

# Remote physical education during the coronavirus pandemic. A discourse analysis of how students are positioned on Padlet webpages

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## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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## ABSTRACT

During the coronavirus pandemic, physical education (PE) in schools was forced into remote forms of teaching and learning, leading to a surge in the use of digital technologies and online resources. In a larger project, we identified webpages created by PE teachers on the site Padlet.com as an important hub for the remote delivering of German-speaking PE during the pandemic. In this paper, we follow a poststructuralist perspective to investigate how students are positioned as subjects of *pandemic PE* through the discursive practices articulated on these webpages. Our discourse analysis of a sample of 14 webpages with a combined number of 755 posts reveals one largely uncontested discursive construction that positions students as (i) doing something during lockdown, (ii) using suggestions individually and self-responsibly, (iii) exercising, performing, fit, and (iv) predominantly able bodied, sporty, stereotypically gendered, and white. We critically discuss the narrow possibilities of becoming intelligible as an appropriate subject of pandemic PE afforded by these positionings in the context of foregoing scholarship. Concluding, we argue that even – or especially – when PE has been returning to its traditional co-present form, exploring how PE is socially constructed, how students are positioned, and which forms of subjectivity are privileged/marginalized in emerging PE-related online cultures is a crucial task for sport pedagogical research and practice.

### Keywords

*physical education, corona pandemic, remote teaching, internet, social construction, subject positioning, poststructuralism, discourse analysis*

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## Introduction

During the lockdown measures issued in many countries in response to the coronavirus pandemic, school physical education (PE) abruptly had to shift to remote forms of teaching and learning. This led to a surge in the use of digital technologies and online resources ranging from workout plans sent via email (Schierz & Thiele, 2023) to online videoconferences (Varea & González-Calvo, 2021) and to the emergence of, e.g., YouTube channels offering movement-engaging digital content (Coulter et al., 2023). Research has focused mainly on pre- or in-service teachers' perspectives on this digitally mediated PE (Cruickshank et al., 2022; González-Calvo et al., 2022; Howley, 2022; Mercier et al., 2021; Nyberg et al., 2022; O'Brien et al., 2022; Varea et al., 2022; Varea & González-Calvo, 2021) while the emerging online resources, their actors, and their content have also been subject to controversial discussion (Stirrup et al., 2020; Windsor, 2020) and case-based analyses (Bowles et al., 2022; Lambert et al., 2022). Tying in with other scholarship on *pandemic PE* (Cruickshank et al., 2022; Mercier et al., 2021; Schierz & Thiele, 2023; Webster et al., 2021), discussions and analyses of prominent YouTube videos called *PE with Joe* reveal that these digital resources present narrow sports- and fitness-oriented interpretations of PE while reconfiguring relations between PE, popular physical culture, family, and internet lifestyle capitalism (Bowles et al., 2022; Lambert et al., 2022; Stirrup et al., 2020; Windsor, 2020). Some interpret this as a novel vision for PE (Windsor, 2020) while others emphasize the inherent "heteronormative, classist, ableist and racist assumptions about movement, bodies, knowledge and even what it means to be physically educated" (Lambert et al., 2022, p. 575). Again,

others show how the success of such phenomena is based on dominant health discourses that have been positioning PE as an instrument for enhancing the health of children and of the public in general since the 1990s and have been particularly focusing on "connecting exercise, body management, self-regulation, personal choice and private enterprise" (Bowles et al., 2022, p. 7) during the pandemic (Bowles et al., 2022; Malcolm & Velija, 2020).

This scholarship highlights that digital resources and online spaces must be recognized as media and sites of increasing importance for the social construction of PE. While narrow interpretations of PE during the pandemic are reported and discussed, there is a need for further research that goes beyond single phenomena like *PE with Joe* and focusses more on the consequences for students. We contribute to addressing this issue by drawing on a study situated in a larger project on German-speaking PE-related online cultures (Rode & Zander, 2022). In this project, we found that one way of "Emergency Remote Teaching" (Kerres & Buchner, 2022, p. 1) in which PE teachers tried to reach their students at a distance was that they created webpages on the site Padlet.com (Table 1). Padlet webpages are repository webpages that functioned as online notice boards on which PE teachers collected digital resources and content from various sources (e.g., YouTube channels like the one mentioned above) and addressed it to their students to engage with at home. These webpages served as important hubs and functioned as makeshift quasi-curricula for German-speaking pandemic PE. They assembled a variety of different digital resources, content, and actors – of which some emerged during the pandemic while others had been part of popular physical (online) culture

long before – and framed them with general, encompassing messages to students (as well as teachers and family). Because of that, these webpages make for a compelling research field to investigate how PE was socially constructed and how its actors – particularly students – were positioned through the communication of a broad range of online content. In this paper, we use a discourse analytical approach to investigate how students are positioned in the discursive practices articulated on these Padlet webpages. From a post-structuralist perspective, our purpose is to show which possibilities of becoming intelligible as subjects of pandemic PE are addressed at students, and to highlight the privileging/marginalizing effects this entails.

## Theoretical perspective and foregoing scholarship

Students in PE, their abilities, performance, bodies, etc. are not only specifically addressed by Padlet webpages during the corona pandemic, but by sports pedagogical theory, policy, and practice in general. We build on a poststructuralist research perspective (Wright, 2006), which holds that, by addressing these issues in certain ways, teaching methodologies and conceptual frameworks, curricular and policy documents, or teachers' practices actively (re-)construct certain orders of knowledge and position students in powerful relation to them. They (re-)produce specific ideas of what PE is (and what not; Kirk, 2009), specific cultural ideologies, values, norms, and notions of normality – e.g., about people with disability participating in PE (Táboas-Pais & Rey-Cao, 2012) –, and thereby shape how students can become intelligible as (in-/desirable, in-/appropriate, ab-/normal, etc.) subjects of PE. Put differently, poststructuralist scholarship centralizes PE as a site of cultural wrestles for the dominance of certain forms of meaning and subjectivity (Lambert et al., 2022, p. 561). It seeks to make visible which forms of meaning and orders of knowledge are dominant in existing cultures of PE and show how “they operate to privilege certain practices and forms of subjectivity” (Wright, 2006, p. 60) and marginalize or exclude others.

International scholarship (e.g., Fitzpatrick & McGlashan, 2016; Kirk, 2009) argues that PE is often constructed in patriarchal, Eurocentric, and straight forms, is often focused on teaching of sport-techniques, on instrumentalism but also on enjoyment, and often (re-)produces various inequalities (e.g., racism, ableism, genderism). Additionally, neoliberal developments have brought other actors, especially corporate and commercial ones, into the “open market” (Lambert et al., 2022, p. 560) of PE while pushing notions of students as “self-managing citizens” (Lambert et al., 2022, p. 560) and reducing PE to physical activity and its easily measurable aspects (Evans, 2014; Mangione et al., 2022), all of which further perpetuates inequalities (Azzarito et al., 2017).

Based on our object of research, we particularly draw on research in the German-speaking context. Analyzing German sports pedagogical and policy discourses from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 2010s, Schierz (2009, 2013) shows how one discursive construction, which attributes PE a special position opposite to other intellectual school subjects and constructs PE as a form of functional learning that achieves effective changes through bodily exercises, has prevailed through different reforms, political changes, and conceptual-theoretical reorientations. Drawing on public discourses about young people's presumed decline in health, physical capability, and physical activity, this construction has been taking a neoliberal turn (Thiele, 2008) in which the ideal PE student is positioned as “practically active, performance-optimizing, and self-perfecting” (Schierz, 2013, p. 75). Tying in with this, Ruin (2015, 2017) and Ruin & Giese (2018) find functional, instrumental, and ableist constructions of students' bodies and abilities to be predominant in German-speaking teaching methodologies and conceptual frameworks, curricular documents, and interviews with PE teachers. Other research (e.g., Ernst, 2018; Volkmann, 2008) shows that German PE teachers' biographical knowledge and actions are strongly oriented on practices, meanings, and understandings from traditional, organized sports, which, e.g., leads to them

addressing a binary, asymmetrically gendered norm of the male athlete at students (Schiller, 2020).

In sum, existing scholarship provides important insights into the social constructions that are actualized and negotiated to shape cultures of PE. By making such social constructions and accompanying privileging/marginalizing subject positionings of students visible, poststructuralist research aims to better understand and challenge existing cultures as well as help shape future cultures of PE.

## Methodological background

Following this poststructuralist perspective, we do not regard reality, knowledge, power, and subjectivities as fixed essentialities but rather as processual and relational phenomena that are performatively constructed in social practices – in our case in the discursive practices articulated on Padlet webpages. We understand these webpages as a discourse arena (Wrana, 2006, p. 148), in which human actors (PE teachers, students, actors from organized sports, etc.) and non-human elements (Padlet webpage structure, algorithms, digital objects) directly or indirectly come together to negotiate meaning regarding specific topics or problems – in our case, delivering PE at a distance during the pandemic. To explore this meaning making, we follow the methodology of discursive practices (Wrana, 2006, 2015a, 2015b), which builds on a reading of Foucault's work that is inspired by current practice theories and by Butler's concept of subject constitution through performative acts of hailing and recognition. This methodology holds that giving a Padlet webpage a title and a description, creating a layout, or writing a post that presents a YouTube video to students can be regarded as discursive acts that, first, construct the phenomena they explicitly or implicitly refer to (e.g., the coronavirus pandemic, PE and its goals during this time). In other words, we regard a title, a description, or a post as an articulation that poses a certain construction of knowledge as recognizable and as to be recognized. Second, such an articulation thereby calls upon certain orders of knowledge (about the pandemic, about phys-

ical activity) and claims them to be valid (or invalid, il/legitimate, etc.). Third, the articulation positions the actors involved in relation to these constructions and orders of knowledge by hailing at them (e.g., to stay fit) and by directly or indirectly constructing certain norms for gaining recognition (e.g., as self-responsible students). Thus, the positionings can be reconstructed as acts of subject constitution: When discursive acts position speakers, actors spoken to and actors spoken about in relation to specific constructions and orders of knowledge as well as norms for gaining recognition, they address at these actors the need and the possibilities to constitute themselves as subjects in accordance with these constructions, orders, and norms (Wrana, 2006, 2015a, 2015b). In this paper, we reconstruct the positionings that are addressed at students on Padlet webpages created for the remote teaching of PE during the pandemic to investigate the following questions: Which needs and possibilities for subject constitution are articulated in this online discourse arena? Which forms of subjectivity are privileged/marginalized through this?

## Methods

To address our research questions, we employed the methodology of analyzing discursive practices (Wrana, 2006, 2015a, 2015b) in an online-ethnographic (Marotzki, 2017; Pink et al., 2016) approach, which is suitable for exploring new fields that rely on the internet – such as the online arenas of pandemic PE – and for analyzing the discursive constructions and positionings that are performed in the social practices of these fields.

## Data collection

From April 2020 to June 2022, we systematically engaged with the research field and collected the data for this study. We followed public communication on PE during the pandemic and lockdowns by actors such as schools, teachers' associations, ministries, sports organizations, universities, and scientific actors on different news outlets, websites, and social media plat-

forms. Having identified Padlet webpages as one discourse arena relevant for PE during the pandemic, we progressively built a sample of 14 PE-related Padlet webpages (combined number of posts: 755 posts; Table 1) through links posted on the websites we were following and through Google searches (keywords: Padlet, physical education, sports, corona, pandemic, lockdown). We treated each webpage as one case and looked to find minimally and maximally contrasting cases regarding criteria – which we continually developed in the process – such as number of posts, overall appearance and layout, options to participate (comment, like, rate posts, and/or create own posts), authors, addressees (students or other teachers, specific course or school or larger audience), school type, school level, wording in title and description. We saved the webpages and wrote memos of our observations in the field. Since the internet is a highly dynamic environment, we also saved PDFs or screenshots as well as text files of the webpages in a MAXQDA project.

We consider the articulations found on these webpages to be natural discourse that happened without our interference.<sup>1</sup> To get a better understanding of how their structure and technical elements shape the discursive practices articulated in these online spaces, we also opened an account on [www.Padlet.com](http://www.Padlet.com), created a Padlet webpage of our own, and wrote an extensive set of self-observing fieldnotes about our experiences and observations in this process.

## Data material

The Padlet webpages are a complex and hybrid data material, which is directly or indirectly co-produced by different human actors (e.g., PE teachers, social media personalities) and non-human elements (e.g., algorithms). Each webpage is primarily authored by one Padlet user account; other accounts may contribute posts and users without accounts may rate and/

or comment posts depending on the settings. The basic structure is comprised of a large canvas, on which the posts are displayed according to different layout options, and a header, which consists of a symbol and next to it the username of the main author, links to other authors, the time of the last activity, the title of the webpage, and a description (subtitle; Table 1).

Depending on the settings, a post combines visual articulations chosen by the post author (e.g., a picture), chosen by the author of the linked content or generated by an algorithm (e.g., thumbnail of a YouTube video), textual articulations by the post author (title, post text), automatically generated textual articulations (e.g., caption of linked content), and reactions to the post (e.g., comments, thumbs up/down, stars; Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5). Taken together, the posts and other webpage elements are documents of hybrid articulatory acts while at the same time functioning as discursive spaces for these acts.

## Data analysis

While different approaches to engage with online spaces, practices and discourse are emerging (e.g., Geimer, 2018), there is no tried and true method for analyzing our specifically complex and hybrid data material, which required us to find our own approach. To explore our online field site, we first conducted open coding of the textual and visual articulations on these webpages using MAXQDA. We developed our codes to larger themes and wrote accompanying memos guided by the following questions: Who speaks, is spoken to and/or spoken about? Who does not? Who is (not) shown? What is (not) spoken about and what is (not) shown? What is noticeable about the way people speak in this online space? To develop these initial explorations into detailed reconstructions of the discursive positionings addressed at students, we then focused on the sequential analysis of discursive figures (Wrana, 2015a, 2015b) found in the webpages and posts. A discursive figure is the semiotic and pragmatic structure of an individual articulation (e.g., of a sentence describing the purpose of a Padlet web-

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1. Ethical approval was obtained from the ethics board of the University of Salzburg (reference number EK-GZ 27/2021). Ethical considerations are explained in Rode & Zander (2022).

**Table 1**  
Body of Data

Case	Webpage name (modified for anonymization; all translations by the authors from German)	Number of posts
• CP1	• Fit at home. Padlet of the sports department at secondary school A	• 36
• CP2	• Physical activity breaks	• 62
• CP3	• Sports ideas for the lockdown. Comprehensive school A	• 30
• CP4	• Physical education and movement - school year 2021/22 - date A - author institution A	• 84
• CP5	• Sports at secondary school B	• 59
• CP6	• Physical Education	• 27
• CP7	• Physical education in times of the pandemic	• 43
• CP8	• Ideas and examples for physical education in pandemic times	• 82
• CP9	• Movement offers secondary school C	• 35
• CP10	• Collection of ideas for the workshop A on date B	• 32
• CP11	• Sports (education) in times of Corona	• 110
• CP12	• Fit during the corona time. Padlet of the sports department	• 35
• CP13	• Physical education under special conditions. Padlet for teachers	• 56
• CP14	• Movement, play, and sports in pandemic times	• 64

page addressed at students) that constructs the objects of speech and their meaning as well as positions the speaking and the spoken to subjects in a specific way (Wrana, 2015a, 2015b). Our goal was to move from single articulations to identifying overarching discursive constructions and positionings. We reconstructed the discursive figures to be found in case CP1 and then went through all other 13 cases in our sample to analyze if and how the reconstructed discursive figures also appeared there and if we could find others.

## Results

We found that the Padlet webpages created during the coronavirus pandemic form a discourse arena in which PE teachers speak – and, through the resources they share, also various actors from sports, youth, physical, and internet cultures speak –, whereas students

remain mostly silent. They have opportunities to rate posts, comment on them or, in some cases, even create own posts, but these opportunities are rarely used. Students remain in the position of those that are spoken to and spoken about.

Looking at how they are addressed and what is addressed at them, we found that this discourse arena is dominated by one overarching discursive construction – an overarching storyline, so to speak. Following, we detail the interrelated positionings implicated in this construction and explain how they together privilege a very narrow form of subjectivity: Appropriate student subjects of pandemic PE are (i) *doing something during lockdown*, (ii) *using suggestions individually and self-responsibly*, (iii) *exercising, performing, fit*, and (iv) *predominantly able bodied, sporty, stereotypically gendered, and white*. While details and aspects of this storyline are varied, altered, or contested in single

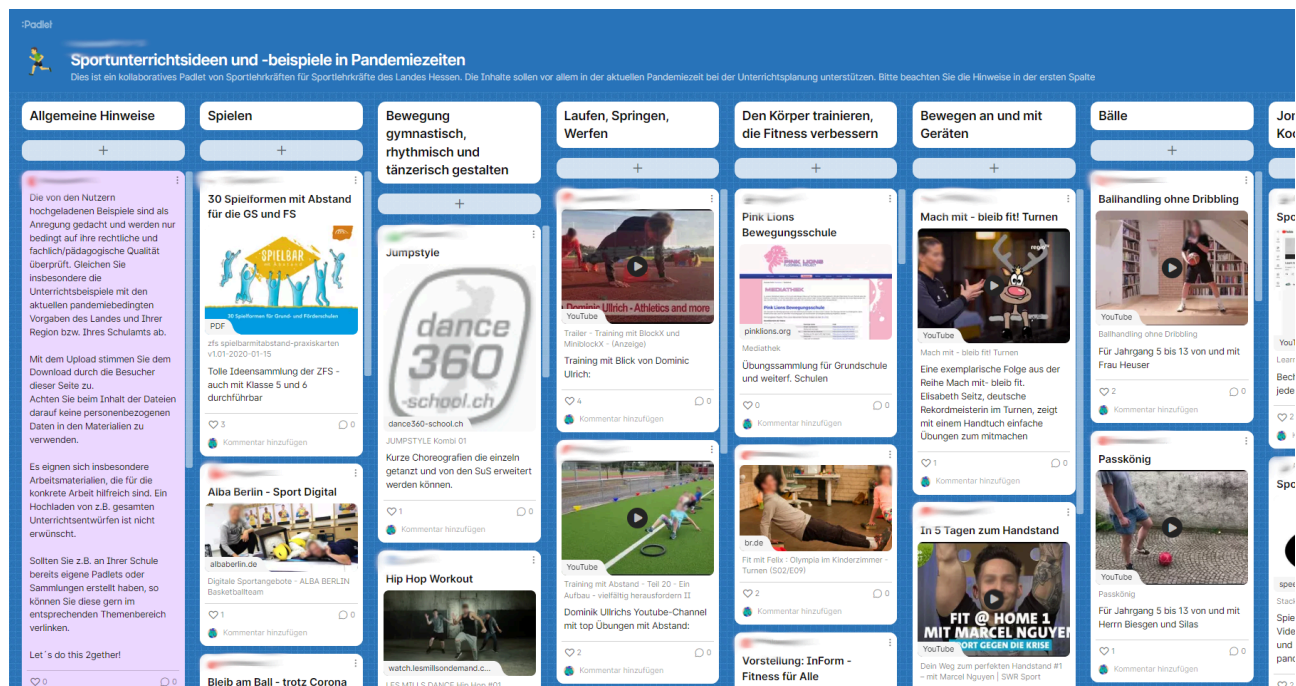


Figure 1 Padlet webpage structure and layout (CP8).

discursive articulations on the webpages, we found it to be a largely hegemonic construction with no general alternatives or substantial challenges being offered.

### Doing something during lockdown

In their titles, descriptions, and posts, the Padlet webpages address students as subjects of the “corona situation” (e.g., CP7, CP8, CP11, CP12). The basic storyline of how they are positioned goes: *The corona pandemic is a negative reality that students should deal with by purposefully staying active.*

Against the background of an implicated, positively connoted before, the corona pandemic is constructed as a negatively marked exceptional situation. This situation is characterized by individuals being confined to doing individual activities at home:

Doing sports inside your own four walls (CP7)

This is qualified as being restrictive, onerous, and monotonous:

World-class gymnast Marcel has a good tip for you against boredom at home: practice a handstand! (CP2)

And it is constructed as a threat to positively marked states and properties such as being fit while yielding negative states and properties that are mostly referred to indirectly through metaphors such as rusting:

So that you don't get rusty ;) (CP3)

All actors involved are positioned as having to deal with this corona situation, whereas the positioning is further structured by a central distinction: There are those who do something to actively deal with the corona circumstances and – as negatively marked, implicated counterpart – those who do not belong to that group. The teachers posting on the Padlet webpages position themselves – and, by default, also the actors (e.g., sports personalities) of the content they share – as part of the first group while hailing at their students to also belong to it:

What can we do now in particular to stay fit, motivated, cheerful, and capable? (CP1)

It becomes clear that doing something specifically means one thing – being physically active:

It is important to be active regularly also in this special time (CP6)

Let's go... (CP8)

Let's do this 2gether! (CP8)

Physical activity thus is constructed both, as being threatened by the corona circumstances and as an incremental means against the negative consequences of these circumstances (e.g., rusting).

The positioning detailed in this section is marginalizing/excluding because students who cannot or do not want to follow the imperative of doing something and staying active (e.g., by practicing a handstand) are positioned as the others that are excluded from the group of teachers, appropriate students, and other actors of pandemic PE and are thus positioned as unable to successfully deal with the corona situation.

### **Using movement suggestions individually and self-responsibly**

Building on the positioning as subjects that stay active during the pandemic, the webpages address students as learners in a pedagogical relationship that is geared towards facilitating movement and sports. For that, the resources collected on the webpages are labelled as offers, ideas, or suggestions that cover a broad variety of movement practices, are differentiated for different levels of expertise, and are framed to be non-binding:

Since PE is now not taking place anymore, you can find different voluntary movement offers here. The offers are amended and updated regularly. Use them and seize this chance! (CP9)

You are welcome to also try the offers for older or younger age groups! (CP12)

Ideas and inspirations for physical education and active time during corona (CP2)

Try it out! (CP8)

Students are addressed in encouraging and motivating semantics as subjects that flexibly explore, pick, try, choose, and modify these offers according to their individual preferences. The storyline of this discursive positioning thus goes: *Students' proper form of self-care is using the digital ideas and suggestions collected on the Padlet webpages individually, flexibly, and self-responsibly.*

This construction may suggest openness and inclusiveness, but it privileges students who have the willingness and ability to show this kind of individual flexibility, self-responsibility and self-care while other actions, attitudes and experiences are positioned as deviant and inappropriate forms of subjectivity.

### **Exercising, performing, fit**

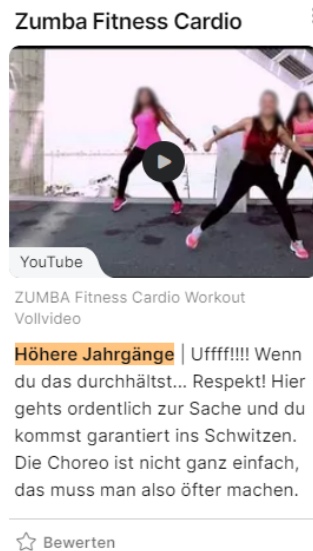
In the different posts, students are called on to engage with various movement-oriented content that is mainly situated in the fields of organized sports and fitness. The formats – even of non-fitness content – are labelled as “challenge”, “workout” or “exercise” (e.g., CP1). Students are meant to work on their “strength” (e.g., CP8), “endurance” (e.g., CP13), or “fitness” (e.g., CP4) and are addressed in challenging can-do-semantics (Figure 2):

What sports goals did you set or already accomplish in the corona time? Can you also do the other challenges? (CP1)

Who can keep it up the whole week? (CP1)

Through this selection and presentation of content, students are thus positioned according to the following storyline: *Doing something and staying active during*





**Figure 2** Post with challenging can-do-semantics (CP3) [Title: “Zumba Fitness Cardio”. Caption: “ZUMBA Fitness Cardio Workout full video”. Text: “Higher grades | Uffff!!! Respekt... if you make it through this! Here, you are getting into the thick of it and are guaranteed to break a sweat. The choreography is not easy, you must do it repeatedly”].

*the corona situation means exercising, practicing, performing, achieving, and staying/becoming fit.*

This positioning leaves little room for struggle, demotivation or failing and for interpretations of students, e.g., as personality-developing subjects, as sensual and emotional subjects, as subjects that seek lived bodily movement experiences, or as subjects that critically reflect on movement, sports, and themselves – all of which are mostly invisible in this discourse arena.

We write mostly because there are other posts that, e.g., reference a weblog about “stress, relaxation, nutrition and movement” (CP1) or link creative, movement-engaging forms of play that “hopefully bring you fun and joy” because “you cannot meet, play, run and jump around with your friends like you used to” (CP1). These posts do not fall into the narrow exercising, performing, and achieving imperatives we just detailed, and they invoke, e.g., notions of playful, movement enjoying subjects. Yet, they still revert to the activat-

ing, individualizing and responsabilizing positionings described in the sections above by framing meditation or play as a form of active self-care to deal with the corona situation:

Especially now it would be useful if we all profited from exercises, tips, and podcasts regarding the topics stress management, relaxation, proper nutrition, and sufficient physical activity. (CP1)

We have thought of some movement-engaging forms of play so that you do not get bored and stay fit. (CP1)

### **Able bodied, sporty, stereotypically gendered, and white**

When woven together discursively on the Padlet webpages, the positionings presented in the previous sections yield a powerful and marginalizing/excluding construction of appropriate students of pandemic PE as subjects that self-responsibly use movement suggestions to stay active and fit during the coronavirus pandemic. In this last section, we want to highlight how this construction is located at the intersection of the categories *ability, body shape/size, gender, and race/ethnicity*.

Above, we already explained how the discursive positionings privilege very specific abilities while other abilities as well as in- and disabilities are marginalized/excluded. This is supported by the numerous visual representations on the Padlet webpages in which users exclusively encounter able-bodied people who appear trim and sporty, are capably mastering challenging and difficult forms of movement while looking highly motivated and joyful (Figure 2), and who, with notable exceptions, are predominantly white. People who do not fit or identify with this mold are not represented and remain the invisible and divergent others.

In the pictures, documents, videos, channels, etc. posted on the webpages, actors from physical culture and sports – e.g., known athletes or fitness youtubers – act as experts and authorities for the specific content



**Figure 3** Post conveying hypermasculine ideals (CP1) [Title: “From wimp to towel hulk”. Caption: “From wimp to towel hulk’ with our physical therapists Sebastian and Jan”. Text: “Workout ideas with different levels of difficulty and armed just with a towel”].

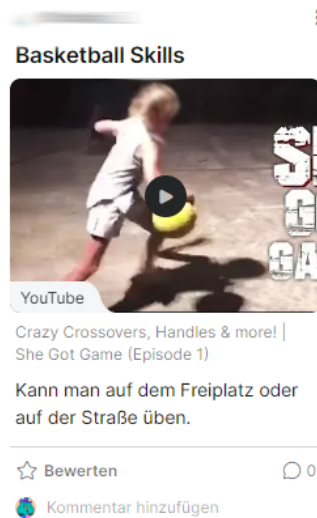
presented. The relation between these actors and the content they present is, for the most part, stereotypically gendered: persons that can be read as female present dance, meditation, rope skipping, or aerobics on roller skates (e.g., CP1) while being pictured stereotypically feminine, whereas soccer, “hockey skills” (CP1) or strength workouts are represented as masculine domains. In some posts, such gendered representations convey hypermasculine ideals, e.g., of transformations “from wimp to hulk” (Figure 3).

However, there are also posts that break with stereotypical gender relations. For example, the female field hockey player in Figure 4 is not presented as passive, modest, good looking and joyful, which would be the traditional form of representing female athletes in mainstream media, but rather as actively involved in contact with an opponent with an intense, fighting facial expression, i.e., according to conventions of representing male athletes (Hartmann-Tews & Rulofs, 2003).



**Figure 4** Post with picture of female athletes that breaks with stereotypical conventions of visual representation (CP 1) [Title: “Once we all were really fit...”. Text: “So, stay fit with a TABATA workout. Find a private tutorial here: anonymous weblink. Quick warmup and then let’s go. Here another example: anonymous weblink”. Comments: “Mrs. Anonymous in action!”, “It’s been a long time...”].

A different example would be a post linking a YouTube-video labelled “she got game” (Figure 5), which is a slogan used by different projects aimed at empowering girls in sports (e.g., <https://www.she-gotgame.eu/>). Yet, the post does not elaborate on this agenda, and we found that examples like these two mentioned here generally also do not challenge the activating and responsabilizing imperatives described above.



**Figure 5** Post with link to a video that references an empowering agenda (CP1) [Title: “Basketball Skills”. Caption: “Crazy Crossovers, Handles & more | She Got Game (Episode 1)”. Text: “You can practice this at the outdoor court or on the street”].

## Discussion

Padlet webpages in which students were presented digital movement-engaging resources and content emerged as an important hub of remote PE in Germany during the coronavirus pandemic. Employing a post-structuralist research perspective, our study found that students were confronted with detailed and comprehensive hails that invoke specific movement practices, body ideals, personal characteristics, etc. and thus construct powerful and narrow norms for gaining recognition as subjects of pandemic PE. Our findings show that appropriate students of pandemic PE are positioned as using the movement-engaging resources on the Padlet webpages individually and self-responsibly to deal with the corona situation by staying active and fit. Obviously, this discursive construction does not meet the educational goals set for PE in German (and in many other) curricular (e.g., Ruin & Stibbe, 2016). More important from our research perspective, we drew attention to how this largely uncontested positioning of students, which is specifically located at the intersection of ability, body shape/size, gender, and race/ethnicity, (re-)produces inequalities by privileg-

ing some and marginalizing or excluding many other forms of subjectivity from becoming intelligible as appropriate students of pandemic PE.

Looking at existing scholarship, it becomes clear that the positionings we found take up sports- and fitness-oriented, activity-centered “just do it” interpretations of PE and neoliberal activating, individualizing, and responsabilizing perceptions as well as unequally gendered norms of students, all of which have been described as predominant in German-speaking as well as international cultures of PE (Fitzpatrick & McGlashan, 2016; Kirk, 2009; Schierz, 2009, 2013; Schiller, 2020). Going beyond analyses of particular cases of online-content (e.g., *PE with Joe*, Bowles et al., 2022; Lambert et al., 2022) or teacher communication (e.g., an e-mail to parents, Schierz & Thiele, 2023), our study shows that Padlet webpages functioned as important hubs, and, as such, as important discourse arenas in which the dominant discursive practices (mostly by teachers) cited this established cultural knowledge to make sense of the corona situation and construct pandemic PE. This knowledge ties in seamlessly with larger neoliberal health discourses and particularly with a specific problem discourse that connects the corona pandemic, self-responsibility, the body, and physical activity (Malcolm & Velija, 2020). Our study suggests that this seamless fit of culturally predominant knowledge of PE and larger discourses coming together with the digital infrastructure of online platforms and already existing digital resources and formats may explain why PE was constructed in such a narrow meaning and why alternative or critical interpretations were not taken up or cited. Additionally, our results provide a better understanding of the consequences this social construction of pandemic PE has for students and their subject constitution.

Foregoing scholarship also points to a reconfiguration of the relations between PE, sports, physical culture, family, and commercial internet culture during the pandemic (Bowles et al., 2022; Lambert et al., 2022; Stirrup et al., 2020; Windsor, 2020). In fact, one key element of neoliberal developments well beyond the pandemic is that external actors become increasingly

involved in providing PE, deciding its content, and shaping its approaches (Mangione et al., 2022). Our study makes this neoliberal character of pandemic PE visible by showing how Padlet webpages function as a discourse arena in which actors and content from PE, organized sports, popular physical culture, and commercial internet culture come together, e.g., when videos from small sports clubs or channels from fitness influencers are posted by teachers and framed as resources for PE. These posts are hybrid articulations in which students are not only addressed by teachers but also by such other actors and by non-human elements, e.g., algorithms that generate thumbnails or captions. Interestingly, our analysis revealed very little friction within these hybrid articulations, which means that the different actors and non-human elements address students almost univocal. At the same time, the posts on these Padlet webpages provide links and establish relations to various other sites, spaces, and discourse arenas that each follow their own logic. Thus, while many models and approaches reduce PE, its teaching, learning, and pedagogy to interaction between teacher, learners and content in the PE classroom – with some paying particular attention to the use of technology (Casey et al., 2017) – our study suggests that current and future PE instead has to be considered a much more complex, multi-sited, and decentered phenomenon whose meaning-making and pedagogy are carried by different actors and non-human elements and distributed across different discourse arenas, many of them to be found on the internet (Rode & Zander, 2022). We conclude that in post-pandemic times, where PE has been returning to its hands-on, co-present form, the task of exploring PE-related online cultures may indeed be more pressing than ever to help understand, challenge and shape orders of knowledge, meaning, and subjectivities of PE.

The implications of our study for research and pedagogical practice thus relate to the importance of regarding digital resources and online spaces not just as tools but recognizing them as powerful discourse media and discourse arenas for the social construction of PE. There is no telling what the digital futures of PE

will look like. However, to challenge and help shape the ways in which people, especially students, can constitute themselves as subjects of PE, gaining a better understanding of the actors speaking (or remaining silent), the knowledge (re)produced, the subject norms invoked, and the discourses taken up in such media and arenas appears to be crucial.

This study's limitations pertain to our focus on German-speaking internet spaces during the corona pandemic, on Padlet webpages and on our specific research question. Future research should extend beyond the German-speaking context and beyond pandemic PE. It should trace constructions of PE across different online and offline discourse arenas. And it should also take the positioning of teachers and other actors into account. Additionally, the considerable scholarship on teacher's perspectives has yet to provide clear insights into the reasons for them constructing remote PE the way they did. Conversely, the yet understudied perspectives and practices of students warrant more in-depth attention: How do students, especially those not fitting the discursively constructed template of ideal PE students, perceive and deal with the norms and imperatives addressed at them in the context remote PE? (Where) Can they find (digital) spaces to negotiate, oppose and perhaps publicly challenge these norms and imperatives?

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