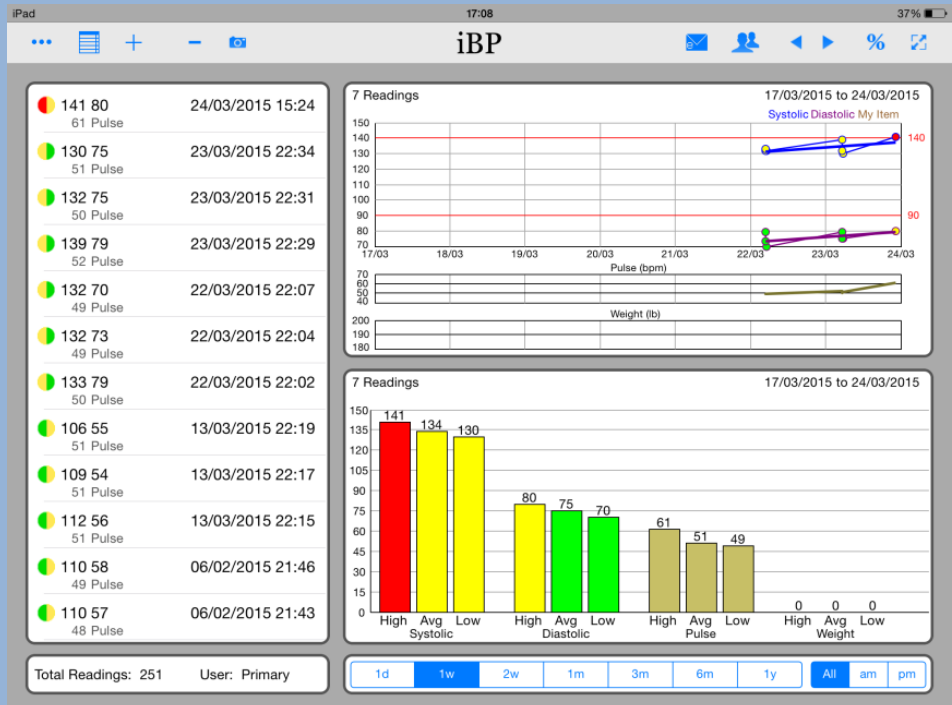


# **The domestication of self-monitoring devices: beyond data practices?**

Kate Weiner, University of Sheffield  
Catherine Will, University of Sussex

Data Power Conference  
University of Sheffield, 22-23 June 2015

blood pressure monitor.  
 £20  
**£10**





**Do you ever measure your own blood pressure?**

**Do you own a blood pressure monitor?**

**Have you ever downloaded a blood pressure app?**

I am looking for people who measure and keep track of their own blood pressure or who do this for someone else close to them. If you do this now or have done in the past, would you be willing to take part in an interview?

I am a researcher in the Department of Sociological Studies. I would like to know more about why and how people measure their own blood pressure and how people come to start (or stop) measuring.

# tracking expectations

- Self-monitoring as obligation (Lupton 2012)
- Algorithmic subjectivities (Lupton 2013),  
'Truthiness' valence (Fiore-Gartland and Neff, 2015)
- Political economy (Terranova 2000; Mitchell and Waldby 2010; Till 2014; Lupton, 2014)
- Creative tracking and participatory medicine (Nafus and Sherman 2014; Panzar and Ruckenstein, 2014; Prainsack 2011,2014)

# Data power?

- Numbers important
- Recorded
- and shared?
- doing things – a project linked to change – experimenting, intervening: actionability and discovery valences (Fiore-Gartland and Neff, 2015)





Tues 4th 10:30 am  $\frac{125}{64}$  (70) 4:30 pm  $\frac{144}{75}$   
 Mon 10th 10pm  $\frac{161}{87}$  (78)  $\frac{136}{66}$  (73)  
 Tues 11th 12pm  $\frac{140}{70}$  (70)  
 Wed 11pm  $\frac{165}{95}$  (71)  $\frac{159}{81}$  (69)  $\frac{145}{80}$  (65)  
 Thurs 7:30 am  $\frac{148}{78}$  (60)  
 Sunday 10 am  $\frac{147}{75}$  (60)  
 Mon 11pm  $\frac{155}{79}$  (59)  
 Sat 22 10:30pm  $\frac{142}{75}$  (67)  
 Tues 25th 7:30 am  $\frac{156}{77}$  (57) 10:30 am  $\frac{128}{68}$   $\frac{139}{72}$  (65)  
 Wed 11am  $\frac{143}{72}$  (72)

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# David

it might be anxiety but I need to suddenly know if there's something wrong with me. So if I think I've got a bit of a headache or I get some palpitations I'll check it...

**There's a big psychological component to it, I don't think it's just a biological instrument ...So it's like wanting some kind of reflexion on how you feel at the time. Say if you come in from a stressful day at work you might want to know how you feel and how you feel different on a Sunday or a Saturday, but you don't work at weekend and so you want to know if you're more relaxed or you're more chilled.**

# Alice and Mark

Mark: Now what's probably happened with me is I've gone to the doctors for something, been quite anxious about the issue I've gone with and then I get this white coat syndrome and then they will take it, it will be high and then I'll start to worry. What I'll do is monitor it with my own for a few days in a more relaxed environment and if I'm quite happy with the readings I'll then not bother to do any more.

Alice: So I think it confirms that yes I'm stressed. With the children arriving and then, and particularly before I stopped work, because I'm stressed at work and I was coming and checking my blood pressure. **So I think it's about confirmation that actually yes I am stressed and maybe I need a camomile tea.** I think it's that confirmation, or not wanting it to be dangerously high so just keeping an eye on it



# Nora

So I was a bit moany about this and **so actually my partner brought the blood pressure monitor for me. Because I was also moaning because I sometimes think that my high blood pressure wasn't really real** so, particularly as a teenager I think I had white coat syndrome...so I think part of it and the **partner knows that I felt that it was a little bit unnecessary and it was really interfering with my work and my life** in general and so he bought it for me. **And actually my blood pressure was high and then I agreed to take the higher dosage...**So I did use it frequently for the last 3 or 4 weeks of my pregnancy. And then it's been in a drawer since.

# “He told me to download an app”

Nora: I was a bit surprised because this is obviously a big change since 3 years ago, when they wouldn't trust my readings at all [...]

Kate: do you think he assumed you were taking your own blood pressure?

Nora: I don't know, **I don't think so, I wouldn't have told him that I have one.** He wouldn't have assumed that I take my own blood pressure because there's no reason for him to know that I would have one **and I certainly didn't wouldn't have offered. So no I think he just means the GP.**

Kate: You said 'I certainly wouldn't have offered' in a very definite kind of way

Nora: **Well yeah it's just not very interesting**

# Doing things with devices

- Affect and care
- Algorithmic subjectivity
- Inconspicuous numbers
- Responsibility
- Quiet resistance and non-use
- Data bartering, data ambivalence