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## Negotiating Outdoor Swimming and Environmental Health at Windermere

**Taylor Butler-Eldridge** (He/Him) Neurodivergent ESRC Funded PhD Student

Human Geography

Cumbrian Lakes Research Forum 2023 (Lancaster Environment Centre)

Wed 8<sup>th</sup> Nov 2023



UK Centre for  
Ecology & Hydrology



South West Doctoral  
Training Partnership



Economic and Social  
Research Council



Photo: Bird (2017)



Photo: James Kirby Photography (2021)

- Exercise, competition, socialisation + restorative wellbeing  
(Foley 2015; 2017; 2018; Britton and Foley, 2021)
- Growing transdisciplinary research  
(Throsby, 2015; Van Tulleken *et al.*, 2018; Olive, 2022; Moles and Bates, 2023; Massey *et al.*, 2023)
- Individual/universalised, overly buoyant + romanticised  
(Bell *et al.*, 2018; Atkinson, 2019; Olive, 2022; 2023)
- **Research Opportunities:**
  - Challenges: socio-political + environmental issues
  - Freshwater environments
- **My Research:** Outdoor swimming + environmental health
- Lacustrine (lake) spaces
- 12-month, wet ethnographic fieldwork
- 60 'Lake Hangouts' + 40 'Swim-Along Interviews'
- 100 Visits (September 2022 - September 2023)
- Windermere, Lake District National Park





Photo: Windermere Lake Cruises (2015)



Photo: Butler-Eldridge (2022)



Photo: Gilchrist (2022)



Photo: Butler-Eldridge (2022)





Photo: Dan Vernon Photography (2015)





Photo: Butler-Eldridge (2022)



Photo: Butler-Eldridge (2023)



Photo: Drew.Fus (2023)



Photo: Lakes Plastic Collective (2020)

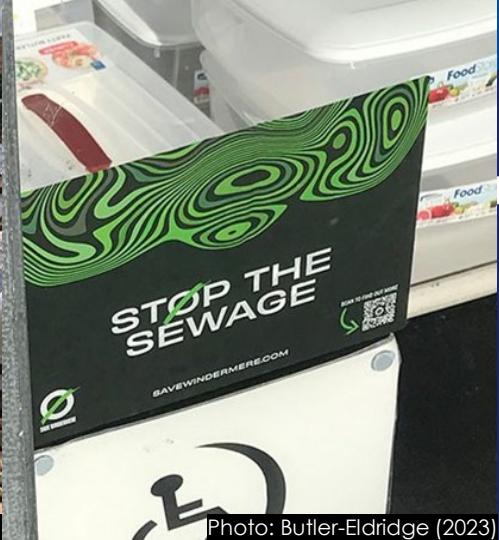


Photo: Butler-Eldridge (2023)



Source: Love Windermere Partnership (2023)





**Soak Up**

**Re-trace**

**Re-layer**



**Ambivalence**

**Adaptation**

**Avoidance**



## Wet Ethnography

- Fluid and immersive approach (Evers, 2019)
- 12-months, full season
- September 2022 - 2023
- Rayrigg Meadow and Millerground, public bathing sites
  
- **60 'Lake Hangouts'**
- Observational methods
- Lake activities, water, and weather conditions
- Different times of the day
- Solo and group swims
- Immersed in the recreational swim communities
- Personal swim responses
- Photos, written diaries and in-situ video recordings





Photo: Wood & Co Photography (2022)



Photos: Butler-Eldridge (2022)



## Swim-along Interviews

- **40 'Swim-Along interviews'** (Denton and Aranda, 2019)
- Playful, immersive, and contextual
- 34 (water-based) | 6 (land-based)
- In-situ video or audio recordings
- GoPro 10 mounted to inflatable tow float / Dictaphone
- Motivations, experiences, and challenges
- Embodied responses / social / environmental context
- Swimmers and dippers (range of abilities / confidence)
- Gender (F: 22 / M: 18) | Ages: (25-62)
- Ethnicities (White-British: 37 / Mixed Race: 3)
- Residence (Cumbria / Yorkshire / Lancashire / North East)
- Health conditions and challenges





Photo: Wood & Co Photography (2022)



Photo: Butler-Eldridge (2022)



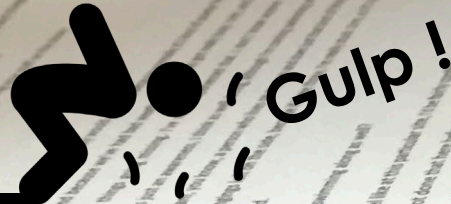
Photo: Butler-Eldridge (2022)



Photo: Wood & Co Photography (2022)



# Data Analysis





...it, report it! To report an environmental incident, call our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 (24 hours).

## TOXIC ALGAE

### TAKE CARE WHEN BATHING IN THIS WATER

THIS WATER MAY CONTAIN TOXIC ALGAE WHICH CAN CAUSE UPSET STOMACH AND SKIN IRRITATION

ANIMALS CAN ALSO BE SERIOUSLY AFFECTED

Health Protection Agency

www.southlakeland.gov.uk and explore



### STOP THE SPREAD

## INVASIVE AQUATIC SPECIES

Check your equipment and clothing. Check your plants and animals. Pay particular attention to areas that are damp or hard to dry.

Invasive plants and animals harm the environment, reduce the quality of fishing and spread disease. Please help to stop them by following the Check, Clean, Dry code.

**CHECK** Clean and wash all equipment thoroughly. If you do come ashore, leave them at the water's edge.

**CLEAN** Dry all equipment and clothing for many days. Make sure you don't re-contaminate.

**DRY**

Check your equipment and clothing. Check your plants and animals. Pay particular attention to areas that are damp or hard to dry.

Check your equipment and clothing. Check your plants and animals. Pay particular attention to areas that are damp or hard to dry.

### Advice on Blue-green Algae (cyanobacteria)

Why it is important to be aware of them

Blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) can cause skin rashes, eye irritation and allergic reactions. They produce toxins that may cause skin rashes and more serious symptoms. If you swallow, they are at risk of causing illness. If you drink the water, or let your dog drink after swimming, you are at risk of becoming ill. Symptoms may appear very soon after exposure.

Potential health effects

- Skin rashes
- Eye irritation
- Vomiting and diarrhoea
- Fever and pain in muscles and joints

Keep safe around a bloom

- Keep children and dogs away from the water
- Keep dogs on a lead
- Carry a bottle of water for your dog to drink and use it to wash off any skin

If you, or your pet, become unwell after contact with water that may be contaminated with blue-green algae, we'd recommend you seek immediate medical or veterinary advice.

How can I recognise a blue-green algae bloom?

Blue-green algae float (bloom) in small green patches of 1-2 cm. If the bloom continues to expand, it may become a larger green or blue-green mass. It may have a strong, earthy or musty smell.

Further guidance

Blue Cross advice for dog owners

Further contacts: 0800 807060

### HAVE YOU DONE YOUR 2 MINUTE LITTER PICK?

THANK YOU

Don't forget to snap it, tag it, post it, upload it.

#2MINUTELITTERPICK & UPLOAD IT.

FOLLOW US:

@2MINUTELITTERPICK

#2MINUTELITTERPICK

THE IS A PRODUCT SUPPORTED BY webtoys



Photos: Butler-Eldridge (2022)



## Next steps ...



- Data analysis (\* gulp!)
- PhD thesis and other research outputs + events
- **Contributions:**
  - 12-mo season / environmental / socio-political
  - Freshwater / lacustrine environments
  - Health geographies
  - Transdisciplinary outdoor swimming research
- **Dissemination and broader engagement:**
  - Current and potential communities invested in Windermere
  - Encouraging care-full outdoor swimming practice



# Research Website

Visit: [www.swimdermere.com](http://www.swimdermere.com)



Take your time.  
Have a scroll. Soak it up.



**Thank you for listening ...**





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