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Disciplining Subjectivities and Sensing Time at a US University

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Abstract: Informed by new materialism as well as Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's concept of the undercommons, this article is a philosophical investigation of the feelings of time upon disciplined bodies and subjectivities in the university. Drawing from the author's experience while participating in an anomalous reading group, this mode of inquiry is reflective and interpretive, mirroring the personal nature of sensation. The article first turns to Foucault's analysis of how time disciplines the subject, followed by a discussion of the university's perceptions of time. Finally, a sense of "useless" time is explored in terms of the undercommons to disrupt temporally disciplined bodies. Attention to the different sensations of time encountered – fast, slow, and timeless – demonstrates how, in turn, those same feelings can generate strategies to counteract the temporal constraints imposed by the managerial and neoliberal university.

Keywords: Sensation, university, subjectivity, undercommons, time, disciplined bodies

Introduction

How do temporal modalities affect subjectivity? What pedagogical spaces are sought when attempting to navigate constrained academic temporalities of the United States university? Foucault identified how time and its

felt constraints are used as disciplinary tools in schooling to control bodies and subjectivities. This article expands on Foucault's argument to consider disrupted sensations of time within the pedagogical spaces of the university. By pedagogical spaces, I refer to transitional spaces, which evoke pedagogic potentiality,³ as well as the covert spaces Stefano Harney and Fred Moten call the undercommons, 4 or time-spaces of study. Time in educational institutions presumes a compartmentalized quality, thereby deeming time's linear progression as a controllable, disciplinary measure. Time, treated like a manageable object in the university – as evidenced by initiatives with catchy slogans like "15 to Finish" that push students to stack multiple credits each semester in order to finish within a predetermined period – is seen as a series in which the next component is unlocked after satisfactory completion of the previous step. Here educational goals are aligned as vertical transcendence rather than horizontal study, and the imposed progression discourages spontaneous, nonlinear radical learning.6 In short, the neoliberal US university uses institutional time to discipline subjectivities.

This article builds on previous scholarship that attends to sensation and embodiment in pedagogy and education, ⁷ shifting focus to the temporal feelings encountered in a university setting. Through new materialist perspectives informed by the undercommons, I consider the material, affective dimensions of *feeling* time in spaces of higher education to explore pedagogies that "address us as bodies whose movements and sensations are crucial to our understandings." I address my participation in an anomalous group of study

¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Second Vintage Books, 1991).

² D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Tavistock, 1971).

³ Elizabeth Ellsworth, *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

⁴ Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, (New York: Autonomedia, 2013).

⁵ "15 to Finish" is a campaign at the University of Hawai'i that encourages students to take an additional three credits (equivalent to one course) each semester. The full-time load for undergraduates is twelve credits, or four classes.

⁶ Eli Meyerhoff, *Beyond Education: Radical Studying for Another World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

Ellsworth, Places of Learning, Rikke Toft Nørgård and Janus Aaen, "A University for the Body: On the Corporeal Being of Academic Existence," Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education 1, no. 3 (2020); Stephanie Springgay, "The Chinatown Foray' as Sensational Pedagogy," Curriculum Inquiry 41, no. 5 (2011); Annouchka Bayley, Posthuman Pedagogies in Practice: Arts Based Approaches for Developing Participatory Futures (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

⁸ Ellsworth, *Places of Learning*, 27.

– an informal reading group – as a catalyst to juxtapose to the time "contradictions" of the university. By anomalous, I mean a departure from what is considered standard in the sense that it does not adhere to the contemporary neoliberal university's practice of disciplining subjectivities, whether through organized schedules or metrics of productivity. The fluid desires of the group, not a preplanned, strictly adhered-to schedule, guided its format. Following Elizabeth Ellsworth and Hannah M. Tavares, ¹⁰ I also use anomalous in terms of alternative objects of inquiry in educational research. Rather than focusing on the efficacy of a reading group, I instead turn to the feelings of participating in that group as the object of inquiry, with particular attention to competing sensations of time. Composed of graduate students from different disciplines within the university and a professor, the group discussed full readings of collective interest in a manner a university, which is informed by structured timelines, would deem unruly.

However, submersion in a neoliberal US university culture that monetizes creative joy reinforces habits of accountable production. These habits groove themselves into muscle memory. A reading group's meandering and playful study is heretical to the university's aims. The body actively resists the slowing down of time because it is disciplined to resist the perceived uselessness of reading and interacting simply for the sake of reading and interacting.¹¹

Feeling Pedagogies of Time

The reading group I reference here discussed full readings of collective interest in a temporal and relational manner. The commitment was to each other rather than to the texts or academic calendar. Sometimes the group, energized by our interactions with the readings, would spark new iterations of

Oarolina Guzmán-Valenzuela and Roberto Di Napoli, "Competing Narratives of Time in the Managerial University: The Contradictions of Fast Time and Slow Time," in Universities in the Flux of Time: An Exploration of Time and Temporality in University Life, eds. Paul Gibbs, Oili-Helena Ylijoke, Carolina Guzmán-Valenzuela, and Ronald Barnett (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 154.

¹⁰ Ellsworth, *Places of Learning*; Hannah M. Tavares, *Pedagogies of the Image: Photo-archives*, *Cultural Histories*, and *Postfoundational Inquiry* (Springer Nature, 2016).

¹¹ Jairus Grove, Savage Ecology: War and Geopolitics at the End of the World (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 25.

The university itself embodies multiple contradictions. Here, as a reviewer astutely pointed out, that which makes the university a university are those within the university. I would also add that the university as a whole operates as its own body, or even perhaps machine. The accelerated professionalization of the US university, which Harney and Moten noted runs counter to the concept of the undercommons, desires

discussions in fields of email threads extending beyond our physical meetings and the university's calendar. Other times the group paused when the outside demands of the university spilled over into our space. The group met for several years, before going into hibernation when the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly moved the university's operations online.

I understand the contradictory nature of calling for sensations of hidden, informal spaces of intellectual lounging as modes of resistance to the university's habits of production while writing an academic reflection on those very spaces. Perhaps though, as Harney and Moten suggested, the university constantly catches those in this tension. 13 These are the stakes. As Foucault explained, the body - and its attendant sensations - figure prominently in disciplinary processes. Therefore, institutions that engage such disciplinary measures – one of which is the manipulation and control of time in relation to the body – understand the impact of the affective encounter and sensation. Furthermore, the disciplinary attention to the body reproduces narratives on what constitutes valid and consequently worthwhile sensations of the body. Supposedly worthwhile sensations are controllable, efficient, and as Emer Emily Neenan observed, "logical," as opposed to unruly "emotional" sensations. Neenan further argued that this "false dichotomy of 'logical' vs 'emotional' is all too often used as a weapon to dismiss scholars who are most affected and most invested in certain areas of research; especially women, scholars of colour, disabled scholars, scholars from working-class backgrounds, scholars from colonized and exploited countries, queer scholars and so on."14 It is an ethical, aesthetic, and political move to not only find fugitive spaces, but to also maneuver stealthily to cultivate those clandestine, temporary sensations of satisfaction in the undercommons of a university.

The interest here lies in how sensations, and in this case, sensations of nonlinear time, have the potentiality to disrupt subjectivities disciplined by constrictive approaches to time in neoliberal university. The affective

efficiency and rapid research output. This, as Oili-Helena Ylijoki observed, results in the decrease of the kinds of "slow" time for engaged research and the increase of other approaches that instead emphasize time as transactional, with a goal to get the most profitable return on investment. For Ylijoki's further discussion of project time, see "Conquered by Project Time? Conflicting Temporalities in University Research" in Universities in the Flux of Time: An Exploration of Time and Temporality in University Life, eds. Paul Gibbs, Oili-Helena Ylijoke, Carolina Guzmá-Valenzuela, and Ronald Barnett (Abigndon: Routledge, 2015).

¹³ Harney and Moten, The Undercommons.

Emer Emily Neenan, "Writing and Structure," in *The Affective Researcher*, ed. Andrew G. Gibson (Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing, 2022), 39.

encounter, extended by reflecting on the sensations of time, remains elusive and unable to predict, sustain, or intentionally force. The inability to produce predicted affects suggests that while the university seeks to produce subjects, with time as one of the disciplinary techniques, affect and sensation's unruliness interrupt this process. On the potential of seeking sensation and affect in relation to pedagogy, Elizabeth Ellsworth wrote, "to the extent that sensations are 'conditions of possible experience,' pedagogy as sensation construction is a condition of possible experiences of thinking. It becomes a force for thinking as experimentation."15 If one seeks to determine educational success through the implementation of discrete and manageable indicators, then the elusiveness of affect presents challenges. However, if one considers the challenges that the elusiveness, or "undecidability" as Chris Ingraham has described, 16 of affect presents as openings rather than detriments, then affect provides an avenue to encounter the body's possibilities beyond predetermined boundaries of the knowable (and measurable) subject that can be disciplined.

Attentiveness to the affective sensations of the body during the learning process recall John Dewey's scholarship. The body's sensations, as well as how it is affected and in turn affects, suggest the ability to encounter plurality and possibility in the process of learning, or the "pedagogico-aesthetic." Dewey's support of personal experience as a valid component of learning expands narrow conceptualizations of educational purposes. While this focus remains an important project in education, this particular perspective of the self's experience is, as Jane Bennett critiqued, still focused on the human. 18

¹⁵ Ellsworth, *Places of Learning*, 27, emphasis in original.

¹⁶ Chris Ingraham, "To Affect Theory," Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Theory 3, no. 1 (2023). Ingraham further detailed the role of representational language in inhibiting affect: "Which is to say, representational language has a discouraging way of plowing through the undecidability of affect by reducing 'it,' first to a thing, and then to a thing fixed enough to presume that it's knowable and attached to a subject. But affect (and hence the question of what affect theory is) just isn't compatible with being calcified into a semiotic system premised on the notion that signs have a stable-enough thing to signify" (2, emphasis in original).

¹⁷ Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 9.

¹⁸ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

Nuances of sensation, experience, and affect beyond the human are important here because they provide an opportunity to engage with the potential of embodied pedagogies. Although Bennett considered Dewey's work on the public, community, and the composition of the body through new materialism, she highlighted that Dewey "relegates the nonhuman and the nonorganic to the role of 'environment' rather than actor and affirms a profound 'dependence' of humans on 'surroundings,' but not a true reciprocity between participants of various material compositions. And Dewey generally assumes that the acts in conjoint action are *human* endeavors." Here sensation and experience are not contradictory to Dewey's work but rather run in a different direction.

By loosening the human-centric intentionality of experience it becomes possible to reflect on the affective power of temporalities and spaces, and even time's own agency: "A lot happens to the concept of agency once nonhuman things are figured less as social constructions and more as actors, and once humans themselves are assessed not as autonoms but as vital materialities."20 The awareness of the experiencing, learning self as affected by many things enables the ability to reflect on these sensations, as suggested by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological considerations of the body that facilitate "understanding our somatic selves through engagement with the world."21 The role of "aesthetic attention to the object's 'qualitative moments'"22 is a reminder to utilize bodily sensations to articulate the discomfort of the unknowing. Some scholars acknowledge the significance of the body itself in the production of knowledge. For example, Rikke Toft Nørgård and Janus Agen observed that despite its entanglement within the university from spaces to processes, the body is disregarded in university discourse. They instead argued for a university both for and of the body that embraces all of the possibilities arising from bodies in relation with each other.²³ However, this capability is thwarted when limiting temporalities are imposed on bodies in the university.

The neoliberal university treats time as an object to be managed and controlled. In turn, the sensations of objectified time discipline subjectivities. A new materialist sensibility here engages other interactions with time unlimited

¹⁹ Bennett, Vibrant Matter, 102, emphasis in original.

²⁰ Bennett, Vibrant Matter, 21.

Megan Watkins, "Desiring Recognition, Accumulating Affect," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 276.

²² Bennett, Vibrant Matter, 15.

²³ Nørgård and Aaen, "A University for the Body."

to the university's structured approach. Additionally, it recognizes the agency of time and other temporal objects in a relational manner by emphasizing the sensations provoked through the encounters. Reengaging other ways to sense time in a university setting has the added possibility of working to untangle the "mastery" of these institutions. ²⁴ Julietta Singh pointed out that mastery is not an archaic goal of colonialism. Mastery continues to infiltrate significant spheres of contemporary ways of making sense in the world from politics to the production of the subject. Its logics can also permeate the very efforts intended to do away with it: mastering mastery.

Singh framed mastery in three ways. First, mastery requires a split or distinction of one thing from another. Second, mastery demands hierarchy. Things are not only distinguished from one another but they are also appraised differently. Third, and most relevant to this discussion, mastery extends in a temporal manner. Mastery, as a concept and practice, endures.

Uselessness of "slow" time has no role because it is unproductive. In other words, using Singh's approach to mastery, slow time neglects to participate in the mastery of the body. Slow time neither efficiently extracts the body's labor nor adheres to the neoliberal university's expectations of the temporally disciplined subject.

Foucault and the Temporally Disciplined Subject

For Foucault, time disciplines the subject through "control of activity," identified by five contributing aspects.²⁵ These aspects are the time-table, the systematic application of time to the body, the connection of the body to its deliberate movement, the connection of the body to the object, and the reinterpretation of time as a resource that can be infinitely (and efficiently) extracted.

The first aspect, the time-table, strictly measures and controls time. Disciplinary institutions like schools found value in "its three great methods – establish rhythms, impose particular occupations, regulate cycles of repetition." While Foucault specifically detailed the time-table's allure for elementary schools, the three methods materialize in institutions of higher education as well. For example, the subject becomes accustomed to the temporal rhythms of the university: semester, trimester, or quarter systems. The

²⁴ Julietta Singh, *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

²⁵ Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 149.

²⁶ Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 149.

university also arranges itself via specific occupations. These occupations occur in a managerial hierarchy often depicted visually through organization charts. Finally, the temporal cycles of the university repeat. Besides the aforementioned semester, trimester, or quarter system calendars, the regular cycles of enrollment, accreditation, and so on occur. These rhythms and cycles solidify in the institution because "precision and application are, with regularity, the fundamental virtues of disciplinary time."²⁷

The second aspect contributing to the discipline of the subject is that time is programmatically applied to the body: "Time penetrates the body and with it all the meticulous controls of power." This connects bodily sensations of time with control. Here the gesture is associated with duration. Importantly, as Foucault observed, this time-disciplined body does not follow a generic set of rules. Rather, the time-disciplined body must adhere to a specific, predetermined rhythm. For example, this time-disciplined body in a classroom may find themselves in the semester rhythm of a class that rapidly proceeds through multiple texts to get through the assigned material. Counter to this is a temporally undisciplined body of an informal reading group with no predetermined schedule to explore texts.

The third aspect proclaims that nothing is useless with the correct use of the body and time. The subject whose body and sensations are disciplined according to the temporal rhythms of the university is productive. This discipline is not "simply in teaching or imposing a series of particular gestures," such as the introduction and implementation of the semester calendar in one's syllabus, imposing the presence of student bodies at certain times on particular days. Instead, Foucault noted that discipline is the relationship between the body and its movement.

The fourth aspect is that the disciplined body is connected to the object. Foucault provided the example of a soldier holding a rifle. In doing so, the disciplined body-object connection introduces power. This power is generated not from restriction but from relation: "Thus disciplinary power appears to have the function not so much of deduction as of synthesis, not so much of exploitation of the product as of coercive link with the apparatus of production." To return to the example of syllabus, the semester calendar becomes second nature, a habituated sensation of linear, managed time expected from the university.

²⁷ Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 151.

²⁸ Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 152.

²⁹ Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 152.

³⁰ Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 153.

However, according to the fifth aspect, time is no longer seen as limited but rather unlimited and increasingly extractable due to discipline.³¹ This aspect is particularly relevant to the aims of a neoliberal university. Disciplined subjectivities produce, from scholarship to grants, for the institution, defying finite approaches to time. There is always time to update that syllabus, return an email, or work on a publication, if one is disciplined with their time management. The infinitely extractable approach to time treats it as an object that is able to be controlled and managed. Yet, that is not the only way to feel and interact with time.³² As the next section illustrates, an infinite feeling of time is not limited to an extractive sense. This limitless feeling of time can also be creative and supportive in a collaborative sense.

How the University Perceives Time

Given the entangled interpretations of time in educational endeavors, I loosely categorize approaches in two groups: perceptions of time and how that perceived time is felt. Perceived, categorized time concerns "clock time", "social time", and "virtual time." Referencing Wendy James and David Mills' research, ³⁴ Julia C. Duncheon and William G. Tierney observed that clock time has "measurable, linear units through clocks and calendars." Clock time objectifies time, shaping it to be controllable, a resource, and a necessary organizational tool for capitalist practices. Social time instead considers the subjective sense of time and its shifting experience among diverse timescapes. Virtual time is reflective of the increased use of technology in society; scholarship on virtual time ranges from a very technology focused interpretation of compressed time³⁶ to its potential to shift sensations of time into enjoyable affects.³⁷

³¹ Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 154.

³² See, for example, Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber's chapter, "Time Management and Timelessness," in their book *The Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy* (2016).

³³ Julia C. Duncheon and William G. Tierney, "Changing Conceptions of Time: Implications for Educational Research and Practice," *Review of Educational Research* 83, no. 2 (2013): 236.

Wendy James and David Mills, "Introduction: From Representation to Action in the Flow of Time," in *The Qualities of Time: Anthropological Approaches*, eds. Wendy James and David Mills (London: Routledge, 2005).

³⁵ Duncheon and Tierney, "Changing Conceptions of Time," 240.

³⁶ Duncheon and Tierney, "Changing Conceptions of Time."

³⁷ Guzmán-Valenzuela and Di Napoli, "Competing Narratives of Time."

How that perceived time is *felt* recalls velocities. *Fast time* connects ideologies guiding contemporary educational approaches in the university. These ideologies focus on the market and neoliberal rationality's influence in shaping academic life. Acceleration and efficiency are key to fast time. Take the aforementioned "15 to Finish" example. Even though a full load for an undergraduate student is twelve credits (four classes) per semester, they are encouraged to add another class (three credits) in order to finish in four years. The justification is economic: the sooner one finishes, the sooner one can be competitive on the job market.

Slow time navigates competing perspectives: the slow time of bureaucracy³⁸ and the slow time of creative scholarship.³⁹ In the first iteration of slow time, the university's administrative requirements contradictorily "encourage slow speeds through what can be at times unending cycles of checks and controls on academic activities."⁴⁰ These "unending cycles" create frustration when addressing managerial responsibilities that operate on a different time from pedagogical, creative time for scholarship.⁴¹ These administrative processes also serve to institutionalize a specific sense of appropriately managed time for the academic subject.

In the second iteration of slow time, time is not approached as an object to be managed but rather a pleasurable process felt in bodies. Sensed in this way, slow time provides more space to engage scholarship while simultaneously resisting the accelerated demands of the corporate university.⁴²

Timeless time runs parallel to slow time but incorporates technology's ability to influence temporal sensations. Counterintuitively, timeless time, an effect of compressed time in an increasingly technologized society, ⁴³ describes a phenomenon when time accelerates to the point that it exceeds felt linearity, melting into complete sensory immersion. This echoes Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's work on the sensation of being in time's flow. Like slow time, timeless time engages creative scholarship because it offers strategies to carve out

Guzmán-Valenzuela and Di Napoli, "Competing Narratives of Time."; Yvonne Hartman and Sandy Darab, "A Call for Slow Scholarship: A Case Study on the Intensification of Academic Life and Its Implications for Pedagogy," Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies 34, nos. 1–2 (2012).

³⁹ Hartman and Darab, "A Call for Slow Scholarship"; Berg and Seeber, *The Slow Professor*.

⁴⁰ Guzmán-Valenzuela and Di Napoli, "Competing Narratives of Time."

⁴¹ Hartman and Darab, "A Call for Slow Scholarship."

⁴² Hartman and Darab, "A Call for Slow Scholarship"; Berg and Seeber, *The Slow Professor*.

⁴³ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

necessary spaces to explore ideas.⁴⁴ Losing track of one's sense of time releases the grasp of how time should be managed. The immersive experience of flow is also a personal sensation, one that cannot be forced upon an individual or pre-dictated by other situations. Flow arises from the individual's own history, attitudes, purposes and tastes. With slow, pleasurable time and timeless time, as demonstrated by the sensations encountered while participating in the reading group, the subject can maneuver around the fast marketized and slow bureaucratic time of the university.

A Cacophony of Competing Temporal Modalities

Witnessing the university act as a manager suggests a renewed inquiry of its purpose: is it a place of learning to prepare and nurture students or is it a place to manage those students? The entrepreneurial university nurtures the quality of individualism in the student, yet it is an individualism informed by consumerism and marketability (again, see "15 to Finish") rather than the development as a learner. 45 The shift in ideologies informing university life to those of economic considerations also creates tensions in reinterpreting the academic subject amid "academic freedom." 46 Carolina Guzmán-Valenzuela and Roberto Di Napoli noted, "Universities and academics are being impelled, under market pressures, to respond faster to wider economic opportunities while also developing robust administrative systems for accountability and managerial purposes."47 Enacted perceptions of Western time in contemporary universities presume time is objective and manageable. For the sake of efficiency, measurability and evaluative ease, it encourages (or strongly implement through elimination of other options) those involved in the culture to adhere to a particular sense of objective time.

Adding more wrinkles, Paul Gibbs identified "higher education" as "a temporal activity that can effect change and colour our ideas of time." Interestingly, Gibbs confronted the contradictory objectification of time in the university, noting, "Time is mediated through their duration, density, and our

⁴⁴ Duncheon and Tierney, "Changing Conceptions of Time"; Guzmán-Valenzuela and Di Napoli, "Competing Narratives of Time."

⁴⁵ Guzmán-Valenzuela and Di Napoli, "Competing Narratives of Time," 156.

⁴⁶ Guzmán-Valenzuela and Di Napoli, "Competing Narratives of Time," 156–157.

⁴⁷ Guzmán-Valenzuela and Di Napoli, "Competing Narratives of Time," 154.

⁴⁸ Paul Gibbs, "If Time Doesn't Exist, Why Are We Learning about the Past?" in Universities in the Flux of Time: An Exploration of Time and Temporality in University Life, eds. Paul Gibbs, Oili-Helena Ylijoke, Carolina Guzmán-Valenzuela, and Ronald Barnett (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 46.

choices. It is never really out there on its own, but acts as an analogy for order, complexity and inactivity."⁴⁹ Time in the university is conceptualized as objective and separate yet is also considered as a mode of mediation. Hartman and Darab discussed the compression of academic time within the perspective of "what Foucault (1988) calls technologies of power, whereby subjects are objectified,"⁵⁰ as the objectification of subjects facilitates their use as efficient modes of measurement in the increasingly corporatized university. The objectification of time and the subject "suggests that scholarship can be broken into discrete activities – teaching, research, and service that can be pursued independently of each other and asynchronously,"⁵¹ and moreover, controlled.

Fast time, slow time, and timeless time all at once in the university setting: no wonder why the academic subject can feel so fragmented. They are pulled in multiple temporal directions. In the university setting, this cacophony of competing temporal modalities presents an interesting enigma. On one hand, these multiple temporalities provoke a variety of sensations, or ways to feel time. On the other hand, though multiple temporalities are present, only particular temporalities are legitimated within the neoliberal university's structure. These legitimated temporal modes manage an idealized disciplinary model of the academic subject.

The university actively shapes these temporal feelings to discipline academic subjectivities. Involvement in higher institutions of learning requires a negotiation between personal academic identities and the assumed narrative of the university.⁵² This attention to subjective and objective time in an academic setting raises a question if time is considered "objective" precisely to reinforce assumptions that it can be controlled, measured, and applied indiscriminately to individuals regardless of their subjective senses of time. Simplified to a false dichotomy, the interaction with time in educational settings can begin to feel like an either-or prospect: either one assimilates,⁵³ to a particular academic temporality informed by an accelerated expectation of research production, to align with the goals of the increasingly entrepreneurial university or one runs the gambit, acknowledging their own shifting sensations of time and risking the consequences of not adhering to the dominant, expected and assumed sense of time.

⁴⁹ Gibbs, "If Time Doesn't Exist," 47.

⁵⁰ Hartman and Darab, "A Call for Slow Scholarship," 49.

⁵¹ Hartman and Darab, "A Call for Slow Scholarship," 54.

Brew, 2015 Angela Brew, "Academic Time and the Time of Academics," in Universities in the Flux of Time: An Exploration of Time and Temporality in University Life, eds. Paul Gibbs, Oili-Helena Ylijoke, Carolina Guzmán-Valenzuela, and Ronald Barnett (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

⁵³ Duncheon and Tierney, "Changing Conceptions of Time".

Marianna Papastephanou critiqued "uniform treatments of time" and the limitation of conceptualizing educational endeavors to the relationship with time at the expense of also considering temporalities.⁵⁴ Particularly, attention to time's linearity reinforces that "the underlying power equation involves management of chronos, i.e. measurable time, and the 'ideal type' of the achiever."55 Aligning the "ideal" subject with expectations of efficient discipline according to a specific interpretation of time narrows opportunities to sense their own learning moments. Papastephanou's call to develop an ethic of time within the milieu of higher education identifies the "need for temporal nuance," cautioning that constrictive approaches to engaging with and conceptualizing time in the university threaten the possibility of learning and becoming selves.⁵⁶ In their research on the change in a university's teaching calendar, Hartman and Darab remarked on the sensation of "time pressures" as reported by survey respondents, which resulted in feelings of "exhaustion, depletion, and inability to maintain the same level of quality as before the introduction of the new calendar."57 The sense of compressed time and work intensification is articulated as a negative sensation.

Constricting the possibilities for those in educational environments to interact and explore their own internal experiences with time potentially forecloses other ways of knowing and being in educational settings: "Changing notions of time have been creating new higher education ontologies that are increasingly being defined externally, thus diminishing the sense of professional ownership." The external control upon scholarly work and the academic subject limits the creative space and time for academics to produce thoughtful, reflective, and critical work. While Foucault's work on time and the disciplined subject, with particular attention to the subject's body, is helpful in discerning how the university incorporates these disciplinary measures into its own production of subjectivity, additional tools are necessary to address competing temporal modalities of the contemporary university. The contradictions of time and the affective impact call for another perspective: Harney and Moten's undercommons.

Marianna Papastephanou, "Higher Education and an Ethic of Time," in Universities in the Flux of Time: An Exploration of Time and Temporality in University Life, eds. Paul Gibbs, Oili-Helena Ylijoke, Carolina Guzmán-Valenzuela, and Ronald Barnett (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 169.

⁵⁵ Papastephanou, "Higher Education and an Ethic of Time," 170.

⁵⁶ Papastephanou, "Higher Education and an Ethic of Time," 168.

⁵⁷ Hartman and Darab, "A Call for Slow Scholarship," 54.

⁵⁸ Guzmán-Valenzuela and Di Napoli, "Competing Narratives of Time," 161.

The Undisciplined Subject Reading Against the University's Clock

The sensation first encountered during the informality of the reading group was discomfort. The goal of the reading group was not to produce but to interact in liminal spaces of creative, subversive study: "That the pursuit of knowledge without immediate application is so thoroughly useless, even profane, is a diagnosis of our current moment." Submersion in a neoliberal university culture that monetizes any form of creative joy reinforces habits of accountable production. These habits groove themselves into muscle memory. The playful study of a reading group – where the goal is not to get through the book but instead the surprise of the social and intellectual interactions, loosely and always tangentially, encountered during reading – is heretical to the university's aims. The body actively resists the slowing down of time, struggling against a misplaced sense of uselessness of reading and interacting simply for the sake of reading and interacting. Because should not one constantly consider how to incorporate this particular book into the next publication?

Controlling time is futile. It always escapes or transforms into other ways to feel and engage. Like sensations and affect, a single definition of time does not present itself. Temporal sensations can occur simultaneously: flow, sense of time stretched, slower, lose track of, compressed, stopped, faster, focused. What does it mean to lose one's sense of time? Does the letting go refer to the chronological, linear perception of clock time? The tendency for educational institutions to structure time as discrete and manageable is "temporal entrapment," cementing a belief it is possible to comprehensively determine distinct lengths of time. To lose this sense of managerial time is to experience time as a feeling and not simply as a tool to delineate between events. Instead, it gestures to the experience of sensation itself.

Attending to the ebbs and flows of time provoked me to be attentive to paces of different sensations of time, or what Nicholas Go referred to as time's polyrhythm. Hhat calls out about this sensation is the recognition of the re-learning process of slowing down and a conscious self-catching to not preemptively impose an accelerated schedule informed by an entrepreneurial temporality to finish learning "modules." When immersed in university culture, it becomes second-nature to align with accelerated timelines or perceptions of learning that focus on swift completion of texts for finishing, rather than simply finding the joy of relating to others through discussions in an

⁵⁹ Grove, Savage Ecology, 25.

⁶⁰ Gibbs, "If Time Doesn't Exist," 52.

⁶¹ Go, "Temporality and Emergences in Education."

act of subversion to the neoliberal university. I learned to savor the unrushed feeling of not being forced to work, learn, create, or research according to a modality of time dictated by frameworks that value efficient, fast, easily measurable, and succinct units; these timelines do not speak to the knots of scholarship and the time needed to explore different paths.⁶² To slow down into a joy, or *pleasure* as Berg and Seeber described,⁶³ the managerial university deems useless affirms opportunities to generate creative collaborations that encourage subversive, productive frictions.

Study, as opposed to the university's educative habits, presents one strategy to provoke sensations different from managerial time and to distance one's self from the chronologically disciplined subject. In educational theory, the concept of study takes many expressions, from study informed by feminist and Indigenous Marxist frameworks⁶⁴ to study informed by Giorgio Agamben⁶⁵; although drawing from different frameworks, both approaches identify a feeling of freedom that is characteristic to study.⁶⁶ For example, Eli Meyerhoff identified study as "an activity in which people devote attention to the world," further observing that observes that "this sustained attention modifies their capacities and dispositions for understanding the world."67 For Tyson E. Lewis, study aims "to suspend the functioning of obedience through 'preferring not' to act as such and such a subject within the allotted order of things. Instead, studying gives access to the experience of potentiality freed from obedience to any sovereign command."68 Furthermore, Meyerhoff's concept of modes of study – which considers its means and relations – enables an expansive approach to reimagining the university. In this way, Meyerhoff argued, education is just one of many possible modes of study. Specifically, Western contemporary education is a transcendent, vertical mode of study in which time and subjects progress in a temporally linear manner, thus facilitating management and control of bodies. Conversely, horizontal modes of study have collective, nonhierarchical aims. There are alternatives to the dominant vertical approach of education as a mode of study, often demonstrated

⁶² Hartman and Darab, "A Call for Slow Scholarship."

⁶³ Berg and Seeber, The Slow Professor.

⁶⁴ Meyerhoff, Beyond Education.

⁶⁵ Tyson E. Lewis, "The Potentiality of Study: Giorgio Agamben on the Politics of Educational Exceptionality," *Symploke* 22, nos. 12 (2014).

For further discussion specifically on Lewis' approach to freedom in regards to study, see Jairo Jiménez, "Finding Moments of Studying: Being a Studier in the University," *Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education* 2, no. 3 (2020).

⁶⁷ Meyerhoff, Beyond Education, 13.

⁶⁸ Lewis, "The Potentiality of Study," 276.

by Indigenous communities, social movements, and Black radical study. For Meyerhoff, these alternatives practice world-making in a different manner, thus contributing to different modes of study.

The expected adherence to these disjunctive modes of vertical time-study for academic life disrupts other time sensations, limiting pedagogical practices countering chronological approaches aligned with the academic year. Time, operated chronologically in this manner like a manageable object reveals the pursuit of content and learning as a series of steps with the next component only available after satisfactory completion of the previous. If an individual fails to complete a certain level to the determined level of satisfaction, then the process reverses and the individual is made to repeat that component.⁶⁹ Gesturing to habituated goals aligned with education as vertical transcendence rather than horizontal study,⁷⁰ Meyerhoff stated that the imposed orderly progression discourages horizontal study's spontaneous and nonlinear radical learning.

However, the reading group disrupted that imposed and orderly vertical progression. We collectively engaged multiple levels from student to faculty, disregarded the academic calendar, and purposefully slowed down an accelerated mindset to finish texts as fast as possible. As Jairo Jiménez contended, "to be able to study, we need to disturb – at least momentarily – the rhythm and direction of educational designs." The reading group demonstrated horizontal modes of study in a university setting. In doing so, it engaged slower rhythms and timeless sensations of time – those very sensations that enable creative scholarship. Furthermore, horizontal modes of study engage a collaborative commons approach. In other words, a horizontal mode of study – like this reading group – are unbound by the university's temporal enclosures and encourage organically developed ways of relating. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten discussed study in relation to their work on the undercommons:

[FRED]...When I think about the way we use the term 'study,' I think we are committed to the idea that study is what you do with other people. It's talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice.⁷²

While not a direct contradiction to the managerial temporalities generally imposed by institutional spaces of education, the reading group had the

⁶⁹ Nicolas Go, "Temporality and Emergences in Education," Kronoscope 12, no. 2 (2012).

⁷⁰ Meyerhoff, Beyond Education.

⁷¹ Jiménez, "Finding Moments of Studying," 40.

⁷² Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 110.

flexibility of neither adhering to chronological expectations like the academic year nor completing 'learning goals' by the end of a semester because it operated according to the temporal rhythm of an undercommons – not the institution.

Temporal Pleasures in the "Undercommons"

The commons refer to commonly held resources, such as land, services, food, and so on. The enclosure of the commons correlated to the privatization of the body. In education, Meyerhoff connects the enclosure of the commons and privatization of the body to education's vertical mode of study, in which the horizontal temporalities of the commons are discarded in favor of a distinct and managed timeline. Educational spaces like the university are often imagined as a type of commons. Learning, as well as the academic freedom necessary to support it, is an integral component of a common good – even though "academic freedom" and "common good" are abstractions with shared meanings taken as self-evident. However, especially in the case of state universities, this view mistakenly conflates public with commons. The ideal of "the commons" as consensus contends that the commons are freely accessible spaces open with resources available to all. The transport of the undercommons in relation to a public university in Aotearoa New Zealand that this

⁷³ Silvia Federici, Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2014).

⁷⁴ Meyerhoff, Beyond Education.

⁷⁵ If the university is conceived of as a commons, then what are its commonly held resources? See Krystian Szadkowski and Jakub Krzeski (2021), "The Common Good and Academic Freedom in Poland," *Higher Education Quarterly* 76 no. 3. Szadkowski and Krzeski noted that the universalized abstractions of "academic freedom" and "common good" as integral to the functioning of the university is very rooted in US-university culture. They present a way to approach these two concepts in a relational manner and outside of the US-centric university model.

⁷⁶ See Lauren Berlant, On the Inconvenience of Other People (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 78. Referring to the dilapidated Detroit Public Schools book depository, Berlant commented: "Any library or depository is a public resource of sorts, but a public is not a common: institutions narrow access to what circulates through the patronage norms of philanthropy, the ownership norms of most publishing institutions, and the obligations of the membership card."

⁷⁷ Berlant critiqued this nostalgic view, instead turning to Harney and Moten's "undercommons" to develop their concept of the commons that, like the undercommons, "move[s] away from good-life fantasies that equate frictionlessness with justice and satisfaction with the absence of frustration" (2022, 81).

is an incomplete narrative. The neoliberal university's habits extend beyond national borders, as their examination of student movements protesting proposed budget cuts at the University of Auckland demonstrates. Lamusse, Morgan, Rākete, and Birchall sharply observed that while the university may present itself as a commons for learning and knowledge, *the students will still have to pay for it.*⁷⁸

Through our collective study, the reading group disrupted temporal rhythms of the managerial university. Why did the reading group enact an undercommons instead of a commons? This is due to its existence within the physical and temporal confines of the university.

For Harney and Moten, the undercommons persistently resides in temporal in-between spaces. Unlike the commons, the undercommons is not a teleological ideal. There is no achieving a uniform, replicable undercommons because first, the undercommons is always present and second, the undercommons – unlike the smooth consensus enigmatic of a pastoral commons⁷⁹ - runs on tension. Harney and Moten demonstrated this tension through the "subversive intellectual." The subversive intellectual is both necessary to and reviled by the university. The subversive intellectual knows this yet remains in the space-time of the university. Harney and Moten described the subversive intellectual: "Her labor is as necessary as it is unwelcome. The university needs what she bears but cannot bear what she brings. And on top of all that, she disappears. She disappears into the underground, the downlow lowdown maroon community of the university, into the undercommons of enlightenment, where the work gets done, where the work gets subverted, where the revolution is still black, still strong."80 Harney and Moten's undercommons is dynamic, demonstrating that it is possible to maneuver within the contradictions of the university whose infrastructure is premised on colonial mastery that Singh speaks of. Lauren Berlant noted that this undercommons approach does not make any claims of a solution for an ideal commons but rather ways to critically examine the interstices where this work is already being done. Here, Harney and Moten's undercommons highlight the value of disruption, friction, and antagonism to reinvigorate the affective body in the university.

Acknowledging and welcoming polyrhythm⁸¹ allows for multiple speeds, or modes of horizontal study, for creation and interaction with learning.

⁷⁸ T. Lamusse, S. Morgan, E. R\u00e4kete, and A. R. Birchall, "Reading and Rioting: Student Politics Beyond the University," New Zealand Sociology 30, no. 2 (2015), 77.

⁷⁹ Harney and Moten, The Undercommons, 30.

⁸⁰ Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 26, emphasis in original.

⁸¹ Go, "Temporality and Emergences in Education."

Seeking unpredictable pedagogical spaces – like the reading group's flexibility in turning from one text to another, untethered to a syllabus or schedule – required a willingness to let go of the managerial university's temporal discipline while remaining within the university itself. The affective power of time as not entirely human-initiated, echoing Bennett, ⁸² has a place in the exploration of temporal sensations engaged by the reading group within the university's undercommons.

The affective capacity of *pleasurable* temporal sensations provoked by objects and interactions unlimited to the human can occur in many anomalous pedagogical settings. Discussing the inclusion of time in artist Shimon Attie's work, Ellsworth highlighted the occurrence of a temporal hinge: "We find ourselves at a temporal hinge where past and future fold into proximity and create the time between past and future: the interval of change."83 This temporal hinging illustrates the moment(s) and duration of the self's awareness coming into the space-time of the undercommons. Articulating the sensations of time as disruptions and provocations create a way to work through the pedagogical spaces and the body's sensations of Harney and Moten's undercommons.84 Disregarding the pleasure – a sensation – desired by the body of an academic subject, especially a "subversive intellectual" of the undercommons has a cost. Working off of Dylan Trigg's creative reframing of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Nørgård and Aaen considered the prepersonal body as a "thing-me" whose sensations act prior to the disciplining function of the university, noting that "without recognising the thing-me, with all its horrors and desires, as native to the university, we risk losing ourselves as well as the potentials of horror and desire in relation to our thinking, doing and being at the university. The university might end up slicing the academic human condition so thin and subduing the thing-me so thoroughly that the chance for authenticity is undermined and bodily desire – and with it academic desire - disappears."85 The amenability to encountering difference in these modes of temporality and varying pedagogical spaces reveal that feeling the tension of the undercommons – of both existing and not existing within the eyes of the university – can rework the university's disciplinary subjectivity.

This emphasizes self-reflection, awareness of the sensation, and duration – the in-between-ness⁸⁶ – not distinct 'checkpoints' indicating something has

⁸² Bennett, Vibrant Matter.

⁸³ Ellsworth, *Places of Learning*, 68.

⁸⁴ Go, "Temporality and Emergences in Education."

⁸⁵ Nørgård and Aaen, "A University for the Body," 190, emphasis in original.

⁸⁶ Seigworth and Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers."

2een learned.⁸⁷ The habituated refusal to acknowledge emerging sensations wrought by startling, shifting temporal landscapes signals a need to imagine other approaches to sensing time in the university. Rather than working within pre-2020 conceptualizations of fast, slow, and timeless time, thinking through how capacious yet fleeting time feels in the latent undercommons of the university points to possibilities to reimagine our encounters with others and with different temporal imaginaries that resist the managerial desires of the institution.

Conclusion

Whether the university's or my own, temporal sensations demonstrate the contested ways in which bodies and subjectivities maneuver in these spaces of higher education. Time as a disciplinary measure—detailed by Foucault—shapes the subject. However useful Foucault's tools have been to describe temporal constrictions, there remains room to address the increasingly contradictory approaches and sensations of time in the university.

To imbue the informal reading group with any sort of dictated structure is generous. This pedagogical space embraced and enveloped its transitional characteristic – as a group we welcomed moments of learning through an undercommons. The unscheduled proliferation of study spaces shows the potential of affinities motivated and sustained by collective goals rather than the university's imposed educational aims informed by managed temporality. It echoes a longing to feel the different ways that I can engage with time, whether voluntarily sought or involuntarily experienced, and the desire to feel the sensation of time working in congruence with one's experiences. While not quite a hedonistic fantasy of indulging in time, the sensations of time experienced by my participation initiated a voluntary relaxation of my efforts to constantly adhere to a university's sense of time. The pedagogical vulnerability of this letting go enabled the interaction with other ways of sensing: ways dulled due to neglect or a forgotten purpose from lacking value in the contemporary neoliberal rationality approach to learning processes.⁸⁸

Reflecting on felt interactions between the body's modes of experiencing time exposes contemporary tensions to reassess fixed temporal perceptions and linear subjectivities. Numbing possibilities to feel difference prevents the experience of different sensations that provoke new ways of knowing or the discovery of previously unforeseen ways to learn. Attention to temporal

⁸⁷ Ellsworth, Places of Learning.

⁸⁸ Ellsworth, Places of Learning.

sensations opens the possibility of these encounters and are the seeds that can nurture our own disruptions of feeling time to sense a latent undercommons of the university. To expand conceptualizations of time in education through awareness of sensations of time – how time feels during fugitive study – is to refuse the foreclosure of the possibility of other ways of knowing and being in pedagogical projects.

Engaging anomalous sensations of time through horizontal modes of study and the undercommons – demonstrated by my involvement in the reading group – opens the possibility for learning selves in the university beyond those disciplined subjects that the university constructs through constrictive perceptions of time. Gibbs supported the "flourishing" of learning selves, stating, "In these times, I believe that this is a risk both needed and worth running, for it conceives the university as a community of students and academics who are able to change, are in flux and are becoming, through developing capabilities that might liberate potential to be rather than focusing on performativity, teaching-learning and students." The flux, the becoming, the pedagogic potential held by attentiveness to affectivity: these are the approaches that can resist the temporal disciplining of the body-subject in the university and instead nurture our own interactions with the sensations of time in the university's undercommons.

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⁸⁹ Gibbs, "If Time Doesn't Exist," 54–55.

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