

10. Technological Practices of Multiple Bodies: Self-tracking in an Overworking Culture

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INTRODUCTION

On February 23rd, 2022, a 28-year-old software engineer from the Chinese tech giant ByteDance was sent to the emergency room after collapsing in the company's fitness gym and died from cardiac arrest shortly after. The tragedy happened after his strenuous workday – not in his office but in the corporate gym. It is hard to say whether it was the long hours of his office work, his strenuous workout, or a combination of both that led to the immature death of a young man. Discussions on the Chinese social media, filled with sympathy, anger, and anxiety, treated this incident as an instantiation of the “996” (9 a.m. to 9 p.m., 6 days a week) overworking scheme in contemporary China. This overworking culture, defined by the pursuit of productivity, demands a body that bears such ordeals. It epitomises the fetishisation of a healthy, capable, and hardworking self through the management of good health, but the pursuit of health itself leads to unmanageable and sometimes tragic outcomes.

Notably, the use of self-tracking technologies, such as smartwatches, wristbands, and mobile applications (apps), fueled by commercial investment and individualised focus on design and data collection, demonstrates the intensity of personal health management. The expanding health-tech market and availability of cheap devices make it possible to

track bodily metrics and behaviors, assisting such strenuous self-management in a fast-paced society with vast scales of collection of personal data. Self-tracking technologies play a critical part in framing and transforming health perceptions and behaviors, especially around the neoliberal ideas of self-responsibilities and self-surveillance (Ajana 2018; Lupton 2016). However, the current scholarship rarely situates the analysis in specific social settings and lacks perspectives from diverse cultural and social backgrounds with conflicting narratives. Most importantly, the questions of “how” are less investigated – through what mechanisms are norms, ideas, and beliefs passed down onto users and waived (or fail to be) into day-to-day routines? Do technologies instantiate neoliberal ideas or serve as interfaces between individual experiences and societal structures and values?

The recent overworking culture in China, which has a tremendous impact on personal health and exacerbates the tension between individuals and society, provides a rich ground for such investigations. This chapter, therefore, offers a unique perspective and approach by examining self-tracking and the use of wearables in an overworking culture. Using interviews on users’ experiences and reflections over collected personal data from self-tracking devices, this chapter shows how the idea of “work” – both as on-going bodily practices and a dominating discourse of productivity and personal responsibility – is mediated through technological practices through the enactment of material and social elements. The technological and commercial designs of engagements, rewards, and habituations are interpreted as work/productivity with neoliberal and tech-saturated languages of growth, performance, and self-management. The social and material environments in the workplace blur the boundaries of personal and workspaces and accentuate the need for self-responsibilities and adaptive strategies. Users internalise, reflect, and/or negotiate a work-self relationship through multiple and different practices of personal data and frame their own health narratives that correspond with current social and political structures. In examining the multiplicity of data practices, this chapter unveils personal technologies’ health impact in a complex and ambivalent social context and power mechanisms. Furthermore, this chapter discusses innovative approaches to study health-tech designs to involve critical social contexts through examining users’ technological and health narratives.

NEOLIBERAL HEALTH, WORK, AND SELF-TRACKING IN CHINA

In *Health China 2030 Strategic Plan Outline* released by the Chinese State Council (Chinese State Council 2016), the promotion of «self-initiated and self-discipline behaviors» became the top priority, placed ahead of the improvement of healthcare services. Cultivating neoliberal, “civil citizens” requires personal responsibilities – a revamp of ideologies about governance. Diverting public health responsibilities to personal practices as “freedom of choice” is the ideological core of neoliberal health. Self-tracking, the new form of know-your-self through personal data collection of biometrics and behaviors,

exemplifies the responsibility of managing one's own health. In the process, the power of bodily biometrics is subjectivised as responsible biological citizens' agency (Rabinow and Rose 2006; Rose 1999, 2007; see also Foucault 1988, 1990, 1991). Another notable component of neoliberal health is the idea of "value". Self-tracking through data directs people towards desired bodily values, thereby becoming constitutive of their identity. It speaks to biomedicine's trend towards optimisation (Rose 2007) and anticipation in value (Adams et al. 2009; Cooper 2008). Following Clarke and colleagues (2003), bodily value can entail the commercialisation of data, privatisation of health services, assemblages for surveillance and treatment, and the production of technoscientific identities.

The neoliberal power and value systems correspond with the trends in China, where decades of rapid economic growth gave rise to a well-off middle-class workforce. They are shouldered with the image of patriotic, future-oriented new Chinese citizens, who are globalised and individualised in their approach, but also represent the spirit of hardworking and dedication that President Xi has characterised as essential for the realisation of the "Chinese Dream" – an ambivalent combination of neoliberal values and nationalist imaginary (Gow 2017; Harvey 2005; Rofel 2007; Yan 2010). Hardworking and self-entrepreneurship as an ethical code of Chinese citizens have been ingrained into the neoliberal language of technological development (Lindtner 2020). The struggle to remain in the game is exemplified in the self-management of work/life balance and health with inward-looking and self-disciplinary technologies – especially among the mid-30s and 40s, who are burdened with economic pressures, health risks and mental and physical burnout.

The neoliberal framework of value provides a theoretical ground for studying technological phenomena, yet those phenomena shall be analysed and dissected with material perspectives and societal nuances – how self-tracking encompasses the language of self-surveillance. Lupton argues that digital data circulates as a new form of knowledge by creating a «sociomaterial approach and assemblage», where technology embodies the meaning and significance of self (Lupton 2016: 40–41). People's lives and bodies are reduced to a collection of facts and figures without context, and such a regime is imposed on the user by invisible forms of tracking (Ruffino 2017). Societies and our bodies are perceived and governed as «a modulation of control» (Cheney-Lippold 2011: 5) or broken down and managed in a powerful «dataistic paradigm» (Ruckenstein and Pantzar 2017). Other nonhuman agents such as algorithms, gamification strategies, and data visualisation tools also mediate the human experience by enticing affective experience and subconscious "nudges" geared towards behavioral changes (Choe et al. 2017; Erkin 2016; Fogg 2002; Kelders et al. 2012; Lister et al. 2014). Values are reinforced and expressed through design and interface (Heyes 2006; Zaidan and Roehrer 2016; Zheng 2021). Tech companies can harvest user-generated data for a data-driven "ecosystem" that favors the future vision of optimizable life in a biomedical gaze (Alam 2016; Millington 2016; Millington and Millington 2015). By all means, self-tracking technologies express identity (Ajana 2018) and cultural ideals of individual responsibility and self-regulation for better care (Schüll 2016; Sanders 2017).

Self-tracking technologies also reconfigure the relationship between work and self. Well-being is increasingly linked to work and productivity and is seen as trackable and manageable, which introduced a range of ethical questions of accountability and control (Moore and Piwek 2017; Moore 2018; Saukko and Weedon 2020; Till 2018). The intrusion of technologies challenges the boundaries of work/life, personal/social, and body/artifacts, changing the sense of time and space (Sharma 2014; Wajcman 2015) and transferring bodies into productive and fit subjects (Esmonde 2021).

As boundaries are blurred, and productivities are embodied, the relationship between life, work, and self-tracking extend into a set of connected ideas and practices overshadowed by an overworking culture. However, the current self-tracking studies fell short in explaining such connections and addressing the social context from users' work/life narratives (e.g., life becomes means of reproduction for work). The neoliberal ideas embedded in the technological practices must be investigated empirically among experiences in certain social settings; conflicts and ambivalences are not to be ignored. Therefore, it is necessary to study the situatedness of self-tracking practices to reveal the process of neoliberal power.

METHODOLOGY AND EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

Distinct from traditional sociological analyses that focus on structures (e.g., classes and power hierarchies) and interpersonal relations (e.g., communities and networks), as well as from design studies that primarily center on material design and its embedded human intentions, this chapter examines the entanglement of technology, individuals, and social contexts using the concept of sociomaterial "practices". Actors – humans and nonhumans – carry their assumptions, discourses and habits and attach meanings throughout embodied actions and responses, sometimes collectively, in heterogeneous performances (Berg and Akrich 2004; Latour 1996, 2005). Powers are operational in a network of relations and connections rather than a static, overarching structure. As proposed in Deleuze and Guattari's idea of "assemblages", bodies are connected with other human and nonhuman elements, linking biological processes to material objects and social practices. This approach refuses to subordinate the body to homogeneity (Currier 2003; Deleuze 2017) – in the case of self-tracking, the regulatory forces are never one-way and defining but in a constant process of enacting and negotiating. STS scholars have examined the complexity and multiplicity of bodily practices (Berg and Mol 1998; Mol 2003, 2008; Mol and Berg 1994) and the reconfiguration of bodies and machines through performative and situated actions (Suchman 2007). Phenomenons and experiences are, therefore, framed through a constellation of meaning-making, skill-building, and habit-forming practices, interplaying with material and social engagements (Shove et al. 2012).

More recent studies of self-tracking also address the mundane, specific, and situated practices, delineating the process of knowledge-making, for example, in negotiating

meanings of weight-losing (Didžiokaitė et al. 2018), constructing narratives in runner’s community (Hardey 2019), and appropriating and aggregating bodily data in competing interests (Esmonde and Jette 2021). Technological designs reveal distinct yet interwoven values in different lived experiences (Lyll and Robards 2018). Different practices highlighted some extent of interpretive flexibility as users become situated in different contexts of use (Marent and Henwood 2021) or different «ethico-psychological subjects» (Pols et al. 2019) when it comes to personal choices.

By investigating the articulations of technological practices, this chapter dissects the micro-macro connections of self-tracking practices. It reveals how values, meanings, and human-technology relationships are configured through sociomaterial practices in a broader social and cultural context. The empirical materials are drawn from 49 semi-structured interviews with 37 interviewees conducted by the Author. The interviewees were recruited voluntarily through WeChat groups and the Author’s WeChat Moments posts and snowball sampled through existing contacts. The selection criteria are those who experience overworking, stress and/or burnout in workplaces and have regularly used at least one type of self-tracking device/application to monitor health. 17 self-identified as working in the tech sector¹, and 16 self-reported on a “996” or similar scheme on a regular basis (weekly hours > 50).

Gender	Age			Work placement		Job Title		Overworking	
Male	20	18-29	11	Tech	17	Engineer	8	On a regular basis	16
Female	17	30-40	24	Other	20	Product	5	Occasional overwork	9
		>41	2			Market	7	No overwork, but stress	12
						Content	7		
						Consultant	3		
						Other	7		

Table 1 – Interviewee background

¹ There is a certain extent of vagueness when someone describe their job placement. Here, tech sector includes companies who makes revenue by selling technological/internet devices, services, or digital contents; the workforce is commonly described as “knowledge workers”, distinct from manufacture or service sector jobs. Those tech workers are typically software engineers/developers, designers, product managers, marketers, content managers, among other job titles. As the tech sector projects exponential growth, the “996” scheme was firstly popularised by big-tech companies in China such as Huawei and Alibaba, and the tech sector work in China is characterised as growth-oriented, highly competitive, self-initiative and with potential of upward mobility. However, such overworking culture is not exclusive to the tech sector. See Li 2022.

Questions about their daily routines, workloads, self-tracking behaviors, data interpretation, and health perceptions were asked during online video interview sessions over WeChat. Recordings were transcribed and coded in nVivo for qualitative, thematic analysis. The first round of coding was focused on the theme and topics of life routines, workplaces, and self-tracking data; the second round was to draw connections to show the composition of technological practices and how they are situated in their work/life settings. Aside from the interviews, other materials such as news releases from wearable and app makers, news reports, and design features are critically examined to triangulate users' experiences. Drawing on theoretical concepts of sociotechnical assemblages and technological practices, which address the dynamic, evolving entanglement of human behaviors and technological designs (e.g., Mol 2003, 2008; Müller 2015; Shove et al. 2012), this chapter seeks to answer:

1. how are work/productivity interpreted during self-tracking engagements with the technological design?
2. how are such practices embedded, enacted, and reinforced through the network of productivity?
3. how are different and multiple practices enacted through alternative explanations of health and resistance against the culture of productivity and overworking?

WORK/PRODUCTIVITY IN DESIGN AND SELF-TRACKING PRACTICE

If I am a few steps short of closing the rings, I will go downstairs to make a few more steps.
(Interviewee #2-2, female, works in digital media)

The idea of work/productivity is frequently recognised, perceived, and narrated by the users in their self-tracking practices with wearables and fitness applications. The data collection and reading processes make it convenient to know themselves and provide related information throughout daily use. Other than simply having records, users describe their experience with affective elements during data collection and reading. It is sometimes followed by behavioral changes driven by these experiences, as the quote above from a female digital media worker after finishing her day of work. The Apple Watch has a daily goal visualisation feature in which three important metrics (exercise, calories and standing hours) deemed by Apple Health are shown as three “rings” that one needs to “close” every day as activity goals, with sound and visual effects as “celebration”. Users are not usually strange to this type of gamification² design, which is common in wearables and fitness app interfaces. These so-called «persuasive technologies» (Fogg 2002) configured

² Among a variety of such features, gamification designs have been examined extensively yet, however, the results are mixed especially over its long-term effects (Hamari et al. 2014; Lister et al. 2014; Maturó and Setiffi 2016; Hassan et al. 2019).

within technological interfaces are geared towards promoting physical activities. During the process, the visualisations and interactive features are more often made to embody the technological experiences with affective elements and to incentivise continuous use and engagements. Etkin et al. (2016) argue against the affective elements in gamification of exercises and fitness activities since such design transforms enjoyment into the language of work and damages long-term outcomes.

However, looking beyond the affective reactions towards design features, the actual practices of users' engagement with gamification designs gravitate towards performing work/productivity more than enjoying entertainment and engagements. The practices are centered around personal plans and goals to stimulate a sense of achievement, especially when seeing performance screenshots right after exercise sessions or when scrolling back to summarise a certain period. Aside from one gamer who addressed the resemblance of fitness to gaming, most interviewees connected and interpreted the visualisations as accumulated hard work and achievement. An interviewee who works in digital media addressed making numbers as making progress and matching performance:

I will scroll back to see how long I rode my bike, how far I ran... the change in bodies such as my heart rate, is hard to see; it's slow. But the accumulated running and cycling distance is easy to see... It's also a kind of self-incentive, like, I exercised that much last month; should I at least reach my average this month? Should I try harder? (#2-10, male, uses Apple Watch)

Moreover, meanings of selected healthy behaviors (such as steps) are produced by interpreting actions in a reward system where quantified/quantifiable fitness achievements and behaviors become external validations of work. For example, interviewees frequently deploy the action "refresh" (*shua*, 刷), which originally means the refresh key (F5) on the keyboard, indicating getting credits by repeating a fixed action. The term "refresh" was originally used by the gaming community yet adopted in various scenarios where people make repetitive actions for external validation of work. Interviewees used this term when referring to getting steps and exercise time on their wearables as a productive way to accumulate numbers – such as turning on the exercise record when running errands with a bike (#2-16).

- There is an impulse to "refresh" my steps [when I have my wristband on]... I would walk out for lunch on purpose.
- For "refreshing" steps?
- Yes.
(#2-19, male, uses Apple Watch)

Some applications encourage users to "clock-in" (*daka*, 打卡, sometimes translated as "check-in") daily, shown as crossing off certain tasks. The action of "clock-in" derives from a term that is originally used to describe work – workers use a punch card to record

their presence. It has been appropriated by technological designs to indicate the validation of having something done.

I will clock-in every time I finish an exercise, giving myself some achievement, posting on my timeline and stuff... I feel great as if I have finished something great. (#1-2, female, uses Keep)

This speaks to the assumption that as part of datafication, all activities can be broken down into routine, standard, sequential tasks and could be self-automated with the help of technology (Pharabod et al. 2013; Wajcman 2019). However, it does not mean that it undermines internal motivation. Quite the contrary, the culture of productivity – non-stopping growth and improvement – is internalised and manifested through numbers and tracking records, and work/productivity is both the means and ends. To “refresh” and “clock-in” is to reach goals and accomplishments productively and efficiently. This type of language is observed in most users, regardless of their overworking status.

[after seeing social media posts] I bought the smart rope-jumping thing to refresh some numbers. 3000+(counts) means good fat-burning. It is definitely faster than running. (#1-20, uses a smart rope-jumping device)

Another element connected with the achievement features is the habituation of healthy behaviors, and such habituation demands extra work and sometimes meticulous self-management rather than smooth, smart interactions embedded in “nudging” designs such as notifications. Popular self-tracking applications, such as *Keep* in China, carry plan-making functions tailored to losing weight or gaining muscles. Apple Watch gives daily “suggestion” of calorie consumption and frequently adjust goals according to the user’s daily physical activities – usually pushes towards higher goals (again, a persistent idea of improvement). Users thought the automated settings made things more convenient (#1-12, #2-3, #2-16), yet it doesn’t suggest a smooth or automated decision-making process. Interviewees talked about how they consciously choose a metric to “work on”, continuously strive to “make room” for certain activities and create stable habits according to the arrangements or plans. The struggles are especially common among those who overwork, as the plans are frequently interrupted, sometimes inducing a sense of anxiety and self-shame.

The plan is every Mon, Wed and Fri... [due to disruptions], I will have to make up the amount of exercise on the weekend. (#2-21, male, works overtime in a tech company)

For me, everything is built on routine. Once the routine is interrupted it was difficult... around 2018 I moved to Beijing, and had a period of unstable time. I didn’t have time to think about [the plans]... I needed strong self-discipline to open [the app]. It is stressful to stick to a higher standard. (#1-1, female, was on a tight diet while working in digital media)

I installed the app so that I can exercise any time... [I worked] until 11 p.m. and realised that today's exercise plan hasn't been carried out... there's a frustration that why someone else can do but I can't? (#1-18, male, works in the supply chain)

With the annotations of hard work and productivity, interviewees mentioned that the accumulation of activity data is a series of self-initiated work metrics that gives a sense of self-affirmation, control, and empowerment rather than a simple “nudge” towards behavioral changes. Besides, the accumulated personal data creates a profile or identity that one would not easily let go of, which again corresponds with the validation of productive work that one has done, giving meaning to the collected data as a process of self-building.

I don't care about the rewards [in the fitness app]... I do not care about other people telling me what I have done. I care about if I have built the habit of exercising... [when I can do more intense exercises], I feel myself becoming strong. (#1-20, female, works in digital media, uses Keep to track exercise)

You see, the rings are closed, and this month's rings are all closed; you feel you have completed the plan even if you don't care about the actual numbers and feedback. (#2-9, male, works in a tech company, uses Apple Watch)

ENACTING PRODUCTIVITY

As people frame self-tracking data as work and productive activities, it is critical to see how certain practices are enacted, how certain elements are involved in the networks of productivity, and how the networks are reinforced.

The practice of work/productivity is framed in the health-tech “ecosystem”, where users act as well-informed consumers who practice their free choices and seek ways to improve health performance (Hardey 2019). More notably, this practice aligns with the business models of wearable devices and services – the need to expand scales, accumulate users, and intensify engagements. Users use and produce data as ways of “presumption” (Millington 2016) and provide value to the companies. The work/productivity practices also imply the desired path of progress from novices to well-trained, well-informed consumers – transferring casual users into users of all-around services such as online courses, plan subscriptions, offline gyms, fitness attires and healthy food packages. It is critical for the commercialisation of health tech, a still new and emerging field that attracts venture capital (VC) with the promise of a potential market and scalable business model.

Most app makers and service providers in this allegedly fast-growing market have not lived up to a profit-winning business. In China, the company which makes the most popular fitness app *Keep* went public in January 2022 without current profit but a developing ecosystem the company proposed in their IPO. Intensified and productive self-tracking is seen as materialising the network of profit-seeking stakeholders, including

VCS and health-tech start-ups that make up most of China's health-tech market. In this sense, the self-tracking practices – from an imagined, dedicated user – inevitably point towards productivity out of well-planned personal time (in and out of workplaces) for the assumed goal of fitness and health, which generate potential business revenues.

In addition to the productivity-oriented designs, the practices of recognising bodily achievements are also deeply embedded in the productivity culture, reinforced by the social and material environment around the users. There is an on-going blurring of boundaries between game and work as the design of gamification becomes increasingly popular in the automatization of behaviors, most notably the application of reward and reflective design to incentivise users and promote self-efficacy (Lister et al. 2014). Workplaces adopt such elements to boost engagement levels and motivation of employees as well as to streamline and automate mundane tasks (Ferreira et al. 2017). The production of work, as well as an ideal employee, blurs work and personal lives (Cederström and Spicer 2015). As work becomes more individualised and precarious, productivity becomes a measurement of both products and aspects of self and bodily states (Moore 2018; Wajcman 2019). The idea of work and productivity become aligned with the management of health and fitness, and bodies being quantifiable and optimizable under the overarching ideology of neoliberal selfhood – bodies are seen as “workable” projects of one's own (Ciccone 2021). Work-related languages, workplace culture, and constant overwork highlight the demand for effective measures to perform self-care as maintenance and reproduction work. Work-related languages are common in describing bodily work, as well as the management of daily routines. Some interviewees describe such bodily work as «making oneself a KPI» (Key Performance Index), a widely used term in workplaces. One interviewee (#2-21, works in a tech company) defines exercise as “an assignment” that needs to be planned and accomplished regularly. For him, fitness apps help record exercise time performed through the wearables, and he tries to “make up” with other activities in and around his workplace if a weekly goal is not met. It is also common for tech companies to encourage workers to perform self-growth with productivity goals. One interviewee (#2-17) said that in her team, it is possible to define fitness goals into personal OKRs (Objectives and Key Results, another framework to measure performance). Workplaces encourage sharing fitness records in “clock-in groups” (*daka qun*, 打卡群), where people show their actions of “clock-in” and get supervised by their peers. Self-tracking records are proof of performances in those groups.

The habituation of health-related plan-making is incorporated into the workplace, too. This phenomenon is more common in tech companies than in non-tech sectors, as the popular notion of work-life balance from Silicon Valley is adapted by Chinese tech companies by installing workplace gyms, massage rooms, and even fitness meal services. They are provided as part of wellness programs (*fuli*, 福利) in parallel with monetary bonuses. It weirdly fits within an overworking culture – employees have certain “freedom” to arrange their own work out by making time during lunch break, after dinner before

overtime work, in the late night or extremely early morning to utilise the services. They also navigate wellness options during flexible working hours or working-from-home periods. Interviewees associated such practices of “arrangements” when talked about how they can integrate their self-tracking practices such as steps, exercising plans, and sleeping patterns into life and how it creates predicaments:

The reason I bought wristbands is to structure my life... the primary thing is to put exercise into my schedule, and then think about how to improve it. Data will help me improve it, but first, I have to have it first. (#2-18, female, work from home in digital media)

Aside from gym workouts, users who are dedicated to achieving fitness goals will respond to notifications to alert sedentary seating pop out during work, perform micro exercises during meetings, and accumulate step goals during lunch breaks. In the users’ narratives, the boundaries between personal life and work have been blurred, and individuals must take extra responsibilities to “manage” the intricate relationship between personal spaces and workplaces, and the need to manage is more imperative among those who work from home, or during COVID-19 lockdowns. Such scenarios are reinforced by the use of technologies, as they are integrated with social norms, creating the intricately overlapping space and time as an «ubiquitous technoscope» (Wajcman 2015) that normalises multitasking. An interviewee working in a medium-sized tech company said that she often incorporates fitness app’s exercise into her daily schedule (#1-13). Two interviewees (#2-14, #1-3) told that they “block off” a certain time, so that they could be shielded from work messages and meetings while going for arranged exercises.

In sum, the doing and practices of fitness and wearable data provide a lens through which the users understand healthy behaviors, making self-tracking context-dependent and linked with the norms of work/productivity. Meanings are given around a dominant discourse (productivity through hard work), artifacts are stabilised (for measuring productivity), skills are trained (to quantify and record metrics effectively, such as “refresh”), and habits are formulated (arranging life accordingly through monitoring not only bodily metrics but also related behaviors in everyday lives). By treating health, life, and recreation as work, health concerns and responsibilities are translated into the language of productivity and are situated in the increasingly blurred space of work and personal lives.

BODIES AS SITES OF PRODUCTIVITY AND RESISTANCE: MULTIPLE PRACTICES

As mentioned above, the reward system in self-tracking and wearable applications plays a central part in the design. The reward and achievement elements in self-tracking devices and apps align the practices of recreation and work – which seem to be on the two ends of a spectrum but are increasingly overlapping by the process of self-building. However, there are more nuances in situating these productivity-oriented practices in an overwork-

ing culture. The multiplicity of practices reveals different networks involved in the self-tracking design and use and sometimes creates paradoxes in making a productive body, revealing the struggles between overworking and overworked-out selves.

From the maker's and market's point of view, the work/productivity practices of self-tracking imagine goal-driven individuals developing habits and profiles during engagement with the technological interfaces. Nevertheless, the long-lasting vision of continuous use does not quite pan out. The growth of *Keep* slowed down, and the loss of users indicates the difficulty of "cultivating" well-disciplined, dedicated individuals with a «higher standard of health and fitness» (Huang 2022). In fact, users of self-tracking devices do not share the same goals and behavioral logic. Their selective use of services and alternative interpretations of data exemplify the multiplicity of self-tracking practices. Previous studies have identified various modes of self-quantification to create «situated subjectivity» (Pantzar and Ruckenstein 2017). Data values are defined by active engagement as mindfulness, resistance, narrative aid (Sharon and Zandbergen 2017) and different «data valences» across different social settings (Fiore-Gartland and Neff 2015). Users' living experiences lead to a situational interpretation of self-tracking data, especially in an overworking culture under anxieties and time stress.

There is a fundamental conflict in managing health: health for work or health as extra work. On the one hand, fitness for work is regarded as a social truth of health (Hull and Pasquale 2018), and such body is being readily watched and monitored with self-tracking devices to increase productivity. However, considering the empirical material presented in this chapter about users' experiences, the work/productivity-oriented practices call for additional attention and resources, creating tension in users' daily lives as they struggle to manage stress and time to cope with a body already at burnout. In the practices of self-tracking with various wearable devices and applications, the data collection and interpretation processes entail a negotiation between the three distinct practices: i) body as a subject/site of continuous work, ii) body as a source of productivity/work, iii) body as a vulnerable victim of productivity/work. The first indicates working towards improvement and optimisation, aligned with the logic of engagement and wearable's business model. Health is interpreted as a desirable achievement and a source of self-actualisation. A healthy body is also a disembodied one, translated into quantified progress and accomplishment. However, the second and third practices are sometimes more relevant in an overworking context. Fitness and exercise serve as sources of reproduction against stress and a fix for the vulnerable body, in which the productivity-oriented metrics are less important than the actual experience of relief and distraction from work, such as sleeping, relaxation, and recreational exercises; on some occasions, the vulnerable body shall be hidden away from strenuous, demanding work, suggesting radically different interpretations of bodily data from self-tracking.

For example, the maintenance and restoration of health are, in many cases, a descriptive "status-being" (*zhuangtai*, 状态) – being able to keep a stable energy level, both phys-

ically and mentally, in order to work and live stress-free. The performance numbers serve as proxies of such status-being or a benchmark to gauge their physical and mental senses.

For example, if I have quite a few inactive days, I would feel not right and comfortable, then I'll look at the numbers. If the number proves my feelings and thoughts, I'll start to think about how to be more active... I'll treat it as a reference... My workloads are not stable, and I remember I have once worked 12 days in a row, all until 1-2 a.m. It tests my physical capacity; I need to remind myself I need to rest, sleep, and make time for a small run. I'll feel much better. (#2-10, male, works in digital media)

I need to make some adjustments to get a better status-being... I hope not just to cut my diet but to let my body move and to avoid staying static for too long... for me, [maintaining] health is to keep things regular and rely on my body to do many things. (#2-13, female, works in digital media, currently on a diet)

I sometimes look at my sleep tracking as a mindfulness practice... staying up too late will affect my work, and delay at work will lead to staying up late; I'll (use the watch to) notice myself and avoid the vicious cycle. (#2-18, female, works from home in digital media)

Although users actively engage with the health-tech ecosystem by purchasing and continuously using self-tracking devices, applications and devices, the multiplicity of practices allows users to navigate a multitude of resources and regimes to agree with their bodies, sometimes even resisting the existing regime of self-tracking.

I won't quantify anything other than work, as it costs energy and increases stress... it's like project management. Once something goes wrong, you have to figure out ways to fix it. (Interviewee #2-22, male, recently quit a job in a tech company)

Wearing my watch is just a ritual [of minding my health], while the data doesn't matter that much. When it reminds me to do things and close the rings, I feel cared about, but won't do it. (Interviewee #1-3, female, works in a tech company)

I am sick of objectives, always external standard that Chinese are obsessed with... I gave up stringent management. My weight does change due to some environmental factors. I must come to terms with those changes. [#2-14, female, works as a consultant]

As shown in the interviews, in contrast to the imaginaries of flexibility and self-disciplined hard work, the lack of actual freedom due to heavy workloads and tight scheduling pull users out of the imaginaries. The environmental and social factors are pulled into the overall narratives of data interpretation against the unrealistic demands of being a productive self. In this sense, self-tracking and data collection serve as multiple ways of reflection on, informing about, and sometimes even resistance against overwork.

Self-tracking as work can be understood as a series of multiple practices – the ethics of good work and citizens, the material design and interpretation of productivity and optimisation, and the cultivation of certain skills and habits as both healthy and productive. Work/productivity is both a neoliberal norm and a mode of understanding body and health. The term “work” serves as both rhetoric of productivity and invisible labor of tracking, interpreting, and arranging. The multiplicity of the practices shows the (dis)connections between work and various components of neoliberal health networks (e.g., political economy, market, and selfhood). It delineates the power relations between individuals in a precarious status and the Chinese neoliberal regime: organisations, the market, and the overworking culture embed the idea of hard work in the self-tracking technologies, shaping the technological networks around productivity. Health is framed as responsibilities and achievements and, at the same time, an ideal status that individuals struggle to maintain.

The phenomenon of self-tracking entangles with the materiality of devices, with which meanings are produced and interpreted through a series of small, scattered daily actions – recording, “refreshing”, looking back, and “clocking-in”, many of which can be seen as an intrinsic part of systemic bodily work. The cultural and social context enacts through mundane practices with technological artifacts (devices, applications, and data) as sites of meaning-making and habituation. Users’ interactions with the design are shaped by the relational network of practices – a network of work/productivity, where bodies are producing not only personal achievements but also growth and revenues. Nevertheless, individuals make meanings and habits while engaging with technologies to create multiple or alternative interpretations as they navigate the risk-ridden social environment and negotiate with the materialised power. Their precarious states are addressed through the practices, suggesting that self-tracking is not only the instantiation of neoliberal ideals but also a critical interface through which people read and understand their social contexts and bodily connections with them. Users are constantly creating new connections during self-tracking practices between their bodies, devices and social factors, and those connections make up their own health narratives.

This chapter contributes to the literature on self-tracking by engaging by dissecting technological practices. Through understanding the practices in the networks of artifacts, meanings, skills, and habits, the design elements are connected to a broader social context, where different networks are aligned or in conflict. Here, different institutions and their value systems – workplaces, individuals, health-tech markets, etc. – are inscribed through practices onto technological artifacts and seemingly individual choices. Through the analysis of practices and networks, it is easier to see various stakeholders and their engagement with their agendas, interests, and imperatives in making a certain technological phenomenon.

Future research shall further address the political implications of self-tracking – how different the institutional powers reinforce each other by materialising values, imaginaries, and assumptions and recruiting users into their networks of practices. Besides, by connecting designs and practices, it is possible to address users’ capabilities in terms of agency and control – how technological design can foster meaningful interactions and co-create practices and narratives with users. How positive, diverse, and inclusive engagement can be made and how design can take on social responsibilities shall be explored beyond the critique of self-surveillance and productivity culture.

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