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Project Title: What's There To Cheer About?: How Does Cheerleading Affect the Identity of Young Girls of Color

Synopsis: How cheerleaders view their racial identity through social interactions.

Abstract: While research on gender, race and sports/physical activities is prevalent, there are limited studies on how cheerleading plays a part in how Black/African American people negotiate cultural boundaries within predominantly white spaces. This research will focus and compare two adolescent cheerleading teams, one being a predominantly Black/African American cheer team and the other being a predominantly white/multi-racial cheerleading team. This research will view how their interactions with their peers impact how they express their self-esteem and racial-identity. The methodology for this study is field observations and participant observation. I frame my analysis using the social learning theory and symbolic interaction paradigms that observe how cheerleaders socially interact with each other and promote girl collectivism. Throughout my observations I have found that race and class play a significant role on how the cheerleaders interpret their self-esteem and racial identity. Through interactions and observations with the cheerleaders, I have found that cheerleading is helping the girls on predominantly Black/African American cheerleading teams build their racial-identity by the choreography from the cheers and the interactions with other cheerleaders of the same race/ethnic background.