

This is an Open Access document downloaded from ORCA, Cardiff University's institutional repository: <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/138042/>

This is the author's version of a work that was submitted to / accepted for publication.

Citation for final published version:

Bates, Charlotte and Moles, Kate 2023. Immersive encounters: video, swimming and wellbeing. *Visual Studies* 38 (1), pp. 69-80. 10.1080/1472586X.2021.1884499

Publishers page: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2021.1884499>

Please note:

Changes made as a result of publishing processes such as copy-editing, formatting and page numbers may not be reflected in this version. For the definitive version of this publication, please refer to the published source. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite this paper.

This version is being made available in accordance with publisher policies. See <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/policies.html> for usage policies. Copyright and moral rights for publications made available in ORCA are retained by the copyright holders.



Bates, C. and Moles, K. Immersive encounters: video, swimming and wellbeing, *Visual Studies*. Forthcoming 2021.

Abstract

Using a GoPro harnessed to the body of participants, we sent the camera into the sea, in order to explore how swimming under an open sky makes people feel about themselves and the natural world. Giving people GoPro cameras to record their swims and make pre- and post-swim video diaries, we aimed to investigate the rejuvenating effects of cold water and the connections between swimming and wellbeing. We are interested in the ways in which wellbeing is experienced, understood, and constructed *in situ* as an unfolding event. Here, we reflect on the methodological challenge of conducting research on the move and in water. We suggest that the technological innovation of the GoPro, a lightweight, small, rugged and, most essentially for us, waterproof camera, provides new means of addressing methodological challenges, while the combination of this technology with the video diary method enables the development of a multidimensional and multisensory account that mixes together talk and action, helping us to develop more immersive and attentive ways of doing research through which we can come to understand different ways of being in the water.

Introduction

In water, all possibilities seemed infinitely extended. (Deakin, 2000: 3)

This paper emerges from the murky depths of the sea to provide an account that brings together, and extends the possibilities of, two different video methods and devices – video diaries and the GoPro. Our research is based on Kate’s ongoing sensory ethnography of outdoor swimming and her desire to find *in situ* ways of recording swims, and Charlotte’s work with video methods. Together, we are interested in developing ‘new tools for ‘live’ investigation’ (Back and Puwar, 2012: 7), and finding new capacities for how we do sociology. Some time has passed since Law and Urry announced that existing methods of research deal poorly ‘with the *sensory* – that which is subject to vision, sound, taste, smell; with the *emotional* – time-space compressed outbursts of anger, pain, rage, pleasure, desire, or the spiritual; and the *kinaesthetic* – the pleasures and pains which follow the movement and displacement of people, objects, information and ideas.’ (2004: 403-4). Here, we aim to restore the sensory, the emotional, and the kinaesthetic, and to move beyond ‘rational and decontextualized’ (Brown and Spinney, 2010: 130) understandings of everyday lives and mobilities. Empirically, our work contributes to a growing body of research on swimming, from Scott’s (2009; 2010) work on bodies and swimming pools, to Throsby’s (2013; 2016) (auto) ethnographic research on the process of becoming a marathon swimmer, and Watson’s (2019) work on urban outdoor swimming. It also connects with multidisciplinary work on bluespace (a term commonly used to refer to watery spaces, in contrast to terrestrial green spaces) (Wheaton and Olive, 2020), and specifically with work on the therapeutic qualities of bluespace (Straughan, 2012; Foley, 2015; 2017; Foley et al. 2019). We are interested in the sensory, embodied, emotional and social nature of wild swimming – the practice of swimming outdoors in rivers, lakes and seas, alone or in groups – and its connections with wellbeing, and to research this we have experimented with new technological opportunities, taking up the methodological challenge to conduct research on the move and in water (see also Merchant, 2011; Evers, 2015; and Denton and Aranda, 2019).

The paper consists of four sections. First, we look beyond academic depictions of swimming, to take inspiration from a selection of documentaries that highlight the connection between wild swimming and wellbeing. Here, we are interested in the use of film to evoke and represent the sensory, embodied, emotional and social nature of swimming. The following two sections provide an overview of video diary methods and technologies and their social science applications. We

review scholarly work using these methods and devices, pointing out the particular affordances that each provides. Next, we present extracts from three video diaries of wild swimming. By making video diaries on a GoPro, we hoped to benefit from both the qualities and affordances of the video diary method and those of mobile methods and wearable technologies. This section of the paper moves between description, transcription, stills and video clips, and is a compound of word, image, sound and text (Back and Puwar, 2012). Instead of opposing talk and text to the non-verbal, embodied, sensory and emotional, we have tried to bring them together in a multidimensional and multisensory account. We offer this account as one example of ‘using technological possibilities to create new tools for investigation’ (Back and Puwar, 2012: 15) and developing more immersive and attentive ways of doing research.

Films

Beyond academia, there has been a surge of interest in exploring and documenting the value of wild swimming through film. In the last two years alone, an incredible selection of award winning documentaries has appeared online, highlighting the connection between wild swimming and wellbeing. *100 Days of Vitamin Sea* (2019), documents the lives of Beth and partner Andy as they take on the challenge to swim in the cold sea waters around Anglesey in North Wales for 100 days to explore the effects of being in water on wellbeing and chronic migraine. *Tonic of the Sea* (2017), directed and produced by Jonathan J. Scott, is a mini-documentary telling the story of Katie, who found open water swimming to be just the tonic that she needed following her experience of breakdown and anxiety through chronic burnout. She now swims off the rocks of Penzance in Cornwall nearly every day of the year. *My Big White Thighs and Me* (2017) is Hannah’s personal story of womanhood, healing, and rebalancing her life by taking the plunge into open water at least once a month for a year. *Waterlog* (2018), directed and produced by Ben Cox and The Progress Film Company, documents the story of writer Joe Minihane and his battle with anxiety as he embarked on his own swimming journey across the UK, and *Man Down* (2019), directed and produced by Gaz Papworth and Element Films UK, is a documentary about mental health and male suicide in the UK, highlighting how sea swimming helps men cope with mental illness.

Other films highlight the friendships formed through swimming, as well as the adventure of swimming outdoors. *Well Preserved* (2018), a Green Renaissance film, tells the story of a group of women, who call themselves the ‘Morning Swimmers of Sandagerði’. Ingrid, Eileen, and their friends brave the icy waters of the North Atlantic, along the coastline of the Faroe Islands, for their morning dip in the ocean every day of the year. For them, swimming is as much about connection and friendship as it is about exercise and invigoration. *Chasing the Sublime* (2018) directed by Amanda Bluglass and Shot in Loch Hourn, Scotland, documents the swimming adventures of ‘swim twins’ Kate Rew and Kari Furre, founders of the Outdoor Swimming Society. Kate Rew narrates, questioning why she puts herself into the path of discomfort and risk, and what drives her to get too cold and too tired, to battle with fear, in the name of adventure. Collectively, these films offer a powerful viewing experience. They tell stories of recovery and adventure through a combination of narration and stunning underwater photography, immersing the viewer in the physicality of cold water swimming and evoking the emotional and embodied experience. This is not an exhaustive review, and more films are available on The Outdoor Swimming Society website.

Video diaries

Video diaries belong to a repertoire of diary methods (Bartlett and Milligan, 2015), which draw on different techniques – including solicited written diaries, audio diaries, and photo diaries – to chart everyday rhythms, routines, behaviour and perceptions and analyse social life. Video diaries are fast becoming a 21st century method, but they first became popular in the 1990s. Two projects stand out from that era. The Video Intervention/Prevention Assessment (VIA) project began in 1994 at the

Children's Hospital Boston, USA. It gave video cameras to young people with chronic medical conditions, and asked them to 'teach your doctor about your life and your condition' (Rich and Chalfen, 1999; Rich and Patashnick, 2002; Chalfen and Rich, 2008). Around the same time, researchers in the UK were working on Project 4:21: a longitudinal study of 30 working class and middle class British girls focused on how social class informs life trajectories. When the girls were 16 or 21 years old they were invited to make their own video diaries about their 'transition to womanhood' (Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001; Pini and Walkerdine, 2011).

More recently, researchers have begun to experiment with video diaries as a way of sharing many different stories, across health, identity, sports, higher education, and tourism, from around the world. From aging and self-representation (Threadgold, 2000), to primary school learning dispositions (Noyes, 2004), identity and sexuality (Holliday, 2004), identity and physical impairment (Gibson, 2005), higher education (Cashmore et al., 2010), being an immigrant (Brown et al., 2010), childhood and death (Buchwald et al., 2012), family Christmases (Muir and Mason, 2012), sports (Cherrington and Watson, 2010; Darko and Mackintosh, 2016; Jones et al., 2014), illness and everyday life (Bates, 2013), tourism and home (Pocock and McIntosh, 2013), breastfeeding (Taylor, 2015), sport and disability (Apelmo, 2017), transgender transitioning (Klein et al., 2018) and even Antarctic explorations (Nash and Moore, 2018), the sheer variety of topics that video diaries have been used to investigate illustrates the possibilities that they have opened up.

As a method, video diaries offer particular opportunities. For example, they give us access to places, interactions and occasions that we cannot otherwise or easily join in, from family gatherings (Muir and Mason, 2012) to remote locations (Nash and Moore, 2018). They also come with particular constraints. For example, video diaries are typically recorded on hand-held video cameras in the comfort and safety of participants' homes or other indoor areas. Placed in the hands of participants, they work through a combination of show and tell, giving an entry point into the lives of others and a perspective 'from the inside out' (Rich and Patashnick, 2002: 249). And while filming styles may vary, from 'performances' to the 'confessional', video diaries are characterised by their raw, untrained, personal perspective. Both private and very public, they offer opportunities for a more collaborative, compelling and emotionally engaged research practice. For a fuller account of the principles and practices of using video diaries as an ethnographic method see Bates (2020).

The GoPro

The GoPro, and other wearable cameras, have recently been put to use by researchers in a variety of contexts. The GoPro is an HD micro camera, typically used by extreme sports enthusiasts. As Vannini and Stewart note, 'GoPro's are lightweight, small, and rugged – thus ideal for shooting outdoor adventures' (2017: 152). Strapped onto bodies, bikes, and surfboards, they have been used as a way of keeping pace with active lifestyles and bodies in motion. One of the first studies to use a headcam was Brown, Dille and Marshall's (2008) research on mountain biking and walking. Emphasising the ability of the headcam to help us understand embodied, multisensory ways of knowing and experiencing landscapes, they pointed the way towards using video as a sensory and mobile method. Since then, head and chest mounted cameras have been used with dog walkers (Brown and Banks, 2015), children (Green 2016; Bates 2019), outdoor adventurers (Vannini and Stewart, 2017), and runners (Palmer, 2016; Smith, 2019), to conduct research on the move and to explore our relationship with different landscapes. GoPro's, and their technological predecessors, have also and more frequently been strapped to bikes (Brown and Spinney, 2010; Spinney, 2011; Hatzius and Wakeford, 2015; Jungnickel, 2015; McIlvenny, 2015; Pink et al. 2017) in order to research this highly mobile and physical practice.

As Evers (2015) notes, the GoPro began its life in the sea, when Nicholas Woodman tied a 35-mm camera in waterproof housing to his wrist to record himself and his friends surfing. Yet researchers have hardly touched on this opportunity to take a video camera in and under water. To date, there are only two published studies using video cameras in the sea – Merchant's (2011) research on scuba diving, for which she became an underwater videographer, and Evers' (2015) research on the sea, masculinity and men-who-surf, for which he went surfing with a GoPro – taking the technology back to its birthplace.

Like video diaries, GoPro's and other wearable cameras offer researchers access to places and activities they might otherwise not reach. In contrast to video diaries, they facilitate research filmed outdoors and mounted on the body. The emphasis on location points to an interest in our relationships with different landscapes, while the subtle shift from being in the hands of the participant, to being mounted on the head or chest, affords a more embodied and immersive perspective, and less direction about where to position and point the camera. Instead, everything is recorded from the participant's Point of View (PoV). Typically, there is also a shift from talking to the camera, to doing an activity – walking, running, cycling, surfing, or diving.

Video diaries of wild swimming

This project combines video diaries with mobile methods and wearable technology. Using a GoPro Hero 7 mounted on a 'Chesty' and harnessed to the body of participants, we sent the camera into the sea, in order to explore how swimming under an open sky makes people feel about themselves and the natural world. Giving people GoPro cameras to record their swims and make pre- and post-swim video diaries, we aimed to investigate the rejuvenating effects of cold water and the connections between swimming and health and wellbeing. We are interested in the ways in which wellbeing is experienced, understood, and constructed *in situ* as an unfolding event.

By making video diaries on a GoPro, we hoped to benefit from both the qualities and affordances of the video diary method and those of mobile methods and wearable technologies. The resulting footage is intimate, raw and immersive, combining talk and action. Participants not only perform and describe what they are doing in the moment, they also recall memories and histories of swimming, experience outbursts of emotions, splash and swim, dip and dive, sit and reflect. Being in the water while making a video diary allows for an instantaneous and personal account of what it means to swim outdoors.

Here, we describe three video diaries made at Jackson Bay, a sea swimming spot in Wales, UK. This was one of our first ventures out with the GoPro, and the camera was passed between three swimmers as they took turns to enter the water on a sunny summer morning (we have continued swimming and filming throughout the seasons). The participants were simply asked to talk to the camera about why they were swimming outdoors and how it made them feel, and to leave the camera recording while they swam. The video diaries were made by three women – Kate and two anonymous participants, Alva and Baba. In the UK, white middle class women typically represent, and are used to represent, wild swimming, and these three women are representative of the larger group of swimmers we have continued to work with. At the same time, the participants in our project include a variety of swimmers, including those new to swimming and lifelong swimmers. We are working with people who swim in different conditions, and with a mix of bodily abilities and ages. While Kate, Alva and Baba share a love of wild swimming, they have different swimming abilities – characterised by the distinction between 'swimming' and 'dipping and flapping' – and different relationships with the water.

Alva and Baba were invited to choose their own pseudonyms, and given a sliding scale of consent to guide us in the use of their video diaries. While their faces do not appear in the videos and other

parts of their body only occasionally enter the frame, their voices are present. Working with an ethical sensibility, we move between video clips, stills and text to bring these video diaries to the printed page in ways that our participants are comfortable with. While video offers untapped possibilities for reaching a much wider audience (Vannini, 2015), participants are not always comfortable with releasing video diary footage into the world, and both Alva and Baba chose not to share their raw videos beyond the research team. Working within these limitations supports a more careful and considered approach to video data – we cannot let the data speak for itself, and need to find words and fragments to translate video footage to our audience. As such, what follows is also an experiment in writing video (Bates, 2015).

Kate's pre-swim diary (<https://vimeo.com/videodiaries/katepreswim>) is short – she is eager to get into the sea and her anticipation and excitement are palpable. As she talks to the camera she walks across the sand towards the water. The closer she gets the more relaxed her voice becomes. The diary entry ends as she is standing at the shoreline, feet in the water, looking out to sea:

I had a really grumpy morning, this morning. I shouted at my kids, I angrily cleaned the kitchen. And since I have come to the sea, it has all just blown away. I'm really eager to just get in and swim now, to have that total immersion. But even just being near the water, I feel calmer. There's still a little, I'm anxious to get in the water, I'm anxious to swim. I can see the tide going out, and I want to make a proper swim out to the buoy. So for me now the anticipation of being in the water is really strong, even though there's a certain reticence because it's going to be cold, I know it's going to be cold, but I also know I'll feel so much better after it. I feel all tightly wound up this morning, and I'm looking forward to unwinding myself through a big swim.

After 30 minutes of swimming, out to the buoy and back, Kate emerges again (<https://vimeo.com/videodiaries/katepostswim>). She wades out of the muddy water and finds a rocky place to sit and talk, looking out to sea again. The background soundscape of waves lapping and gulls calling accompanies her monologue:

Stumbling out of the water, washing the mud of my feet. Being back on land is no fun. I had such a clear sense, in that swim, of just becoming part of the water. The eroding of the boundaries between myself and the sea. When I went in, again, my head was sore, I was really conscious of my body in different ways. My shoulders were tight, my head was sore, the water was cold. And then you just sort of pull through it, and instead of overcoming it you become part of it, in such a different way. And now I just feel really calm, I just wish I was back in the water. It's always just a pull back in, to become part of it.

Harnessed to her body, the video camera records the surrounding landscape, giving the viewer an embodied perspective from the inside out. Blue sky, murky water, yellow sand, and the occasional glimpse of a leg or hand. Her voice is close, drawing the listener into a private conversation that feels like a personal relationship. Swimming with the camera, Kate is able to express how being in the water makes her feel in the crucial moments before and after swimming, creating a certain immediacy and intimacy to her video diary.



Figure 1: sitting on the beach [Kate's video diary]

While Kate restricted her talk to the camera to pre- and post-swim video diaries, with an intense swim in-between, Alva and Baba entered the water with the camera in a more playful way, described by Baba as ‘a dipping and flapping exercise’ rather than a swim. This meant that their diaries continuously flowed, as they narrated not just the before and after moments, but the in-the-moment action as well. The difference in filming styles is related to the ways in which Kate, Alva and Baba embody wild swimming. It would have been impossible, for instance, for Kate to narrate her more serious swim, as the camera, harnessed to her body, was submerged underwater and her voice could not be recorded. Talking would also have interrupted her front crawl stroke and rhythmic breathing. Instead, the camera records the murky depths beneath her, the bubbles rising as the water moves around her body, an arm outstretched in front just visible. This is the ‘action’ – the embodied practice recorded in an immersive viewing experience. Due to the relatively short battery life of the GoPro, we have experimented with different ways of filming long swims – from short bursts of filming to timewarp footage that records at x10 speed. These create different viewing experiences, with the timewarp footage evoking some of the intensity of the swim. Filming at x10 also compresses time, making a long swim, which might become mundane and repetitive, more watchable.

Like Kate, Alva starts her video diary while walking across the beach to the sea. She begins by justifying her escape from work during a week day, drawing our attention to the restorative feeling of sun and wind on her body. She wades into the water, gasping at the cold. Her monologue then shifts in time, as she recalls her childhood experiences of swimming outdoors. Now waist deep in water with waves lapping against her, she dives under, immersing her body and the camera in the sea. We are plunged to murky depths, shades of brown and blue, accompanied by the underwater sound of breathing and bubbles. Alva resurfaces, the camera bobbing in and out of the waves – she is just deep enough to stand with head and shoulders above the water. She reaffirms ‘this is good for

me', then swims some more, the camera submerged. After a few minutes, she wades back out to the beach, breathing deeply with a sense of satisfaction:

It's gorgeous being here and feeling the sun and the wind on you. It feels so good because it's so cold. The little bit of difficulty or hard work in it is kind of part of why it's good I think, it's so cold, and then you get in...It is cold!... Swimming in the sea isn't really about exercise... it's just being in the water really. We didn't go to the pool a lot when I was small, but we went river swimming and sea swimming. It feels so good... this is good for me and it will be good for me, it doesn't have to be about making me work better, it's lovely just for itself... I feel good after having come out. It's really muddy, a bit gross coming out. I feel a bit tingly, but it's not like swimming in winter where you come out feeling superhuman. It's just nice, you feel good.



Figure 2: bubbles [Alva's video diary]



Figure 3: muddy leg [Alva's video diary]

Baba's video diary is much longer than the first two. She is comfortable and open, chatting to the camera as she walks into the water, recording in detail the moment of entry – a pivotal moment in wild swimming:

Don't do it, don't do it, just go back to the comfort! Anyway, going in! You know you want to go in, but you also don't want to go in. This is the threshold, where you decide you're giving up with comfort and you're going in. It's going to be horrible! A few deep breaths, just hold on for a little bit longer. I think I know, once I get in it will be really nice, and I love that rush when you kind of, you know, you're all cold and your body goes all tingly, and it's exciting and thrilling, and you kind of find a new comfort inside, in the water. And I know it's there because I've done it a million times before, but also I feel very reluctant. But I kind of know it's going to sort me out as well.

It is critical moments like this one that we hoped to record as they unfolded. There is a palpable difference between recalling the moment of entry after it has happened, and describing it in-the-moment. The camera records the tonalities of expression, the gasps of breath, the anticipation (which Kate alluded to and which we began to sense in her pre-swim diary) in vivid detail, bringing the moment back to life. Here, we are able to hear an otherwise internal monologue and sense embodied emotion. Baba continues:

This isn't a swim, this is definitely a dip, a dipping and flapping exercise. I'm not here for the exercise, or the miles, or the numbers, I just want, I'm here for the tingles! Ok, here we go.

She resurfaces, crying. The camera records her outburst, and her vulnerability is moving. Baba is able to open up to the camera in a way that we doubt she would have, had one of the researchers

been with her in the water. In this moment we are together alone, sharing a deeply personal experience. Recomposing herself, Baba continues to swim, pausing to talk to the camera now and then. A big blue sky separated along the horizon from gentle waves dominate the frame above water, while underwater the camera films a blue-brown haze. Like Alva, she is not here for the exercise, but for the experience of being in the water:

I used to do quite a lot of intense sport... you drag yourself up the bank or the beach... and I haven't really done that for quite a long time. Stuff like this has become a lot more emotional, and just about enjoying being in my body, and actually feeling my body and listening to my body, rather than just powering through a sport.



Figure 4: diving in [Baba's video diary]



Figure 5: swimming [Baba's video diary]



Figure 6: underwater [Baba's video diary]



Figure 7: crying [Baba's video diary]

These three clips illustrate the potential of combining video diaries with mobile methods and wearable technology. Each of the video diaries is a mix of talk and action, through which we come to understand different emotions, histories, and ways of being in the water. The richness of the data allows us to become fully immersed in the watery worlds we seek to understand, and to attend to the verbal, bodily and environmental aspects of wild swimming. As audio-visual data, the video diaries contain audible and visible dimensions beyond our participants' verbal accounts (breathing, waves lapping and birds calling are all noted, together with the colours and textures of water, mud and sand). It is important that these details do not fall out of the analysis, and that we do not fall back on an over-reliance on voice (Back, 2012). Attending to these details helps us to write thick, evocative descriptions, but beyond this it also enables us to hold onto the liveliness of the water our swimmers are in, and to consider bodies of water as both objects and subjects in our account. The sound, smell, taste and feel of the sea are evoked through the GoPro footage, so that it takes up space. Moments with no words are not empty – instead they are filled with the significance of water.

Conclusion

Instead of opposing talk and text to the non-verbal, embodied, sensory and emotional, we have tried to bring them together in a multidimensional and multisensory account. Working with the video diary method in combination with GoPro cameras, we have been able to record experiences *in situ*, gaining insights into bodily practices, sensations and emotions, as well as narratives, histories and memories. The technological innovation of the GoPro, a lightweight, small, rugged and, most essentially for us, waterproof camera, provides new means of addressing methodological challenges (Brown, Dille and Marshall, 2008). As Chalfen writes, 'GoPro facilitates and extends ways and

means of seeing' (2014: 300). In particular, it facilitates and extends ways and means of doing research on the move and in water.

Of course, the GoPro is not without limitations. We have encountered a variety of technical difficulties and have had to find work-arounds and make compromises. The short battery life of the GoPro (which decreases in cold water and as video quality is increased) needs to be considered. For most of our swims so far, this has not been an issue (cold water swimmers tend not to spend too long in the water), but where we have wanted to film long swims the technology has forced us to consider the value of continuous filming. As we described in Kate's swim, we have experimented with different ways of filming long swims – from short bursts of filming to timewarp footage that records at x10 speed – evoking some of the intensity of the swim and making repetitive footage more watchable. We have also experimented with different ways of harnessing the GoPro to the bodies of our swimmers. While the 'Chesty' mount facilitates an embodied and immersed perspective, a head mount has been more useful during group swims, where our focus has been on the socialities of wild swimming. This above water perspective makes talking to the camera while in the water more feasible, but limits the degree to which the footage is immersed (this also depends on the swimmer's stroke and the time of year). At times the head mount has interfered with woolly hats or goggles, highlighting the necessity of putting things on in the right order as well as the intrusion that the camera can be in the moment. Additionally, talking and swimming are not always compatible, and we recognise that asking our swimmers to narrate their experience *in situ* changes the event and shifts things around. And during group swims, the camera has captured moments of nudity as swimmers hurriedly change out of wet costumes – moments that are part of this social world (see Moles, 2020) but which lie beyond what we might want to record on camera (and which we have deleted from our data).

Law and Urry (2004) reminded us at the beginning of this paper that existing methods of research deal poorly with the sensory, the emotional and the kinaesthetic. Video has untapped potential to evoke these aspects of experience and to attune to a world that is 'tentative, charged, overwhelming, and alive' (Stewart, 2007: 128). As a sensory method, it moves beyond the illusion of direct access to give us not just a sense of 'being there' or 'seeing there' but 'a feeling *there* and a feeling *for*' (Bates, 2015: 1) the lives and worlds we seek to understand. As a mobile method, it allows us 'to move with, and to be moved by' (Büscher, Urry and Withger, 2011: 1) our participants. Video shows us things that are elusive without trying to hold them still, offering a mode of evocation that does not immobilise or flatten that which it seeks to know. Combining video diaries and wearable technology we have used video to develop a concern with both what people do and how they feel. From the bodily sensation of getting in the water (Bates and Moles, forthcoming), to the edgework between cold water, risk and wellbeing (Bates and Moles, 2020), the technological affordances of making video diaries using a GoPro have allowed us to feel and experiment with other ways of showing, telling, knowing and understanding ways of being in the water.

Acknowledgements

Heartfelt thanks to Alva and Baba for taking the plunge and sharing their swims with us.

Project blog

<https://suspendedmotion.tumblr.com>

Film links

100 Days of Vitamin Sea <https://www.vitaminseafilm.com>

Chasing the Sublime <https://www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com/chasing-the-sublime/>

Man Down <https://vimeo.com/333860719>
My Big White Thighs and Me <https://maiamedia.co.uk/my-big-white-thighs-me/>
Tonic of the Sea <https://tonicofthesea.co.uk>
Waterlog <http://bencoxfilm.com/work#/waterlog/>
Well Preserved <https://vimeo.com/299166692>
More: <https://www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com/category/features/films/>

References

- Apelmo, E. 2017. *Sport and the Female Disabled Body*. London: Routledge.
- Back, L. (2012) Tape recorder. In Lury, C. and Wakeford, N. *Inventive Methods: The happening of the social*. London: Routledge.
- Back, L. and Puwar, N. 2012. A manifesto for live methods: provocations and capacities. *The Sociological Review*, 60(S1): 6-17.
- Bartlett, R. and Milligan, C. 2015. *What is Diary Method?* London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Bates, C. 2020. Video diaries. In Vannini, P. (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of Ethnographic Film and Video*. New York: Routledge.
- Bates, C. 2019. Rewilding education: exploring an imagined and experienced outdoor learning space. *Children's Geographies*, 0(0).
- Bates, C. (ed.) 2015. *Video methods: social science research in motion*. London: Routledge.
- Bates, C. 2015. Intimate encounters: making video diaries about embodied everyday life. In Bates, C. (ed.) *Video methods: social science research in motion*. London: Routledge.
- Bates, C. 2013. Video diaries: audio-visual research methods and the elusive body. *Visual Studies*, 28(1): 29-37.
- Bates, C. and Moles, K. Forthcoming. Submerging bodies in wild waters. In Moles, K. and Bates, C. (eds.) *Living with Water*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bates, C. and Moles, K. 2020. Suspended and immersed: video methods and wild swimming. *The Sociological Review*. Available at: <https://www.thesociologicalreview.com/suspended-and-immersed-video-methods-and-wild-swimming/>
- Brown, C., Costley, C., Friend, L. and Varey, R. 2010. Capturing their dream: video diaries and minority consumers. *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 13(4): 419-436.
- Brown, K. and Banks, E. 2015. Close encounters: using mobile video ethnography to understand human-animal relations. In Bates, C. (ed.) *Video methods: social science research in motion*. London: Routledge.
- Brown, K., Dilley, R. and Marshall, K. 2008. Using a head-mounted video camera to understand social worlds and experiences. *Sociological Research Online*, 13(6)1.

- Brown, K. and Spinney, J. 2010. Catching a glimpse: the value of video in evoking, understanding and representing the practice of cycling. In Fincham, B., McGuinness, M., and Murray, L. (eds.) *Mobile Methodologies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Buchwald, D., Delmar, C. and Schantz-Laursen, B. 2012. How children handle life when their mother or father is seriously ill and dying. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*, 26: 228-235.
- Büscher, M., Urry, J. and Witchger, K. 2011. *Mobile Methods*. London: Routledge.
- Cashmore, A., Green, P. and Scott, J. 2010. An ethnographic approach to studying the student experience: the student perspective through free form video diaries. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*, 1(1): 106-111.
- Chalfen, R. 2014. 'Your panopticon or mine?' Incorporating wearable technology's Glass and GoPro into visual social science. *Visual Studies*, 29(3): 299-310.
- Chalfen, R. and Rich, M. 2008. Applying visual research patients teaching physicians through visual illness narratives. *Visual Anthropology Review*, 20(1): 17-30.
- Cherrington, J. and Watson, B. 2010. Shooting a diary, not just a hoop: using video diaries to explore the embodied everyday contexts of a university basketball team. *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*, 2(2): 267-281.
- Darko, N. and Mackintosh, C. 2016. 'Don't you feel bad watching the Olympics, watching us?' A qualitative analysis of London 2012 Olympics influence on family sports participation and physical activity. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 8(1): 45-60.
- Deakin, R. 2000. *Waterlog: a swimmer's journey through Britain*. London: Vintage Books.
- Denton, H. and Aranda, K. 2019. The wellbeing benefits of sea swimming. Is it time to revisit the sea cure? *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 0(0): 1-17.
- Evers, C. 2015. Researching action sport with a GoPro camera: an embodied and emotional mobile video tale of the sea, masculinity, and men-who-surf. In Wellard, I. (ed.) *Researching embodied sport: Exploring movement cultures*. London: Routledge.
- Foley, R. 2015. Swimming in Ireland: Immersions in therapeutic blue space. *Health and Place*, 35: 218-225.
- Foley, R. 2017. Swimming as an accretive practice in healthy blue space. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 22: 43-51.
- Foley, R., Kearns, R., Kistemann, T., and Wheeler, B. (eds.) 2019. *Blue space, health and wellbeing: hydrophilia unbounded*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Gibson, B. 2005. Co-producing video diaries: the presence of the "absent" researcher. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 4(4): 34-43.
- Green, C. 2016. Sensory tours as a method for engaging children as active researchers: exploring the use of wearable cameras in early childhood research. *International Journal of Early Childhood*. 48(3): 277-294.

- Hatzius, B. and Wakeford, N. 2015. "Everything is going on at the same time" The place of video in social research installations. In Bates, C. (ed.) *Video methods: social science research in motion*. London: Routledge.
- Holliday, R. 2004. Filming "the closet": the role of video diaries in researching sexualities. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47(12): 1597-1616.
- Jones, R.L., Fonseca, J., De Martin Silva, L., Davies, G., Morgan, K. and Mesquita, I. 2014. The promise and problems of video diaries: building on current research. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 7(3): 395-410.
- Jungnickel, K. 2015. Jumps, stutters, blurs and other failed images: using time-lapse video in cycling research. In Bates, C. (ed.) *Video methods: social science research in motion*. London: Routledge.
- Klein, A., Krane, V. and Paule-Koba, A.L. 2018. Bodily changes and performance effects in a transitioning transgender college athlete. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 10(5): 555-569.
- Merchant, S. 2011. The body and the senses: visual methods, videography and the submarine sensorium, *Body and Society*, 17(1): 53-72.
- McIlvenny, P. 2015. The joy of biking together: sharing everyday experiences of vélomobility, *Mobilities*, 10(1): 55-82.
- Moles, K. 2020. The social world of outdoor swimming: cultural practices, shared meanings and bodily encounters. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*. Special Issue, OnlineFirst.
- Muir, S. and Mason, J. 2012. Capturing christmas: the sensory potential of data from participant produced video. *Sociological Research Online*, 17(1)5.
- Nash, M. and Moore, R. 2018. Exploring methodological challenges of using participant-produced digital video diaries in Antarctica. *Sociological Research Online*, 00(0).
- Noyes, A. 2004. Video diary: a method for exploring learning dispositions. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 34(2): 193-209.
- Palmer, C. 2016. Research on the run: moving methods and the charity 'thon'. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 8(3): 225-236.
- Pink, S., Sumartojo, S., Lupton, D. and Heyes LaBond, C. 2017. Empathetic technologies: digital materiality and video ethnography. *Visual Studies*, 32(4): 371-381.
- Pini, M. and Walkerdine, V. 2011. Girls on film: Video diaries as 'autoethnographies'. In Reavey, P. (ed) *Visual Methods in Psychology: Using and Interpreting Images in Qualitative Research*. London: Routledge.
- Pocock, N. and McIntosh, A. 2013. Long-term travellers return, 'home'? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 42: 402-424.
- Rich, M. and Chalfen, R. 1999. Showing and telling asthma: Children teaching physicians with visual narrative. *Visual Studies*, 14(1): 51-71.

- Rich, M. and Patashnick, J. 2002. Narrative research with audiovisual data: Video Intervention/Prevention Assessment (VIA) and NVivo. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 5(3): 245-261.
- Scott, S. 2009. Reclothing the emperor: the swimming pool as negotiated order. *Symbolic Interaction*, 32(2): 123-145.
- Scott, S. 2010. How to look good (nearly) naked: the performative regulation of the swimmer's body. *Body and Society*, 16(2): 143-168.
- Smith, R. J. 2019. Visually available order, categorisation practices, and perception-in-action: a running commentary. *Visual Studies*, 34(1): 28-40.
- Spinney, J. 2011. A chance to catch a breath: using mobile video ethnography in cycling research. *Mobilities*, 6(2): 161-182.
- Stewart, K. 2007. *Ordinary affects*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Straughan, E. 2012. Touched by water: The body in scuba diving. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 5: 19-26.
- Taylor, A. 2015. "It's a relief to talk...": Mothers' experiences of breastfeeding recorded in video diaries. PhD thesis Bournemouth University.
- Threadgold, T. 2000. When home is always a foreign place: diaspora, dialogue, translations. *Communal/Plural*, 8(2): 193-217.
- Throsby, K. 2013. "If I go in like a cranky sea lion, I come out like a smiling dolphin: marathon swimming and the unexpected pleasures of being a body in water. *Feminist Review*, 103: 5-22.
- Throsby, K. 2016. *Immersion: marathon swimming, embodiment and identity*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Vannini, P. 2015. Afterword: video methods beyond representation: experimenting with multimodal, sensuous, affective intensities in the 21st century. In Bates, C. (ed.) *Video methods: social science research in motion*. London: Routledge.
- Vannini, P. and Stewart, L. 2017. The GoPro gaze. *Cultural Geographies*. 24(1): 149-155.
- Walkerdine, V., Lucey, H. and Melody, J. 2001. *Growing up girl: psycho-social explorations of gender and class*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Watson, S. 2019. Liquid passions: bodies, publics and city waters. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 20(7): 960-980.
- Wheaton, B. and Olive, R. 2020. Understanding bluespaces: sport, bodies, well-being, and the sea. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*. Special Issue, OnlineFirst.