: Avon Books.
- Cahn, S. K. (1998). *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sports*. , 358. Harvard University Press.
- Coakley, J. J., & Dunning, E. (2000). *Handbook of Sports Studies*. , 570. Sage Publications Inc.
- Cole, C. L. (1994). Resisting the Canon: Feminist Cultural Studies, Sport and Technologies of the Body. In S. Birrell & M. G. McDonald (Eds.), *Women, Sport and Culture* (pp. 5-29). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.
- Cole, C.L. (2000). The year that girls ruled! *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 24(1), 3-7.
- Connell, R.W. (1987). *Gender and power*. Stanford; Stanford University Press.
- Davies, R. (2007). Sport and the Emergence of Modern America. R. Davies In *Sports in American Life*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Davis, L. (1994). A Postmodern Paradox? Cheerleaders at Women's Sporting Events. In S. Birrell & M. G. McDonald (Eds.), *Women, Sport and Culture*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.
- Denzin, N., & Giardina, M. (2006). *Qualitative Inquiry and the Conservative Challenge*. . Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Dunning, E., & Sheard, K. (1973). The Rugby Football Club as a Type of "Male Preserve": Some Sociological Notes. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 8(3), 5-24.
- Elias, N. (1971). The Genesis of Sport as a Sociological Problem. In E. Dunning (Ed.), *The Sociology of Sport: A Selection of Readings* (pp. 88-115). London: Frank Cass.

- Feder-Kane, A. M. (2001). A Radiant Smile from the Lovely Lady”: Overdetermined Femininity in “Ladies” Figure Skating. In S. Birrell & M. G. McDonald (Eds.), *Reading Sport: Critical Essays on Power and Representations*. Boston: Northeastern.
- Felshin, J. (1974). The Social View. In E. Gerber & et. al (Eds.), *The American Woman in Sport* (p. 204). Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing.
- Fine, G. A., & Johnson, B. N. (1980). The Promiscuous Cheerleader: An Adolescent Male Belief Legend. *Western Folklore*, 39, 120-129.
- Franklin, S., Lury, C., & Stacey, J. (1996). Franklin, S., Lury, C., & Stacey, J. (1996). Feminism and cultural studies: Pasts, presents, and futures. In J. Storey (Ed.), *What is cultural studies? A reader* (pp. 255-272). London: Hodder. In J. Storey (Ed.), *What is Cultural Studies? A reader*. London: Hodder.
- Geissler, D. (2001). G generation. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 25; 324-331.
- Goodwin, E. P., Adams, K. J., Shelburne, J., & DeBeliso, M. (2004). A strength and conditioning model for a female collegiate cheerleaders. *Strength and Conditioning Journal*, 26(6), 16-21.
- Grindstaff, L. (2005). hold that (gender) line! Cheerleading on ESPN. *Contexts*, 4(3), 71-73.
- Grindstaff, L., & West, E. (2006). Cheerleading and the Gendered Politics of Sport. *Social Problems*, 53(4), 500-518.
- Griffin, Pat. (1998). *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.
- Grossberg, L. (1997). Cultural studies: What's in a name?(one more time). In *Bringing it all back home: Essays on cultural studies* (pp. 245-271). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hanson, M. E. (1995). *Go! Fight! Win!: Cheerleading in American Culture*. , 172. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.
- Hargreaves, J. (1982). *Sport, Culture and Ideology*. , 264. Routledge.
- Hargreaves, J. (1986). *Sport, Power and Culture*. , 276. Polity Press.
- Hargreaves, J. (1987). The Body, Sport and Power Relations. In J. Horne, D. Jary, & A. Tomlinson (Eds.), *Sport, Leisure and Social Relations* (pp. 139-159).
- Hargreaves, J., & Vertinsky, P. (Eds.). (2007). *Physical Culture, Power, and the Body* . . London: Routledge.

- Heywood, L. (2000). The girls of summer: The social context for the "year of the woman" at the '96 Olympics. In K Schaffer and S. Smith (Eds.), *The Olympics at the millennium: Peace, politics, and the games* (pp. 99-116). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Heywood, L. (2007). Producing girls: Empire, sport, and the neoliberal body. In J. Hargreaves & P. Vertinsky (Eds.), *Physical culture, power, and the body* (pp. 101-120). London: Routledge.
- Humphries, B., Mertens, D. M., & Truman, C. (2000). Arguments for an 'emancipatory' research paradigm In , *Research and Inequality*. London: University College Press.
- Johnson, R., & Chambers, D. (2004). *The Practice of Cultural Studies*. . . Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Kestler, M. (2007, April 9). Cheerleaders defend tile, repeat as NCA champions. . *The Diamondback*.
- King, S. (2005). Methodological Contingencies in Sport Studies. In M. L. Silk, D. L. Andrews, & D. S. Mason (Eds.), *Qualitative Research in Sport Studies*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Kurman, G. (1986). What Does Girls' Cheerleading Communicate? . *Journal of Popular Culture*, 20, 57-64.
- di Lenoardo, M. (2006). Mixed and rigorous cultural studies methodology- an oxymoron? In M. White & J. Schwoch (Eds.), *Questions of Method in Cultural Studies*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Lockford, L. (2004). *Performing Femininity : rewriting gender identity*. . Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Loy, J., & Andrews, D. (1993). The Body in Culture and Sport. *Sport Science Review*, 2(1), 69-91.
- Markula, P. (2005). *Feminist sport studies: sharing experiences of joy and pain*, 250. State University of New York Press.
- McElroy, J. (1999). *We've got spirit: The life and times of America's greatest cheerleading team*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- McKendrick, J.H., Bradford, M.G. and Fielder, A.V. (2000) Kid customer? Commercialisation of playspace and commodification of childhood. *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research*, 7.3: 295-315.

- Messner, M. (1994). Sport and the Male domination: The Female Athlete as Contested ideological Terrain. In S. Birrell & M. G. McDonald (Eds.), *Women, Sport and Culture* (pp. 65-80). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.
- Messner, M. A. (2002). *Taking the Field: Women, Men, and Sports*. , 239. University of Minnesota Press.
- Messner, M. A. (2007). *Out of Play: Critical Essays on Gender and Sport*. , 227. State University of New York Press.
- Miller, T. (2004). *Sportsex*. . United States: Temple University Press.
- National Cheer Association Collegiate Uniform Requirements. (2007). National Cheer Association. Retrieved from www.varsity.com/uploads/pdfs/nca/College_Uniform_Requirements.pdf .
- National Cheer Association Scoring Guidelines 2007-2008. (2007). Retrieved from www.varsity.com/uploads/pdfs/nca/college_sgb.pdf.
- National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education. (2002, August 27). TITLE IX ATHLETICS POLICIES: Issues and Data for Education Decision Makers . . Retrieved from www.womenssportsfoundation.org/binary-data/WSF_ARTICLE/pdf_file/914.pdf.
- National Federation of State High School Associations. (2006). *2005-2006 High School Athletics Participation Survey* . . National Federation of State High School Association.
- NCAA Emerging Sports. Retrieved March 8, 2008, from http://www1.ncaa.org/membership/membership_svcs/emerging_sports/home.html.
- NCAA Emerging Sports History. Retrieved March 8, 2008, from http://www1.ncaa.org/membership/membership_svcs/emerging_sports/history .
- O'Keefe, B. (2003, November 23). Not everyone cheers move at Maryland. *The Capital*, 12.
- Organized Cheering. (1911). *The Nation*, 5-6.
- Parratt, C. (1994). From the history of women in sport to women's sport history: A research agenda. . In D. M. Costa & S. R. Guthrie (Eds.), *Women and sport: Interdisciplinary perspectives*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.

- Porto, B. (2003). *A New Season: Using Title IX to reform College Sports*. . London: Prager Publishers.
- Reynolds, G. (2003, July 11). Further Clarification of Intercollegiate Athletics Policy Guidance Regarding Title IX Compliance. U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. . . Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/title9guidanceFinal.html>.
- Rinehart, R., & Grenfell, C. (2002). BMX spaces: Children's grass roots' courses and corporate-sponsored tracks. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 19(3), 302-314.
- Rosenberg, B. (2003, October 27). Competitive Cheerleaders stand up and holler to be varsity. *The NCAA News*.
- Schools, M. (1966). *Cheerleading: A Road to Good Sportsmanship*. , 24. Cedar Falls: State College of Iowa.
- Schor, J. (2003). Born to buy: The commercialized child and new consumer culture. New York: Scribner.
- Siegel, J. (2005, February 16). No Longer on the Sidelines. *Washington Post*, 1.
- Silk, M. L., Andrews, D. L., & Mason, D. S. (2005). Encountering the field In *Qualitative Research in Sport Studies*. Oxford: Berg Publishers
- Slack, J.D. (1996). The theory and method of articulation in cultural studies. In D. Morley & K.H. Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 112-127). London: Routledge.
- Snyder, T. D. (Ed.). (1993). *120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait*. . . National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education: Diane Publishing.
- Theberge, N. (1994). Toward a Feminist Alternative to Sport. In S. Birrell & M. G. McDonald (Eds.), *Women, Sport and Culture*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.
- Thomas, D. Q., Seegmiller, J. G., Cook, T. L., & Young, B. A. (2004). Physiologic profile of the fitness status of collegiate cheerleaders, *The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, 18(2), 252-254.
- The University of Kentucky Cheerleading Squad*. (2008). Retrieved January 10, 2008, from http://www.ukathletics.com/index.php?s=&change_well_id=2&url_article_id=11394.

- University of Maryland Athletic Department. (2007, June). Information on Competitive Cheerleading at the Collegiate Level.
- University of Maryland Cheerleading Overview . (2007).
- University of Maryland Competitive Cheer Media Guide. (2007).
- University of Maryland Student Athlete Handbook. (2007).
- Varsity brands acquire athletic championships and premier athletics. (2005). *Memphis Business Journal*. Retrieved March 8, 2008, from <http://www.bizjournals.com/memphis/stories/2005/07/04/daily16.html>.
- Vest, B., & Masterson, G. (2007). Title IX and Its Effect on Sports Programs in High School and Collegiate Athletics. *Coach & Athletic Director*, 77(5), 60-62.
- Von der Lippe, G. (2001). Sportification Process: Whose Logic? Whose rationality? . *Sport History Review*, 32(1), 42-56.
- Whitson, D. (1994). The Embodiment of Gender: Discipline, Domination and Empowerment. In S. Birrell & M. G. McDonald (Eds.), *Women, Sport and Culture* (pp. 353-371). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.
- Wiggins, D. & Mason, D. (2005). The Socio-Historical Process. In M. L. Silk, D. L. Andrews, & D. S. Mason (Eds.), *Qualitative Research in Sport Studies*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Woods, R.B. (2006). *Social issues in sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Yow, D. (2003, September 29). University of Maryland Reply to OCR on Competitive Cheer.