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Routledge Handbook of Physical Cultural Studies

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INTRODUCTION

Michael L. Silk, David L. Andrews and Holly Thorpe

Over the past two decades or so, there has been a noticeable shift towards the identification of, and engagement with, physical culture as an empirical field of study (cf. Adair, 1998; Atkinson, 2010; Brabazon et al., 2015; Hargreaves and Vertinsky, 2007; Huggson, 2008; Kirk, 1999; McDonald, 1999; Phoenix and Smith, 2011; Pronger, 1998). While some may have utilized the more inclusive term 'physical culture' as little more than a descriptive antidote to the empirically limiting term 'sport', others clearly have broader aspirations in seeking to advance an intellectual project centred on the transdisciplinary study of physical culture: what has, at various points (Andrews, 2008; Atkinson, 2011; Brabazon et al., 2015; Ingham, 1997; Pavlidis and Olive, 2014; Silk and Andrews, 2011; Thorpe, 2011a; Vertinsky, 2015), been termed physical cultural studies (PCS). The emergent intellectual formation that is PCS engages neither the physical culture of the Soviet *spartakiad*, nor that of the late-nineteenth-century/early-twentieth-century physical culture movement. Rather, it incorporates a relational and pluralistic approach to, and understanding of, physical culture, whose various expressions of active embodiment (including, but certainly not restricted to, exercise, fitness, health, movement, leisure, recreation, dance, and sport practices) are approached as constituent elements of the broader conjunctural formation out of which they were constituted. Furthermore, this understanding is based on the assumption that the very nature of physical culture renders it a complex empirical site incorporating numerous interrelated levels that can be experienced, and thereby examined, from a variety of levels, including the socio-structural, discursive, processual, institutional, collective, communal, corporeal, affective, and subjective.

'Genesis' and germination

The very fact that each of the editors of this handbook possess their own – and markedly distinct – origin narratives for PCS, indicates that there are multiple spaces and times of origin for the project. Differently put, disparate researchers located around the world (some in groups, others in relative isolation) have, for various reasons (some empirical, others theoretical and/or methodological) navigated a physical cultural (studies) turn within their own work, and have, whether knowingly or otherwise, contributed to the loose coalescence of the intellectual formation, or sensibility, that we recognize PCS to be. Somewhat reworking Smart Hall's (1992) reflections on the emergence of cultural studies, PCS has multiple trajectories, different

ways of materializing, different histories in different disciplines and geographical locations; it is a set of different conjunctures, formations and moments.

Far from a coherent institutionalized formation, PCS is an intellectual assemblage perpetually in a state of becoming. It possesses no fixed origins, histories, disciplinary boundaries or trajectories, and is rather a site of both internal and external struggle for precisely what it should and could be now and, perhaps more importantly, in the future. So, there is a necessary and generative intellectual tension at the core of PCS; a dynamism that disrupts as much as it delineates, as the project responds to the unfolding conjunctures, or problem-spaces it confronts (Grossberg, 2010). Predictably, and again with Hall (1992: 277), the emergence of PCS as the 'new' kid on the block among the international community of sociology of sport scholars has been heralded by a degree of 'bad feeling, argument, unstable anxieties, and angry silences' derived, in part, from the over-eagerness and enthusiasm of some early advocates whose failures to attribute PCS's complex genealogy understandably rankled some (Adams et al., 2016). Looking to learn from previous oversights, within this handbook we seek to acknowledge both the complex derivation and extant plurality of PCS, by bringing together scholars from a multitude of ontological, theoretical, and methodological backgrounds, whose work helps to simultaneously establish, excoriate, and extend the always already contingent boundaries of PCS. Evidently, we are not looking to offer a definitive meta-narrative of what PCS is or should be, but instead as an attempt to bring together differing tensions, positionalities, debates, politics, and so on, so as to think productively about what an emergent PCS approach to active embodiment might, not ought, to look like.

While this handbook provides a forum for marking out the – necessarily fluid and permeable – boundaries of PCS in its current and complex iterations, this brief introduction provides the opportunity for us to proffer our own vantage point. Once again, out of a recognition that there are as many motivating factors behind people's turn to physical culture, as there are discrete expressions of PCS in practice, we can only offer an unavoidably personal and, some may argue, parochial genealogy of PCS. Rather than speaking from any sort of authority, we disavow any ascribed or achieved intellectual status and/or influence we may (or may not) have accumulated, and instead position ourselves as offering but one contribution to the ongoing PCS dialogue. According to our understanding, PCS is a collective and democratic project, incorporating a productive tension of divergent foci, viewpoints, and opinions (very) loosely united by a common concern with understanding the existence, operation, and effects of power and power relations as they are manifest within, and through, the complex and contextual field of physical culture. With such critical dynamism at its generative core, PCS fights off the inertia created by the all-too-easy adoption of empirical, theoretical, and/or methodological certainties. Differently put, and in a Freirean sense (Freire, 2000), we contend that PCS is a dialogic learning community, in that its advocates are in critical and constructive conversation, or dialogue, with each other as a core part of the learning process (as opposed to having knowledge and understanding imposed on them). Dialogue is thus understood as 'never an end in itself but a means to develop a better comprehension about the object of knowledge' (Macedo, 2000: 18). In this sense PCS aims to nurture dialogic reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it' (Freire, 2000: 51; see also Donnelly and Atkinson's discussion on a public sociology of sport, 2015). The ongoing PCS conversation, the basis of this handbook, aims to co-produce consciousness related to the field's object of knowledge: namely, physical culture in general, and, more specifically, the manner in which specific sites, forms, and/or expressions of physical culture are organized, disciplined, embodied, represented, and experienced in relation to the operations of social power.

Promptings

As alluded to previously, it is important to acknowledge that PCS – or at least its constituent or complementary sensibilities – have been germinating, discussed and even centred in a number of academic and non-academic spaces. For us, physical culture, and more specifically physical cultural studies, is a response to a number of perceived intellectual (and institutional) threats, ambiguities, and/or inadequacies. Indeed, the seemingly unrelenting (bio)scientization of kinesiology/sports studies (and the accompanying devaluing of the humanities and social sciences of kinesiological thought) has been identified as a major contributory factor to the genesis and development of PCS (Andrews et al., 2013; Andrews, 2008; Ingham, 1997; Silk et al., 2013). However, the scientization of our academic field of study is certainly not the most compelling factor that can explain the inception and growth of PCS. Indeed, informed by a variety of intellectual influences (most notably, in our case, cultural studies, body studies, feminism, sociology, media studies, history, cultural geography, critical psychology, and urban studies), the unfolding transdisciplinary, trans-theoretical, and transmethodological nature of our work placed it at odds with distinct disciplinary boundaries (such as sociology, or sub-disciplines such as the sociology of sport) as understood in the traditional sense of these disciplines. Indeed, we found such nomenclatures at best, to be increasingly vague and an imprecise descriptor of our research practice and objects of study. Additionally, our initial empirical focus on, and understanding of, high-profile, prolympic, or corporate sport (Andrews, 2006; Donnelly, 1996) was complicated by the recognition of the universality, yet imprecision, of sport as a collective noun. Thus, as our research ventured more into the realms of leisure, fitness, recreation, lifestyle, leisure, movement, popular culture, education, and health, we came to question the conceptual pertinence (and over-determining nature) of sport as a means of capturing the empirical breadth of our work. For us, and unlike some of its noted proponents (Farris, 2006), the sociology of sport failed to reflect the disciplinary and empirical diversity operating under the moniker, rendering the term at best, a term of relevance to only a segment of this diverse intellectual community, and, at worst, an anachronistic flag of convenience.

To date, the most considered and concerted contributions to the physical culture debate are arguably the varied contributions that comprise Jennifer Hargreaves and Patricia Vertinsky's (2007) edited anthology *Physical Culture, Power, and the Body*, those within the *Sociology of Sport Journal* special issue on *Physical Cultural Studies* (Silk and Andrews, 2011), and a number of contributors in Russell Field's (2015) *Playing for Change* (perhaps especially Vertinsky, and Donnelly and Atkinson). Evidenced within these works, the turn to physical culture is closely linked to – indeed, it has arguably been propelled by – an increased focus on the body and issues of embodiment within sociology of sport research. Furthermore, and as illustrated by numerous journal articles, conference foci, and conference presentations, once the sociology of sport acknowledged its unavoidably embodied emphasis, the field has gradually broken away from its narrow preoccupation with the sporting, and broadened its empirical scope to include a wider range of physical cultural forms.

As evidenced in this handbook, not all (in fact, perhaps a small minority) of PCS exponents are located within kinesiology/sport departments and/or have backgrounds within the field. Largely precipitated by the influential works of numerous feminist scholars (cf. Barlant, 1991; Bordo, 1993; Butler, 1993; Grosz, 1994; Haraway, 1991), the turn to the body within the wider academic community (specifically manifest in cultural studies and allied fields such as gender studies, health, social and cultural geography, leisure studies, media studies, queer studies, racial and ethnic studies, urban studies, youth studies etc.), and the accompanying increased attention paid to the processes, practices, and politics of embodiment, have spurred a rethinking of

physical culture (in its myriad guises) as a relevant and resonant empirical domain. From displaying a palpable academic disregard, numerous scholars located outside the extant sociology of sport community have come to acknowledge physical culture as a legitimate, and indeed significant, avenue for critical intellectual inquiry into the relationship between the body, power, and culture. Indeed, over the past decade or more, there has been a discernible *physical culture creep*, whereby the inalienable social, cultural, political, and economic significance of physical culture has infiltrated even some of the most intransigent academic minds. Coupled with the breakdown (indeed, one could consider it almost to be an inversion) of traditional academic distinctions between high and low culture forms as legitimate objects of analysis, physical culture (including organized sport, dance, exercise, health, leisure, movement, recreation, and rehabilitative-related practices) has occupied the critical gaze of scholars from fields as diverse as American studies, anthropology, architecture, gender studies, geography, Latin American studies, media and communication studies, race and ethnic studies, and urban studies (cf. Barratt, 2012; Cook et al., 2015; Hill, 2016; Powers and Greenwell, 2016; Qviström, 2013; Worthen and Baker, 2016). While many of these researchers may be blissfully unaware of the field as they gleefully *discover* physical culture – oftentimes with little or no recognition of the work that preceded theirs – they nonetheless are making contributions to the body of knowledge. Yet, the recognition of physical culture as the central object of research was but a first (albeit an important) step towards imagining, and legitimating, PCS as an approach to studying the politics of (in)active embodiment.

A definitional effort

As indicated in our prefatory remarks, there has been a palpable (and we would argue healthy) mix of defensiveness, hostility, and outright disdain towards PCS, balanced with a growing and expanding (both intellectually and geographically) engagement and development of the field (to which this handbook is testimony). Within this context, this handbook is committed to developing ever more acute explanations of the focus, structure, purpose, critical edge, and value of PCS (cf. Atkinson, 2011; Silk and Andrews, 2011; Thorpe et al., 2011; Verinsky, 2015). Further, and to avoid falling foul of the indeterminacy that hampered the growth of cultural studies more generally, we see this collection as a step towards – albeit far from a grand narrative – defining the possibilities of PCS. The collective unwillingness to delineate the parameters of the (vexed) cultural studies project created a situation wherein ‘the refusal to define it becomes the key to understanding what it is’ (Grossberg, 1997: 253). For PCS, this is simply not a sensible, strategic, or in any way sustainable state of affairs.

To this point, however, PCS has failed to delineate any coherent or consistent sense of its own parameters. This can be partly attributed to the criticism that unavoidably attends any definitional effort. Generally speaking, this takes two forms. The first is the anticipated, and indeed greatly welcomed, criticisms occasioned by the ‘initial definition (see Andrews, 2008), and those who (at times precociously, at times vivaciously, often both) advanced multiplicitous offshoots ground – to differing degrees – in the sensibilities of this definitional effort. Any attempt to define an intellectual phenomenon is bound to elicit disagreement and counter-definition of a particular element or elements (empirical, theoretical, methodological, or axiological), or, indeed, of the definitional effort *in toto*. Definitional efforts are thus the starting points, and subsequent stimulants, for the dialogic engagements through which the PCS project takes shape and consequently matures. Hence, those in any sense committed to the development of PCS are challenged to contribute to the definitional dialogue: to offer definitions and counter-definitions through which PCS can move forward, and realize its perpetual

dynamics as a project always in the process of becoming. They need to be sufficiently bold to articulate their own definitional thoughts, recognizing that critique is the inevitable corollary, but dialogic advancement is the ultimate result – and this handbook is peppered with such accounts and advances. The second form of critique attending any definitional effort is linked to the position of authority that appears to be assumed by the definer(s). This leads to the interrogation of precisely what gives an individual, or collection of individuals, the right to speak for, in this case, a burgeoning intellectual project? What misguided sense of intellectual entitlement encourages such definitional efforts? This type of criticism is valid, but only if the definitions offered are positioned as being absolute and incomparable. Should they – as in the case of PCS – be framed as, hopeful, suggestive catalysts for considered deliberation, they cannot be critiqued for any totalizing ambitions. Others may read such assumed authority into the definitional effort, but it is not necessary here. Of course intellectual life is structured in such a way as to afford primary and privilege to the voices of figures, whose status and influence is derived from their accrued intellectual capital. Although understandable in more established fields, PCS’s recent emergence means it is a less hierarchical intellectual space, and one *presently* more open to a multitude of generational influences.

Definitions tend to divide as much as they unite; PCS incorporates numerous points of contestation that could alienate as much as they interpolate potential proponents. Yet, for us, PCS should not be reduced to being a generalist approach to the study of physical culture, and has to incorporate specific empirical, theoretical, methodological, and axiological dimensions through which researchers either do, or do not, recognize themselves and their work within it. This is not to say that any definition of PCS is fixed or inalienable, rather, the self-reflexivity inherent within the project demands constant critical reflection and revision. Hence, those involved and invested in PCS are charged with the responsibility for – they are the custodians of – its very being. It is in this sense that PCS should be considered a dialogic learning community, (re)generated through critical and constructive conversation (or dialogue), as opposed to being characterized by the imposition of externally derived knowledge (Freire, 2000). Any definitional effort then should be considered generative as opposed to being definitive. It is intended to be a stimulus for dialogue, rather than an act of intellectual domination. It is not written from any misguided sense of PCS authority or omnipotence; rather, it is offered by people who self-identify as members of the PCS learning community, yet who continue to struggle to adequately conceptualize the PCS project.

Having made the case for the importance for PCS of ongoing definitional practice, we are thus compelled to offer the following, as a starting point for what follows in this handbook:

PCS is a dynamic and self-reflexive *transdisciplinary* intellectual project, rooted in qualitative and critical forms of inquiry. Its research object is the diverse realm of physical culture (including, but not restricted to sport, fitness, exercise, recreation, leisure, wellness, dance, and health-related movement practices).

PCS is concerned with a process of theorizing the empirical, in identifying, interpreting, and intervening into the ways physical culture-related structures and institutions, spaces and places, discourses and representations, subjectivities and identities, and/or practices and embodiments, are linked to broader social, economic, political, and technological contexts.

By contextualizing physical culture in this way, PCS looks to explicate how active bodies become organized, disciplined, represented, embodied, and experienced in mobilizing (or corroborating), or at times immobilizing (or resisting), the conjunctural inflections and operations of power within a society.

As a form of critical pedagogy, PCS aims to generate and circulate the type of knowledge that would enable individuals and groups to discern, challenge, and potentially transform existing power structures and relations as they are manifest within, and experienced through, the complex field of physical culture.

From this definitional effort, we briefly expound upon what we consider to be the key elements of the PCS assemblage. However, unlike in previous discussions (Andrews and Silk, 2016), herein we are not advancing a prescriptive model of PCS. Rather, we envision PCS to be a dynamic intellectual assemblage that would incorporate some, if not necessarily all, of the following dimensions as researchers organically contour their research practice (Marcus and Saka, 2006) to the precise empirical scale and object of study:

- **Empirical:** PCS focuses on physical culture, and more specifically the way specific forms of physical culture are organized, disciplined, represented, embodied, and experienced in relation to the operations of social power. While acknowledging the human body as the subject and object of physical culture, PCS cannot be reduced to phenomenological studies of bodily movement. Physical culture, and therefore PCS, encompasses a breadth of empirical sites, and a depth of empirical dimensions/scales. Within its empirical reach, PCS includes activities ranging from sport, through fitness, exercise, recreation, leisure, wellness, dance, and health-related movement practices. Furthermore, the empirical dimensions/scales at which these physical cultural forms can be engaged range from the macro through the micro: from structure and institution, to discourse and representation, subjectivity and identity, to experiential practice and embodiment.

- **Contextual:** PCS offers an approach to the study of physical culture that is necessarily contextual in both form and objective. It is anti-reductionist, in that any physical cultural expression cannot be reduced to singular or simple effect (i.e. the social, economic, political, or technological). Rather, physical cultural phenomena are the aggregates of multiple and intersecting determinant relations and effects. Mapping the context (the aggregate of determinant relations) in which physical cultural expressions are structured, made meaningful, and experienced represents the contextual imperative and outcome of PCS. Moreover, PCS's contextuality is based on a dialectic assumption that, however minutely, physical cultural practices act as constitutive elements of the larger context through which they are simultaneously constituted.

- **Transdisciplinary:** PCS cannot be considered, nor should aspire to being, an academic discipline. Rather, its breadth of empirical engagement – focused as it is on a wide range of physical cultural forms and dimensions/scales – necessitates a truly transdisciplinary approach. As such, PCS selectively borrows from various field/disciplinary-based research objects, methods, and theories (such as those drawn from body studies, cultural studies, economics, gender and sexuality studies, history, media studies, philosophy, political science, race and ethnic studies, sociology, and urban studies). PCS's transdisciplinary formations are thus fluid, and wholly contingent on the form and dimension/scale of physical culture under scrutiny.

- **Theoretical:** PCS is characterized by a commitment to social and cultural theory as important frameworks informing empirical engagement and interpretation. However, this does assume a slavish adherence to a singular theoretical position, since the empirical diversity of the PCS project precludes the adoption of such a totalizing approach. PCS research requires a critical engagement with theory: a grappling with specific theories to see what is useful and appropriate within a particular empirical site, and

discarding/reworking that which is not. Hence, PCS requires the development of a broad-ranging and flexible theoretical vocabulary able to meet the extensive interpretive demands of its diverse empirical remit.

- **Political:** PCS is a political project, in that it is committed to the advancement of the social formations in which it is located. As such, PCS researchers adhere to an inequivalental understanding of politics of intellectual practice as being concerned with discerning the distribution, operations, and effects of power and power relations. PCS is based on the assumption that societies are fundamentally divided along hierarchically ordered lines of differentiation (i.e. those based on class, ethnic, gender, ability, generational, national, racial, and/or sexual norms), as manifest within the existence of socio-cultural inequities or injustices; advantages or disadvantages; enablers or constraints; empowerment or disempowerments. For this reason, and as part of their broader commitment to progressive social change, PCS researchers critically engage physical culture as a site where such social divisions and hierarchies are enacted, experienced, and at times contested. The sites of political struggle – or problem-spaces – within physical culture, through which social power becomes manifest and operationalized, are changeable and necessitate an equal dynamism in PCS's strategic emphases.

- **Qualitative:** PCS is a predominantly (though not exclusively) qualitative project, which seeks to interpret and understand (as opposed to predict and attempt to control) the diverse realm of physical culture as a social, cultural, political, economic, and technological construct. Through adherence to an approach rooted in specific forms of qualitative inquiry, PCS provides a counterpoint to the positivist scientism that increasingly dominates academic life. Qualitative research encompasses a diverse array of interpretive (as opposed to predictive) methods designed to elicit representations of the social world, through which that world, and experiences of it, are interpreted. PCS's value-laden approach to qualitative inquiry is rooted in a humanist intellectualism – a pathway paved by many who have put their heads above the parapet in a variety of disciplines – motivated by the identification and elimination of disparities and inequities, the struggle for social justice, and the realization of universal human rights.

- **Self-reflexive:** PCS research and researchers are motivated by subjective moral and political commitments, made explicit within and through the choices and enactment of research. Hence, PCS eschews the purported value-free objectivism of the positivist sciences in favour of a value-laden subjectivism, rooted in a critical approach guided by explicitly humanist goals. The self is thus unavoidably situated within research practice, and needs to be reflected upon as such. The variously located iterations of the PCS project are also more broadly reflexive, in that they recognize the need to be attentive to, and sometimes transform themselves in response to, the specific institutional, societal, and/or historical conditions they confront.

- **Pedagogical:** PCS represents a form of public pedagogy designed to impact learning communities within the academy, in the classroom, and throughout broader publics. Whether teaching, writing, presenting, consulting, advocating, protesting, agitating, mass communicating, and/or mentoring, PCS scholars utilize the products of their research labours in circulating knowledge to – and oftentimes co-producing knowledge with – wider constituencies. This pedagogical commitment is motivated by the aim of enabling individuals and groups to discern, challenge, and potentially transform existing power structures and relations, as they are manifest within, and experienced through, the complex field of physical culture.

Evolutions

From our viewpoint, PCS is a critical intellectual endeavour committed to the realization of progressive social change through the generation and dissemination of physical culture-related knowledge enabling individuals and groups to discern, challenge, and potentially transform existing power structures and relations. Yet, and while disconcerting for some, PCS's commitment to an ontological and epistemological conjuncturalism is at the root of its perpetual dynamism; it has an unmitigated commitment to the future through the dialogic generation of ever-more acute understandings of the present. At any given moment, the struggle over defining PCS – over deciding what is the most prescient definition and formation of the project – will be waged. Uncomfortable conversations and confrontations will continue to be had in order to ensure that PCS retains its intellectual dynamism and political relevance (for fear of falling into the scientific method's trap of moribund knowledge generation resulting from adherence to the twin positivist pillars of replication and incrementalization). As the 'problem-spaces' that confront PCS change over time, so the project is compelled to reshape and refocus itself – to evolve – in order to be able to meet the interpretive and political demands of the new conjuncture (Grossberg, 2010: 1). PCS will constantly be reinventing itself in response to what are ever-changing institutional, societal, and/or historical conditions. The last generation's PCS may not be this generation's; something that has provoked, and will surely continue to fan, stimulating debates.

This intellectual conjuncturalism renders PCS an anti-relativist project: relativism in this sense understood as the uncritical embracement of any study of physical culture under the PCS umbrella as being an equally valid and/or credible interpretation as any other. Adopting a relativist stance would open PCS up to charges of an absence of intellectual coherence and credibility. While it may be an open and fluid project continually *in process*, at any given time, and in regards to any specific project, PCS needs to be subject to sustained challenges as to whether it adopts the most appropriate object of study, method, theory, and politics. Such challenges are in many respects its life-blood. Challenge stimulates debate (hopefully not retrenchment!), reflection, advances, new movements, and new moments; challenge, contestation and critique are centrally embedded in the often-allomorphic DNA of a constantly evolving PCS. This anti-relativism is not rooted in a realist assumption of the existence of a singular and truthful reality, that PCS researchers are driven to discover. No, this approach acknowledges a multiplicity of truth claims, yet equally establishes that some truth claims are more methodologically sound, theoretically informed, and politically prescient – they are more interpretively insightful – than others, based on fluid criteria for assessing the rigour, relevance, and quality of scholarship/research (see Arnis and Silk, 2008, for a discussion of the politics of 'quality'). While advancing a temporal *authority of knowledge* claims, it is important to acknowledge their incompleteness and deficiencies, while (hopefully) demonstrating how they realize understandings more interpretively and politically insightful than their antecedents. PCS is not a discipline, but it must be disciplined (it must self-reflexively police the rigour and relevance of its research, through the establishment of generally accepted, though dynamic, criteria of evaluation). Only then will it be in a position to produce the 'best knowledge and understanding' of physical culture within the context at hand; knowledge and understanding to be used within the public pedagogical process of what is the 'damning task of transforming the world' (Grossberg, 2010: 1) in whatever way possible. This is the intent of this handbook, a self-conscious and self-reflexive effort to (re-)produce a partial, political, theoretical, and practical PCS assemblage relevant to, and prompted by, our contemporary conjunctural moment. It will evolve, in part through the pages of this book, by holding the text together as a whole, or

certain chapters with each other – each reader will use the book differently, for their own purposes and likely draw out multiple and competing uses, value, and meanings. It is a text that is necessarily held together by difference, contestation, and debate, and which, perhaps rather obviously, is marked by a unity in difference. By necessity, there was a need to/for order; in part this 'order' reflects an ephemeral and definitional assemblage, is perhaps prompted by our genesis (our differing starting points), and is certainly dictated by the strictures of corporatized academic publishing.

The opening two sections of the handbook provide a broad-based overview of the conceptual and empirical complexities of PCS. While some of this has been addressed in earlier discussions (Atkinson, 2011; Gardina and Newman, 2011; Silk and Andrews, 2011), herein contributors problematize, complicate, and extend the understanding of PCS's foundations and boundaries. *Growings* (Part I) comprises six chapters that variously outline the historic, trans-disciplinary, theoretical, self-reflexive, political, and praxis-oriented dimensions of PCS. The five chapters that comprise *Practices* (Part II) illustrate the empirical diversity of physical culture, incorporating discussions of leisure, health, movement, exercise/fitness, dance, lifestyle, and high-performance sport-related practices.

As we have suggested above, at least since the late 1980s and early 1990s, the physically (in)active body has garnered considerable academic attention (cf. Gruneau, 1991; Hargreaves, 1987; Harvey and Sparkes, 1991; Loy, 1991; Loy, Andrews and Rinehart, 1993; Theberge, 1991), such that the body and embodiment have increasingly become the 'empirical core' of the sociology of sport field (Andrews, 2008: 52). It is important to acknowledge that this turn to the moving body was informed by various disciplines, but particularly the strong foundation of feminist scholarship that had been reflexively engaging in research as an embodied act, and writing the body into the text for decades (England, 1994; Fonow and Cook, 1991; Lather, 1986, 2001; McLaren, 2002; Pillow, 2003; Stanley, 1990). Despite a renewed interest in sporting and exercising bodies, a number of critical sport scholars have expressed concern that the over-specialization and fragmentation of the parent field of kinesiology is limiting understandings of the 'body in motion' (Duncan, 2007: 56; Andrews, 2008; Booth, 2009; Duncan, 2007; Hargreaves and Vertinsky, 2007; Ingham, 1997; Woodward, 2009). Partly a response to such concerns, the transdisciplinary and theoretical and methodological fluidity of PCS offers opportunities for reinvigorating and reconceptualizing understandings of the physically (in)active body.

In this handbook, three sections are dedicated to imagining the potential of PCS approaches for understanding the manner in which bodies become organized, represented, and expert-enced in relation to the operations of social power. The first of the three, *Subliterated Bodies* (Part III), features seven chapters that offer complex examinations of moving bodies as classed, raced, gendered, sexual and sexualized, (dis)abled, and aged, as well as the various ways that bodies press back upon existing social structures. The following section, *Institutionalized Bodies* (Part IV), builds upon the former with eight chapters revealing bodies as medicalized and scientized, technologized, spiritualized, aestheticized, healthized, mediated and commodified, spectacularized and exoticized, and disciplined and punished, across an array of global, national and local contexts. *Experimental Bodies* (Part V), then consists of six chapters that critically examine various dimensions of the lived moving body, including bodies as injured and pained, risk-taking, invisible, mobile, affective and pleasured, and pregnant. Of course, there are many intersections across the three sections dedicated to the moving body, and also with other parts of the handbook, and we encourage readers to take up the challenge to reimagine new connections for understanding (and intervening in) the ways power operates on and through moving bodies within and across disciplines, spaces, contexts, and sites.

As intimated throughout the constituent chapters of the handbook, the field of physical culture is empirically diverse, incorporating as it does a range of embodied practices. However, as the six chapters within *Contexts and Sites of Embodied Practice* (Part VII) illustrate, physical cultural practices are also manifest across a broad expanse of empirical dimensions. As such, the foci of these chapters range from health discourses, through pedagogical practices, to community and digital cultures, and both national and international policy. Our bodies, our physical practices are of course inherently spatialized; they are inseparable from, and serve to constitute (and are constituted by) the multifarious spaces they inhabit. Focusing on the relationships between power, privilege, and socio-spatial relations, the chapters in the *Spaces* section (Part VI) address the mutual constitution of bodies and spaces across a range of different scalar units. As such, the chapters focus on rethinking key geographical concepts of nature/landscape through the body; the important and active role played by non-humans in the environment in understanding physical culture, the neoliberal 'logics' of gyms in putting bodies to work, mobilities of migrants between spaces, the affective, material, and public spaces generated through exercise, sport and physical activities, the ways in which enclosures and functional sites, architecture and spatial technologies organize, survey and monitor bodies in 'healthified' spaces, and the relationships between, and legacies of, material and discursive urban renewal, sporting spectacle, mobility and securitized space.

Given our understanding of PCS as an organic and diffuse intellectual assemblage formed in response to the specific empirical scale and object of study, the methods utilized by PCS researchers are correspondingly diverse. As a result, *Methodological Contingencies* (Part VIII) comprises eight chapters that explicate varied approaches to identifying and engaging the physical cultural empirical, including autoethnographic and narrative, fictional and performative, contextual, ethnographic, textual, discursive, visual and sensory, and digital approaches. Donnelly and Atkinson (2015) ask if the critical study of sport and physical activity has tended to rest on its intellectual laurels, while all too infrequently engaging in concerted and unapologetic rituals of transformative praxis – a critique that has perhaps quite rightly been directed at PCS in its emergent forms (see Silk and Mayo's Chapter 6 of this handbook on 'Praxis' for a fuller discussion). Given our understanding of PCS as both a political project, committed to the advancement of the social formations in which it is located, and a pedagogical project that can impact learning communities (within the academy, in the classroom, and throughout broader publics), we were keen to further debate about where and how PCS might (and has) enabled individuals and groups to discern, challenge, and potentially transform existing power structures and relations. As such, and in part influenced by Vertinsky (2015) who offers a compelling warning about striking the 'balance' between political desire, complexity, concreteness and the intellectual basis of the field, the *Politics and Praxis* section (Part IX) comprises five chapters that address the relationship between, and possibilities' of, PCS, social change and publicness, the important place of the classroom and curriculum, the multiple complex relationships between sport, development and social change, the transformative possibilities in holding together two unlikely bedfellows in PCS and corporate social responsibility, and the complexities inherent in advancing the empirical and metaphysical bases of PCS relational to methodological reflexivities, flesh politics and embodiment.

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PART I

Groundings

20

DIGITAL BODIES

Deborah Lupton

Introduction

Human bodies have always interacted with technologies. However, the nature of the technology has changed over the millennia. In the contemporary digital era, bodies are digitized as never before, both by individuals on their behalf and by other actors and agencies seeking to portray and monitor their bodies. From Facebook status updates and images, Instagram selfies, YouTube videos and tweets to exergames, sophisticated digital medical imaging technologies and the ceaseless generation of data from sensor-based devices and environments, human bodies now emit vast quantities of digital data. A major change in digitized embodiment is the way in which detailed data are now generated on the geolocation, movements, appearance, behaviours and functions of bodies and the uses to which these data are put as part of the digital data knowledge economy. The cyborg body has transformed into the digital body, whose data outputs possess commercial, managerial and research as well as personal value and status to a range of actors and agencies beyond the individual.

Researchers contributing to physical cultural studies have drawn attention to how recent digital technologies are employed to monitor and measure moving bodies in diverse ways. They have analysed the representations and practices of embodiment that are portrayed in apps and exergames such as Wii Fit, for example, that bring together exercise and fitness routines with gaming devices. In such games, certain bodily shapes and degrees of fitness are normalized, while others are stigmatized. Stereotypical gendered, lean, vigorous and youthful bodies are frequently reproduced and celebrated in these games. Participants are encouraged to engage in self-care practices directed at attempting to develop these attributes (Francome, 2010; Millington, 2014a, 2014b). Via such technologies (among a plethora of many other practices and devices), the biopolitics of movement (Newman and Gardina, 2014) are configured. These technologies enact forms of biopedagogies that privilege the active, physically fit and therefore (assumed) productive and self-responsible body.

In this chapter, I extend this previous work by examining the ways in which human bodies interact with and are configured by digital technologies and how these technologies generate new knowledges and practices about bodies. I use infants and young children as a case study to explain these aspects. From before they are even born, children's bodies are now frequently represented and monitored by digital technologies, including medical imaging and monitoring

devices as well as social media sites, surveillance and self-tracking technologies. In my discussion, I draw on literature from sociocultural theorizing of the body, childhood, digital technologies and big data, particularly that by scholars adopting the sociomaterial perspective. The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first presents a general overview of theoretical approaches to conceptualizing the interactions between bodies and technologies, while the second part is devoted to outlining the ways in which infants' and young children's (moving) bodies are digitized.

Theorizing digital bodies

Scholars in the sociology of the body and technocultures developed an interest in the entanglements of human bodies with computerized technologies following the advent of personal computing in the mid-1980s. The terms 'cyborg' and 'cyberspace' (among many other 'cyber'ologies) were adopted to discuss the ways in which computer users interacted with their PCs and with each other online. Donna Haraway's work on the political implications of the cyborg as a heterogeneous, ambiguous and hybrid entity has been particularly important in drawing attention to the fluidities of embodiment and selfhood (Haraway, 1991, 1997). Many other social researchers in the 1990s and early 2000s seized on the concept of the cyborg to investigate the forms of embodiment that are generated or mediated by digital technologies across a range of contexts, including, for example, computer users, IVF embryos, menopausal women, athletes and older people (Lupton, 1995; Buse, 2010; Franklin, 2006; Rayvon, 2012; Leng, 1996).

Cyber terminology is not as often employed in discussions of the social, cultural and political dimensions of computer technology use now that academic terminology has moved more to a focus on the 'digital' (Lupton, 2015b). However, the important work of Haraway and others writing on cyborg bodies developed an argument that acknowledges the complexity of relationships between human and nonhuman actors and calls into question ideas about the fixed nature of identity and embodiment (Lupton, 2015c). Such a perspective is now often referred to as 'sociomaterialism'. It recognizes that subject and object co-configure each other as part of a relationship. Objects are viewed as participating in specific sets of relations, including those with other artefacts as well as with people (Latour, 2005; Law, 2008; Fenwick and Landri, 2012). The term 'assemblage' is often used to capture these entanglements. Assemblages of human flesh and nonhuman actors are constantly configured and reconfigured. They facilitate modes of knowing and living the body.

People domesticate technologies by bringing them into their everyday worlds, melding them to their bodies/selves and bestowing these objects with biographically specific meanings. They become 'territories of the self', marked by individual use, and therefore redolent of personal histories (Nippert-Eng, 1996). This concept of territories of the self acknowledges that bodies and selves are not contained to the fleshy envelope of the individual body, but extend beyond this into space and connect and interconnect with other bodies and objects. These processes are inevitably relational because they involve embodied interactions and affective responses (Lupton, 2015b, 2016; Labanyi, 2010). As Merleau-Ponty (1968) argues, our embodiment is always inevitably interrelational or intercorporeal. We experience the world as *fleshy bodies*, via the sensations and emotions configured through and by our bodies as they relate to other bodies and material objects and spaces. We touch these others, and they touch us. Our bodies are distributed throughout the spaces we inhabit, just as these spaces and the others within them inhabit. Embodiment, then, is primarily a relational assemblage. The concept of the person's (including the person's body) becomes distributed between the interactions of heterogeneous elements (Lee, 2008).

In the digital age, practices of embodiment are increasingly becoming enacted via digital technologies. We now no longer refer to the separate environment of 'cyberspace' as our everyday worlds have become so thoroughly digitized. Where once the figure of the cyborg was science-fiction creation of superhuman powers (Lupton, 1995), our bodies now engage routinely with digital technologies to the extent that it is taken for granted. It is now frequently argued that online and offline selves cannot be distinguished from each other any longer, given the pervasiveness and ubiquity of online participation. Instead categories of flesh, identity and technology are porous and intermeshed (Elwell, 2014; Hayles, 2012). Our bodies are digital data assemblages (Lupton, 2015c).

Digital social theorists have drawn attention to the increasingly sensor-saturated physical environments in which people move, which add to the pre-existing technologies for visually observing and documenting human movements in public spaces, such as CCTV cameras (Kirchin and Dodge, 2011; Kirchin, 2014; Lyon and Bauman, 2013). Kirchin and Dodge (2011) use the term 'code/space' to describe the intersections of software coding with the spatial configurations of humans and nonhumans. They underline the power of code to shape, manage, monitor and discipline the movements of bodies in space and place, including both public and private domains. Digital representations of bodies and digital data on many aspects of embodiment are generated from the various sites, devices and spaces with which individuals interact daily. These include the transactional data produced via routine encounters with surveillance cameras in public spaces, sensors or online websites, platforms and search engines or from the content that people upload voluntarily to social media sites or collect on themselves using self-tracking devices. These technologies create and recreate certain types of digital data assemblages which can then be scrutinized, monitored and used for various purposes including intervention.

The collection and analysis of digitized information about people's behaviours are now becoming increasingly advocated and implemented in many social contexts and institutions: the workplace, education, medicine and public health, insurance, government, marketing, advertising and commerce, the military, citizen science, and urban planning and management. The growing commodification and commercial value of digital data sets and their use in these domains are blurring the boundaries between small and big data, the private and the public. People are now encouraged, obliged or coerced into using digital devices for monitoring aspects of their lives to produce personal data that are employed not only for private and voluntary purposes but also for the purposes of others. These data have begun to be appropriated by a range of actors and agencies, including commercial, managerial, research and governmental (Lupton, 2016).

Critical data scholars have drawn attention to the valorization of quantifiable information in the digital data economy and the algorithmic processing of this information as part of new forms of soft power relations and the production of inequalities (Lupton, 2015b; Kirchin, 2014; Cheney-Lippold, 2011). Digital data can have tangible material effects on people's actions including the ways in which their bodies are conceptualized, managed and disciplined by themselves and others. The calculations and predictions that are generated by software algorithms are beginning to shape people's life chances and opportunities: their access to insurance health care, credit and employment, and their exclusion from spaces and places, as in the identification of potential criminals and terrorists (Crawford and Schultz, 2014).

It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate digital technologies from their users, as both are viewed as mutually constituted. Technologies discipline the body to assimilate better to their requirements, their ways of seeing, monitoring and treating human flesh. However, bodies also shape technologies. The new mobile and wearable devices are carried or worn on the body,

becoming a body prosthetic, an extension of the body. When people handle or touch technologies, they may leave the marks of their bodies on the devices: body oils, sweat, skin flakes. Software is also transformed by use. Now that digital technologies are increasingly used as part of the practices of selfhood, digital archives have become important storage places for personalized bodily data. Images, descriptions and markers of users' bodies are entered into the memories of their digital devices: photographs and videos of themselves, records of their geolocation, the detailed biometric information that is generated by self-tracking apps. Digital devices and software have become repositories of selfhood and embodiment (Lupton, 2015b, 2016).

Young children's embodiment and digital technologies

All human bodies are understood to be in the process of constant transformation, requiring engaging in work on the self and reflexive self-monitoring as part of performing selfhood and embodiment. Foucault refers to these ethical practices of citizenship as technologies of the self (Foucault, 1986, 1988). Beck uses the term 'reflexive biography' (Beck, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995) to denote the ways in which people are encouraged to seek knowledge and use it to improve their life chances, health and wellbeing. The idea of the unfinished body is particularly true of children's bodies, which are viewed as requiring constant monitoring, assessment and improvement from themselves and other actors and agencies to achieve the ideal of the civilized body (Jenks, 2005; Uprichard, 2008; Lupton, 2013a).

While developing *in utero* and following birth, children's bodies are measured and observed for signs of 'normal' growth and development, and they are continually subjected to practices that seek to socialize and normalize their bodies. Children's bodies – and especially those of the unborn, infants and the very young – are regarded as particularly precious and vulnerable, requiring the intense surveillance of their caregivers as part of efforts to protect them from risk and ensure their optimum health and development (Lupton, 2013a, 2014). These efforts are now often rendered into digital forms with the use of an array of devices and software.

The sociomaterialist perspective has been taken up by several scholars writing about children's bodies, particularly within cultural geography, but also by some sociologists and anthropologists (Horton and Kraftl, 2006a, 2006b; Lee, 2008; Woodyer, 2008; Prout, 1996). Researchers using a sociomaterialist approach have conducted studies on, for example, children's use of asthma medication (Prout, 1996), the surveillance technologies that have developed around controlling children's body weight in schools (Rich et al., 2011), children's sleep and the objects with which they interact (Lee, 2008), the interrelationship of objects with pedagogy and classroom management of students' bodies (Mulcahy, 2012) and sociomaterial practices in classrooms that lead to the inclusion or exclusion of children with disabilities (Söderström, 2014). Outside sociomaterialist studies, young children's interactions with digital technologies have attracted extensive attention from social researchers, particularly in relation to topics such as the potential for cyber-bullying, online paedophilia and for children to become unfit and overweight due to spending too much time in front of screens (Holloway et al., 2013). However, few researchers thus far have directed their attention to the types of digital technologies that visually represent children's bodies or render their body functions, activities and behaviours into digital data, or, in other words, how children's bodies become digital data assemblages.

From the embryonic stage of development onwards, children's bodies are now routinely monitored and portrayed using digital technologies. A plethora of websites provide images of every stage of embryonic and foetal development, from fertilization to birth, using a combination of

digital images taken from embryo and fetus specimens and digital imaging software (Lupton, 2013b). 3/4D ultrasounds have become commodified, used for 'social' or 'bonding' purposes instead of the traditional medical diagnostic and screening scan. Many companies offering 3/D ultrasounds now come to people's homes, allowing expectant parents to invite family and friends and turn a viewing of the fetus into a party event. This sometimes involves a 'gender reveal' moment, in which the sonographer demonstrates to all participants, including the parents, the sex of the fetus. Some companies offer the service of using 3D ultrasound scan files to create life-sized printed fetus replica models for parents.

The posting to social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube of the fetus ultrasound image has become a rite of passage for many new parents and often a way of announcing the pregnancy. Using widgets such as 'Baby Gags', expectant parents can upload regular status updates to their social media feeds automatically that provide news on the fetus's development. While a woman is pregnant, she can use a range of digital devices to monitor her fetus. Hundreds of pregnancy apps are currently on the market, including not only those that provide information but those that invite users to upload personal information about their bodies and the development of their fetus (Tripp et al., 2014). Some apps offer a personalized fetal development overview or provide the opportunity for the woman to record the size of her pregnant abdomen week by week, eventually creating a time-lapse video. Other apps involve women tracking fetal movements or heartbeat. *Bella Beat* is a smartphone attachment and app that allows the pregnant woman to hear and record the fetal heartbeat whenever she likes and to upload the audio file to her social media accounts.

YouTube has become a predominant medium for the representation of the unborn entity in the form of ultrasound images and of the moment of birth. Almost 100,000 videos showing live childbirth, including both vaginal and Caesarean births, are available for viewing on that site, allowing the entry into the world of these infants to be viewed by thousands and, in the case of some popular videos, even millions of viewers. Some women even choose to livestream the birth so that audiences can watch the delivery in real time. Following the birth, there are similar opportunities for proud parents to share images of their infant online on social media platforms. In addition to these are the growing number of devices on the market for parents to monitor the health, development and wellbeing of their infants and young children. Apps are available to monitor such aspects as infants' feeding and sleeping patterns, their weight and height and their development and achievements towards milestones. Sensor-embedded baby clothing, wrist or ankle bands and toys can be purchased that monitor infants' heart rate, body temperature and breathing, producing data that are transmitted to the parents' devices. Smartphones can be turned into baby monitors with the use of apps that record the sound levels of the infant.

As children grow, their geolocation, educational progress and physical fitness can be tracked by their parents using apps, other software and wearable devices. As children themselves begin to use digital technologies for their purposes, they start to configure their own digital assemblages that represent and track their bodies. With the advent of touchscreen mobile devices such as smartphones and tablet computers, even very young children are now able to use social media sites and the thousands of apps that have been designed especially for their use (Holloway et al., 2013). Some such technologies encourage young children to learn about the anatomy of human bodies or about nutrition, exercise and physical fitness; calculate their body mass index; collect information about their bodies or represent their bodies in certain ways (such as manipulating photographic images of themselves). These technologies typically employ gamification strategies to provide interest and motivation for use. Some involve combining competition or games with self-tracking using wearable devices. One example is the *Leapfrog Leapband*, a digital wristband

connected to an app that encourages children to be physically active in return for providing them with the opportunity to care for virtual pets. Another is the *Squad* interactive online platform with associated digital wristband and app. Children who sign up can make an avatar of themselves and use the wristband to track their physical activity. Users compete with other users by gaining points for moving their bodies as often and as fast as possible.

In the formal educational system, there are still more opportunities for children's bodies to be monitored, measured and evaluated, and rendered into digitized assemblages. Programmable 'smart schools' are becoming viewed as part of the 'smart city', an urban environment in which sensors that can watch and collect digital data on citizens are ubiquitous (Williamson, 2014). The monitoring of children's educational progress and outcomes using software is now routinely undertaken in many schools, as are their movements around the school. In countries such as the USA and the UK, the majority of schools have CCTV cameras that track students. Many use biometric tracking technologies such as RFID chips in badges or school uniforms and fingerprints to identify children and monitor their movements and their purchases at school canteens (Taylor, 2013; Selwyn, 2015). A growing number of schools are beginning to use wearable devices, apps and other software for health and physical education lessons, such as coaching apps that record children's sporting performances and digital heart rate monitors that track their physical exertions (Lupton, 2015a).

We can see in the use of digital technologies to monitor and represent the bodies of children a range of forms of embodiment. Digitized data assemblages of children's bodies are generated from before birth via a combination of devices that seek to achieve medical- or health-related or social and affective objectives. These assemblages may move between different domains: when, for example, a digitized ultrasound image that was generated for medical purposes becomes repurposed by expectant parents as a social media artefact, a way of announcing the pregnancy, establishing their fetus as new person and establishing its social relationships. Parents' digital devices, and later those of educational institutions and those of children themselves when they begin to use digital devices, potentially become personalized repositories for a vast amount of unique digital assemblages on the individual child: from images of them to descriptions of their growth, development, mental and physical health and wellbeing, movements in space, achievements and learning outcomes. These data assemblages, containing as they do granular details about children, offer unprecedented potential to configure knowledges about individual children and also large groups of children (as represented in aggregated big data sets).

Conclusion

As I have shown in this chapter, new forms of bodies are being configured via contemporary digital technologies. Devices that can monitor, portray, measure and compare bodies generate increasing flows of data about individuals that then move into the digital data economy and are repurposed by a range of actors and agencies. I have employed the example of young children's bodies to demonstrate the manifold ways in which such digitized bodily assemblages are created and the uses to which they are put. Digital data are forms of 'lively capital' in four major ways. First they are generated from life itself, in terms of documenting humans' bodies and selves. Second, as digital data they are labile and fluid as they are generated and circulate in the digital data economy. Third, because with the advent of interconnected smart objects, aggregated data sets and predictive analytics, personal digital data have potential effects on the conduct of life and life opportunities. And finally, as valuable commercial and research entities, they contribute to people's livelihoods (Lupton, 2016).

In this age of unceasing collection of often very intimate and personal information about people via digital technologies, questions of data security and data privacy have become paramount. Once personal digital data enter the computing cloud, people lose control over how they are protected and controlled. Recent scandals and controversies, have revealed the precariousness of personal data security and privacy. These include such events as the former CIA and the US National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden's release of documents that demonstrate how national security agencies in Western countries are conducting surveillance on citizens' online interactions and various events of hacking into personal data databases.

Thus far we know very little about how people are engaging with the digital data assemblages that are generated on them, how they contribute to, manage, manipulate and make sense of these assemblages and what impacts they have on people's sense of selfhood and embodiment. This is a particularly pressing issue for individuals such as the current generation of children whose lives and bodies have been so thoroughly digitally documented. As humans are entering into technological entanglements that can document their lives from pre-birth to death in ever-finer detail, many issues and implications remain to be explored. These include who has the right to collect data on people, who controls and has access to the repositories of personal data that are now configured on individuals, how these data are used by those who do have access and what happens to people's data assemblages after death.

Digital data assemblages are always mutable, dynamic and responsive to new inputs. A recursive feedback loop is established in which information is generated from digital technologies that then are used by the individual to assess her or his activities and behaviour, and modify them accordingly, which then configure a renewed data assemblage – and on the cycle goes. Indeed, one major novel aspect of people's encounters with digital technologies is the ways in which these technologies are now often designed to 'nudge' users into taking up certain practices. Instead of merely providing information, as in older forms of internet engagement, software is coded to algorithmically manipulate users' personal data and send them 'push' notifications to encourage them to purchase more goods and services or change their behaviour to optimize their health, wellbeing or productivity.

More and more, our digital machines are taking on the role of managers, task-masters or disciplinarians of our bodies. Commentators are now beginning to envisage a world in which interconnected smart devices, as part of the Internet of Things, interact with the personalized data that each generates to provide advice to users. Thus, for example, the wearable body tracker can interact with smart objects in the user's home (such as the smart fridge, smart thermostat, smart television and smart bed) to determine what kind of food users should consume, what types of television programmes they should watch, what temperature level their home should be set at and for how long and what time they should go to sleep and wake up, based on such features as their mood, body weight, calories burnt and physical activity data.

Such entanglements of human bodies with technological devices potentially represent further major changes to concepts and practices of embodiment. For the field of physical cultural studies, they constitute a new and important element of understanding how knowledge, practices, objects, emotion, discourse, data and humans intertwine.

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21

SPIRITUALIZED AND
RELIGIOUS BODIES

Andrew Parker and Nick J. Watson

Introduction

Those who have written about the relationship between sport and religion are in general agreement that academics outside of the traditional social science sports studies disciplines (i.e. sociology, history, anthropology, philosophy and psychology), such as theologians and philosophers of religion, have been slow to recognize the cultural significance of modern-day sport (see Watson, 2011a). In this chapter, we argue that this trend is slowly changing. In addition to the emergence of research centres, academic journals and sport–faith initiatives, contributors to recent monographs and anthologies that analyse the different facets of the sport–religion relationship have emanated from a plethora of disciplinary fields and subject areas.

It is widely accepted that links between the sacred and sport have been evident across a number of historical periods. These include primitive times when ritual-cultic ball games were played to appease the gods (for fertility), the athletic spectacles of ancient Greece and the Olympic games that were held in honour of mythological deities, the gladiatorial contests of Rome, the festivals and folk-games of the Middle Ages in Britain and Europe, Puritanical suspicion and prohibitions against sports, and, of course, Victorian muscular Christianity (c. 1820–1910), a socio-theological movement that significantly shaped the character of modern sports (see Gutman, [1978] 2004; Mangan, 1981; Shilling and Mellor, 2014). Additionally, there is a small corpus of work that has explored how sport interacts with other monotheistic and eastern (pantheistic) world religions, such as Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Shintoism (see Majdalinski and Chandler, 2002; Prebish, 1993). These accounts provide useful comparative insight for those examining the sport–Christianity relationship which is our primary focus in this chapter.

Given Christianity's Hebraic roots and its inseparable ties to Jewish history, faith and tradition, contemporary debates surrounding Judaism and sporting pursuit undoubtedly assist scholars when examining the sport–Christianity nexus, especially in relation to historical, theological and sociological research on embodiment and identity. In the following discussion our central aim is to review a selection of existing academic work on sport and spiritualized/religious bodies. We begin with a brief overview of the more general literature on sport and religion, focusing thereafter on a topic around which our own recent research has been located that is, sport and the disabled body. To this end, the chapter is structured around four main