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# Slow Time, School Time, and Strange Times: Opposing and Entangled Discourses on Temporality in Teenagers' Everyday Lives During a Pandemic

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## Abstract

In Spring 2020, the Finnish government declared a state of emergency over the Coronavirus outbreak, which led to schools moving to remote teaching, cancelling all kind of event in society, recommending social distancing and the government encouraging children and adults to take walks. This article sets out to identify and discuss contradicting, complementing, entangling discourses on temporality in a public diary written by teenagers during a pandemic. The data consists of a corona diary published in a local newspaper, through which 34 pupils aged 13 to 16 provide their version of how a day unfolded during six weeks of the beginning of the state of emergency. The identified discourses include: regulation through temporality, change through temporality, normality and normativity through temporality, living present, acceleration and deceleration.

## Keywords

Temporality, acceleration, deceleration, COVID-19, diary, distance teaching, social distancing, living present

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## Introduction

I think that corona has ‘stopped time’.

This citation is written by Tamara, Grade 9, a pupil of a Finnish lower secondary school<sup>1</sup> in a corona diary published by a local newspaper. In this diary, 34 pupils from the same school each wrote one diary entry, with the aim to give their version of how a day unfolded. The diary covers six weeks during the Spring of 2020, and it starts two weeks after the Finnish government together with the President of the Republic declared a state of emergency over the Coronavirus outbreak. The diary ends in the middle of May, on the same day the schools reopened and distance learning ended.

When the Emergency Powers Act was implemented, schools closed, contact teaching was suspended, and distance learning through digital learning environments was rapidly organized instead. During this time, restaurants were only open for take away, all events were cancelled, distance working was recommended to everyone who had the opportunity, and children and adults were encouraged to take walks outside. During the Spring, tests were taken only by people with severe symptoms, which make it difficult to estimate cases of COVID-19<sup>2</sup>. During less than a month, Uusimaa the region where the capital is located, was closed so no one could enter or leave the region unless they needed to because of work. The school is, however, not located in this region.

In regards to COVID-19, important research has been done and scholarly comments given on, for example, the effect of COVID-19 on youth mental health (Rider et al., 2021), the pandemic’s impact on vulnerable and disabled youth (Mietola & Ahonen, 2021; Roberts et al., 2021), the effect of lockdown on sports and youth (Nassar et al., 2020; Russo et al., 2020; Watson & Koontz, 2021), youth and employment (Bengtsson et al., 2021; Cook et al., 2021), and youth and leisure (Panarese & Azzarita, 2021). Many, but not all, of these studies were conducted within health studies, medicine, psychology, sociology, or sports medicine. This article is, however, a qualitative study in the intersection of ethnology and interdisciplinary narrative studies, which focuses on temporality in texts written during everyday life in a pandemic. The article discusses how a time of local and national emergency leads to possibly new or different time constructions and discourses among youth aged 13 to 16, with a public corona diary as empirical material. As Adams (1995) states, ‘the dominant approach to time, the way time is conceptualized, related to and used, tends to be established during childhood’. More specifically, the purpose of this article is to identify contradicting, complementing, entangling discourses on temporality in a public diary written by teenagers during a pandemic.

The article does not study mental states or employ a psychology or medicine perspective, instead the article contributes to critical time studies which is central to a plethora of disciplines within the humanities and social sciences where youth studies are included. I argue that experiences and constructions of temporality are an interesting subject of study, as they take part in creating the conditions youth live under. We do not yet know how and if everyday life of both children, youth and adults will continue to be affected by the pandemic or if and how the pandemic will take part in constructing experiences of temporalities. For future research it is therefore

important to study contemporary data also in the beginning of the pandemic. It opens for, for example longitudinal and comparative studies in the future.

A backdrop for the article is, that time is fundamentally embedded in the social forms of life which constitute it and which are simultaneously constituted by it (Adam, 1990, 1995). In the analysis, however, several scholars' work on temporality function as theoretical tools for the analysis, but also as analytical tools that complement and challenge each other. The use of multiple theoretical perspectives aims at discussing youth's experiences of temporality in a multi-layered and nuanced way. Each section starts with a short begins with an introduction to the theoretical perspective that guide the analysis, and each section focuses on different aspects of the complexity of temporality.

After this introduction, I discuss the empirical data and method. This is followed by four analytical sections focusing on discourses that became apparent during the qualitative textual analysis. First, how time is experienced and organized through clock time, institutional time, and regulated time, hence, the discourses of regulation and change through temporality. Second, the focus is on the construction of a routine through the formation of normality and normativity, hence, the discourses of normality and normativity through temporality. In the third analytical section, the discourse of living present is discussed in relation to narrations of the past and future. Lastly, rhythm is examined through examples of entries that express acceleration and deceleration, which also form the fifth and sixth identified discourse. In these analytical sections the theoretical framework and more specific research questions for the analysis are included.

## Data and Method

The data consists of a corona diary published during six weeks in Spring 2020 in a local newspaper in Finland. This period of a little over six weeks covers the first stretch of social distancing and distance teaching and the beginning of the Coronavirus outbreak. In the article I have dated the entries and added the week according to how long social distancing and distance schooling has gone on. In the diary, 34 pupils of a lower secondary school each wrote one entry consisting of approximately 350–550 words. The task, when writing the diary, was to 'give their version of how a day precedes' (Teacher, 29 March 2020, week three). Apart from writing, the pupils also included two to three photographs or drawings they had made. The students are Finland–Swedish, with Swedish as their first language in the officially bilingual country, and live in one of Finland's bigger cities.

As the data for this article is limited to the diary, I am unable to ask the pupils questions related to their experiences of everyday life and temporality during the pandemic. In addition, I am unable to ask them to further elaborate their diary entries or ask about their thoughts about the diary writing task or how they chose to write the way they wrote. The pupils' contextualization of the data is therefore missing. While, due to these circumstances, the data could be considered as fragmentary, I also find it to be rich when it comes to contradicting, complementing, entangling discourses on temporality.

In this article, I chose not to name the school, city, or students for ethical reasons. It is, however, important to note for the study and analysis that the entries are not

anonymous in the newspaper, as they are signed by the student's first name, family name and grade. Although the city is densely populated, the pupils belong to a minority, as only 5% of its inhabitants are Finland-Swedish. It is also important to note that the entries were not initiated by me as a researcher. Instead, their first-language teacher was the initiator. Most students belong to classes specialized in sports, and apart from extra sports, they also have more classes in their first language, which is reinforced by the school. The first and last entries were written by the teacher. In the first entry (29 March 2020, week three), the teacher states:

This diary was a very spontaneous idea, and one could not know how long it would go on. I started it by asking for volunteers in one class and after a while I looked for new authors in other classes.

Even if the data is referred to as a diary, I do not view it as such. The pupils wrote only one entry each, and even if the opening line most often used is 'hello again', the pupil never returned to the diary as a writer. When writing, pupils knew they would be published under their own name in the local newspaper. The entries also show that pupils were aware of the conventions of a diary as a genre.

The focus on data from pupils of a lower secondary school was not predetermined or an intentional choice. The focus on a lower secondary school does, however, have implications for the study. All pupils still live with their parents and are teens with some independence, as they can drive mopeds and moped cars in the higher grades.

The method of analysis is qualitative textual analysis. With temporality in mind, I intended to identify narratives, words, and expressions related to temporality, with the aim to identify discourses. After I traced the narratives, these narrations on temporality were subsequently analysed using the theoretical framework.

Following gender scholar Mary Talbot (2007), discourses are viewed as structures of possibility and constraint; hence, they are social constructions with a long history in the organization and circulation of knowledge. In the article, textual analysis is a method of showing how particular texts take up elements of different discourses, articulate them, and consequently 'knit them together' (O'Sullivan et al., 1994). Inspired by media scholar Alan McKee (2001), I define context as other texts that surround a text, but also as the rest of the text, the genre of the text, and the wider public setting in which a text is circulated. For this article, the contexts are, for example, the pandemic and the way Finland as a state related to the pandemic, the publication of the diary in a local newspaper and it not being anonymous, the public and media discourse on the pandemic, the diary being related to a school context, and the diary as a genre.

## Analyses and Discussion

### *Marking Time: Clock Time, Institutional Time, and Regulated Time*

The focus in this section is on occasions when specific hours and specific time references are mentioned in the diary entries. I ask, how these can be understood and how they are contextualized in the diary and in relation to everyday life during a pandemic. Partly because the diary is initiated by a teacher and connected to voluntary schoolwork, I find it not surprising that time references are connected to

school. On the other hand, it is not surprising as school is a big part of the life of youth aged 13 to 16. Additionally, the time of clocks is unquestionably the dominant time experience in contemporary Western education (Adam, 1995). The practices of marking time, ordering it into segments, or anchoring it in recurring and significant events (Bash, 2000) are ways of reading everyday life and school life. School days are always temporally and spatially punctured (Gordon et al., 1999).

As mentioned, there are in general, a great number of time references and specific hours in the diaries, which is not unexpected given the genre. In addition, time references are expected as many of them are mentioned when the pupils write about school time. This follows Adam, 1995, 61), who writes that ‘time markers bind pupils and staff into a common schedule within which their respective activities are structured, paced, timed, sequenced and prioritized’. When analysing the data one can also see how marking time can be a way of showing and capturing change. This is visible in the following citation (Adam, Grade 9, 5 May 2020, week eight), in which everyday life during the pandemic has come to mean mornings of sleeping in, school often starting later than normal, and no need to worry about commuting time:

On my Tuesdays during quarantine, I do not wake up until 8:55. Our school starts at 9 every day except on Fridays. If I wake up five minutes before school starts, there is time to get up from bed and do everything I need to do before school starts.

Apart from showing the marking of time as change, the citation points to Felski’s (2000) understanding of Bloch’s term ‘synchronous non-synchronicity’ and the cultural politics of time. According to Felski (2000, p. 3), ‘it acknowledges that we inhabit both the same time and different times: individuals coexist at the same historical moment, yet often make sense of this moment in strikingly disparate ways’. While time and space are still regulated by the school as an institution, in pandemic times, Adam foremost focuses on the possibility to wake up only five minutes before school starts. This citation reflects the sense of subjective time in a social world.

At the same time, the time markers in the citation above can be analysed as a way of making strange corona times more manageable. The data show that school time acquires an important and uniform role during the pandemic and state of emergency, as the day is divided according to the school’s time markers. Pupils mention not only when they get up, but also at what time different classes start and when school ends:

School day started at 9 sharp. [...] Right when math class ended, Finnish class started. [...] I worked for about one hour on [the first language assignment] until I decided that it was enough for the day. It was about two o’clock when I ended schoolwork (Jonathan, Grade 8, 16 April 2020, week six).

I had three blocks of work ahead of me. When the first assignments came at around 10 o’clock I started, it was biology on the timetable (Maria, Grade 9, 3 April 2020, week three).

Although pupils probably viewed marking time as an essential characteristic of the diary as a genre, their mentioning of clock time can also be understood in relation to sociologist Anu Alanko’s (2010) study on the wishes of Finnish pupils in lower secondary school. One of the most common wishes was to have a clock on the wall

in every classroom. Alanko (2010) interprets the absence of a clock on the wall as a way for adults to deprive pupils of the possibility for time management and therefore control the classroom and its pupils. In the quotes above, we can see examples of both strict time management and more freedom for students to decide when they end school. Still, time markers are present during remote learning. Apart from deciding when they have studied enough or getting up right before school starts, some entries also show how pupils have more possibility to time-manage eating, which is illustrated below (Fiona, Grade 8, 15 April 2020, week five):

I usually combine lunch and dinner after a school day.

Instead of eating lunch when allocated in the timetable of the school, Fiona makes her own arrangements. The text is written in the beginning of week three, and Fiona states that she already has a routine or usual way of doing things during distance teaching. Ambivalent feelings towards distance teaching are more common in entries in April and May, when the pupils have experienced it for a while. But examples are also visible earlier (Laura, Grade 9, 8 April 2020, week four):

What I like most about distance teaching is that it is pretty free and not so stressful. At the same time, I do miss school and the normal everyday life.

The time of a school day before the pandemic—the normal everyday life in school—was divided into instructional time and non-instructional time. The former consists of time spent in class and the latter of things such as lunch, recess, and moving between classes. As the pupils were at home during the pandemic and all teaching was done via computers, the entries show that they rarely had recess or time between classes. Even if there was a bit more space for pupils' own time management during remote school, institutional time—constituted, regulated, and surveilled temporality (Rosen, 2017)—is present. This can be seen in the following citation, in which Jonathan writes about the start of a school day (Jonathan, Grade 8, 16 April 2020, week five):

Everyone was almost right away present, but we waited a couple of minutes for the last ones.

To understand this citation, the term institutional time can be combined with the term chrononormativity (cf. Freeman, 2010), which entails the use of time for organizing individual bodies to achieve the highest level of productivity. Hence, people are tied to each other and made to feel united through certain arrangements of time. Clock time is a central organizing principle in the industrialized world (Adam, 1995), which the entries show to be true in the school world as well. Things such as school bells and timetables serve 'as political tools, used to regulate, control, and differentiate' (Rosen, 2017, p. 375). The diaries usually refer to the rest of the day as afternoon, evening, or leisure time, if some kind of time markers are mentioned at all, but more specific time markers than this are not mentioned. Time outside of learning seldom consist of clock time.



### *Normality Through Temporality, Normativity and Routine*

As shown in the last section marking time can be a way of structuring a day and constructing routine and control among other possibilities. While focusing on clock time in that section, other ways of constructing temporality in everyday life is in focus in this chapter. As Felski (2000) stresses, continuity and routine are crucial in people's lives. In this section, I discuss them as part of constructing normality. If everyday life is viewed as a temporal term and refers to repetitive activities that happen day after day (Felski, 2000, p. 81), I ask, how repetition and routine is part of everyday life at the beginning of a pandemic, when one might think that many things are new? Central for my analysis is also philosopher Henri Lefebvre's (2004) understanding of cyclical rhythms and repetitions as co-constructions for everyday life and related to societal norms and social forms. A further question for this section is how cyclical rhythms are present in the diary entries, and how normality during state of emergency is constructed both by the pupils, but also influenced by the government.

I begin the analysis by referring to a very short quote, the first sentence of Fabian's entry (Grade 8, 17 April 2020, week five).

Again, a day during the corona pandemic, but it is nevertheless Friday.

In this quote, even if it is very short, it is packed with temporalities. In the entry the repetitiveness, the strange times, but also the everydayness and normality are all present. Despite strange times, Fridays occur. The world is organized and made sense of through repetition (Felski, 2000). Repetitions and the normal can be understood through thinking of time as circular. Signs of the circular and the normal can be identified in nature, which the following citation is an example of (Adrian, Grade 9, 7 April 2020, week four):

By the water I saw that the swan couple had returned to the same place for breeding as earlier years.

Through the entry as a whole, I can read that the observation provides comfort to Adrian. Apart from signs in nature, annual holidays also form circular temporality, and in continuation a sense of normality. 'Easter occurred during this strange time', writes a pupil. Apart from Easter, the holidays Walpurgis Night and Mother's Day fell during the time of distance teaching. Despite the pandemic, they occur, and all of them are mentioned in the diaries as holidays containing some familiar elements while also differing from earlier years. According to Lefebvre (2004), this cyclical repetition in the form of days, seasons, and monthly cycles and linear repetition in the form of social practices, movements, and imposed structures are distinct, but they also interfere with one another. In the examples mentioned above, this is symbolized by calendar holidays being infused with social practices and norms.

Another recurring thing in the data is morning exercise, which is not very surprising, as many of the pupils attend classes specialized in sports. In addition, exercise becomes a way of organizing the day and constructing normality. Robert (Grade 9, 30 March 2020, week three) writes:



Hello again! Today I woke up at about 8 o'clock to maintain the everyday routines. I do my daily morning workout, which takes approximately half an hour. It is just after that that it is time for breakfast. The school day starts at 9 o'clock, and I must hurry with my morning routines, just as it was during normal circumstances.

Staying with routines is a way of creating a modified version of the pre-pandemic everyday life and establishing normality. Veronica (Grade 9, 14 April 2020, week five) takes note of this in their corona diary when writing:

I am stunned at how people can so easily adjust to such different and completely unthinkable situations, how a person can incorporate a routine and a feeling of normality.

As sociologist Hartmut Rosa (2013) notes, the synchronization requirements of society shape and prescribe our practices. However, in the examples above, it is not necessarily synchronization requirements that require the pupils to structure and construct their day around exercise, but societal norms and requirements. When the state of emergency was declared by the Finnish government together with the President of the Republic, daily routines and exercise were emphasized. During the continued televised press conferences with the Finnish government throughout the months of remote teaching and social distancing, routines and exercise were stressed time and time again. By keeping to routines and exercising, one continued to be a good citizen and a part of normative practices during the pandemic. Hence, a circular and new repetitive temporality was formed, which in turn created a partly new normality. This can be understood through the term governmentality, which entails techniques and procedures to direct human behaviour (Foucault, 1991). One technique is self-discipline; hence, governmental practices create compliant subjectivities. However, I am hesitant to emphasize governmentality, since a pandemic, the new situation, and the executed Emergency Powers Act were unprecedented. Because of the 'strange times', it is likely people would have embraced routines and exercise regardless of the government emphasizing them. Another point is that repetitions of rhythms complicate the understanding of modernity as permanent progress and acceleration (Rosa, 2013), which I will return to in the final analytical section.

### *Past and Future in the Living Present*

Temporality may be chronological and linear, but also the opposite, as past, present, and future can be interwoven and co-present (Bear, 2014) or temporality connotating the messy, moving relations between the past, present, and future (Harootunian, 2007; Ingold, 2007; Lorenz & Bevernage, 2013; McLeod, 2017). In this section, I ask how the past, present and future is presented in the entries. Furthermore, when writing about the past, present and future, what is expressed and brought to the front in the diary entries? This is discussed and analysed through the concept of the 'living present' (Loewen Walker, 2014), which refers to the past as being continually reimagined in the present and to the practice of looking towards the future while drawing on the potential of the present (Colebrook, 2010). Following gender scholar Rachel Loewen Walker (2014, p. 47), the living present offers 'a dynamic engagement

with temporality, one where the past is continually reimagined in its present invocations'. In other words, the notion of the present as a fixed 'now' is challenged. Below follow two citations through which the living present can be discussed:

Our corona everyday life continues, and one starts to get used to everyone in the family being at home. My everyday life has changed a lot compared to the time before corona. In March I still practiced football like hell and met my friends. I had football training almost every day (Anthony, Grade 7, 28 April 2020, week seven).

When we were still in school, I used to meet my friends, cousins, and grandparents. My weekends used to be filled with a programme: schoolwork, exercise, and friends (Freya, Grade 7, 25–26 April 2020, week six).

In a sense, one could argue that there is a divide between the present and the past in these examples, but I argue that it is more complex than that. This complexity means that I am not only analysing a present 'corona time' but also a past and possible futures. In the examples, past experiences and practices contribute to the experience of the corona present. In turn, and following Loewen Walker (2014), the future is also a dimension of the past and the present. A plethora of entries mention the future. A few of them concern team sports practices and competitions that pupils hope will start, while others concern the school. In April, two pupils write:

I hope that we will be able to return to school before the term ends (Stella, Grade 9, 2 April 2020, week three).

Let us see if the school still opens during Spring, but so far, we take it one day at a time. One can always slowly start to wait for the Summer holidays (Fabian, Grade 8, 17 April 2020, week five).

Hope and longing are present in both citations. According to philosopher Ernst Bloch (1986), hope is a longing for what is missing in the present and oriented towards the future. The first of the two quotes above is from the first week of distance schooling. I am writing this article over a year later, while the pandemic continues and schools have closed and opened many times. This future was not foreseeable when the pupils wrote their entries, and they lived in a state of uncertainty. This has implications for the narratives and my analysis of these, since experiences and ways of handling everyday life during a pandemic can change over time, as can the discourses. In addition, hope and longing may be directed to different things and times, depending on whether the pandemic has just started or has been around for a while. Borrowing anthropologist Frances Pine's (2014, p. S96) words, I argue that hope rests 'on the capacity for imagination, and on a sense of time and of temporal progress'. This corresponds to hope possessing a split temporal structure, as it looks towards a future that is different from the present but still draws upon the promise of the present (Colebrook, 2010). Apart from entries in which the pupils hope for school to go back to normal, other notions of hope are also present. The following two citations are related to holidays and time outside of the school year. One example is from the first week, while the other is from week seven. Still, the same hope is visible:

We have a lot of plans for Summer, so let us hope that everything will work out fine (Tessa, Grade 9, 11 May 2020, week nine).

I really long for Summer and hope that this misery will be over soon (Michael, Grade 9, 1 April 2020, week three).

At the end of April, the Finnish government announced that schools would reopen, and Katherine (Grade 7, 29 April 2020, week seven) writes,

This evening we found out that the schools will open in the middle of May, which feels good, as one may meet all friends again.

Here, the future and changes mean a return to the past and being a step closer to an earlier version of normality, while the previous two entries are directed to the future more than the past. Aligned with this, Tamara writes (Tamara, Grade 9, 10–13 April, 2020, weeks four and five):

I have been sitting in the wind-free corner of our backyard in the mornings while having breakfast, closing my eyes and dreaming about the ‘normal life’ after all this.

This can partly be understood as contrasting with the way youth, the future, and change are often viewed in research. Melucci (1996, p. 8) states, for example, that youth ‘is the age in which orientation towards the future is prevalent’, while the past is perceived as narrow and limiting. In what some pupils call ‘strange times’, the unknown future is undesired. The expression is an instance in the data when the uncertain future is frightening and the well-known past is the comforting temporality.

### *Rhythms: Acceleration and Deceleration*

In general, the time of corona—the time under the Emergency Powers Act, a pandemic, remote working, and distance teaching—is a time that can be perceived as accelerating and decelerating synchronously. In this section I draw on Rosa’s (2013) theoretical concepts of social acceleration and deceleration, when I ask how these form discourses connected to temporality. As Rosa (2013, p. 9) states, ‘the rhythm, speed, duration and sequence of our activities and practices are almost never determined by us as individuals but rather almost always prescribed by the temporal patterns and synchronization requirements of society’. Grocery shopping during the pandemic can require swiftness in order not to linger needlessly among other individuals during social distancing. Simultaneously, slowness is required to neatly avoid walking too close to other bodies. This can be connected to Adam (1995, p. 66), who draws attention to how the ‘when, how often, how long, in what order and at what speed’ are governed by ‘norms, habits and conventions’ about temporality. The place, situation, and context determine whether people’s movement patterns and pace follow or breach a convention. When studying the entries other expressions of time as accelerating and decelerating was an interesting find.

In the diary entries discussed in this article, the time before the pandemic stands for ‘normal time’ and acceleration, while ‘corona time’ is characterized by deceleration

and slowness. Michael (Grade 9, 1 April 2020, week three) discusses slowness and boredom in their entry, written after two weeks of social distancing:

Again, a day to endure here at home, frustrating when one is used to be on the go. [...] After two o'clock, I was truly completely bored. I am used to being on the go from morning to evening. Now, during the circumstances that prevail, I have not in principle been able to meet any friends; it is only being at home that is on the agenda. [...] It was once again boring during the evening, so my girlfriend and I decided to go to [the local national park] to watch the sunset.

In the citation, it seems that staying in the same place for a longer time makes time slow down and life start to appear as boring. Indirectly, I deduce that a high life tempo entails a movement between places, which is highlighted at the end of the citation where the pupils writes that they felt bored again in the evening and therefore went to the local national park. Acceleration is associated with mobility and movement. This coincides with the characterization of modernity by sociologist John Urry (2000). Remote learning and social distancing strongly affect mobility and movement but also tempo.

Rosa (2013) writes about social acceleration as a characteristic of modern society, in which a sense of time is changing. Modern society entails a continuous pressure to change and an accelerating life tempo for both individuals and society. We should exercise more, get more friends, eat more healthily, and have more money, but also have more time. Rosa (2018) argues that this is a perceived good life tied to escalatory acceleration. These are also things that can be read and heard in the public discourse during the pandemic. The pandemic and social distancing would give us more time to learn a new language, exercise more, test new recipes, visit new hiking trails, and start a new hobby. To laze about was not encouraged, at least in the beginning of social distancing in Finland. These things are also visible in the corona diary analysed for this article. Apart from exercising, entries mention visiting nature trails, having more time with family, eating well, and trying out new recipes during the pandemic, as can be seen in the following three entries:

Now during the corona quarantine, I have had more time with my family and the dogs, and there has also been more time to make food and try out new recipes (Linda, Grade 8, 18–19 April, 2020, week five).

I woke up at half past eight as usual. I have a lot more time nowadays to have a proper and tasty breakfast (Fiona, Grade 8, 15 April 2020, week five).

If we try and find something positive in this misery, we can see that families have had more time together, maybe possibilities to exercise, play games, work together, and simply communicate. Many have had the possibility to take one step back and review their lives (Emilia, Grade 9, 9–10 May 2020, week eight).

As can be seen in the citations, corona time is not wasted, but instead used in the most effective way possible (cf. Rosa, 2018), even if this time does not resemble the time before COVID-19. Fiona (Grade 8, 15 April 2020, week five) even uses the word 'productive' in their entry:

It was a stunning and calm day, at the same time as I felt productive.

Interestingly, it seems like productivity and calmness are viewed as opposites in this entry. This follows Rosa (2013, p. 135), who states that ‘time pressure has a positive connotation in the patterns of modern social recognition: not to have any time signals desirability and productivity’. The earlier used term *chrononormativity* can also help us understand this implication. Through *chrononormativity*, there is a continuous forward movement that maximizes productivity and encourages a specific and normative life course. There are, however, also examples in the data where slowness and deceleration are viewed as positive. For example, two pupils write:

I think that corona ‘stopped time’. I have had time for small things that I usually do not have time for in pacey everyday life (Tamara, Grade 9, 10–13 April 2020, week four).

In fact, I feel that it has been nice to have more time to just be at home, be allowed to slow down and have time to think. Teenage years are otherwise pretty revolutionary and so many things happen all the time (Emilia, Grade 9, 9–10 May 2020, week eight).

In the passages, ‘more time’, ‘pacey everyday life’, ‘not have time’ and ‘slow down’ are mentioned. Both Tamara and Emilia perceive the time before the pandemic as accelerating, while time during the pandemic is decelerating. Lefebvre (2004) points out how an individual’s rhythm always relates to a societal and hegemonic rhythm, but I argue that social distancing, remote teaching, and the pandemic have not only partly transformed society but also modified its rhythm. In the two examples above, the comfort in the deceleration is the result of the individual’s rhythm coinciding with societal rhythm. In the first citation in this section, we met a pupil who felt frustration. Going back to that example, I argue that their frustration was the result of the rhythms not coinciding. To do something according to one’s own rhythm is a way of having or retrieving control over time: to fill an evening with a trip to the local national park can be a way of retrieving control over one’s rhythm and consequently normalizing temporality. Rhythm and temporality are also visible in the diaries in different ways. In an entry with the title ‘One loses time’, a Veronica writes (Grade 9, 14 April 2020, week five):

Do you know what diary, the days fly by! Now when there is not much to do and one ends up in the constant routine of only lazing around, what is more, without having a specific goal in mind, one simply loses time.

In this passage, time both accelerates and decelerates. The description of lost time or the disappearing of time highlights how time is made by practices. This corresponds to sociologist Elizabeth Shove’s (2009, p. 17) argument that ‘temporal arrangements arise from the effective reproduction of everyday life’. Time is made through sleeping, eating, doing homework, playing football, making dinner, and taking a walk. When we do not seem to do anything, which is described in the data as ‘lazing around’, time is not constructed. In addition, normative expressions and practices, such as doing homework, maintaining one’s routines, exercising, not meeting friends, following regulated school time, and maximizing productivity can be understood as ways of creating normality and of representing oneself as a ‘proper’ subject (cf. Skeggs, 2011) or ‘proper’ pupil (cf. Gordon et al., 1999) during the pandemic.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have taken an analytical look at how a time of local and national emergency leads to possibly new or different time constructions and discourses among youth aged 13 to 16, with a public corona diary as empirical material. The analysis was framed by Adam's (1990, 1995) work on time as fundamentally embedded in the social forms of life which constitute it and which are simultaneously constituted by it. In the analysis of the diary I have identified several contradicting, complementing, entangled discourses on temporality: regulation through temporality, change through temporality, normality and normativity through temporality, living present, acceleration, and deceleration.

As mentioned, one of the identified discourses is regulated time, which in the data is strongly connected to clock time in the context of attending school. I have showed how marking clock time in the diary entries are ways of ordering it into segments and anchoring events, such as school classes and school lunch. By emphasizing clock time, the pupils show that they are of time as regulated, constituted and surveilled by an institution (cf. Rosen, 2017). When pupils mentioned clock time, I also found that pupils wrote about change, which could be characterized as a second discourse. Hence, through marking time, the pupils also show change that the pandemic and distance schooling has led to.

A third discourse is on temporality and normality/normativity. Partly, normality was connected to comfort, hence, feelings of things not changing despite of the pandemic and feelings of the familiar. This was partly found in some entries where clock time was emphasized. In these examples, marking time seemed to offer comfort as it ordered the day in familiar ways even if all days during the pandemic are spent at home. Marking time was, however, not the only means by which the pupils used temporality as a way of addressing normality. I have shown how pupils stress circular temporality and cyclical rhythms (Lefebvre, 2004), such as the repetition of specific weekdays every week or annual events every year, despite 'strange times' or 'corona times'. These circular and repetitive examples form normality. Other ways of creating and sensing normality is routines, which in these particular diary entries are the routine of exercise. The practice of forming normality through exercising, is something I believe to be context specific, where the context is Finland and the state of emergency and social distancing. During the continued televised press conferences with the Finnish government throughout the months of remote teaching and social distancing, routines and exercise were stressed time and time again. Apart from constructing normality, I showed in the analysis how normativity is created. By keeping to routines and exercising, one continued to be a good citizen and a part of normative practices during the pandemic.

The fourth discourse that I identify is the living present discourse (cf. Loewen Walker, 2014), which refers to the past as being continually reimagined in the present and to the practice of looking towards the future while drawing on the potential of the present (Colebrook, 2010). This practise can be categorized as done, regardless of a pandemic or state of emergency, nevertheless the living present is found to be very recognisable in the corona diary. For the analysis, the identification of living present is imperative as it gives attention to the circumstance that not only the current time, the corona time, is present, but in the diary, the past

and future are also present. My empirically grounded insights have shown that the past and future are explicitly associated with the pandemic. This, I have argued, is a sign of the youth's engrossment with the implications that COVID-19 has in their everyday life.

The fifth and sixth identified discourses are antonyms to each other. They are deceleration and acceleration, where I in the analysis draw on Rosa's (2013; 2018) theoretical work. The empirical data have shown that experiences of slowness, immobility, non-chrononormativity, and boredom during state of emergency are connected with what I identify as negative experiences of deceleration. Positive deceleration is identified when it seems like the pupil have experienced everyday life before the pandemic as too accelerating and the pandemic offer the pupil and society a possibility to slow down. Leaning on Rosa (2008), sociologist Dan Woodman (2011) argue, in a study on youth and temporality, that 'day-to-day life is dismantled increasingly regularly and rapidly', which lead to people feeling unanchored in time. Following this argument, I claim that deceleration is perceived as positive during social distancing—it anchors the pupil. Acceleration is, however, either associated with everyday life before the pandemic, mobility and movement, or with a continuous forward movement that maximizes productivity and encourages a specific and normative life. This manifest in the entries by using the time to learn a new language, exercise more, test new recipes, visit new hiking trails, and start a new hobby (cf. Rosa 2013).

The findings and contributions of this article—the discourses—suggest that the complexity of temporality is even more tangible in youth's everyday life when they are getting used to or living with new restrictions or a new 'normal'. Throughout, I have argued that regulation, normativity, and a desire for normality are visible as common themes in the ways youth experience temporality in the data. It is important to further highlight, elaborate on, and continuously complicate and capture different nuances of youth and temporality. This is also the scope of critical time studies, which is combined with youth research in this article.

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### **Notes**

1. The age range in the Finnish lower secondary school is 13–16.
2. In March, April and May of 2020, 308 deaths occurred because of COVID-19 and Finland had a population of 5.531 million in 2020.



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