

# *University Campus Culture—Cheerleading as a Builder of Unique Cultural Symbols*

**Xueqin Deng**

*Hainan Vocational University of Science and Technology, Haikou, 571126, China*

**Keywords:** Cheerleading; Campus Culture; Cultural Symbol; University Life; Sports Activity

**Abstract:** This paper delves into how cheerleading becomes a unique and significant cultural symbol in university campus culture. Through a comprehensive analysis of the historical origins, evolution, and profound cultural significance of cheerleading, the paper reveals its crucial role in enhancing campus spirit, fostering student engagement, and strengthening teamwork and community belonging. Additionally, the paper discusses the adaptability and innovative potential of cheerleading in the face of modern challenges and diverse campus environments, especially its new opportunities in promoting cultural diversity understanding and thriving in the era of social media. In summary, this paper not only elucidates the core position of cheerleading in campus culture but also emphasizes its potential value as an educational tool and social platform in promoting students' comprehensive development, revealing the profound impact and long-term significance of cheerleading on contemporary university life.

## **1. Introduction**

In university campuses, cheerleading serves as a distinctive cultural symbol, playing multiple roles and profoundly influencing contemporary university life. Its origin can be traced back to the late 19th century in the United States, initially serving as a spontaneous cheering method for audiences. However, over time, cheerleading has evolved into a comprehensive art form, incorporating dance, music, chants, and teamwork, becoming a diverse artistic expression. In the campus context, cheerleading is not only a cheering activity for sports events but also represents the spirit and values of the school. By organizing and participating in cheerleading activities, students express their love and loyalty to the school, enhancing the cohesion of the campus community. It plays a significant role in campus events such as sports competitions and welcoming ceremonies, becoming an important way to showcase campus culture and facilitate student interaction. Moreover, cheerleading involves event planning and organization, collaborating with other organizations, contributing to the diversification and richness of campus cultural activities. The evolution of cheerleading reflects societal understanding and emphasis on gender roles, teamwork, and sportsmanship, demonstrating its unique value and multiple roles in campus culture.

## **2. The History and Cultural Roots of Cheerleading**

### **2.1. Origin and Evolution of Cheerleading**

Cheerleading originated in the late 19th century in the United States as a means of cheering for sports events. Initially, it involved spontaneous cheering from the audience to motivate athletes and enhance the competitive atmosphere. Over time, this form of cheering evolved into a more organized and standardized activity. Early cheerleading was predominantly led by males who guided the audience in chants and cheers during sporting events.

Entering the 20th century, the significant participation of females brought notable changes to cheerleading. The inclusion of women introduced more dance elements and artistic aspects, transforming it from mere chanting to a comprehensive performance art that encompasses gymnastics, dance, and acrobatics. During this period, the choreography and presentation of cheerleading became more diverse, gradually forming the recognizable cheerleading style we know today.[1]

In the mid to late 20th century, cheerleading began to be recognized as an independent competitive sport, extending beyond its role as a supplementary activity for sports events. With the emergence of formal cheerleading competitions and championships, the sport gained its own identity and status. Cheerleading plays a crucial role in campus culture, not just as a means of support during sports events but also as a way to showcase school spirit and culture. Its evolution reflects changing societal perceptions and emphasis on gender roles, teamwork, and sportsmanship. Through this historical review and analysis, we gain a deeper understanding of how cheerleading has evolved from a simple cheering activity into a complex phenomenon with profound cultural and social significance.

### **2.2. Cheerleading and Cultural Transmission**

Since its inception in the United States, cheerleading has undergone extensive cultural transmission and evolution, becoming a global phenomenon. With the increasing global influence of American culture, particularly through movies, television, and international sports events, cheerleading rapidly gained recognition and popularity worldwide. This transmission not only pertains to its role as a form of sports support but extends into school and popular culture.[2]

In different countries and regions, cheerleading has been endowed with unique cultural connotations. In some places, it has become a crucial part of high school and university culture, symbolizing team spirit and school pride. In other areas, cheerleading is seen more as a competitive sport or artistic performance, emphasizing skills, creativity, and entertainment. This diverse reception reflects the adaptability and evolution of cheerleading in various cultural contexts.[3]

The globalization of cheerleading also brings challenges, particularly in respecting and integrating different cultural traditions. As it spreads globally, cheerleading needs to maintain its core spirit while adapting to diverse cultural environments and expectations. This challenge extends not only to cheerleading itself but also to its leaders and participants, requiring sensitivity and adaptability to different cultural backgrounds, ideas, and practices. Through this process, cheerleading not only spreads worldwide but also promotes cross-cultural exchange and understanding.

## **3. Interaction between Cheerleading and Campus Culture**

### **3.1. The Role of Cheerleading in Campus Culture**

Cheerleading plays a unique and significant role in university campus culture. It is not merely a cheering activity for sports events but also a crucial component of campus culture, profoundly embodying the spirit and values of the institution. Through its distinctive forms of performance, such

as songs, dances, and chants, cheerleading enhances students' sense of belonging and identity with the school. During significant campus events like sports competitions, cheerleading provides not only spiritual support for athletes but also joy and motivation for the audience, creating a sense of unity and positivity throughout the campus community.

Additionally, cheerleading is an essential aspect of student group activities and club involvement. It offers students a platform to showcase individual talents and creativity, not limited to dance and gymnastic movements but also involving teamwork and performing arts. Students participating in cheerleading have the opportunity to showcase themselves in the campus community, whether as performers or organizers. This involvement not only improves their physical fitness but also enhances their social skills, teamwork, and leadership, providing crucial support for their overall development.[4]

The presence and activities of cheerleading have a profound impact on campus culture. It is not just a sports activity; it is a cultural phenomenon that promotes student interaction, strengthens campus unity, and enhances the quality of campus events. Through cheerleading, students find a channel to release stress and express themselves beyond the pressures of academic life. In summary, cheerleading, as part of campus culture, enriches campus life and promotes personal and social development among students.

### **3.2. Cheerleading and Student Life**

The close connection between cheerleading and student life has far-reaching effects on the daily lives of university students. Firstly, it provides students with a unique platform for self-display and self-expression. Students involved in cheerleading not only showcase their personalities and talents through performances but also find avenues for creative expression in dance routines and chants. This opportunity for self-expression contributes to cultivating students' confidence and self-identity, simultaneously honing their abilities to present themselves in public settings.[5]

Secondly, cheerleading is a team activity that reinforces social interaction and the establishment of friendships among students. Within a cheerleading team, members need to trust each other and collaborate closely to pursue common goals. This team spirit is evident not only in training and competitions but also extends into daily life, fostering students' teamwork and social skills. Many students establish profound friendships within cheerleading teams, friendships that often endure a lifetime, adding precious memories to their university experiences.

Lastly, cheerleading provides students with opportunities to interact with other campus groups. During sports events, cheerleading team members interact with the audience and athletes, adding excitement to the competition and creating a lively atmosphere. Moreover, cheerleading actively participates in campus cultural activities, engaging with other students and faculty, contributing to the integration of the campus community. Through these interactions, students can better assimilate into campus life, expand their social circles, and enrich their university experiences.

## **4. The Manifestation of Cheerleading in Campus Culture**

### **4.1. Cheerleading and Campus Activities**

The relationship between cheerleading and campus activities is multifaceted, primarily manifested in its role as a spiritual and cultural activity. Cheerleading plays a crucial role not only as a significant cheering force in sports events but also enhances the entertainment and interactivity of the events through dynamic dances and inspiring cheers. This performance is not only vital in the realm of sports but also plays a key role in other major campus activities, such as campus cultural festivals, opening ceremonies, and graduation ceremonies. Through its spectacular performances, cheerleading conveys

the joyful atmosphere and celebratory spirit of the campus.

The impact of cheerleading on campus cultural activities goes beyond its role as a performing art. Cheerleading team members actively participate in the planning and organization of activities. Collaborating with other school clubs and organizations, cheerleading team members contribute to the planning and execution of various campus events, providing them with opportunities to develop organizational, planning, and communication skills. This collaboration not only enhances the personal development of cheerleading team members but also significantly contributes to the diversity and richness of campus cultural activities.[6]

Furthermore, the presence of cheerleading in campus culture is essential, not merely as a sports activity or performing art, but also in shaping campus culture and fostering campus unity. Through involvement in cheerleading, students not only exercise and express themselves in sports and the arts but also enhance their social networks and teamwork skills through participation in large-scale campus events. Cheerleading becomes a vital link connecting students, faculty, and the campus community, showcasing the vibrancy and diversity of campus culture through various activities.

## **4.2. Cheerleading and Student Club Culture**

Cheerleading plays a crucial role in student club culture, serving not only as a collective sport but also as a platform for promoting team spirit and cross-cultural exchange. As a collective activity, cheerleading emphasizes teamwork and group coordination, crucial for fostering students' sense of teamwork and collective responsibility. Cheerleading teams typically consist of students from different colleges and majors, providing participants with a unique opportunity for interdisciplinary communication. In such a diverse environment, students can not only share their knowledge and experiences but also learn how to find common ground and cooperate in a collaborative manner.

Additionally, cheerleading provides students with a stage to showcase and enhance their self-expression abilities. By choreographing and performing intricate dance routines, students have the chance to exhibit their talents in both art and sports. These performances require not only artistic sensibility and physical coordination but also mutual trust and cooperation among team members. The skills cultivated through cheerleading training and performances, such as discipline, focus, and teamwork, have profound implications for students' personal and professional development.

As a part of student club culture, cheerleading not only enriches campus life but also promotes social interaction and psychological well-being among students. Through participation in cheerleading, students find a way to release stress and enhance their physical and mental health amidst the pressures of academic life. Simultaneously, cheerleading provides students with an opportunity to make new friends, build social networks, and improve their social skills. Overall, cheerleading, as a student club activity, not only enhances students' athletic and artistic skills but also fosters their personal growth and social integration.

## **5. The Impact and Reflection of Cheerleading on Campus Culture**

### **5.1. Contribution of Cheerleading to Campus Spirit**

Cheerleading plays a significant role in strengthening campus spirit and promoting school culture. Through collective dances and chants, cheerleading not only enhances the sense of unity within the campus community but also increases students' and faculty's identification with the school spirit. These performances are often designed around the school's themes and values, captivating audiences visually, aurally, and emotionally. Cheerleading performances at sports events and other campus activities not only add vibrancy and energy but also serve as an essential means of displaying and promoting school spirit. Such activities not only strengthen students' sense of belonging to the campus

but also foster respect and understanding for the culture and traditions of their educational institution.

Cheerleading also contributes significantly to cultivating a positive competitive spirit and a healthy attitude toward campus life. The discipline, teamwork, and relentless pursuit of excellence demonstrated by cheerleading team members during training and performances set a positive example for other students. This attitude and spirit are not only admired in the realm of sports but also find expression in academic and other campus activities. Through these means, cheerleading encourages all students to strive for excellence, whether in academic achievements, sports competitions, or the development of other personal interests and talents.

Moreover, cheerleading promotes the holistic development of students. By participating in cheerleading, students not only exercise their bodies, improve physical coordination, and rhythm but also develop confidence and leadership skills through teamwork and public performances. The skills cultivated during cheerleading training and performances, such as discipline, focus, and teamwork, have far-reaching effects on students' future personal and professional development. Therefore, cheerleading in campus culture is not just a sports activity; it is also an educational tool, assisting students in self-improvement and growth on multiple levels.

## **5.2. Challenges and Opportunities for Cheerleading in Campus Culture**

Despite the positive impact of cheerleading on campus culture, it faces a series of challenges. Firstly, there is the challenge of diversity and inclusivity. As campus culture becomes increasingly diverse, cheerleading needs to adapt to student groups with different backgrounds and cultures. This requires cheerleading content and performance methods to be more inclusive and diverse, reflecting and respecting various cultures and values within the campus.

Additionally, cheerleading faces challenges from modernization and technological developments. With the prevalence of social media and digital platforms, the performance and organization of cheerleading need to evolve to attract more audiences and participants. Moreover, the changing ways in which modern students engage in activities and their shifting interests pose a challenge, demanding constant innovation from cheerleading to maintain its attractiveness and influence in campus culture.

However, these challenges also bring new opportunities. Cheerleading can use these challenges as a springboard for further development and refinement. For example, by integrating different cultural elements, cheerleading can enrich its performance content. Utilizing new media technologies can help expand its influence. In this way, cheerleading can not only maintain its core position in campus culture but can also continue to be a significant force in promoting campus unity and student development.

## **5.3. The Future Development of Cheerleading in Campus Culture**

The future development of cheerleading in campus culture is both challenging and full of opportunities. As society and technology continue to advance, cheerleading needs to continuously adapt to new changes and trends. This involves not only adopting new technologies and media to enhance the attractiveness and participation of performances but also innovating in content and form to better reflect the needs and interests of modern students. To achieve this, cheerleading must preserve its traditional spirit while incorporating more innovative elements and diverse cultural content, making it more inclusive and contemporary.

The potential of cheerleading as an educational tool and social platform should receive more attention and utilization. It not only helps students develop in sports and the arts but also provides a place for learning teamwork, leadership, and communication skills. Therefore, future cheerleading training and activities should place more emphasis on cultivating these skills, assisting students in achieving success in their future academic and professional careers.

In conclusion, cheerleading is a vital component of campus culture that will continue to play a crucial role in shaping a positive campus atmosphere and fostering students' comprehensive skills. Through continuous innovation and adaptation, cheerleading has the potential to play a more significant role in the future of campus culture, not only providing students with opportunities for entertainment and physical exercise but also supporting their personal growth and development.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper discusses the role and influence of cheerleading in university campus culture, and reveals that it is not only a sports activity, but also an important symbol and a powerful team spirit catalyst in campus culture. Through its unique art form, combining music, dance, and teamwork, cheerleading plays an irreplaceable role in enhancing campus spirit, enhancing students' sense of participation, and promoting multicultural communication.

Lala operation is a collective activity, which not only strengthens the unity and sense of belonging of the campus community, but also promotes the positive competitive spirit and a healthy attitude towards campus life. It plays a positive role in developing students' teamwork, leadership and communication skills, and has had a profound impact on their all-round development. At the same time, in the process of adapting to the diversified campus culture and modernization challenges, cheerleading shows its potential for continuous innovation and development.

In the future, with social changes and technological progress, the role and form of cheerleading in campus culture will continue to evolve. In order to maintain its central position in campus culture and continue to promote student personal growth, cheerleading needs to constantly innovate while maintaining its traditional spirit and value. This includes integrating new cultural elements, adopting new technologies, and constantly adapting training and performance methods to meet the changing needs of students.

In a word, cheerleading operation is a unique campus cultural symbol, whose value is far beyond the scope of sports and entertainment. It is an important platform to cultivate students' understanding of team spirit, leadership and cultural diversity. It is of great significance to create a positive campus cultural atmosphere and enhance students' overall participation and development. As it continues to adapt to the changing times, cheerleading will continue to play an important role in the campus culture, affecting the campus life experience of generations of students.

## References

- [1] Jurina. *Exploration of the influence and implementation path of cheerleading on campus culture construction* [J]. *Journal of Hubei Open Vocational College*, 2021,34 (01): 43-44.
- [2] Zhou Yong. *Research on the influence of cheerleading on campus sports culture under the background of "Curriculum ideological and Politics"* [J]. *University*, 2021 (02): 7-9.
- [3] Wang Guochao. *Analysis of the role of cheerleading exercise on the construction of campus sports culture in colleges and universities* [J]. *Contemporary Sports Technology*, 2020,10 (30): 131-132 + 135.
- [4] Li Juan. *Study on the interactive effect of cheerleading culture and college campus culture in the new period* [J]. *Land Bridge View*, 2020 (09): 102-103.
- [5] Meng Jianhua. *Brief analysis of the characteristics of the cheerleading movement and its role in the construction of college campus culture* [J]. *Youth Sports*, 2020 (06): 32-33.
- [6] Yuan Xiaoguang. *The influence of cheerleading on the construction of college campus culture in the new era* [J]. *Propagation research*, 2019,3 (31): 217-218.