As a trend that some are referring to as the “New PE,” school physical education (PE) is increasingly making use of digital technologies in the form of pedometers, heart rate monitors, fitness trackers and apps, and more. The goal of such technologies is to motivate students, enable instructors to better evaluate students, and to encourage self-evaluation and monitoring by students. The impact that the rise of these surveillant and self-monitoring technologies has on students and teachers in PE is in need of investigation, particularly given their positioning as tools in the “war on childhood obesity.” Drawing on participant observation and document analysis, we share an examination of how digital technologies are being taken up in one particular PE setting. First, drawing on a Foucauldian framework of discipline and surveillance, we use Lupton’s (2016) five modes of self-tracking to investigate how students and the instructor in a university-level physical activity class utilized digital technologies. Next, we examine the differences between expected and observed uses of technology in the classroom. In particular, we focus on the students’ processes of sense-making with regards to the data outputs of the devices that were used. In doing so, we complicate the techno-utopian and techno-dystopian binary to illustrate that students are both disciplined by and resistant to digital technologies in PE. These findings contribute to scholarship examining digital technologies and the quantification of bodies through technologies in physical culture.

About 75% of Dutch PE teachers integrate ICT in their PE lessons or plan to do so in the future (Reijgersberg et al., 2014). Yet relatively little research has been focused on the consequences of the use of such technologies for the constructions of bodies of students. Contextual research on PE suggests an implicit curriculum (re) produces inequalities among students through dynamics such as communication about and/or visualization of desired bodies (Azzarito & Sterling, 2010; Hill & Azzarito, 2012; Hope, 2015; Van Doodewaard & Knoppers, 2016). The purpose of this study was to explore discourses that guide teachers in their constructions of bodies they select to use in digital instruction movies (DIM), and the consequences of these selections such as the privileging and marginalizing of certain students. The results of semi-structured interviews with seven teachers in phase one and four focus groups (28 teachers) in phase two suggest they created three implicit categories of bodies to select students for participation in DIM: visible bodies, invisible bodies and erroneous bodies. This categorisation was embedded in normalizing practices that suggested a hidden curriculum that disadvantaged and advantaged specific groups of students, and reflected an intersection of ability, gender and ethnicity.
New technology and new methods are common in Beijing’s primary and middle school. Although multimedia technology and network technology, electronic terminal equipment can improve students’ learning effectively, they also reduce face-to-face contacts and interactions and cause adverse effect to student’s emotion, so there exists “alienation of technology” problem. In this study, the primary and middle school students’ physical activity questionnaire, POMS (Chinese version) and social support rating table (SSRs) are adopted in the investigation and test evaluation on 1782 primary and middle school students from 40 classes of 7 schools in Beijing. Random cluster sampling method was conducted to select six classes of 243 fifth-grade students. Effect of age on primary and middle school students’ mental state comes both from academic pressure and also teaching environment. Sports activities especially collective sports activities play a very important role in teenager’s socialization and individual self-esteem development. Besides, sports activities can eliminate the adverse effects of technology alienation in network era. Sports activities participation can help to improve students’ self-esteem and social support level. Organized sports, especially with a certain competitive nature of the collective physical activity had a significant effect on improving primary school students’ health and social support.

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“Big Bodies, Big data: The ‘Soft(ware) Governance’ of Physical Education through the FitnessGram™”

The FitnessGram™ (FG™) is a web-based fitness assessment tool being rolled out in schools across the United States as part of the fight against childhood obesity. The FG™ software produces visual report cards designed to educate children about their health risk, and offers a data management and reporting system used to obtain an aggregated reading of student fitness levels for institutional testing, evaluation, and comparison. Developed by the Cooper Institute, a non-profit research organization that maintains one of the nation’s largest fitness-based databases, and funded by corporate entities such as General Mills and the National Football League, the FG™ was recently chosen to be the assessment instrument of the President’s Youth Fitness Test, an initiative of the US President’s Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition. Drawing upon theoretical and methodological insights from the fields of Science, Technology and Society (STS) studies, and Governmentality Studies, our aim is to identify and articulate the political coalitions, ethical calculations and professional practices that coalesce within, and through, this emergent form of ‘soft(ware) governance’ (Williamson, 2016). This paper is part of a larger and on-going project wherein we critically contextualize the creation of the FG™, and examine its enactment in physical education classrooms.