

## **To Monitor or to Motivate? The Use of Pedometers in the Physical Exercise of Older Adults in Denmark**

Bjarke Oxlund, *University of Copenhagen*

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the use of pedometers in the everyday lives of eight Danes aged 50-75 years and analyzes it from the contradictory perspectives of monitoring and motivation. While the use of a pedometer for monitoring purposes is in one way congruent with the disciplining of old age through an emphasis on active aging (Katz 1997; Katz 2000), it can also be seen as an empowering device that motivates users to engage in physical exercise through the quantification of walking (Mol 2000; Colperton 2010). The paper thus analyzes the dual role that a simple, low-cost technology like that of a pedometer takes on in the ways that older adults perceive of their bodies in relation to calculative practices and age specific standards of good health as they are communicated in public health promotion. Combining insights from life course analysis and cultural gerontology with perspectives from science and technology studies, the paper arrives at new understanding of how the dialogue between the aging user and the pedometer produces both authority and empowerment as well as new ways of perceiving and living the body.