



Mrs. Dalloway and the Shecession: The Interconnectedness and Intersectionalities of Care Ethics and Social Time During the Pandemic

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Abstract

Business ethics researchers and practitioners are interested in understanding the temporal mechanisms of various managerial activities, processes, and policies. In this direction, I borrow notions of time from Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* to examine how social time intersperses with the paid and (unpaid) care work of female employees during the pandemic. I explore how discussions of social time in connection to care work appear in newspaper discourses of “shecession”, i.e. the large-scale job/income losses experienced by women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since shecession is a byproduct of the pandemic times, exploring the role of time in it is crucial. In fact, my findings show that the macro social time of the pandemic affects working women with care responsibilities who are situated at the intersection of multiple vulnerable social categories by simultaneously being a penalizer and a lost opportunity. Similarly, I also find that the micro social times of working women embed, stratify, and synchronize differently during the pandemic when compared to normal times. Working women with care responsibilities are thus adversely affected by both micro and macro social time changes. My findings, therefore, could be instrumental in developing and implementing inclusive policies and processes in business organizations and labor markets. In so doing, my study also indicates how a consideration of social time enriches the application of care ethics in work contexts. Ultimately, this article is also about developing caring organizations, societies, and families which care for the caregivers (working women), since receiving care is a precondition of giving care.

Keywords Ethics of care/care ethics · Gender · Pandemic · Shecession · Social time · Qualitative

“To be cared for is essential for the capacity to be caring.”
—Gaylin (1976)

Care ethics begin with an ontology of relational human beings existing in interconnected, interdependent, intricate associations with one another (Gilligan, 1993; Robinson, 2006). Caring for small children, elderly parents, or vulnerable employees falls under the foci of this ethic. Adapting such a care-centered perspective requires a comprehensive understanding of the nature, quality, and dynamics of care relationships (Alacovska & Bissonnette, 2021) along with the infrastructures and interdependencies underlying

such relations. For instance, the conceptualization of care involves issues of power as well as cultural and social production (Hankivsky, 2014). This is evidenced by the fact that although caring can be anyone's prerogative, usually women are held accountable for care responsibilities in domestic (Blossfeld & Drobnic, 2001) and work settings (see Magoqwana et al., 2019). These traditional gender roles are also internalized by women, who subsequently either voluntarily fulfill their domestic care responsibilities (Günçavdi et al., 2017; Parlak et al., 2021) or are forced to care (Glen, 2010), a tendency which became amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the fact that recent decades have witnessed more inclusion of women in the labor market (Elborgh-Woytek et al., 2013), this positive movement towards equality in the employment sector was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The persistent gendering of care led women to carry the major burden of unpaid care labor during the pandemic, which made it difficult for them to engage in paid

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work in a manner similar to men. The historical gendering of care work was illustrated furthermore during the pandemic through a push back of female employees into their domestic sphere from the work sphere (Nair, 2022; Özkazanç-Pan & Pullen, 2020). The pandemic revealed a lack of conceptual inclusiveness in conversations about care. For building fairer workplaces, we therefore, need to rethink care relationships and examine them within the context of the work and family settings against the backdrop of the pandemic. In this article, I discuss how and why care ethics should be rethought of using a temporal (time-related) lens. Specifically, I discuss how time and care responsibilities interconnect to exacerbate the pandemic-induced female recession, aptly named as “shecession”.

The moniker “shecession” was first used as a wordplay on the term “man-cession”, by the president and chief executive of the *Institute of Women’s Policy Research* C. Nicole Mason. Like man-cession, which referred to the 2008 recession, this moniker was specifically used to refer to the recession experienced by women during the pandemic (Goldin, 2022). As per the International Labor Organization’s new policy brief, the number of employed women decreased by 13 million from 2019 to 2021 (ILO, 2021). During the pandemic, women faced a drop of 4.2% in employment, with the Americas being the worst hit (9.4%), followed by the Arab states (4.1%), Asia–Pacific (3.8%), Europe–Central Asia (2.5%), and Africa (1.9%). Several working women also faced a disproportionate decline in their productive work hours, mostly due to domestic (familial) obligations. Both these aspects, i.e., the loss of employment and the inability to work regular hours, constitute shecession.

Since shecession is a distinct derivative of the pandemic, we must not ignore its temporal aspects (Brunelle, 2017). To begin with, women’s time usage and work patterns have always been different to those of men (Glucksmann, 1998). Temporal constraints caused by large-scale external events such as the pandemic further influenced such subjective work experiences of women. Time, however, has often been conceptualized as an ungendered and standard entity in management literature. This is different from humanities and social sciences literature, which has had deliberations on time and gender in connection with each other more often. Jacobs and Gerson (2005), for instance, explored the time squeeze experienced by women using a sociological perspective (for other examples, see Robinson, 2006; Hochschild & Machung, 2012). In management disciplines and particularly in business ethics, such discussions are still scarce. This could be due to the fact that humanities and social sciences pertain to a broad range of social, cultural, and historical phenomena, whereas business ethics pertains only to the ethical conduct and responsibilities of business organizations. While there are business ethics studies exploring gender-related topics, even those studies do not deliberate on how time dynamics

affect the work-life experiences of female employees. By integrating the concepts of time and gendering of care from humanities and social sciences, business ethics researchers and practitioners can investigate the role played by time in women’s work experiences and care responsibilities. This can eventually be helpful in developing inclusive practices and policies in workplaces and the labor market.

The approach I take in this article is thus evidently not to make a case against the care responsibilities as such. I follow Held’s (2006) view of care ethics, which sees persons as relational and interdependent, rather than as autonomous and self-sufficient. Care ethics pays attention to the context, by focusing on the specificities of concrete situations in which care responsibilities exist. In this study, I hence consider social time as the context/contextual factor. I borrow the lenses of social time and care from Virginia Woolf’s novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (Michaelson, 2017a) and prior humanities literature for this investigation. Novels such as *Mrs. Dalloway* have the potential to inspire and be instrumental in exploring and contributing to humane business practices (Michaelson, 2017b). Subsequently, my aim is to examine how time affects the experiences of paid work and (unpaid) care work of women during the pandemic. This investigation moves beyond essentialist spatial notions of care and reveals how time and care are gendered and interconnected. In the subsequent sections, I discuss the concepts of time (specifically, social time) and care (care ethics and care work). Subsequently, I elaborate upon the methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion.

Time

Management researchers have identified and acknowledged the role of time in research for decades (Ancona et al., 2001; Gherardi & Strati, 1988; Holt & Johnsen, 2009; Hargadon & Wadhvani, 2022). Relatedly, various time-related topics (e.g.: time lags, life cycles, sequences) and methods (e.g.: process tracing, tempography, microhistory) have gained importance (Forray & Woodilla, 2005; Hamann & Suckert, 2018). Researchers and practitioners are interested in understanding the temporal mechanisms of various managerial activities, processes, and policies (Svensson & Wood, 2003). To this end, several academic journals have acknowledged the importance of exploring the role of time in the milieu of management research. Correspondingly, *Academy of Management Review* has put forth a special topic forum on “Theorizing time in management and organizations” (Bansal et al., 2020). The field of business ethics, albeit sparsely, has also started considering the role of time in causing, maintaining, and exacerbating ethical considerations in business scenarios. To give an example, Svensson and Wood (2003) discussed how ethical standards change according to the

movement of time. Henle and colleagues investigated the antecedents of ‘time theft’ in organizations (Henle et al., 2010). To facilitate further discussions on time in business ethics, *Journal of Business Ethics* recently published a call for papers on “ethics and temporality” (Wasielski, 2020). In this article, I contribute to these conversations on business ethics and time by borrowing the conceptualization of social time offered by *Mrs. Dalloway* and humanities literature. The free (public domain) copy of *Mrs. Dalloway* can be found at <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200991h.html>.

Social Time

Several ancient and indigenous cultures have acknowledged the non-linear nature of time. Hinduism, for example, considers time as a cyclical entity without a beginning or an end. The *Kalachakra* (wheel of time) describes this eternal, repetitive, cyclical nature of time. Like Hinduism, several other religions (Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism) and indigenous cultures (ancient Greeks and Romans, Native Americans etc.) have also considered time as a non-linear entity (Coward, 1999; Csaki, 2005). Amongst modern western literary works, Virginia Woolf is credited with breaking the linear formulation of time. Woolf’s biographers have discussed her fascination with time and orderliness (Lee, 1996). Relatedly, different conceptualizations of time are evidenced in Woolf’s novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). The novel details a day in the life of an upper class woman named Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway, in post-World War I London. Clarissa was hosting a party that particular evening. Through interior monologues, the novel explicates the protagonists’ feelings, thoughts, and actions throughout the day in a temporal sequence. In fact, the novel’s working title was ‘The Hours’, which indicated the roles that time would play throughout the narrative. Time objects (clock, church bells), social time, and various temporal metaphors are dispersed throughout the novel. Time is portrayed as a juxtaposition—the moments in which the protagonists interacted with each other, and the amount of time they spent on various events are all juxtaposed and spread across the course of one single day, to form a pattern. Below I discuss the individual components of the juxtaposition of both the subjective and objective social times in *Mrs. Dalloway*. The different types of social time that I consider in this article are included in Table 1.

Clock Time (Objective Social Time)

“...Big Ben strikes. There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable” (Woolf, 1925, p. 3).

“It is half-past eleven, she says, and the sound of St. Margaret’s glides into the recesses of the heart and

Table 1 Types of social time

Type of social time	Characteristic	Definition	Example
Clock time	Objective	The mechanical, predetermined movement of time as denoted by the clock or a wristwatch	The clock hours during which a board meeting in an organization is scheduled
Micro social time	Subjective	The time one spends on interactions, within or outside workplaces. The flow of interactional time depends on the actions of the interacting people and the norms that govern the interaction	The duration of time people spend chatting with colleagues while on coffee breaks; the duration of time people spend hiking with family
Micro social time	Subjective	The time that individuals spend adhering to the time structures set by different social institutions	The duration of time people spend answering work-related emails; the duration of time people spend attending their children’s parent-teacher meetings at school
Macro social time	Subjective	The temporal context of a society, which could involve historical time periods, crises times etc	The overall time period characterized by one company’s hostile takeover of another; the overall time period characterized by a pandemic

buries itself in ring after ring of sound...” (Woolf, 1925, p. 31).

“It was precisely twelve o’clock; twelve by Big Ben; whose stroke was wafted over the northern part of London; blent with that of other clocks... twelve o’clock struck as Clarissa Dalloway laid her green dress on her bed, and the Warren Smiths walked down Harley Street. Twelve was the hour of their appointment” (Woolf, 1925: 58).

As the name suggests, clock time is the objective, mechanical, predetermined movement of time, often denoted by the swing of a pendulum or the ticking of an electronic clock (Butler, 1995). While clock time is socially constructed, it is divided into objective, quantifiable units which are often displayed by an external clock (Avnet & Sellier, 2011). Clock time is represented in *Mrs. Dalloway* by the tolls of Big Ben and St. Margaret’s church bells. The tolls denote the movement of the hours of the day. The novel itself is organized not as chapters, rather is marked by the different times of the day. The clock time thus provides a foundational structure to the novel. In this clock time structure, the different roles and patterns of relationships between the other social times of the protagonists (such as the social appointments of the Warren Smiths) are situated.

In the context of management research, clock time is used by companies and business organizations to synchronize, coordinate, and control their activities. It is linear, uniform, and homogeneous in structure (Lee & Liebenau, 1999). The experiences of clock time, however, are individualized and depends on the phenomena which characterizes them (Adkins, 2009). While objective time is linear and finite, time in the case of working women is neither linear nor solely based on the clock. For instance, working women undertake a vast, disproportionate amount of care responsibilities, which entail an interaction of multiple temporal dimensions adding up to far more than what clock time calculates and compensates for. Such care contributions are systematically underestimated and commonly undercompensated. A woman’s involvement in the workforce hence reflects a relational, social conception of time (Knights & Odih, 1995).

Sociologists Sorokin and Merton introduced the concept of subjective social time in 1937. This conceptualization, although dependent on the clock time, is non-linear and is created by virtue of the rhythms of social life. Social time, as presented by Sorokin and Merton, does not however offer a gendered conceptualization of time. As discussed previously, working women’s experiences of social time are nevertheless different from those of working men, due to the gendered differences in time allocation and utilization. In this study, I hence do not consider this prior

conceptualization of social time as absolute, but rather as a starting point for further investigation.

Subjective Social Time

Time, like space, has a social origin and is abstracted from the rhythms of collective life, its communal activities, and their repetition (Subrt, 2015). The subjective social time is hence exposed to variations depending upon the social processes as well as on the relationships and participation of people in these processes (Gronmo, 1989). This time is structured by the events and processes in a social context. It is not necessarily uniform, nor does it flow evenly (Subrt, 2015). Rather, it is definable in relation to particular micro and macro social phenomena (for instance, time spent on official responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic). The subjective social time, as portrayed in *Mrs. Dalloway*, can thus be subdivided into two, which I term micro and macro social times. The micro social time itself can thereafter be subdivided into interactional and institutional times. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf (1925) illustrates how these different micro and macro social times interact with each other and with the clock time in a multitude of sequences, to create the pastiche that is the lives of the protagonists on one post-War, mid-June day. I discuss some examples below.

Micro Social Time—Interactional Time

““Tell me,” he said, seizing her by the shoulders. “Are you happy, Clarissa? Does Richard —”

The door opened. “Here is my Elizabeth,” said Clarissa, emotionally, histrionically, perhaps .

“How d’y do?” said Elizabeth coming forward.

The sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour struck out between them with extraordinary vigor, as if a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate, were swinging dumb-bells this way and that.

“Hullo, Elizabeth!” cried Peter, stuffing his handkerchief into his pocket, going quickly to her, saying “Good-bye, Clarissa” without looking at her, leaving the room quickly, and running downstairs and opening the hall door. (Woolf, 1925, p. 29)

Prior sociology literature discusses how subjective social time can be further subdivided into biographical, interactional, institutional, and cultural structures (Lewis & Weigert, 1981). In this article, while I use the terms “interactional time” and “institutional time” to denote different micro social times, I delineate their differences in another way. Similar to Lewis and Weigert (1981), I also define interactional time as the time for informal interactions. It pertains to the time one spends connecting with other people, within or outside the workplaces. The flow of interactional time depends on the actions of the

interacting people and on the norms that govern the interaction (Lewis & Weigert, 1981). Different uses of interactional time are evident in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In the aforementioned excerpt, Clarissa was interacting with her friend Peter when her daughter Elizabeth walked in. Elizabeth's entrance interrupted Clarissa's conversation with Peter and was followed by the tolls of Big Ben. Furthermore, Peter's departure also disrupted the interactional time. The individuals, their actions, and the clock time hence affect the interactional time.

Micro Social Time—Institutional Time

“So it wasn't a failure after all! it was going to be all right now—her party. It had begun. It had started. But it was still touch and go. She must stand there for the present” (Woolf, 1925, p. 104).

“To his patients he gave three-quarters of an hour; and if in this exacting science which has to do with what, after all, we know nothing about—the nervous system, the human brain—a doctor loses his sense of proportion, as a doctor he fails.” (Woolf, 1925: 61).

By moving beyond the conception that institutional time is simply the time structure of the involved organizations (see Lewis & Weigert, 1981), I define institutional time instead as the time individuals spend adhering to the time structures set by various social institutions (companies, children's schools, family, religious and healthcare institutions etc.). In simpler words, institutional time denotes the extent of time individuals spend on formal activities, both at work and domestic settings. Institutional time is therefore merged with systematic (organizational and familial) events and activities. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf portrays various types of institutional time (the party-planning time, the time of the doctor's consultations etc.). In these instances, institutional time is merged with the formal events (i.e., party planning, patients' appointments for consultations etc.). Similarly, in an organizational context, the institutional time is expended and experienced in different ways. Employees adjust their routines to the organization's time structures by recognizing the time requirements of different activities and coordinating such activities accordingly. The institutional time is thus subjective, uneven, and established in reference to certain formal events or clock times. In the context of business organizations, a plurality of institutional times exists, each one of them being appropriate to understand specific organizational phenomena (Lee & Liebenau, 1999).

It is important to note that institutional and interactional times co-exist and are often interspersed with each other. Employees develop their own institutional times for different work-related events, which are punctuated by a series of social interactions. For instance, people often organize specific tasks around social interactions or vice versa. (“*We will*

take a coffee break once I tally the accounts”, “*I will talk to my mother on the phone whilst cooking.*”) Interactional and institutional times are hence not easily discernable in many contexts. These micro social times are also dependent on the macro social time (e.g.: the temporal context of the pandemic), which I discuss next.

Macro Social Time

“For it was the middle of June. The War was over, except for someone like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor House must go to a cousin; or Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favorite, killed; but it was over; thank Heaven—over. It was June” (Woolf, 1925, p. 4).

“Evans, whom she [wife of Septimus] had only seen once for a moment in the shop. He had seemed a nice quiet man; a great friend of Septimus's, and he had been killed in the War. But such things happen to everyone. Everyone has friends who were killed in the War.... But Septimus let himself think about horrible things, as she could too, if she tried. He had grown stranger and stranger.” (Woolf, 1925: 41).

The subjective social time involves a macro-component, which is the overall temporal context of a society. Macro social time can refer to large-scale historical time periods such as eras (e.g.: Soviet era, Victorian era), epochs (e.g.: Epoch starting with the incarnation of Jesus Christ, Anthropocene) etc. In this article I focus on the example of the post-War temporal context demonstrated in *Mrs. Dalloway*. While they are completely different events, the first World War and the COVID-19 pandemic are both humanitarian crises which affected people worldwide. Wars and pandemics disrupt social structures and their economic consequences last for long periods in the future. These similarities made me consider the story of *Mrs. Dalloway*, which took place on a mid-June day in post-World War I London, a suitable conduit for discussing the social time of the pandemic. The temporal context in which the individuals existed, interacted with each other, and organized their life is important for understanding the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*. For instance, the protagonist Septimus Smith was a war veteran suffering from shell shock. Although he enjoyed the beauty of the mid-June day sporadically, he was still thinking about the War and the death of his friend Evans. The War thus created a disoriented, ‘out-of-joint’ macro-temporal context in which the everyday activities (i.e. different usages of micro social time) of a mid-June day were enmeshed in.

The notion of the ‘out-of-joint’ time is adopted from a synthesis of the works of Derrida and Woolf. A Derridean

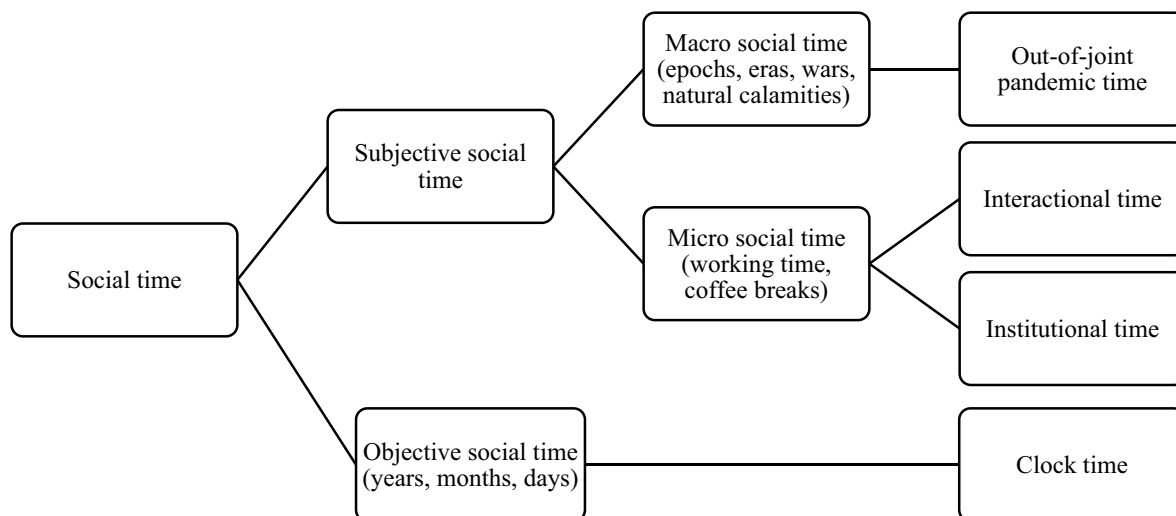


Fig. 1 Types of social time: a summary

reading of Woolf identifies the deconstructive role of social time during post-World War I England (Chen & Lai, 2007; Woolf, 1925). While wars and pandemics are singularities, both are crises which contribute to out-of-joint temporal contexts. The regular functioning of the (pre-War) society as well as the juxtapositions of different dimensions of micro social times were deconstructed and reconstructed in the socio-temporal context of the World War. Like wars, the pandemic is a social crisis which deconstructed the regular functioning of our society. In the context of the pandemic, the standard socio-temporal order and the societal functioning were disrupted due to unanticipated events and social processes. Therefore, understanding secession also involves exploring the out-of-joint (macro social) time in which people live and experience the interactional and institutional (micro social) times.¹ Figure 1 provides a summary of the different social times discussed in this section.

In the case of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the macro temporal context of the post-War period had a vast influence on the gendered differences in the British society. Clarissa was an upper-class lady, who did not enjoy much freedom prior to the War. Partly as a result of the first World War, women of Clarissa's social class were slowly gaining the freedom to walk around the streets without being chaperoned. However, although Clarissa enjoyed this newly found freedom to use her micro social times in ways she wished to, as an unemployed upper-class lady she still was required to define herself in terms of her husband who provided for her (Hewitt, 2019). In her

words, she was "... Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway" (Woolf, 1925, p. 7). Hence the macro social time in *Mrs. Dalloway* influenced the way Clarissa's micro social times and clock time were utilized. In the novel, Clarissa's main activity was planning parties. She spent her social time caring for particular others (the attendees of the parties, her husband and daughter etc.). In the next section, I discuss the care work of Clarissa and the contemporary female workforce, by relating it to care ethics.

Care Work and Care Ethics

Care has been conceptualized across different macro temporal and spatial contexts – how care work was perceived and performed in ancient Greece, in medieval Provence, during the development of capitalism, during the move towards welfare states, by domestic servants in colonies, during globalization etc. (Plumauzille & Rossigneux-Méheust, 2019). The historical division of labor however always worked under the gendered assumption that women are responsible for the care of others. Historically there has thus been a near-universal imbalanced division of care work between the genders. However, across history, there were different dynamics involved in this gendered care work. The visibility and social recognition of care work performed by women varied according to their specific temporal and social contexts. Upper class ladies, housewives, midwives, maids, cooks, cleaners, nurses etc. have had different social and political dynamics across time. In this article, I specifically focus on the macro temporal context of the COVID-19 pandemic by finding parallels with *Mrs. Dalloway*.

¹ Here I consider the post-War temporal context as an influential factor. However, note that the War itself was an outcome of different historical forces, thus reminding us of the non-linear nature of time-related phenomena.

Woolf's diary entry from 1923 shows her unhappiness about how "people scarcely care for each other...they never become attached to anything outside themselves" (Woolf, 1953, p. 55). One could argue that *Mrs. Dalloway* was Woolf's attempt to portray her disdain of how individuals and social institutions impose their will on others. The novel reflects the society's lack of care and attachment, by providing a vista of one day in the life of the protagonists. Clarissa was hosting a party that particular evening, in an attempt to connect and show her care for her fellow upper class Londoners. While she had never faced the insecurities and hardships of working class women, Clarissa was also an economically repressed woman who was completely financially dependent on her husband. Her only function in the novel was to care and to be a perfect hostess. She occupied her time by throwing parties in her social circle, loving her daughter, and performing wifely duties to her husband. Thus, besides social time, *Mrs. Dalloway* is also a novel about Clarissa's care towards particular ones (friend, husband, daughter). It is a novel which focuses on Clarissa's relationships with herself and with others.

In a comparable way, care ethics focus on the relationships between the self and others in specific contexts, as a way to attend to their particular needs (Antoni et al., 2020, Gilligan, 1982; Liedtka, 1996). People, as per care ethics, are relational and interdependent beings who are deeply affected by and involved in care relations with others. In this article, when I discuss care, I refer to the practices and processes of caring for (i.e. taking care of) someone rather than merely caring about someone (Held, 2006).² Indeed, the need for care is infinite (Tronto, 1993) and the processes and practices of caregiving are time consuming and labor intensive. In fact, one of the criticisms of earlier formulations of care ethics was that it glorified caring for others above any other value. More recent formulations have addressed this criticism and emphasized how care ethics should consider the experiences of not only the care recipients, but also the caregivers. The people caring for others should also be thus cared for by others and by themselves. However, this is not often the case since care work is often gendered and unidirectional. Providing care to someone has habitually fallen on the shoulders of women, often without any reciprocity, remuneration, or recognition (McCarthy, 2018). Particularly, female employees work double shifts (Hochschild & Machung, 2012) or even "triple-shifts – engaging in paid employment, as well as performing the majority of child, household, and emotional care" (McCarthy, 2018, p. 340).

Care has thus been linked to gender historically, across different cultures and different macro time structures.

² However, caring for someone and caring about someone often co-exist.

Studies conducted as early as in 1965 have shown that working women spend disproportionately longer times on care work than their male partners (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). In more recent history, the gendered differences in paid work and care work narrowed substantially (Sayer, 2005). However, the demand on women's care responsibilities increased manifold during the pandemic, resulting in female employees facing the dilemma of managing competing care responsibilities (Antoni et al., 2020) more intensely. Furthermore, this demand on care work was also not offset by any reduction on the demand on their paid work. While prior to the pandemic only some jobs involved a flexible format of work organization, during the pandemic most of the jobs switched to this format. During the pandemic, the paid work activities were thus decoupled from the material work place of the office, making it something which could be (and needed to be) done "anywhere" and "anytime" (Tietze, 2002).

In this article, I therefore, discuss how care ethics materialized in practice in the lives of working women during the pandemic. The routines and practices which women followed in different social institutions became interrupted and changed during the pandemic, resultantly requiring working women to be "ever-available as mother, domestic manager, professional manager, colleague and boss" (Tietze, 2002, p. 394). While prior studies have discussed the economic aspects of such care work, in this article I investigate its temporal components within the setting of the pandemic. Since the pandemic disrupted the regular functioning of the society and had had a visible impact on the health and the well-being of people, news about its adverse effects had appeared extensively on public discussions. Shecession and the invisible care work performed by working women also resultantly received prominence in the public media during the pandemic. Subsequently, to explore the temporal components of care work in the context of the shecession, I formulated two research questions. The first question was exploratory.

RQ1: How is social time portrayed in newspaper discourses of shecession?

With respect to RQ1, I did not formalize any predetermined expectations regarding how care was portrayed in the data. Rather, I was interested in openly exploring if and how care was discussed in connection with social time. My second research question was broader in scope. It built up on RQ1 and focused on the temporal nature of care ethics broadly. Theorists are interested in challenging the previously-assumed emphases and taking new directions on care ethics (Koggel & Orme, 2010). Most of current care scholarship considers gender, race, and class as the central organizing principles of care work. Through RQ2, I aim to

examine how incorporating a temporal perspective can further advance care ethics.

RQ2: How does an engagement with the concept of social time advance care ethics?

Methodology

Newspapers aid the social construction of reality (Wetherell & Potter, 1988) by providing an authoritative, articulated system of knowledge about how phenomena exist and operate in societies. In the context of gender and employment, the representations of newspapers have aided in the identification of various discourses surrounding topics such as women's claims to leadership, representation of women at the workplace etc. (Nair, 2022; Oktaviani et al., 2021). Inspired by these prior studies, I explored how newspapers discursively constructed the phenomenon of shecession (Brammer et al., 2020). By investigating and offering a broad coverage of contemporary news in real-time, newspapers allowed me to understand various facets of shecession (e.g.: social time and care) and the public discourses surrounding them. I considered social time as a flexible construct rather than as a definite variable (Faulkner, 2009), since variables restrict the focus of the study whereas flexible constructs just assist researchers in binding and exploring social phenomena. Social time thus acted as a 'broad bucket' enabling me to capture the inherent complexity and messiness of the phenomenon under investigation (Suddaby, 2010).

Data Collection

I sampled online newspaper articles discussing shecession using a keyword search. A purposive, theoretical sampling was conducted through the data mining platform LexisNexis. I intended to include all English-language newspaper articles on shecession and the pandemic, regardless of their length or format. Hence, I first searched LexisNexis for articles using the keywords "shecession" and "COVID-19". Afterwards, I narrowed down the dataset to English-language newspaper articles. Since English is a global language, the articles thus selected provided extensive coverage (across Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, North America, and South America). The search period included 12 months, from May 2020 until May 2021. This period was chosen to ensure a wide coverage of discourses involving shecession from the onset of the pandemic. I did not find any articles on shecession prior to May 2020.

At the end of the initial keyword search, I had 99 newspaper articles. Subsequently, the articles which did not focus on women or COVID-19 were removed for ensuring that I stayed within the scope of the investigation. After removing

the duplicates and articles which were not focused on women or COVID-19, the sample included 73 articles. I then conducted an additional keyword search through LexisNexis using the terms "mothers", "women", and "COVID-19" to ensure that the newspaper articles which discussed shecession without using that exact terminology were also included. However, any additional articles thus identified discussed topics such as motherhood, health conditions, asylum accommodation, etc., rather than working women's employment circumstances. Subsequently, since I was interested only in understanding how shecession was represented and debated in newspapers during the pandemic, the final sample only included the 73 relevant articles initially identified. Most of the articles in the final sample pertained to USA (18), UK (19), and Canada (18). This could be attributed to the fact that I searched specifically for English-language newspapers. However, this assumption can be contested, since other English-speaking countries (viz., Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, and Ireland) showed a disproportionately lower number of newspaper articles on shecession. See Table 2 for more details of the sample.

Data Analysis

I examined the shared lines of argument and patterns of meanings in newspaper reports of shecession using grounded theory. My approach was not purely inductive. I did not start the analysis with a 'blank state' or an 'empty mind' (Urquhart & Fernandez, 2013). Rather, my preunderstanding of social time from prior literature provided a framework for data analysis. This makes this study abductive, since I interpreted the empirical data in light of the concepts from prior theory and while being open to any new findings that might emerge during the analysis (Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013). As a first step in the analysis, I read all the sample articles to understand their general message. Then I compiled the open codes from each newspaper article. After the initial round of coding, which involved 20 articles, 152 open codes were identified. In the subsequent steps, the rest of the sample was coded and more open codes were identified. An independent coder also coded some of the sample data to check the credibility and enhance the confirmability of the open codes. The consensus check revealed that the open codes identified by the independent coder were similar to the ones I had found. After open coding, through constant comparison, I noticed similarities and differences amongst the codes, which resulted in the reduction of the number of open codes to 108. At this point, I also achieved theoretical saturation of the codes. Subsequently, I prepared the summaries of the open codes pertaining to each one of the sample newspaper articles. Afterwards, I examined each summary to see whether there were any references to social time and care

Table 2 Details of the sample

Newspapers	Geographical locations	Number of articles per geographical location
Sydney Morning Herald	Australia	1
Medicine Hat News, National Post, Ottawa Citizen, Post media News, Red Deer Advocate, Sherbrooke Record, Stratford Beacon Herald, The Daily Gleaner, The Gazette, The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star, The Vancouver Sun, Times Colonist	Canada	18
China Daily	China	1
Die Welt	Germany	1
Irish Daily Mail, Irish Independent	Ireland	2
CE Noticias Financieras English	Latin America	7
The Sunday Star-Times	New Zealand	3
Manila Bulletin	Philippines	1
Mint	Singapore	1
Mail & Guardian	South Africa	1
Daily Mail, Jersey Evening Post, The Daily Telegraph, The Evening Standard, The Guardian, The Independent, The Times, The Western Mail	UK	19
Daily Record, Desert Morning News, NewsDay, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, The Baltimore Sun, The Bismarck Tribune, The Daily Cardinal, The Morning Call, The New York Times, The Salt Lake Tribune, Tribune-Review, USA Today	USA	18

The newspaper *CE Noticias Financieras* is the source of all the sample articles from Latin America. This newspaper caters not to a particular country, but to the whole of Latin America (including Mexico, Central, and South America). This is the reason why the geographical area is denoted as “Latin America” rather than as any individual country. (Information identified and compiled through a search using www.lexisnexis.com)

Table 3 Summary of findings

Macro social time (out-of-joint)	Micro social time (interactional & institutional)
Intersectionality: Macro social time as a lost opportunity to address inequalities in the labor market	Increased embeddedness of interactional and institutional times within the time structures and clock time
Intersectionality: Macro social time as a penalizer for women who simultaneously belong to multiple disadvantaged social categories	Ambiguous stratification of embedded times that underlie working days Disrupted synchronization of micro social times of women with those of family members and colleagues

work. The findings are discussed in the section below and summarized in Table 3.

Findings

Prior literature has noted how, when an argument is made about one issue, other issues often recede from consideration (Milne, 2009). However, if the deliberations on an issue are polarized only around a single continuum, it will result in a limited understanding of that very issue, excluding the voices of whoever (or whatever) presumably lies outside its confines. Through the exploration of the links between social time and care, I aim to avoid such a flat conceptualization of shecession. With respect to social time, the newspaper discourses show that micro social times became more embedded within each other and within the clock time. Furthermore, this embeddedness created ambiguity

and disruption in the existing micro-temporal stratification and synchronization of working women’s lives. Macro social time, on the other hand, exposed how different categories of working women were penalized. The newspaper discourses also revealed how the pandemic time had been a lost opportunity for addressing the issues faced by working women from different social categories. Below I discuss the role of macro and micro social times in shecession, as debated in the sample newspaper articles. See Appendix I for the sample newspaper articles quoted in the findings.

Macro Social Time During Shecession

The interrelated practices and processes that result in shecession were accelerated during the out-of-joint macro social time of the pandemic. The macro time thus laid bare the gendered inequalities in the labor market. For instance, working women were paid less and faced challenges in achieving

career growth even before the pandemic. However, the out-of-joint nature of the pandemic time was what finally led to women willingly or unwillingly leaving their disproportionately low-paid jobs. This was mainly due to a combination of the reinforced traditional views which depicted the mother as the selfless caregiver ('We need a real revolution', 2020) as well as the income disparities between genders. When educational institutions and daycare centers were closed during the pandemic, it was necessary for one of the parents to fulfill the care responsibilities towards the children. The stylized care-giver role of mother and the income disparities between the genders led to women being held responsible for such care responsibilities. Many women thereafter were forced to resign or willingly decided to leave their jobs, since they needed to undertake childcare responsibilities.

"I have to try to be the teacher, the lunch lady, the janitor, the mom, the school nurse. It's 24/7, it is overwhelming." (Excerpt from: 'COVID-19 has pushed more women into 'survival mode'', The Daily Cardinal, December 9, 2020)

The out-of-joint nature of the pandemic time resultantly produced new inequalities, including the joblessness of previously employed women ('Women working 5 to 9', 2021). Many female-owned businesses fell behind during the pandemic and the progress of women in the labor market receded in comparison to the past ('Coronavirus briefing', 2020). The newspaper discourses particularly pointed out how the out-of-joint social time affected women who are at the intersections of multiple vulnerable social categories, in two ways: by being a "lost opportunity" and through "penalization". I anchor these two themes that were identified within a discussion of intersectionality.

Intersectionality: Macro Social Time as a Lost Opportunity and as a Penalizer

Intersectionality refers to the interconnection and interdependence between different social categories such as race, gender, economic status, etc. (Walby, 2007), and the resultant disadvantages to individuals in work or social settings. The term 'intersectionality' was initially introduced to explore the discrimination and oppression experienced by Black women in the United States (Crenshaw, 1991). The underlying message of intersectionality is that people experience inequalities shaped not only by gender or race, but also by the interconnection of gender or race with other social categories of difference (Crenshaw, 2017; Mooney, 2016; Thompson, 2020). For instance, while women in general were adversely affected during the pandemic, the effect was drastic for women who were at the intersection of disadvantaged categories of race, job profile, social class, physical condition, age, marital status, maternal status, and/or gender

dispositions. To give an example, Latinas and Black women in developed countries faced severe health, economic, and social disadvantages during the pandemic. Single-parent mothers with children under 6-years of age worked almost two-fifth fewer hours during the pandemic when compared to the pre-pandemic period. Other single mothers could not balance their daily paid work and childcare responsibilities without working overtime (Nair, 2022).

Apart from the many already intersecting social categories such as race and gender, social time also played a role in shecession by amplifying pre-existing inequalities (O'Hagan, 2018). The pandemic time was thus a lost opportunity for tackling the issues faced by women who undertook care responsibilities. Surprisingly, this was the case not only for working women who did unpaid care work at home, but also for women who worked in care sectors (e.g.: maids, nurses etc.). "They have fallen ill in high numbers and, disproportionately, those nurses, care aides, housekeepers, cooks and cleaners are from immigrant and racialized communities." (Excerpt from: 'Canada's women bear the brunt of pandemic, so what's to celebrate?', The Vancouver Sun, March 8, 2021). Many women in developing countries who were involved in paid care work lost their jobs ('Listen to women and youth', 2021). Even in developed countries, Black women working in the care sector encountered the aftermath of shecession due to their race, gender, and job profiles.

Due to the pandemic, hiring was reduced or stopped in such sectors where Black women were overrepresented (e.g., social services, health care) ('Pandemic triggers care', 2021). Instead, governmental efforts became focused on sectors predominantly occupied by White men (e.g., transportation, infrastructure development) ('Hiring is rebounding', 2021). Furthermore, women from minority categories with low-paid jobs were more subjected to gendered expectations regarding childcare. They were unable to hire domestic help due to their economic status. The systemic incapacities regarding absence of childcare facilities and the inconsistency of unemployment benefits also worsened the situation ('Covid aggravates Mexico's', 2021). The newspapers opined that the future of women who lost jobs during the pandemic might thus be bleak, since their absence from the labor market during the pandemic could result in their receiving lower wages for years to come. Similar cases of intersectionalities were evident across the globe. The newspaper articles note how the opportunity to address differences in the labor market due to the intersectional effects of race, gender, ethnicity, maternal status etc., was mislaid during the pandemic.

Another problem which was aggravated during the pandemic was the penalization of the minorities in the labor market. The pandemic exacerbated sexist discrimination which occurred at the intersection of gender, racism,

maternal status, relationship status, etc. For instance, Asian women in vulnerable and low-paid care sectors such as massage parlors were targeted and abused since they are often considered as meek, submissive, and easier targets ('Why Asian women', 2021). The politicians' Anti-Asian rhetoric and lack of preventive measures against racial crimes promoted this abuse. The pandemic thus also has revealed the misogyny, white supremacy, and structural violence in some western societies ('Why Asian women', 2021). Particularly, working mothers and single mothers who were at the intersection of motherhood, gender, relationship status, and race were affected ('The toll of the she-demic', 2021). The pandemic thus revealed the need for co-responsibility in childcare ('Men must be the agents', 2020) and developing systemic capabilities to facilitate care work (Nair, 2022).

Micro Social Time During Shecession

In this study, I challenge the idea that women's micro social (interactional and institutional) times could be confined to the home and work settings, respectively. Instead, I argue that women negotiate and expend institutional and interactional times both at home and work settings. The macro-temporal environment of COVID-19 adversely affected said negotiation of the micro social times of working women. Their downplayed position in the employment sector and assigned caregiver role in the domestic sector collectively inhibited their decision-making power regarding micro time usages. Women encountered a situation in which they needed to focus more on the domestic sphere than on their careers (Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya, 2021). The literature on social time describes three features of social time: embeddedness, stratification, and synchronization (Lewis & Weigert, 1981). During shecession, the micro social times of women became increasingly embedded. Resultantly, the synchronizations and stratifications underlying social time usage also became ambiguous and disrupted.

Increased Embeddedness

Temporal embeddedness refers to how different microstructures of time are constrained and contained within the macrostructures of time (Davis, 2009). For example, the pre-pandemic daily institutional–interactional time routine of a working woman was usually organized around the time structure of the organization she worked for. This time structure in turn was influenced by the clock time followed in that particular geographical area. Embeddedness of institutional and interactional times within the time structures provided a mechanism which enabled the continuous performance of multiple overlapping actions across a given period of time (Lewis & Weigert, 1981).

"It is humanly unbearable to perform all these tasks, which I tried to take care of as if I were the planner of the office. Our tendency is to see care as something smaller, but it is a basic need. If this is not organized, nothing out there works" ('Pandemic triggers care crisis and jeopardizes women's achievements', CE Noticias Financieras English, March 8, 2021).

In the context of the out-of-joint pandemic time, the embeddedness of interactional and institutional times became increasingly complex and overlapping. For instance, the pandemic revealed many systemic incapacities such as the lack of sufficient governmental efforts and the removal of childcare facilities. Due to such difficulties, there was a mismatch between the institutional and interactional time usages of working women and the clock time/organizational time structures. Since many workplaces measure women's productivity based on their availability during specific clock times, women faced extreme pressure in balancing their day-to-day activities ('Moms are paying', 2020). Paid work became an activity that was to be done "anywhere" and "anytime" (Tietze, 2002). With the closure of daycare centers and schools, working women were hence forced to juggle their different social time requirements ('Hiring is rebounding', 2021; 'The toll of the she-demic', 2021).

Extra clock time was also required to get adapted to the virtual mode of working ('COVID-19 is knocking', 2020). Additionally, there were also clashes within the interactional time women spent with their families. Although these women spent most of their time with their families during the pandemic, this time was not interactional anymore. Instead of supportive exchanges, this time was spent on care work (i.e. another form of institutional time). Even the interactional time women otherwise would usually spend on relaxation and recreation with friends or extended family members was reduced ('The toll of the she-demic', 2021), to make way for more care responsibilities. Figure 2 illustrates the changes in micro social time embeddedness during the pandemic.

Ambiguous Stratification

Individuals stratify and order their time embeddedness according to some pre-established priorities (Kaufman & Lane, 1990). For instance, in a pre-pandemic organization with a 9am to 5 pm work schedule, institutional time spent on paid work took precedence over other micro social times during said hours. After 5 pm, the micro social (both interactional and institutional) times at the domestic front took precedence. Such stratification was based on the subjective values of the concerned individuals as well as their work and familial obligations. However, the pandemic inverted the stratification of embedded times which

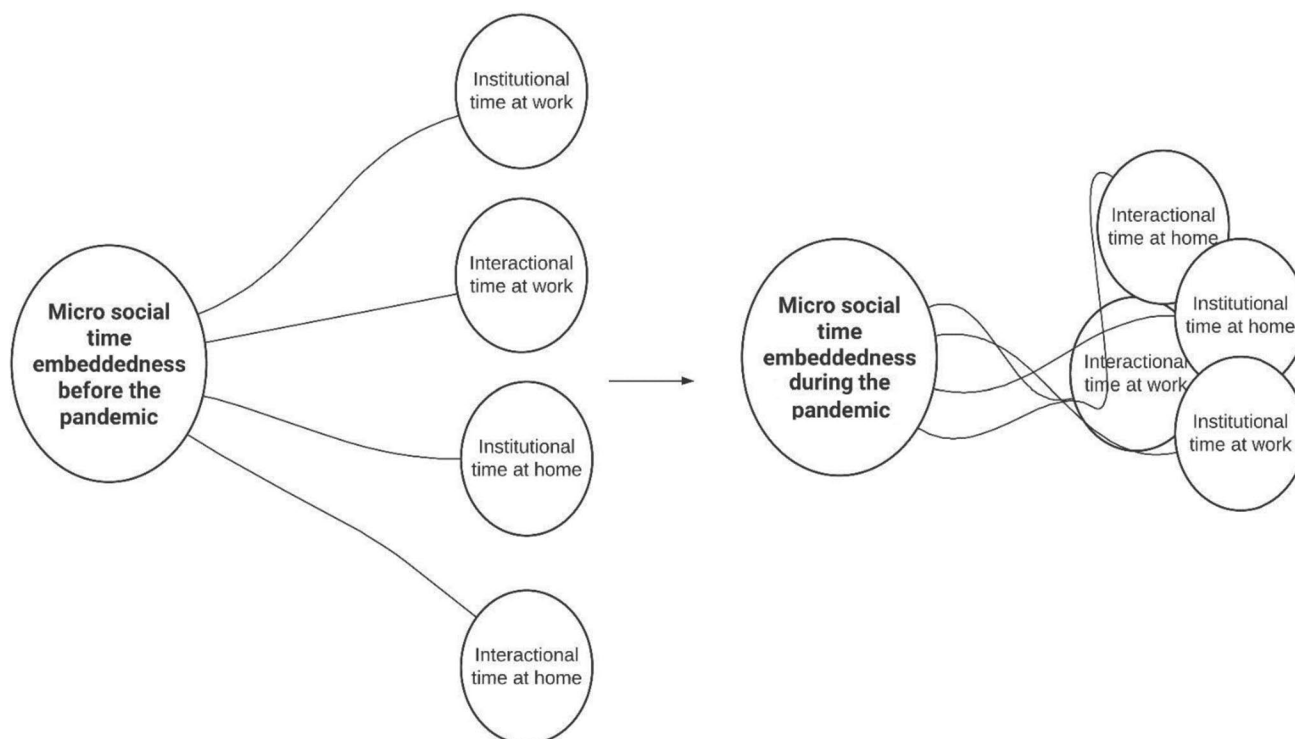


Fig. 2 Changes in micro social time embeddedness during the pandemic

underlay working days. Due to the gendered expectations regarding care responsibilities as well as the closure of schools and day care centers, working women were forced to prioritize their micro social times at the domestic front over those at the work front. This was especially the case for women with unsupportive partners or family members ('How will Utah lawmakers', 2021).

"I tried to balance myself on a tightrope, taking the office, the husband, the son and the house, in addition to keeping at a distance, the logistics of the house of the most." ('Pandemic triggers care crisis and jeopardizes women's achievements', CE Noticias Financieras English, March 8, 2021).

Prior to the pandemic, the time embeddedness allowed women to do their paid work and care work as well as maintain interactions at the work and familial front without many overlaps. However, during the pandemic, women were forced to do the paid work and care work simultaneously ('Covid, women, and the shecession', 2021), with lesser chances of informal interactions unrelated to such work. This created an ambiguity in the micro-temporal stratifications of working women's lives. Figure 3 includes an illustration of the changes in micro social time stratification during the pandemic.

Disrupted Synchronization

Due to the ambiguous stratification of the social time usage, the synchronization of the activities at the work front were also disrupted. Modern industrialized societies function based on the coordination of the stratified times of many individuals. Meaningful events are usually ordered according to specific priorities and are synchronized with the schedules of other individuals involved, to ensure the smooth functioning of workplaces. During COVID-19, working women faced difficulties matching their interactional and institutional times with those of their family members and colleagues ('How will Utah lawmakers', 2021). This negatively affected the efficient execution of paid work and care work. The effects of this asynchronous micro social time usages of working women might linger in the future, leading to a longer recovery time ('Choose to challenge', 2021).

"[The pandemic] has simultaneously deprived women of their usual sources of help and support, such as grandparents, nannies, babysitters, daycare providers, friends and neighbors." (The toll of the she-demic weighs heavy this International Women's Day', Post Media News, March 8, 2021).

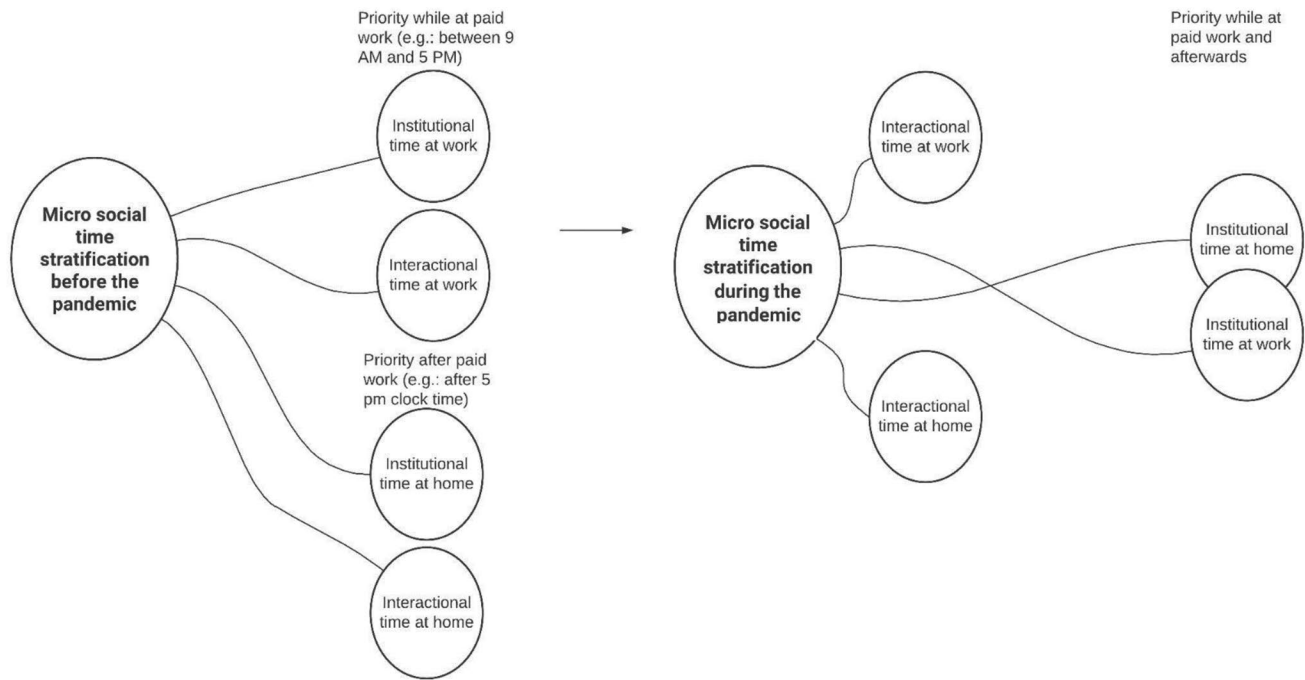


Fig. 3 Changes in micro social time stratification during the pandemic

Furthermore, since the interactional time at work became lesser, working women were excluded from peer support networks. Such exclusions took a toll on their mental health. In the domestic front also, since women were the ones who were more often involved in care responsibilities, they did not have much interactional time. Thus, the opportunities for women to receive care and support from friends or family members also lessened. Figure 4 illustrates the disrupted synchronization of micro social times during the pandemic.

Discussion

Researchers are interested in exploring the factors that produce and sustain gender inequality (Sargent et al., 2020) in the labor market. However, current research and practice focus on what is happening, rather than orienting towards a moral evaluation of what should be happening. Such a focus leads to an ethics deficit (Bone, 2021). Through this study, I explicate what is happening, i.e. how time produces and sustains gender inequality. Furthermore, I also make a suggestion regarding what should be happening—the need for adopting temporal lenses for practicing care ethics. The labor market gender equality declined steeply during shecession not because women decided to drop out of work for no particular reason. They exited their jobs due to the compelling duties and obligations which made it difficult for them to allocate their social time in an optimal manner. The less tangible ideologies and social norms concerning

time usages (i.e. the male breadwinner, female housekeeper differentiation) exerted pressure on women. The neoliberal work structures also resulted in the intensification of work and the blurring of boundaries between different micro social times (Bone, 2021). Exploring the role of social time in shecession can thereby contribute to the development of a prognostic framing of possible solutions (Benford & Snow, 2000; Carmin & Balser, 2002). For instance, gender equality crumbled due to the out-of-joint nature of the macro social time, even in business and societal contexts where there was gender parity before the pandemic. The embeddedness of micro social time in the lives of working women with care responsibilities increased. The micro-temporal stratification and synchronization became ambiguous and disrupted. These changes suggest that micro social times during out-of-joint macro social times such as the pandemic embed, stratify, and synchronize differently when compared to normal times. Ultimately, this leads to working women with care responsibilities being more adversely affected by both micro and macro social time changes.

The effect of social time on the caregivers also points to the fact that women's employment is still contained within structures, norms, and practices which are predominantly masculine. Although such societal and organizational cultures might give an impression of equality during normal times, when the macro time goes out-of-joint, the veneer of equality cracks. The need for better compatibility between the work-domestic lives of women resultantly becomes more pronounced. The contemporary

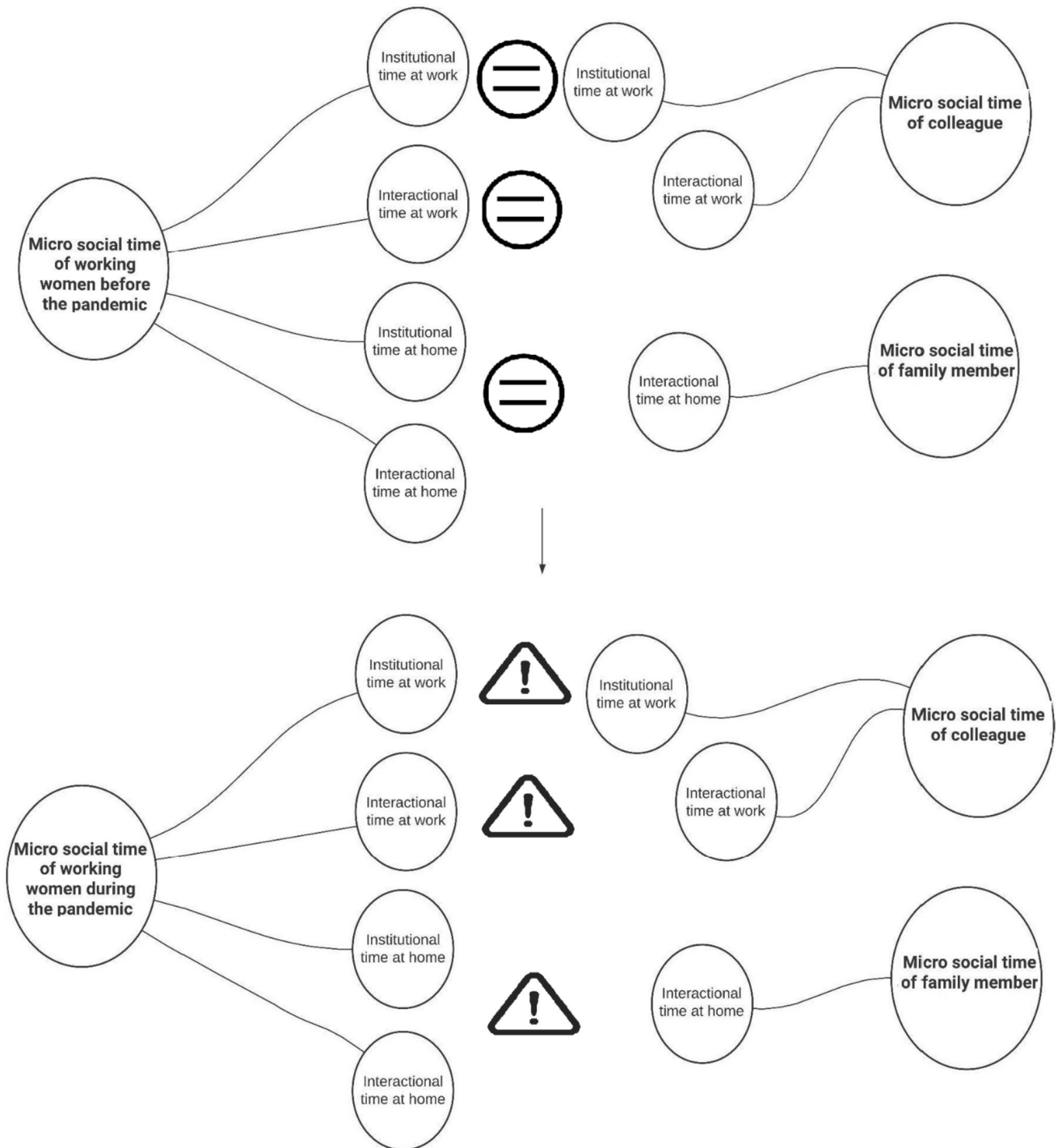


Fig. 4 Changes in micro social time synchronization during the pandemic

work-centered organizational ethos evidently is not congruent with being attentive to the needs of others, which is the underlying principle of care (Antoni et al., 2020). To cultivate care ethics, organizations should make allowance for more flexible work formats which focus on performance, rather than on clock time. Organizations could

also address the gender disparities in the usage of institutional time by incentivizing the care responsibilities which constitute part of the micro social time usage of working women. Work contracts and policies should allow women to reconcile their work with their personal lives (McCarthy, 2018). With such an ethics of care approach,

the micro social time conflicts of working women can be addressed to a large extent.

It is also crucial for organizations to develop policies which accommodate female employees' working time preferences and provide them the possibility to coordinate their micro social time demands (Fagan, 2001). Indeed, the inequalities faced by working women were created in businesses and societies over time (Acker, 2006), not abruptly. The remedies for the inequalities should also therefore be gradual. Hence a long-term plan for tackling the shortsightedness and gendered nature of the labor market (Kelan, 2008) is needed to address gender inequality in the long run. Including more women in the workplaces alone is not a solution. Rather, organizational architecture should be decentralized so that individual female employees are able to carry out their care work autonomously and regularly. Employment policies and educational programs with a care perspective should be implemented and mainstreamed at the societal as well as organizational levels, for allowing female employees to give and receive care regularly. Caring in uncaring organizations is not sustainable. Developing caring organizations, which do not overburden women with responsibilities which exceed their capacity to care, is hence crucial (Liedtka, 1996). Collaborative networks, and not strict hierarchies, are efficient in creating such caring organizations which support individual women and acknowledge their care responsibilities. The employees should be cared for by organizations simply for the sake of caring, rather than for profit motives or for marketing purposes.

The underlying logic of such caring organizations should be that the women who work there are individuals with unique care responsibilities and needs, and are not just generalizable "others" (Liedtka, 1996). For instance, as per the findings, while the pandemic affected everyone, the effects of social time conflicts were diverse for women at the intersections of different disadvantaged social categories. The findings show how social time intersect with the race, job profile, social class, marital status, and maternal status of working women to exacerbate the effects of shecession. The role of social time should therefore not be neglected, since time interconnects with gender and other intersectional social categories to worsen the situation of caregiving working women. Excluding any considerations of social time will result in these women individualizing shecession and considering the job loss/reduction as their personal failure, although that might not be the case. Understanding intersectionality in the context of employment is, therefore, crucial for building organizations and societies (McBride et al., 2015; Thompson, 2020) that care. While distinctive in feminist literature and the humanities, discussions of intersectionality are rarer in management research (Holvino, 2010). By discussing time and care in the milieu of the pandemic, this study

examines how the labor market "deals with", or as is the case here, "does not deal with" intersectional inequalities (Acker, 2012; Sargent et al., 2020).

Lastly, without doubt, it is unethical for women to work twice or thrice as hard as men (McCarthy, 2008). This study is thus a call for creating ethical workplaces and labor markets, which consider social time and care responsibilities as sources of gender inequality. The solutions I proposed for tackling the gendered inequalities at the organizational level are also designed around care ethics. However, while organizations should become more caring, we must remember that care begins at home. The family members should ensure that working women are in caring relationships by engaging with them, sharing care responsibilities, and encouraging them to partake of their leisurely interactional time activities. In the societal level, the problems of working women during the pandemic should be recognized and addressed by governments through solidarity care relations (Lynch, 2007). Reforms to the labor market policies should ensure that there is a place for women in the masculinized careers (Nair, 2022). Statutory regulations and collective public action aimed at understanding and addressing shecession-related difficulties could be helpful. However, such reforms calls for a radical change in the labor market (e.g., changing current labor laws) as well as on the societal/individual front (e.g., developing the ability to care for others).

The findings of this study could thereby be instrumental in developing and implementing gender inclusive policies and processes in the familial, organizational, and societal settings. However, the study is not without limitations. Considering the fallacy of the voluntaristic accounts of women's labor market behavior (Fagan, 2001), this study had analyzed secondary data in the form of newspaper articles. A future research direction would therefore be to explore individual experiences of women who underwent shecession, through interviews. Second, the sample newspaper articles raised the topic of intersectional inequalities. Future research could look deeper into how social time affects the work lives of female employees belonging to multiple disadvantaged categories. Next, this study focused on English-language newspapers across the globe. While this focus ensured global coverage, it decreased the representativeness of the sample since English publications in countries where majority of the people do not speak English represent only specific audiences and discourse levels. A follow-up study can focus on non-English, local newspapers. Studies examining shecession in specific geographical areas or industries can also provide more relevant insights. Lastly, to understand the longer-term consequences of shecession, future studies could apply a microhistorical approach to explore the situated experiences of working women during COVID-19.

Conclusion

Building up on previous research which explored the structural and individual processes leading to inequalities, the findings of this study describe how social time during COVID-19 created, sustained, and deepened the gendered nature of care and the resultant disadvantages borne by working women. Through this study, I thus tease out how the inclusion of social time enriches care ethics. I submit that researchers and policymakers should conceptualize and promote an understanding of gender and gendered inequalities in business organizations, by considering social time and caregiving as influential factors which require further detailed investigation. Ultimately, this article is about caring for the caregivers. It is essential (and ethical) to care for the ones who give care. As the opening quote goes, for women to care for others, they should be cared for first.

Appendix I: Details of the sample articles referenced in the findings section

1. (January 15, 2020) Covid aggravates Mexico's women's economic outlook. *CE Noticias Financieras English*.
2. (June 3, 2020). Coronavirus Briefing: What Happened Today. *The New York Times*.
3. (June 22, 2020). Men must be the agents for change in equality struggle. As women bear the economic brunt of the virus, it is up to the opposite sex to step up the battle for parity at work, finds Kate Bassett. *The Daily Telegraph*.
4. (September 3, 2020). Moms are paying a price for our pandemic policies. *Red Deer Advocate*.
5. (October 30, 2020). "We need a real revolution"; In Italy, the participation of women in the labour market is particularly low compared to the rest of Europe. Up to now the country had come to terms with this, cultivating the problem. But the Corona crisis could put an end to this. And not only in Italy. *Die Welt*.
6. (November 24, 2020). COVID-19 is knocking women out of the workforce. Let's find ways to keep them in it." *Ottawa Citizen*.
7. (December 9, 2020). COVID-19 has pushed more women into 'survival mode'. *The Daily Cardinal*.
8. (February 16, 2021). How will Utah lawmakers help women and families recover from the COVID-19 economic downturn?. *The Salt Lake Tribune*.
9. (February 22, 2021). Covid, women and the 'shecession'. Childcare, lost earnings and a tidal wave of job losses—Covid has disproportionately affected women. Susannah Butter reports on the new battle for equality, and what must be done. *London Evening Standard*.
10. (March 8, 2021). #ChooseTo Challenge to create a fairer Wales after the pandemic. This International Women's Day we should choose to celebrate but we must also #ChooseTo Challenge, says Cerys Furlong, chief executive of Chwarae Teg. *The Western Mail*.
11. (March 8, 2021). Pandemic triggers care crisis and jeopardizes women's achievements. *CE Noticias Financieras English*.
12. (March 8, 2021). Canada's women bear the brunt of pandemic, so what's to celebrate? *The Vancouver Sun*.
13. (March 8, 2021). The toll of the she-demic weighs heavy this International Women's Day. *Post Media News*.
14. (March 19, 2021). Why Asian women are uniquely vulnerable to violence in Canada and the U.S. *The Financial Post*.
15. (March 20, 2021). Women working 5 to 9. *The Bismarck Tribune*.
16. (April 19, 2021). Listen to women and youth to enable recovery from the pandemic. *Mail & Guardian*.
17. (April 24, 2021). Hiring is rebounding in the US—but the 'shecession' persists. *The Guardian*.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest I confirm that I do not have any potential conflicts of interest.

Research Involving Human Participants and/or Animals I confirm that this manuscript is not based on a study involving human or animal participants.

Informed Consent I confirm that this manuscript is not based on a study involving human or animal participants. Hence, obtaining informed consent is not applicable in the case of this manuscript.

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