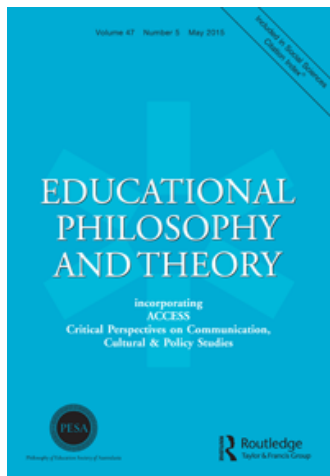


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Being 'Lazy' and Slowing Down: Toward decolonizing time, our body, and pedagogy

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Being ‘Lazy’ and Slowing Down: Toward decolonizing time, our body, and pedagogy

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Abstract

In recent years, scholars have critiqued norms of neoliberal higher education (HE) by calling for embodied and anti-oppressive teaching and learning. Implicit in these accounts, but lacking elaboration, is a concern with reformulating the notion of ‘time’ and temporalities of academic life. Employing a coloniality perspective, this article argues that in order to reconnect our minds to our bodies and center embodied pedagogy in the classroom, we should disrupt Eurocentric notions of time that colonize our academic lives. I show how this entails slowing down and ‘being lazy’.

Keywords: coloniality, temporal, embodied pedagogy, higher education, teaching and learning

Introduction

While time is the most commonly used noun in the English language (Wajcman, 2008), few scholars of higher education (HE) have explicitly engaged the concept (a recent exception is Duncheon & Tierney, 2013), or considered how diverse understandings of time affect scholarship and pedagogy (e.g., Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Pratt, 1998; Tagg, 2003). This is shocking given that we—as faculty, students, and administrators—often refer to ‘time’ in everyday activities in the academy, whether teaching, taking courses, completing administrative duties, conducting research, analyzing data, or writing, particularly in the neoliberal higher education climate.

Many have illustrated the neoliberalization of HE, pointing to how this ensemble of economic arguments and technologies of governance make certain material practices and policies intelligible, practicable, and governable (Baez, 2010). According to the logics underlying this formation, society should construct and produce self-enterprising individuals solely interested in enhancing their human capital. Economic rationality operates as the overarching frame for understanding, evaluating and governing social life. Many suggest that academic work has become more intensified through technologies and through corporate techniques of managerialism, accountability, and

surveillance (e.g., Caanan & Shumar, 2008; Giroux, 2002). Taking up these insights, I will illustrate that critically considering ‘time itself’ will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how neoliberal logics colonize our bodies in the North American academy, but do not preclude important tactics of resistance (cf. Walker, 2009).

Judith Walker (2009) suggests that academic work in a neoliberal context entails ‘both the reification of time and an internalization of the importance of managing time in a demonstrably efficient manner’ (p. 284). She suggests, ‘Quintessentially, academic capitalism is premised on faculty and students both justifying their use of time and seeking to outsmart it’ (p. 285). Taking up Walker’s ideas, I consider how colonial binaries such as superior/inferior, civilized/primitive, and rational/irrational influence and structure conceptions and enactments of the body in scholarship and pedagogy.

By body, I do not employ a wholly discursive notion of the body that privileges its social construction. I instead borrow from Roxana Ng’s (2008) notion of the body in which the spirit–mind–body are interconnected.¹ But, one may wonder: *why do we, as an academic, student, or administrator, want to re-embody our bodies or reconnect to our bodies?* I have three responses. First, the body is inevitably present whether we acknowledge it or not. Instead of ignoring the body, or seeing it as a crutch, embracing it helps us acknowledge that we are psycho-physiological beings (Castle, 2006). Second, it is an important source of knowing that has been ignored, delegitimized, or marginalized (see Rendon, 2009). Bringing awareness to our bodies help us acknowledge and dismantle hegemonic knowledge systems that privilege the mind. Reconnecting to our bodies provides us a different locus of articulation for our theories and experiences (Nguyen & Larson, 2013). Furthermore, acknowledging our bodies helps us bridge theory and practice because the mind cannot will ‘ourselves into a new reality’ (Castle, 2006, p. 56). Re-embodying our bodies helps us find stillness, see more clearly, and focus on the present. Finally, it helps us to lead more healthy and joyous life styles that will sustain our productivity in the academy (Rendon, 2000).

Scholars have taken interest in both anti-oppressive and embodied pedagogy² (e.g., Ng, 2008; Wong, 2004), foregrounding the myriad ways in which racism, classism, sexism, and so on influence education and taking a more phenomenological approach to epistemologies and learning. Building on insights from this body of work, I consider the ways that ‘time’ and temporality intersect these forms of pedagogy. I argue that in order to reconnect to our bodies in the academy and center embodied pedagogy in the classroom, we must reconceptualize and move beyond Eurocentric notions of time that colonize our academic lives. This entails slowing down and ‘being lazy.’ By ‘being lazy’ I am referring to being at peace with ‘not doing’ or ‘not being productive,’ living in the present, and deprivileging the *need for a result* with the passage of time. I use the term ‘lazy’ to provoke my readers, and to prompt interrogation of the negative colonial connotations attached to this term. I reclaim ‘being lazy’ as a transformational heuristic device in the neoliberal academy.

First, I discuss the social construction of time and its link with coloniality. I next highlight how Eurocentric time colonizes our academic lives and impacts our bodies as faculty members, students, and administrators. After formulating a body-centered pedagogy detached from linear time, I conclude by reflecting on some implications of

my analysis for anti-oppressive pedagogy. My intention in this article is to raise questions rather than to provide answers.

Time and Colonial Difference

Even as it silently structures our everyday lives, time is not given or natural; rather, its meanings and forms shift historically and are culturally specific. The concept of time that undergirds the Western academy derives from a Judaeo-Christian notion of time as linear, constant, and irreversible (Lee & Liebenau, 2000). As such the ideas of linear history, progress, and including Darwin's evolutionary theory originate from this linear concept of time. As this linear and unfolding trajectory of time gained prominence, it became possible to quantify time in standardized units. In HE, linear concepts of time underpin our theories of student development, faculty development, etc. For instance, consider how the language of 'stages in development' are all tied to progress, which are in turn connected to linear notions of time and history.

Yet, before the invention of the pendulum clock by Christiann Huygens in 1657, time was measured in relation to physical and biotic phenomenon such as the cycles of the sun, moon, seasons, and harvest (Lee & Liebenau, 2000). Consequently, with the introduction of the clock, time was delinked from human bodies, and human bodies from nature. The clock produced our consciousness of minutes or seconds, and engendered the notions of accuracy and punctuality so familiar to us now. Weber (1958) has noted, as well, the ways in which the intersections of capitalism, religion, and morality, have given time a particular value: it is something that can be 'wasted'. To this end, the idea that if we do not use time properly, then we would remiss salvation in heaven—hence the ideas we have today such as 'waste of time'. More recently, Castells has pointed out that instantaneous communication technologies have shifted our relationship with time. He suggests a 'timeless time' concept (Castells, 2000).

Alongside the technological innovations mentioned above, time became a new commodity of modernity that necessarily enfolded an 'Other' notion of time. According to Mignolo (2011) and Anderson (2011), time is an epistemic tool through which a chronology of difference was created by colonial logic. Time became a trajectory against which to measure indigenous and other subaltern individuals and groups in terms of the degree to which they are out of sync, behind in development, anachronistic, and resistant to progress (Anderson, 2011). Linear Eurocentric notions of time were used to sort individuals into opposing categories such as intelligent/slow, lazy/industrious, saved/unsaved, believer/heathen, developed/undeveloped, and civilized/primitive; in the process, most of the world's people and their knowledge came to stand outside of history (Fabian, 2002). Tuhiwai Smith (2001) argues that colonizers justified their projects by portraying 'others' as having 'deficit models' of time. She states:

The connection between time and work became more important after the arrival of missionaries in the development of more systematic colonization. The belief that natives did not value work or have a sense of time provided ideological justification for exclusionary practices which reached across such areas as education, land development and employment.... It was hard work

to get to heaven and savages were expected to work extra hard to qualify to get into the queue. (p.54)

Using this temporal logic, anything or anyone not aligned with history in forward motion must be converted, saved, developed, or improved. It is not the case that the reckoning of time was not present elsewhere, it is that this particular concept of time was tied to linear progress, which was then used to suggest that only Europe was progressing, while others were in a different period of time (Mignolo, 2011). The colonizing impetus of temporal difference persists today in international HE discourse in the form of terminologies that classify regions and nations as either ‘developed/modern’ or ‘developing/traditional’.

Time has also operated in severing nature from the human body. As Mignolo (2011) argues, the separation of time and space from the cosmological experience of time explain in part the separation of nature from the body: “natural phenomena” takes place out there, in space and time outside of us’ (p. 159). The concept of time functioned to demarcate nature from culture in the eighteenth century, when certain groups were deemed to possess culture while others were associated with nature, making them ideal objects of scientific study. As Quijano (2008) states:

Without this objectification of the body as nature, its expulsion from the sphere of the spirit, the ‘scientific’ theorization of the problem of race... would have hardly been possible. From the Eurocentric perspective, certain races are condemned as inferior for not being rational subjects. Being objects of study, they are, consequently, bodies closer to nature (p. 203).

The complicity of Eurocentric and linear notions of time in the colonial project finds its corollary in contemporary neoliberal logics in HE, even as it takes on a unique form. As I suggest elsewhere (Shahjahan, 2012), neoliberal logic colonized HE by undermining traditional institutional practices and political subjectivities, and capitalizing on fear tactics—‘fear for the survival of one’s country’ amid economic and cultural globalization; ‘fear of the Other’; ‘fear of the survival of the institution’ amid funding cutbacks; and ‘fear of one’s own economic survival’ created by the weakening of unions and reduction of social safety nets (Davies, 2005, p. 11). Neoliberal HE reforms diminish the relationships, ideas, and subjectivities that maintain critical spaces external to pervasive market rationalities (Amsler, 2011). Amid deadlines, fear of survival, and accountability measures, time becomes an important tool for perpetuating neoliberal subjectivity. As hyper extensions of colonial time, neoliberal logics operate to measure, splice, and commodify time in ways that is affectively experienced by individuals navigating the academy.

Why Can’t we be ‘lazy’?: The colonial nature of time

Time is a key coercive force in the neoliberal academy that prompts us to view our own potential ‘lack of fit’ as a form of failure. The multiplying and endless ‘academic tasks’—countless forms of assessments and a hyped up productivity schedule—engendered through neoliberal reforms propagate an ever-present ‘scarcity of time’ affectively and cognitively. Neoliberal technologies of surveillance, management,

measurement, and control are underpinned by linear notions of time that structure or colonize one's career. For instance, individuals on the tenure track in North America are governed by the 'tenure-clock', an imagined and internalized time piece for probationary faculty members who undergo forms of surveillance such as annual reviews to prove their worth to their home university.

These internalized temporalities may have especially exclusionary effects on particular bodies and selves. For example, Brandt (2008) found that the hurried pace of homework, exams, and research associated with molecular biology laboratory class conflicted with a Navajo student's sense of time. Thus, Navajo students internalized a sense of 'being less than' and felt guilty about being in-between home, her parents on the reservation, and her work at university. We all share this predicament, but differently based on our race, gender, class, and ability. Like the Navajo student, if we do not use time productively, we feel 'guilty'. Time has become a precious and scarce commodity. De Walt (2009) suggests that academic colonization takes place as the, 'individual is indoctrinated into the beliefs, norms and practices of the governing institution, discarding or altering his or her former beliefs, practices, and selves' (p. 202). Hyper-competition and individualism tied to neoliberal logic constructs a hierarchy regarding the allocation of time, with the most 'valuable activities' being those that advance one's career and economic survival (Davies, 2005). In summary, an ever-present tension exists among students, faculty, and administrators, whom are constrained by these expectations of time and productivity.

Time and the use of time mark unruly bodies as out of place in academic institutions, much as they marked colonial difference. As Tuhiwai Smith (2001) notes, 'Representations of native life as being devoid of work habits, and of native people being lazy, indolent, with low attention spans, is part of colonial discourse that continues to this day' (pp. 53–54). The proper use of time has become a measure of moral character. Walker (2009) notes:

Accordingly, both academics and students internalize the value of being efficient and productive; time remains a moral issue. Time not spent on producing can be thought of as time theft—procrastination, the deadliest of sins. As we guiltily indulge our time playing spider solitaire and surfing the internet, we are conscious that we will be seen as wasting time and not doing anything useful. (p. 499)

In the neoliberal academy, time is meant to be used to accumulate grants, publications, and patents, as well as to improve teaching evaluations, and structure service commitments: these are the marks of a 'good academic citizen'. Amid modes of quantifying productive time—such as progress reports—time is constructed as a continual efficient progress from the past into the future. Time is already packaged into a particular way of knowing whereby as a particular unit of time progresses, the student's knowledge is supposedly should increase by a particular amount. Such a notion of time perpetuate the colonization process of our personal lives as well. As numerous studies in North America show, faculty members who wish to start a family experience anxiety at the often impossible alignments of the 'tenure clock' and the 'biological clock' (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006).

Linear notions of time are further exacerbated by the intellectual knowledge economy and technology. Neoliberal globalization, time/space compression, and time intensification increasingly take a toll on our bodies (Walker, 2009). On the one hand, ‘we are told we are not controlled by the clock’, yet ‘at the same time we are required to be in control and take control of our activities and our own disciplining’ (Walker, 2009, p. 505). Email has changed the rhythm of work and play:

Nine-to-five, five days a week, and two weeks off a year starts to evaporate as the dominant beat to business life. Professional and personal messages start to commingle: Sunday is not so different from Monday. (Negroponte, cited in Lee & Liebenau, 2000, p. 48)

Before the emergence of wireless telephony, the boundary between work and home life was reflected in the separation of business and home phone lines (with separate numbers); today mobile communication devices connect workers to offices at all hours of the day (Wajcman, 2008). Further, the increasingly normative role of virtual and online educational communities and communication can exacerbate stress and create a perceived ‘time crunch.’ This stress is captured in the words of a faculty member struggling to manage their online time:

Online students think that I am part of the computer sometimes. They type in a question, and they expect the machine to type back an answer right away. But maybe I’m in the midst of my commute, or teaching my three-hour class. When they don’t get a reply for a few hours, they sometimes begin to panic, and send me repeat messages: ‘Professor, I haven’t gotten a reply yet!’ (Beaudoin, 2013, para 2)

We are now colonized to firmly believe that ‘the mad rush is the real world’ (Powers, 2010, p. 13). The entrance of connectivity through technology into the academy moralizes any decision to ‘disconnect’ as bad (Powers, 2010, p. 35).

Fanon’s (1968) reflections on the psychological effects of colonialism, can be analogized to the situation of the psychological effects of neoliberal HE imperatives:

Overnight the Negro [faculty, administrators and students] has been given... frames of references within which he has had to place himself. His metaphysics, or, less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization [linear notions of time] that he did not know and that imposed itself on him. (p. 110)

Yet, what does time have to do with our bodies and in turn embodied pedagogy?

The Temporal Colonization of our Bodies

Time colonizes our bodies by reconfiguring, reorganizing, or ordering it to enact certain postures, language, and gestures that increasingly manifest neoliberal subjectivity. First, time narrows or disrupts our focus on the body. There is always a deadline, a clock, or something to do—and in turn our bodies become ‘mobile devices’ for

conducting this work. We focus on our bodies when we are hungry, stressed, sick, in pain, aging, or have a disability. We also focus on our bodies through exercise or other stress relief endeavors. Within a pervasive time crunch, those parts of the body tied to ‘visible productivity’ such as the head, hands, eyes, and mouth are foregrounded. Our mind is constantly thinking, our eyes perceiving screens or books, our ears listening, and our mouths speaking. Yet, what about those other parts of our bodies: stomach, chest, shoulders, legs, knees, backs, and so on? Amid deadlines and reviews, these non-productive parts of our bodies are rendered invisible.

Amid time scarcity, we now ‘set aside’ time to focus on our bodies: to eat, to work out, to sleep, and to relax. However, these activities ‘invest’ in the body as an instrumental thing meant to carry us through a productive work day. In a dominant culture of disembodiment (Rendon, 2009), discourse around appearance, fitness, and health transform the body into an inert object to be managed by the mind (Freiler, 2008). *Unless, there is a problem with the body such as sickness or pain, it remains invisible and is left unacknowledged.* As they navigate and occupy colonial time, our bodies become ‘things’ to be serviced toward the ends of production and efficiency. Further, the neo-liberalizing academy converts the body into a commodity whose exchange is tied to market value. Instead, our bodies could be acknowledged as valid knowledge producers and elevated having its own value for generating focus, stillness, and more importantly, anchoring us in the ‘now’ moment. To undo this colonization of our bodies, we should strive to ‘embody’ ourselves: inhabit our bodies fully, acknowledge the interconnection between mind, body, and spirit, and contest the insertion of the body into the market.

Time’s colonization of the body is also engrained in the underlying Eurocentric epistemologies and monastic traditions of the academy rooted in dominant mind supremacy epistemologies. A mind-centered framework for knowledge production is also prevalent in liberal educational and anti-oppressive circles. As Ng (2008) points out, contemporary liberal Western and critical education are built on ‘a profound division: the privileging of the mind-intellect over the body-spirit.... The body is relevant only as a vessel that houses the brain, which is seen to be the organ responsible for mind/intellect’ (p. 1). Elaborating on this theme, Wong (2004) suggests:

In a culture of ‘discursive rationality’, the dominant form of knowledge is one that objectifies, organises, conceptualises, normalizes, and dictates. To ‘know’ the world, we categorize what we see and experience in the world—things, people—into concepts and ideas. Instead of being open to the rich moment-to-moment experiences in our encounters with people and things, we ‘know’ and relate to them primarily through our presumed concepts about them. (Restoring ‘Listening’ section, para. 5)

Mind-centered epistemologies serve to dislodge us from our bodies, and relegate other sensorial ways of knowing to the periphery. As such, our bodies as ways of knowing are rendered invisible, and ‘how to describe and interpret actually being embodied and experiencing embodiment in the moment remains awkward and challenging’ (Freiler, 2008, p. 39). Consequently, as in the colonial era, the marginalization of

forms of cultural production or expression that are not deemed rational are marginalized, negated, or ignored in the academy (see Kuokkanen, 2007).

Mind supremacy is ingrained in the Western academy vis-à-vis early monastic traditions. These include: quiet, sitting bodies that are separate from each other, and concentrated on producing and perceiving discourses, not paying attention to other sensations and activities in themselves or others. Working environments are characterized by immobility, lack of physical contact, the exclusion of meals and drinks, and a limited number of visible objects, perpetuating an imperative to focus exclusively on the ‘word’ and ‘to create selectively conscious bodies that are attentive only to discourse, which thus becomes practically separated from every other perception’ (Carozzi, 2005, p. 36). This non-sensational disposition to ‘produce and listen to separate discourses’ is evident when something punctures the regularity of such practices. Carozzi (2005) elaborates:

During a lecture somebody opens a window and a draught of cold air comes in, or voices or music can be heard from the next room, or food can be smelled—all these bodily sensations are immediately experienced by participants who have been trained in the ritual as a surprise, a nuisance or an interference that must be suppressed. Under such circumstances, participants shush, impose silence, get up to close doors and windows. (p. 30)

Scholastic rituals in classrooms and meeting rooms subjugate and construct our bodies into academic vessels whose sole purpose is to produce, perceive, and interpret the word. The theoretically thinking self becomes linked to the conquering body and our bodies become vessels to serve the colonial master—our minds (Carozzi, 2005).

The mind/body duality has roots in colonial logics that conceived non-White races as tied more tightly to their bodies than their minds. The ‘Other races’ ‘were considered to be more natural in their instincts, and sometimes even viewed as having animal passions—more given over to the body and helpless in the face of desires that were both physical and sexual. This idea was linked to a perceived lack of control over the senses that was achieved through the development of the mind’ (Sharp, 2009, p. 37). Colonial improvement schemes capitalized on mind supremacist logic in assigning the mind a role in domesticating and controlling the body.

Even as the body is invisibilized in the academy, the body does not always remain silent. Academic bodies are plagued by overuse, back problems, obesity, and so on. Further, some bodies are more visible than others. People of color, women, and people with disabilities are marked as different while other ‘normal’ bodies are considered to be invisible or objective (Titchosky, 2006). It is these same deviant ‘others’ who, through processes of colonization, have become identified with the body. This objectification and devaluation of persons as bodies marginalizes minorities, women, and people with disabilities as they attempt to navigate a neoliberalizing academy.

Embodying Different Notions of Time: Slowing down in the classroom

I suggest that to *re-embody* the body in the learning environment, we need to slow down, be mindful, and embrace present moments. *How can we re-imagine learning,*

teaching, and a curriculum in light of slowing down? How can we embody 'laziness' in the classroom?

First, we must interrogate the epistemological foundations of knowledge that privilege linear notions of time. Amid product-oriented learning tied to future outcomes, sensory ways of knowing are relegated to the sidelines. Slowing down and focusing on the present allows us to shift our focus back to our bodies and re-inhabit them consciously. I suggest that we embody a 'less is more approach' in the learning environment and take a 'not do' approach to accumulating tasks. Hart (2004) suggests, that we tend to focus on the 'time on task', rather than the 'quality of attention' we bring to the task which requires us 'to not do for a few minutes to be more available for doing the task at hand' (p. 35). For instance, focusing on our breath and our body helps ground us in the present and nurture focused attention, escaping the pitfalls of distraction or racing thoughts. This 'not to do' and mindful approach is particularly salient for anti-oppressive pedagogy. Wong (2004) highlights this point:

Being fully present with the here-and-now through the practice of mindfulness, we discover the richness and untidiness of the present-moment experience, and notice the limit of the concepts, categories and ideologies we have lived by. We begin to recognize how our self-identifications are related to the dominant discourses and systemic relations that determine what is good and bad, what is desirable and undesirable in the world we live in. (Mindfulness Discomfort section, para. 6)

Furthermore, incorporating rituals become an important way to add these 'not do' ingredients into the classroom. Ritualizing learning in new ways by beginning or ending the class with a prayer, the burning of medicines, cleansing ceremonies, and/or the telling of personal stories are some activities through which scholars have integrated different ways of knowing and acknowledged the holistic, embodied nature of instructors and students (see Shahjahan, Wagner & Wane, 2009; Tisdell, 2003).

Others might center silence in the classroom. Unlike Western theories of learning and knowing (e.g., behaviorist, cognitivist, humanist, and/or constructivist perspectives), silence and 'nothingness' are paramount in Eastern philosophies of education. As Nakagawa (2000) points out: 'There has never been the case in Eastern philosophy, in which language has ever won the highest status; rather, an "abnormal" degree of disrespect for language has stood out.... [I]nstead silence has achieved the highest importance' (p. 145). Eastern pedagogical thinking sees language and words as fundamental obstacles to an exploration into deeper dimensions of reality (Nakagawa, 2000). To this end, listening would be emphasized, rather than talking. With an increased emphasis on active learning in the classroom, many suggest the role of creative lectures, discussion, and problem-based learning (see Brookfield & Preskill, 1999). Yet, such pedagogic strategies emphasize the 'word' rather than its absence.

Fostering a space for the 'unspoken' and incorporating time for reflection and contemplation is important. This 'can begin with simply appreciating the object, idea, or person before us. This quality of attention moves us emotionally closer to the object of our inquiry' (Hart, 2004, p. 32). Wong (2004) suggests that mindfulness practice within anti-oppressive pedagogy allows students 'to realize, not just conceptually, but

also emotionally, bodily and spiritually, how their existence and experiences are structured by their location in the larger web of life and relations' (Mindfulness Discomfort section, para. 7). Similarly, Orr (2002) argues that mindfulness practice in the classroom can help address non-cognitive forms of attachment to certain ideas that may remain despite intellectual shift. For instance, students may intellectually affirm anti-essentialist arguments about race, gender, and class, but 'continue to live as if essentialism were true, clinging on non-intellectual levels to reified ideas of self and others' (Orr, 2002 p. 492).

Slowing down is about focusing on building relationships, not about being fixed on products, but accepting and allowing for uncertainty and being at peace without knowing outcomes. As such, we should unpack what notions of time underpin learning theories. Dominant theories of learning in HE suggest that learning is either a product, a process, behavioral change, or human development (Ashworth, Brennan, Egan, Hamilton, & Saenz, 2008). Most of these theories are focused on the mind and individual development. Furthermore, Western theories of learning focus on 'how learning takes place and to enhance its quality' (Nakagawa, 2000, p. 151). Hence, a 'less is more' approach would challenge the notion of 'learning outcomes' that presume linear notions of time. The latter would be a contradictory approach to the non-linear notion of time approach because 'un-learning' is more important. A non-linear notion of time denotes non-duality—the movement of time that is empty of the need for a result. Embodying non-linear time means shedding the conquering self, and living in the moments of silence that calm and nurture the spirit (Some, 1994).

Second, we need to 'welcome' rather than 'plan for' sensory of ways of knowing that go beyond the mind, perhaps employing more embodied activities in spaces of teaching and learning: meditation, movement, and so on. In her classroom, Freiler (2008) employs a number of embodied pedagogical tactics:

...focus on sensorimotor experience and sensory perception through diaphragmatic breathing, guided imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, yoga, and a 'camp fire' guided visualization experience; attention to body inscriptions, delving into an awareness of how bodies are inscribed, marked, and scarred using critical incidents on body inscriptions and bodily experience of power differentials in bowing; focus on embodiment connected to creative expression, symbolic representation, and healing facilitated through music, dance, and artistic expression. (p. 42)

Freiler's examples highlight the myriad ways we can reconnect to the body in the classroom. The use of food, music, drama, and other sensory experiences connected to course readings are tools that acknowledge different ways of knowing (Shahjahan, 2004). This means acknowledging the body in the learning journey and respecting and paying attention to it in the classroom (Nguyen & Larson, 2013). As such we need to reduce the cognitive conceptual content so that we have 'more time' to acknowledge the body. Embodied exercises open spaces for learners to, 'look around and to notice new modes of learning' and present crucial questions that direct and stimulate discussion on revaluing embodiment in learning (Clark, 2001, p. 91). However, we need to be critically self-reflexive in that approaching the body is highly

personal and private in nature for most individuals. Of course, embodied pedagogies (as is also the case with other pedagogies) can impact students very differently. Nonetheless, we can need to nurture, ‘a level of comfort for learners to directly participate in and reflect on experiences of embodiment in the immediate moment while leaving room for observation’ (Freiler, 2008, p. 45). In short, these strategies above ‘cannot be willed, as it arises spontaneously, but it can be welcomed’ (Hart, 2004, p. 34).

However, none of these changes can take place without changing policy discourses and resource allocation in HE. How does one deal with the tensions of re-embodiment oneself or ‘slowing down’ within a larger structural context where one may be ‘left behind’? With the dominance of new public management in HE, where resource allocation is linked to performativity, linear time is dominant, if invisible (Walker, 2009). Tied to these accountability and managerial techniques is a call to focus on student learning outcomes underpinned by policy discourse and measures that continue to privilege the mind (e.g., Arum & Roska, 2011). As Arduini (2004) argues, the focus on outcome-based learning, ‘reduces teaching and learning to interchangeable units or outcomes that can be measured’ which takes away from a classroom space where teaching and learning can nurture ‘creativity and spontaneity’ (p. 57). These trends highlight the structural barriers to slowing down and incorporating the body into the learning environment, since from the latter standpoint knowledge production is of necessity a slow process.

Elsewhere, I suggest that to dislodge HE from neoliberal personhood, ‘our object of transformational resistance is not the past, but begins with a new vision of ourselves and HE difficult to imagine when we are constrained by “scarcity thinking”’ (Shahjahan, 2012, p. 11). Slowing down disrupts a subjectivity that ties time with rationality or productivity, or, more importantly, with being civilized or modern. It is about inviting abundance thinking in the present and focus on our bodies now for its intrinsic value as a knowledge producer, rather than later, or for some other extrinsic value.

I still struggle with ‘slowing down’ in the academy given the dominance of scarcity thinking unleashed by neoliberal logic and the colonial nature of time underpinning it. Nonetheless, we can engage in experiments of imagination, asking: Productivity to what ends and at what expense? Can we re-imagine productivity? Learning for what? What assumptions about human ‘being’ are informing the policy discourses and resource allocation within the academy? So far my discussion of the learning environment has mostly taken place in the context of brick and mortar class rooms, which leaves us with the lingering question: how do we acknowledge the body as a way of knowing and center a slowing down approach in the online environment? This would be an interesting question to explore in future research. In summary, we need more research that looks at the way students, faculty, and administrators conceptualize and use time in HE, and the impact it has on their bodies, inside and outside the classroom. I believe we need to ‘meditate’ on and/or explore these questions in future research to insert the flavor, color, and in general life to savor academia.

Conclusion

In a culture of performativity, rapid communication, and mobility, slowing down seems to be the antithesis of what needs to happen in the academy. Slowing down, or decolonizing time, is about reconnecting to our embodied selves and nurturing ‘depth’ in our work for equity and social justice in the academy, and about improving our quality of life and work. Interestingly, in Japanese/Chinese characters, ‘busy’ represents ‘soul is dead’ (Mayuzumi, 2006, p. 14). It is important to take pause ‘to ask how one’s brains of space and time are accepted as given, universal, natural but actually exclude other shapes of space-time and block access to sources of knowledge’ (Anderson, 2011, p.107). In other words, we need to embody different notions of time to access alternative sources of knowledge, including embodied ways of knowing.

I am suggesting that we need to resist notions of action that are constructed as ‘productive’ by particular underpinning of time. Slowing down is about embodying alternative personhoods in the learning environment, remaining mindful of how a dominant concept of time has hijacked our every day lives. Unfortunately, while our minds are zipping, and our bodies are dragging behind trying to keep at pace, we are losing our spirit, and soon are left to ponder about our spirits when we are lying in our hospital or death beds (see Rendon, 2000). Instead, if we were to listen to our bodies and see the illusion of separateness between mind–body–spirit—the illusion of the Cartesian dualism—we will come closer to our whole selves. I would suggest embodying alternative time and reclaiming our bodies is essential for anti-oppressive pedagogy in the context of HE.

Notes

1. Ng’s theorization of the body differs from that put forth by John Dewey (1938). While the latter is influential in addressing the mental/manual split and continues to have salience in centering experience in learning process and practice, Dewey still assumes an ontological mind–body split, and insufficiently addresses the spiritual dimension of embodied experience.
2. Embodied pedagogy presumes that we are ‘attentive to our bodies and its experiences as a way of knowing’ (Freiler, 2008, p. 40). By anti-oppressive education, I mean a classroom pedagogy that addresses the myriad ways in which racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of subjugation and oppression play out in educational institutions as well as broader society (Kumashiro, 2000).

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