


ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Gender and Employment: Recalibrating Women's Position in Work, Organizations and Society in Times of Covid-19

Gendering boundary work: Experiences of work–family practices among Finnish working parents during COVID-19 lockdown

Katri Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta¹ | Milla Salin²  |
Mia Hakovirta³ | Anniina Kaittila²

¹The Work Community Development Study Program, Humak University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki, Finland

²Department of Social Research, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

³INVEST flagship, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Correspondence

Katri Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta, The Work Community Development Study Program, Humak University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki, Finland.

Email: katri.otonkorpi-lehtoranta@humak.fi

Abstract

In the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak and governmental lockdowns changed the everyday lives of families with children worldwide. Due to remote work recommendations and the closing of school premises and childcare centers, work–family boundaries became blurred in many families. In this study, we examine the possibly gendered boundary work practices among Finnish parents during the COVID-19 lockdown in spring 2020 by asking, how do parents perceive the blurring of work–family boundaries? What kind of boundary work practices did families develop to manage their work and family roles, and were these practices gendered and how? Boundary practices are analyzed by combining theories of doing boundaries and gender theories in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and applying them to survey data. The results revealed that during lockdown, both spatial and temporal boundaries blurred or partly disappeared, and boundary practices developed by families were highly gendered. Especially in families where childcare practices had been gendered already before the lockdown, it was predominantly mothers, who shouldered the main responsibility of increased childcare and struggled to manage their work duties. Hence, families had varying means to cope with blurring boundaries based on their ability to switch to remote work, but also on their work–family practices before the pandemic.

KEYWORDS

boundary work, COVID-19, gender, mothers, parents

1 | INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020 created rapid changes in work and family life all over the world. For many, this meant working from home, whereas employees in frontline occupations did not have this possibility. At the same time, school and daycare closures increased the amount of care work for which families were responsible. Consequently, work–family boundaries blurred as parents' ability to control where and when they needed to fulfill their work and childcare responsibilities was constrained significantly. Hence, during COVID-19, parents were forced to develop new kinds of practices to manage their work and family relations.

The theoretical framework of boundary work helps us analyze individual work–family relations during a pandemic. Boundary work refers to the strategies, practices, and processes that people use to create, maintain, and reproduce the categories of “work” and “family.” The growing interest in work–family boundary dynamics flows from the increasing overlap between work and family domains (Allen et al., 2014; Nippert-Eng, 1996), as spatial and temporal ways of working have become more permeable and flexible. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated these developments (Craig, 2020; Nagy, 2020).

However, while boundary management researchers (e.g., Mellner et al., 2014) have devoted considerable attention to the outcomes of boundary work, the processes producing those outcomes have received less, although growing, attention. Thus, the understanding of social contexts in which individual practices of boundary work are embedded and their connections to those boundary practices has been weak (Beckman & Stanko, 2019; Lewis et al., 2007).

In addition, understanding of boundary work in the field of work and family research has developed somewhat separately from understanding of gender, so that the gendered nature of the process of boundary-drawing has not been carefully examined in prior studies (Carreri, 2020). Gender is intertwined in interactional and behavioral processes of boundary work (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and therefore also in negotiations of work–family boundaries. While negotiating work–family boundaries, parents simultaneously negotiate gender, too. The COVID-19 pandemic created a situation in which both, work–family boundaries and gender had to be renegotiated.

Moreover, gendered consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for work and care responsibilities are not yet clear, as evidence from previous studies (e.g., Craig & Churchill, 2020; Hank & Steinbach, 2020; Hipp & Bünning, 2020; Nash & Churchill, 2020; Reichelt et al., 2020; Shafer et al., 2020) has been somewhat contradictory. Furthermore, to the best of our knowledge, no COVID-19 studies have systematically analyzed the pandemic's gendered consequences from the boundary work perspective.

In this study, we aim to fill these research gaps by combining theorizations of boundaries and gender in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, we seek to shed light on the gendered nature of boundary work practices through which Finnish families managed their work and family activities during the lockdown in spring 2020. We answer the following questions: How do parents perceive the blurring of work–family boundaries? What kind of boundary work practices did families develop to manage their work and family roles? Were these practices gendered and how? The research questions were answered by employing a mixed-methods approach concentrating on qualitative analysis and using quantitative analysis to provide background context. As data, an online survey including qualitative and quantitative questions on Finnish families' experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown in spring 2020 were utilized.

2 | THE FINNISH WELFARE STATE AND COVID-19 CONTEXT

Finland represents a dual-earner-dual-carer regime, which refers to a model in which the explicit policy goal is to promote gender equality in care for children and paid work (e.g., Eydal et al., 2018; Korpi, 2000). The employment rate of mothers in Finland is relatively high: In 2018, 77% of mothers were working, and a vast majority of working mothers (85%) were working full-time (Statistics Finland, 2019). This high employment level for mothers is combined with generous parental leave policies and an affordable public childcare system. Fathers' role as carers is supported by nine weeks of paternity leave with a high replacement rate. However, despite this family policy context explicitly emphasizing gender equality, the division of care is still gendered. Mothers spend more hours doing housework and childcare than fathers (OECD, 2019). Mothers use lion's share of parental leaves and fathers' take up rate of parental leave has been around 20% (Eerola et al., 2019).

Finding time for both paid work and family care is a significant challenge for families with children. In Finland, it became especially challenging when the COVID-19 pandemic spread to the country in late February 2020. As shown in Figure 1, the Finnish government adopted various policy instruments, restrictions, and recommendations to slow down and prevent the spread of COVID-19. The main strategies were lockdown and physical distancing. The government recommended that, whenever possible, children should be cared for at home; however, daycare centers remained open to ensure access to early childhood education and care for the children of employees who worked in sectors critical to the functioning of society. In practice, daycare was open to all children regardless of their parents' working sector. However, only 22% of children participating in municipal early childhood education and 16% in municipal pre-primary education attended these services during lockdown (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020). School premises were closed, and in-person teaching was suspended and replaced by remote teaching. Recommendations to care for children at home, along with remote teaching, were in effect for approximately two months, between March 18 and May 14, 2020. In addition, the government recommended that remote work be favored whenever possible. Some restrictions and recommendations remained in place to some extent throughout the year 2020, but comprehensive schools and daycare centers began to function quite normally after the spring.

Nearly 60% of workers in Finland switched to remote work during lockdown, which is the highest share of workers in Europe (Eurofound, 2020). According to Statistics Finland (2021) there were no differences between men and women in the prevalence of remote work, but remote work was more usual in jobs that require high education. Because such a large share of workers switched to remote work, relatively small share (less than 20%, second smallest share in Europe) had to cut down their working time (Eurofound, 2020). Unemployment and layoffs during

Recommendations and closing strategies in Finland

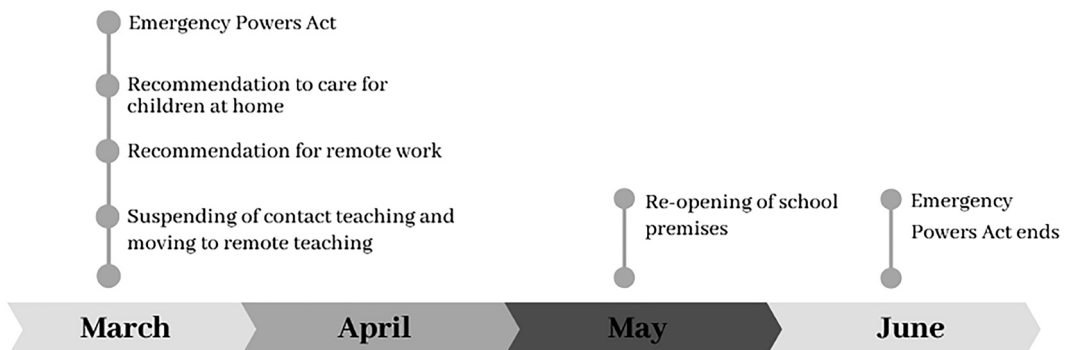


FIGURE 1 Restrictions implemented by Finnish government during spring 2020

lockdown concentrated to some specific – often female dominated – fields, such as tourism and restaurant industry (GSE, 2021).

During the COVID-19 restrictions care work was under constraint due to the requirement for men and women alike to stay home, even if they were employed. During lockdown, the burden of unpaid work is shown to be significantly higher in families with children, for both mothers and fathers than in families without dependent children (Bornatici & Heers, 2020; Craig & Churchill, 2020). There is not yet comparative evidence available to cover northern European welfare states in the context of COVID-19, but for instance, Yerkes, Andre, Remery, et al. (2020) found that Finnish mothers experienced more difficulties in work-life balance than Dutch mothers. The disappearance of state-provided childcare created great difficulty for full-time working Finnish mothers attempting to combine care and paid work during the lockdown.

3 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Boundary work refers to the strategies, practices, and processes that people use to create, maintain, and reproduce categories of work and family (Allen et al., 2014; Nippert-Eng, 1996). It focuses on the ways in which people physically manage their daily lives but also on how they mentally, emotionally, and socially make sense about the world around them (Nippert-Eng, 1996). Individuals' strategies vary in the extent to which they prefer to or also are required to by circumstances integrate or segment their work and family roles. However, boundary work is not only about making individual choices; it also involves negotiations between partners (Ammons, 2013). Further, boundary work is shaped by many societal, cultural, and institutional arrangements and practices, such as gender system, labor market, childcare systems and other welfare services (Lamont & Molnér, 2002; Piszczek & Berg, 2014; Rybnikova & Krüger, 2015). The extensive and affordable public childcare system forms an important part of the relational system used to manage the work–family interface in Finland.

Gender and gendered parenthood are highly relevant in boundary work. When individuals perform boundary work, they negotiate gender simultaneously. They consider themselves and others as gendered actors and, therefore, by completing daily activities, they participate in gender-related meaning-making processes. Gender, as well as boundary work, involves and is in part constituted by activities and interactions situated in time and place that construct social practices that in turn structure normative gender stereotypes, gendered expectations, and gender-based behavior. Individuals then take advantage of these established patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting, and while organizing their own everyday lives, they also reproduce and reconstruct these patterns. Earlier studies have revealed empirically that boundary work practices are shaped by both gender and parenthood (Carreri, 2020; Gray et al., 2017; Shanine et al., 2019; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). For example, Carreri (2020) found out that the blurring of work into family life is interpreted by men and women through distinct ways, which reveal gender asymmetries in the ability to put the style of “boundary work” preferred by the subjects into practice.

This article gives insights into boundary work practices and contributes to the development of gendered boundary work by shedding light on the production of gendered asymmetries within the situation of drastic change in individuals' work–family conditions. As Vuolanto and Kolehmainen (2020) argue, gender has very seldom been the focus in analyses of the processes of boundary work in empirical research. Our aim is to show how gender plays a part in the process of negotiating work–family arrangements within households. By employing a “doing gender” and boundary work approaches together it is possible to capture the gender dynamics of work–family practices. The concept of gendered boundary work perceives gender as a situated social practice that comes into being through the process of boundary work and social interaction within this process.

Since our key aim is to contribute to the construction of time-and-space-situated boundary work practices and to understand their gendering and relational nature, we focus on spatial and temporal boundaries. Spatial boundaries serve to divide physical places, such as workplaces, homes, schools, and daycare centers. Separating work and family life from each other spatially creates or identifies places to perform daily activities related to individuals' different

roles and identities. Temporal boundaries allow the creation or designation of distinct times for these activities. A typical temporal boundary is the end of the working day or shift. Separating work and family life temporally means concentrating on one domain at a time (Allen et al., 2014).

When negotiating spatial and temporal work–family boundaries, individuals actively construct gender norms (Nentwich & Kelan, 2013; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Our focus is on how these processes of negotiating of spatial and temporal boundaries differentiate women and men according to mothers' experiences. This means that although we approach gender as a matter of active doing and outcome of a process, we do not try to move beyond the binary logic by taking mothers and their experiences as a starting point. This is due to our focus on how gender binary, hierarchy and asymmetry are maintained in the realm of work–family (Kelan, 2010, pp. 176–178).

To fully understand the nature of boundaries, it is crucial to differentiate between boundary permeability and boundary flexibility. Boundary permeability refers to the extent to which a boundary allows interruptions to enter from one domain or role to another, whereas flexibility refers to the psychological, behavioral, or physical expansion of one role or domain to another. Hence, boundary permeability describes the extent to which an individual physically located in one domain may be mentally or behaviorally involved with another domain. Flexibility, in contrast, is seen as an ability to vary working times or stretch one domain and its responsibilities at the expense of the other (Allen et al., 2014). The use of technologies and remote work has increased the permeability and flexibility of work–family boundaries, because they help liberate work arrangements from a given place and time (Choroszewicz & Kay, 2020; Mols & Pridmore, 2020; Sayah, 2013). The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated this development, especially in terms of remote work. However, earlier studies have shown that remote work can blur work–family boundaries and hence increase problems related to combining work and family life, especially for women and mothers (Carreri, 2020; Hislop et al., 2015; Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2019; Osnowitz, 2005).

The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns made it concretely visible how changing structural conditions can alter the possibilities and resources for boundary management. Suddenly, individual boundary control—in other words, “the degree to which an individual perceives she/he is in control of how she/he manages the boundaries between work and family life” (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012, p. 161)—did not work along the usually enacted boundaries, and individuals had to reassess work–family boundaries. Studies on the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Hennekam & Shymko, 2020) indicate that families have to develop new kinds of strategies to balance their work and care responsibilities and reconsider in that light their opportunities and ability to shape and control the time and place of their work and childcare responsibilities.

The possible gendered consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on paid work, care work, and work–family boundaries are not yet clear. On the one hand, many studies (Collins et al., 2020; Feng & Savani, 2020; Möhring et al., 2020; Ohlbrecht & Jellen, 2020; Power, 2020; Reichelt et al., 2020) indicate that women and mothers have been hit harder than others by the pandemic not only in terms of paid work and increased care responsibility but also in relation to work–life balance, work time, job satisfaction, and well-being. This indicates that crises such as COVID-19 can strengthen gendered traditions of paid work and care and revert changes. Ultimately, they challenge the equal availability of paid work for mothers, who are expected to devote more time than fathers to housework and childcare. On the other hand, some studies (Carlson et al., 2020; Chung et al., 2020; Craig & Churchill, 2020; Yerkes, Andre, Besamusca, et al., 2020) have revealed that fathers have increased their share of childcare during lockdowns. Hence, at least in terms of dividing increased childcare responsibilities, the COVID-19 pandemic might also have some positive consequences from the gender equality perspective. Nevertheless, despite fathers' more active role in childcare, mothers were still spending more time on childcare than fathers. Fathers are taking a greater share of childcare, and their overall time spent on childcare may even have increased more than that of mothers, but the established disparity and the absolute increase in childcare needed due to COVID-19 have meant that mothers are still spending much more time on childcare than fathers.

4 | DATA, METHODS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 | Data

An online survey on Finnish families' experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown were used as data. The survey included quantitative questions on work–family responsibility reconciliation and marital and parental conflicts as well as qualitative open-ended questions concerning everyday life during the pandemic. In this study, focus is on qualitative questions and quantitative questions are used to provide background context. The survey was launched on April 23, 2020, approximately four weeks after the Finnish government proclaimed physical distancing guidelines; data collection ended on May 17, 2020, a few days after schools and childcare facilities had begun to operate normally again.

The data were gathered using convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique. In nonprobability sampling, the data are not representative of the population, and subjective methods are used to gather the sample (Etikan et al., 2016). Convenience sampling was chosen to enable quick data collection during lockdown. To minimize problems, such as bias, related to convenience sampling, efforts were made to disseminate information about the study through different channels. The main channel used to advertise the survey was the University of X's communication service, which shared a press release on the study with more than 400 media representatives around Finland. In addition, information on data gathering was shared through the University of X's and the researchers' own social media accounts. All participants provided informed consent to inclusion before they participated in the study.

The sample comprised 653 respondents, who were parents with at least one child under 18 years of age. In the analyses, we are interested only in respondents who have a domestic partner and in families where both parents are working; these definitions left us with a sample of 348 respondents. The decision to focus on these respondents with the specific work–family circumstances draw on our interest in boundary work practices that involves two adults negotiating of their both working lives and childcare responsibilities in the same spatial location on the daily basis. It should be noted that our data are biased regarding gender and education: 93% are mothers¹ and 80% are highly educated (university or applied university degree). The mean age of the respondents was 38 years. We will return to these biases when presenting the conclusions of this study.

4.2 | Methods and analysis

In the analyses, we utilize a mixed-methods approach to seek convergence, corroboration, and correspondence of results from different methods (Greene et al., 1989). In our mixed-methods approach, we concentrate on qualitative analysis and employ quantitative analysis to provide background context. We argue that the mixed-method approach is the best suited approach to our concerns, as it enables a platform to qualitatively describe mothers' experiences of families' (gendered) boundary management while also providing quantitative background information on parents' experiences of blurred work–family boundaries. The strength of the mixed-methods approach is the possibility of drawing a more diverse picture of the subject under study (Morse, 2003). It combines the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methodologies and, to some extent, compensates for the gaps in each. The use of multiple methods improves the reliability of research (Plano Clark et al., 2008).

The purpose of *quantitative analyses* is to provide background information on possible gendered experiences by shedding light on mothers' and fathers' experiences of blurred work–family boundaries: that is, whether mothers and fathers have experienced boundary blurring to the same extent. Experiences of boundary blurring are measured with two questions: (1) *Drawing the line between work and caring for children is easy during the corona lockdown*; (2) *Issues related to childcare do not disturb my paid work*. Respondents have six answer options: *strongly agree*, *agree*, *neither agree nor disagree*, *disagree*, *strongly disagree*, and *I do not know*; for analyses, the variables were recoded as three-category variables: *agree* (*strongly agree*, *agree*), *neither agree nor disagree*, and *disagree* (*disagree*, *strongly disagree*). Only a few respondents chose the option *I do not know*, so they were excluded from the analyses. Appendix 1 presents descriptive

statistics for the dependent variables. Moreover, quantitative data is employed in the qualitative analysis in order to provide additional information of the respondents. Quantitative data provides background information that is in line with qualitative analysis and therefore reinforce the results on gender asymmetry based on mothers' experience.

Quantitative data have a few limitations that need to be considered. First, there are many missing cases in the dependent variables; hence, the number of cases in the quantitative analyses is rather low: Of the 348 respondents, 245 answered the questions.² Second, and more importantly, the number of fathers was extremely low: Of the 245 respondents, 226 were mothers, and only 19 were fathers. Thus, especially in the case of fathers, it is impossible to draw generalizations based on the results. The small number of cases also affects the methods that can be used; thus, only descriptive cross-tabulation was employed. In the results, differences between mothers and fathers should be considered only as indicative, and one should be very cautious about inferring statistical significance.

The aim of *qualitative analyses* is to examine what kind of boundary work practices families developed to manage their work and family roles, and whether these practices were gendered and how. Our initial idea was to qualitatively compare mothers' and fathers' experiences, but qualitative data for fathers were so limited that this was impossible. Hence, in the qualitative analyses, we focus only on mothers, and do not consider the data from fathers. Nevertheless, mothers extensively described their whole families' boundary management practices, including those of their partners. Hence, it was possible to tackle the issues of gendering and the relational nature of constructing boundary work practices based on their responses.

For the qualitative analysis, respondents were asked to describe in response to an open-ended question their families' experiences of everyday life during the lockdown, its challenges, and their possible solutions to these challenges. The qualitative data consisted of mothers' written answers to this question. Of the 348 respondents, 207 mothers answered this question. The final qualitative data consist of answers that include descriptions of boundary work practices within families, that is, 106 writings of various lengths.

To answer the research question on gendered boundary work practices to manage work and family roles, we employed both inductive and deductive approaches in the data analysis. We developed a two-stage approach to analyze the data, whereby we could inductively explore the descriptions of participants and use boundary work theory as a means to understand and interpret them. As Xu and Zammit (2020) noted, this so-called hybrid approach assists researchers in identifying the basic features of raw data and flexibly discovering descriptive and interpretive meanings that appear interesting and relevant to the research agenda. The analysis was performed using NVivo 12 software.

We started the analysis by reading and re-reading the data. The text excerpts were then divided into two categories: time and space. The intertwining of spatial and temporal dimensions was sometimes so tight in the descriptions that this categorization was not easy; thus, in indistinct cases, the description was coded to both categories. In the next stage, both categories were further delineated by constructing and gendering elements of practice. In addition, the constructed elements of practice were considered in terms of permeability and flexibility.

5 | FINDINGS

There are three major findings in our study, both of which are strongly supported by qualitative analyses. First, during the COVID-19 lockdown, spatial and temporal work–family boundaries blurred or even partly disappeared in Finnish families we investigated. Second, the boundary practices developed by families to manage spatial and temporal boundaries were clearly gendered. These two results are also conditionally supported by our background quantitative review. Third, based on the qualitative analysis, families had varying means of coping with blurring boundaries based on their ability to switch to remote work but also on their work–family practices before the pandemic. Next, we look in more detail at the results of our analyses, starting with the background context based on quantitative data.

5.1 | Background context on mothers' and fathers' experiences of blurred work–family boundaries

Table 1 present the background information on parents' experiences of work–family boundaries. The blurring of work–family boundaries among Finnish parents is clear: More than two-thirds of respondents stated that drawing the line between work and caring for children was not easy. As regards childcare disturbing paid work, the struggle to manage work–family boundaries is even more pronounced: as much as 83% of respondents agree that issues related to childcare disturb their paid work. Based on Table 1, the COVID-19 lockdown during spring 2020 indeed challenged Finnish parents' ability to maintain and manage their work–family boundaries. Hence, they faced a situation where their boundary management practices needed to be revised and new kinds of practices developed.

Because of the extremely small number of fathers in the data, differences between mothers and fathers in Table 1 should be seen as merely indicative. Nevertheless, the gender difference concerning disturbance in paid work due to childcare is worth pointing out. Around 86% of mother-respondents think that issues related to childcare disturb their paid work, whereas only a bit over half of father-respondents think this way; hence, mothers and fathers seem to have somewhat differing experiences regarding the extent to which childcare issues have disturbed paid work during lockdown. In the case of subjective ease of drawing the line between work and caring for children, differences between mothers and fathers were not statistically significant; however, as Table 1 shows, the percentage point differences between mothers and fathers were rather large, which indicates that the small number of cases for fathers combined with the distribution of the variable in question might at least partly explain the non-significant result.

5.2 | Families' boundary work practices from mothers' perspective

Table 2 present the results of qualitative analysis by summing up constructing of practices from mothers' perspective. The significant factor in construction of practices and their gendered consequences seems to be whether spouses explicitly discussed how they wished to manage the suddenly emergent spatial and temporal boundarylessness of work–family relations caused by the lockdown. As a part of this construction of practices, switching or not switching to remote work and also the ages of children were significant factors for boundary work.

TABLE 1 Experiences of blurring work and family boundaries among working parents during COVID-19 lockdown in Finland, %

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Total (n)
Drawing the line between work and caring for children is easy during the corona lockdown				
Mothers	25.2	5.8	69.0	100 (226)
Fathers	42.1	10.5	47.4	100 (19)
Total	26.5	6.1	67.3	100 (245)
X ² (p-value)	3.756 (0.153)			
Issues related to childcare no dot disturb my paid work				
Mothers	11.1	2.7	86.3	100 (226)
Fathers	36.8	10.5	52.6	100 (19)
Total	13.1	3.3	83.7	100 (245)
X ² (p-value)	14.616 (<0.001)			

TABLE 2 Constructing of practices from mothers' perspective

	Constructing elements of practice	Permeability and flexibility	Gendering constructs of practice
Negotiation of spatial boundaries	(1) No changes in work-family arrangements, "business as usual"	(1) No significant changes in boundary permeability and flexibility	(1) No need for (re) negotiations
	(2) One partner switching to remote work at home	(2) New demands for boundary permeability and flexibility for mothers	(2) Slipping into traditional gender norms and gendered assumptions of division of labor
	(3) Both partners switching to remote work at home	(3) New demands for boundary permeability and flexibility for both parents	(3) Conscious aspirations towards equally shared responsibilities
Negotiation of temporal boundaries	(1) Daily working shifts for both parents	(1) More subjective control over transitions	(1) Conscious aspirations towards equally shared responsibilities
	(2) Working in bursts	(2) Less subjective control over transitions	(2) Slipping into traditional gender norms and gendered assumptions of division of labor

5.2.1 | Negotiation of spatial boundaries

Management of physical space and spatial boundaries involved three different basic scenarios in our data: both parents were working outside the home, one was working at home and the other outside the home, and both were working at home. Mothers in these three groups differed in two respects: First, in the extent to which they needed to negotiate new kinds of practices to manage the spatial boundaries between work and childcare; second, in the degree to which blurring of spatial boundaries became evident.

Mothers in families where both parents were working "normally" outside the home represented a group where no negotiations concerning spatial boundaries were needed. In these families, the COVID-19 lockdown was "business as usual," meaning that parents went to the workplace and children to daycare. This kind of boundary management was enabled because daycare centers remained open throughout the lockdown to ensure access to early childhood education and care for the children of employees who worked in sectors critical to the functioning of society. None of the mothers in our data were in a situation where school-aged children had to manage alone at home.

My spouse and I are both working full-time, and our child is at daycare, so our everyday life goes as usual.

In families where one parent continued to work outside the home and the other switched to remote work at home, the latter parent faced challenges in managing the spatial boundaries between work and childcare, whereas the former continued largely as before. In these situations, the parent (usually the mother) doing remote work was "left alone" to manage and negotiate the boundaries of paid work and childcare. Mothers indicated that using the same space—home—as workplace, children's playground, and school premises made it very hard to concentrate either on work or on childcare.

I am at home taking care of our three children, aged 4, 6, and 8, and try similarly to manage my work. My husband goes to the workplace normally, he has his hobbies, and contacts with other adults. I do all grocery shopping so that I can sometimes get out of my house. During the weekends, I go to do sports

alone. I have difficulties coping with my workload; I cannot be a good mother and good worker at the same time. I am stressed out; I start crying very easily, even though I do not know why.

As stated above, in cases where only one parent changed to work at home, in our data it was predominantly the mother although statistics (Statistics Finland, 2021) show, that there were no gender differences in the extent of remote work during lockdown. Part of the reason for mothers' overrepresentation might be our convenience sampling: maybe our data collection induced especially those (mothers) who had switched to remote work. Nevertheless, the gendered nature of negotiation of spatial boundaries became clear, as mothers felt that their partner did not understand the challenges they faced trying to manage the boundaries of paid work and childcare. Many mothers felt that they were not getting the support they needed from their partner to be able to manage both paid work and childcare. This created tension between parents in some cases, and some mothers had confronted their partners in order to get things changed.

My husband, who works at his workplace, did not understand the workload I had to scrape through when I started working remotely. I needed to learn all new digital applications to manage my teaching job online. At the same time, I had to make a lunch for the kids, clean up after children's mess, and all other possible things. We had a big fight before my husband realized how remote work overturned my everyday life. Now, children need to help with homework. All the kids can do the dishes, wipe dust, and vacuum. Now, all the kids can turn the washing machine on, not only the mom.

Perhaps a bit surprisingly, management and negotiation of physical space were a complicated issue in families where both parents changed to remote work. In these families, both parents needed to utilize the same space for both paid work and childcare. To manage this, families developed different practices. Some families set up a separate workspace, either a dedicated work room or a specially repurposed workspace for the unusual conditions, for example a garage or sauna. These practices made it possible to "work in peace," without interruption by other family members. Interestingly, our data indicated that the management of physical space was gendered: According to mothers, the more peaceful separated workspace was more often their partner's workplace, whereas mothers' workstations tended to be situated in the common spaces of the home, such as kitchens or living rooms. This led to a situation where mothers' work was interrupted more often by children when they needed attention or help with their school tasks.

My workstation is in the kitchen, so when I am not in video meetings, my children think that I am at their service and they ask for help in their schoolwork. My husband is working at his own office space downstairs, and kids do not disturb him as much.

The excerpt above shows how the spaces that mothers used were normally meant for non-work activities, and therefore interruptions by other family members were recurrent. Interestingly, in families without dedicated work rooms, fathers still tended to use more separated spaces, such as bedrooms. Moreover, many mothers mentioned that their homes were not suitable for all family members to work and do homeschooling at the same time. Thus, family members competed with each other for the "best and most peaceful work and schoolwork spot." Lack of workspace was a common problem, and our data indicated that mothers ended up coping with spatial boundarylessness more than fathers did. The only exception was one case where a mother reported that her workspace was a separate space where she could concentrate on her work, while her partner worked next to her children; this arrangement was justified by the husband's ability to absorb himself in his work and not be disturbed easily by the children's noise. Overall, it seems that mothers tended to work in more integrated spaces within the home. It is not clear whether this is due to traditional ideas of the home being the domain of women and gender roles related to that or due to women's lack of power over the management of physical space.

5.2.2 | Negotiation of temporal boundaries

Negotiation of temporal boundaries is difficult for many parents. Negotiation of working hours in shared spaces was an important part of creating daily rhythms and equal working conditions for both parents. The two main practices that parents used were scheduling daily working shifts for both parents and working in bursts. The former was a result of mutual discussion and decision, with the aim of providing separate shifts for paid work and childcare, whereas working in bursts was an unintentional way of managing temporal boundaries day to day.

Daily work shifts for both parents

Arranging daily “work shifts” for both parents required mutual agreement, which was discussed either weekly or daily. If both parents were not able to perform remote work, the one who could had to show more flexibility regarding their daily work time. In these cases, the parent (usually the mother) with a remote work option usually stretched her “office hours” and worked in the evenings after her partner had returned home from work or during weekends. If both parents had the ability to perform remote work, taking turns was arranged more on the grounds of children’s needs and other family-specific reasons. However, some work-related reasons, such as teachers giving lessons for homeschooling pupils and students, meetings with colleagues, clients, and so on, also acted as grounds for scheduling turns between parents. Overall, working in shifts tended to promote equal opportunities for efficient and uninterrupted working hours.

We have tried to share childcare responsibilities in a way that I do my work shift at the library between 8 am and 4 pm, and my husband works between 5 and 10 pm.

In some families, mutually agreed work shifts were extended to cover children’s duties, such as school video meetings, but also family lunch hours and children’s outdoor activities. The purpose of these “family timetables” was not only to ensure that everyone was able to attend their compulsory meetings or events but also to give a clear rhythm to daily routines and events, especially for children under school age.

In the evening before, we do a timetable for the next day, including all our video meetings, children’s school tasks, and lunch time. We try to negotiate which one of us is available to take care of our child and which one can concentrate on his/her own work. Usually, the timetable is very tight, and it is hard to keep it, and then all falls apart. During the quick lunch, we have a “half-time check” for the rest of the day.

Working in bursts

Remote-working mothers in families that had not mutually agreed on equally shared working shifts struggled with the heavy burden of work responsibilities, childcare, taking care of children’s school days, cleaning, laundry, and cooking. It seems that these mothers had little or no control over temporal boundaries; many were “working two or even more shifts simultaneously,” which led to perpetual interruptions and struggles between work and family roles. For these mothers, the needs of family members and household work were something that had to be considered first, and their own paid work was subordinated to that.

I do not have any days off anymore. I work from Monday to Sunday, fragmentally, depending on childcare responsibilities. Working during nights was the hardest. During the past week, I worked on four days until midnight, because I cannot do my work hours during the day. So, I continue working after the kids go to sleep. I am so tired.

Intriguingly, our analysis indicated that mothers who worked in bursts perceived that they had taken the main responsibility for domestic work and childcare before the COVID-19 pandemic, but the lockdown made this unequal division of domestic labor more visible and placed it in a new and more negative light. Mothers considered this situation unequal, and it caused disagreements about whose work was or was being treated as the most important. Hence, perceived fairness seems to be an important contributor to satisfying temporal boundary management needs of mothers in dual-career couples.

My husband does not take part in childcare. He works at his “home office” and I do all childcare, cooking, and cleaning, besides my own work. My husband has never done much domestic work or childcare, and it was not a big deal before. Currently, my own time is that I get to go for a small walk in the evening, while my husband takes care of the kids. Then, he only turns the TV on for the children because he is too tired to do anything with them.

Instead of demanding equally shared shifts for working, these mothers, working in bursts, ended up waiting for better, in other words “normal,” times and slipped into traditional gender norms and gendered assumptions of division of labor.

6 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we utilized boundary theory and a gendered perspective as a theoretical framework for understanding the ways parents develop boundary practices concerning their work and family roles in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. To understand the gendered nature of this boundary-drawing, we aimed to produce new knowledge about boundaries as continuous and open-ended activities of “doing,” to recognize how gendering takes place, and to identify boundary management processes in the context of lockdown. As a result, our study contributes to existing knowledge in the following ways.

First, results revealed that during lockdown, the spatial and temporal boundaries in Finnish families we investigated not only blurred, but in some cases partly disappeared. As Hennekam and Shymko (2020) state, during the lockdown, normal routines and everyday practices lost their meaning and families were left to “improvize” new forms of practice. Based on our results, the novelty of the COVID-19 lockdown was that it simultaneously blurred and erased both spatial and temporal boundaries, and families had varying means to cope with these changes—for example, based on their ability to switch to remote work, but also based on their work–family practices before the pandemic.

Second, our results showed the gendered nature of the boundary practices Finnish families developed to manage these blurring and disappearing spatial and temporal boundaries. According to our analysis, the constructing elements of the practices that parents developed in the process of boundary work led to different gendering constructs. Slipping into traditional gender norms and gendered assumptions of division of labor was combined with situations where only mother switched to remote work and working at home was done in bursts. These mothers had less subjective control over transitions, since they tried to manage their work, childcare and domestic tasks alone. In addition, in situations where both parents switched to remote work and there were not conscious aspirations towards equally shared responsibilities by arranging daily “work shifts” for both parents with mutual agreement between parents, analysis revealed gendering constructs. The results also suggest that household management or cognitive labor (Daming, 2019) related to negotiations of spatial and temporal boundaries was predominantly on mothers' shoulders. Mothers were those, who actively asked for sharing childcare and domestic tasks responsibilities and arranging work shifts between partners.

In line with earlier studies (e.g., Ohlbrecht & Jellen, 2020; Power, 2020; Reichelt et al., 2020), we found that the lockdown indeed made gender inequality more visible; in our Finnish case, especially in families where mothers had shouldered the main responsibility of childcare already before the pandemic, mothers had accepted with varying degrees of frustration the fact that childcare was on their shoulders and that they had to adjust their work mainly according to family needs, but the lockdown exaggerated the situation and in many cases put mothers or families “over the edge.”

Unfortunately, our data do not indicate whether the parents that developed more egalitarian lockdown practices were those that had shared childcare and domestic labor more equally before the lockdown, nor was it possible in general to analyze the drivers of more egalitarian lockdown practices. Nevertheless, conversely, it became clear that many mothers also experienced that their partners preferred to continue the gendered division of domestic labor during lockdown and were not ready to reshape traditional gendered practices.

Third, our results accentuate the role that welfare institutions, such as public daycare and schools, play in normal everyday life in Finnish families and how they enhance mothers' ability to engage in paid work and maintain reasonable working conditions (see also Eydal et al., 2018). Thus, our results point out that this exceptional societal situation, with schools and daycare institutions not functioning properly, can influence the division of domestic labor in a way that reinforces and makes visible gendering elements in the construction of practices and gendered norms embedded in societal expectations. Moreover, when schools and daycare centers work normally, the need to challenging gender norms and gendered division of labor is less acute, since welfare institutions share and ease especially mothers' burden.

Fourth, based on our results, the elaboration of boundary work practices is particularly important for our understanding of the gendering and relational nature of work–family boundary management. From a theory-building perspective, this means that boundary work should be seen as a socially and materially situated negotiation in which individuals are in various social and cultural locations that define their personal realm configurations of work and family. Previous studies (e.g., Kossek & Lautsch, 2012; Mellner et al., 2014) have often oversimplified the management of work–home boundaries into either “preferred” or “enacted” boundaries, without analyzing the particular contexts in which their management takes place. Our results reveal that the COVID-19 pandemic created widely varying conditions for performance of boundary work due to differences in parents' working conditions and transitions to remote work. Furthermore, varying conditions for performance of boundary work were related to differences in living conditions in terms of having an extra space or additional room available or not. Future studies should further investigate how spatial flexibility and temporal permeability can create conditions for a practice such as remote work that simultaneously reinforce and resist conventional constructions of the gendered division of domestic labor. Overall, exploration of the boundary work practices of dual-earner parents may yield a better understanding of the processes that individuals relationally co-construct with their partners in order to manage their everyday lives.

Nevertheless, a few limitations should be kept in mind when considering the results and conclusions of our study. First and foremost, due to data issues, our quantitative background review included only a few fathers, and qualitative analysis focused solely on mothers' experiences. A relevant question is whether mothers' experiences paint a different picture of families' work–family practices than fathers' experiences would do. It is possible that mothers are not able to objectively assess fathers' share and role, for example, in childcare; hence, our results might overestimate the gendered nature of work–family boundary practices. Moreover, in our data, mothers were more often the parent who had switched to remote work, which may also exaggerate the gendered situation as it emerged from our results. Therefore, in future studies, an interesting topic would be to systematically analyze fathers' experiences of blurring and disappearing work–family boundaries, and to compare the boundary management practices of mothers and fathers. Second, in this study, our interest was only in spatial and temporal boundaries, while other boundaries, namely mental and behavioral boundaries (see Nippert-Eng, 1996), were not analyzed. To build a more nuanced picture of the gendering processes of boundary work practices, future research could focus on these other boundaries from a gender perspective. In addition, both the management of boundaries and the way they are negotiated should be further considered from a relational and co-constructed perspective.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ORCID

Milla Salin  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0816-5873>

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Information on the gender of the parent is based on respondents' own identification of their gender. Respondents were able to choose their gender from following alternatives: "female", "male" and "other". In the original sample ($N = 653$) three respondents and in a sample including only those families with two working parents ($n = 348$) one respondent had chosen the option "other". Gender of respondent's partner was not included in data; however, it was mentioned in a vast majority of cases in qualitative data and in these cases, partner was always male.
- ² Unfortunately, we do not know why there are so many missing cases in these variables. However, it seems that especially those respondents who continued to work at their workplace passed these questions. It might be that COVID-19 pandemic did not affect their work–family boundaries and therefore they left these questions unanswered more often.

REFERENCES

- Allen, T. D., Cho, E., & Meier, L. L. (2014). Work–family boundary dynamics. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 1(1), 99–121.
- Ammons, S. K. (2013). Work-family boundary strategies: Stability and alignment between preferred and enacted boundaries. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 82(1), 49–58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2012.11.002>
- Beckman, C. M., & Stanko, T. L. (2019). It takes three: Relational boundary work, resilience, and commitment among Navy couples. *Academy of Management Journal*, 63(2), 411–439. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2017.0653>
- Bornatici, C., & Heers, M. (2020). Work–family arrangement and conflict: Do individual gender role attitudes and national gender culture matter? *Social Inclusion*, 8(4), 46–60. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v8i4.2967>
- Carlson, D., Petts, R., & Pepin, J. (2020). Changes in parents' domestic labor during the COVID-19 pandemic. *SocArXiv Papers*. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/jy8fn>
- Carreri, A. (2020). Control on the 'boundary-work' in work-life articulation for flexible knowledge workers. Insights into gender asymmetries. *Social Sciences*, 9(6), 107. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci9060107>
- Choroszewicz, M., & Kay, F. (2020). The use of mobile technologies for work-to-family boundary permeability: The case of Finnish and Canadian male lawyers. *Human Relations*, 73(10), 1388–1414. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726719865762>
- Chung, H., Seo, H., Forbes, S., & Birkett, H. (2020). Working from home during the COVID-19 lockdown: Changing preferences and the future of work. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OoyxkO_fCKzMCnG2Ld14fVI8HI7xRGe/view
- Collins, C., Landivar, L. C., Ruppner, L., & Scarborough, W. J. (2020). COVID-19 and the gender gap in work hours. *Gender, Work and Organization*, Supplement: Feminist Frontiers January 2021, 28(1), 101–112. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12506>
- Craig, L. (2020). Coronavirus, domestic labour and care: Gendered roles locked down. *Journal of Sociology*, 56(4), 684–692. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783320942413>
- Craig, L., & Churchill, B. (2020). Dual-earner couples' work and care during COVID-19. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 28, 66–79. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12497>
- Daminger, A. (2019). The cognitive dimension of household labor. *American Sociological Review*, 84(4), 609–633. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122419859007>
- Eerola, P., Lammi-Taskula, J., O'Brien, M., Hietamäki, J., & Rääkkönen, E. (2019). Fathers' leave take-up in Finland: Motivations and barriers in a complex Nordic leave scheme. *SAGE Open*, 9, 215824401988538. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019885389>
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. B., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11>
- Eurofound (2020). Living, working and COVID-19. First findings-April 2020. Retrieved May 21, 2021, from https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef20058en.pdf
- Eydal, G. B., Rostgaard, T., & Hiilamo, H. T. (2018). Family policies in the Nordic countries: Aiming at equality. In G. B. Eydal, & T. Rostgaard (Eds.), *Handbook of family policy* (pp. 195–208). Edward Elgar.
- Feng, Z., & Savani, K. (2020). Covid-19 created a gender gap in perceived work productivity and job satisfaction: Implications for dual-career parents working from home. *Gender in Management*, 35, 719–736. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-07-2020-0202>
- Gray, B., Ciolfi, L., De Carvalho, A. F. P., D'Andrea, A., & Wixted, L. (2017). Post-Fordist reconfigurations of gender, work and life: Theory and practice. *British Journal of Sociology*, 68(4), 620–642.
- Greene, J. C., Caracelli, V. J., & Graham, W. F. (1989). Toward a conceptual framework for mixed-method evaluation designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 11, 255–274.

- GSE (2021). *Tilannehuoneen raportti 21.1.2021 – viimeisimmät kehityskulut työmarkkinoilla, kotitalouksissa ja yrityksissä*. Helsinki Graduate School of Economics. Retrieved May 21, 2021, from <https://www.helsinki.fi/covid19-data-fi/tilannehuoneen-raportti-21-1-2021-viimeisimmat-kehityskulut-tyomarkkinoilla-kotitalouksissa-ja-yrityksissa/>
- Hank, K., & Steinbach, A. (2020). The virus changed everything, didn't it? Couples division of housework and childcare before and during the corona crisis. *Journal of Family Research*, 33(1). <https://doi.org/10.20377/jfr-488>
- Hennekam, S., & Shymko, Y. (2020). Coping with the COVID-19 crisis: Force majeure and gender performativity. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 27, 788–803. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12479>
- Hipp, L., & Bünning, M. (2020). Parenthood as a driver of increased gender inequality during COVID-19? Exploratory evidence from Germany. *European Societies*, 23, S658–S673. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2020.1833229>
- Hislop, D., Axtell, C., Collins, A., Daniels, K., Glover, J., & Niven, K. (2015). Variability in the use of mobile ICTs by homeworkers and its consequences for boundary management and social isolation. *Information and Organization*, 25(4), 222–232.
- Kelan, E. K. (2010). Gender logic and (Un)doing gender at work. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 17(2), 174–194. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2009.00459.x>
- Korpi, W. (2000). Faces of inequality: Gender, class, and patterns of inequalities in different types of welfare states. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 7(2), 127–191.
- Kossek, E. E., & Lautsch, B. A. (2012). Work–family boundary management styles in organizations: A cross-level model. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 2(2), 152–171.
- Lamont, M., & Molnár, V. (2002). The study of boundaries in the social sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28, 167–195. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.28.110601.141107>
- Lewis, S., Gambles, R., & Rapoport, R. (2007). The constraints of a 'work-life balance' approach: An international perspective. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(3), 360–373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190601165577>
- Mellner, C., Aronsson, G., & Kecklund, G. (2014). Boundary management preferences, boundary control, and work-life balance among full-time employed professionals in knowledge-intensive, flexible work. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*, 4(4), 7–23.
- Ministry of Education and Culture (2020). *Kuntakysely: Kuntien järjestämään varhaiskasvatukseen osallistuu keskimäärin 22 prosenttia lapsista, 1-3. luokkien lähiopetukseen 9 prosenttia*. Retrieved May 21, 2021, from <https://minedu.fi/-/kuntakysely-kuntien-jarjestamaan-varhaiskasvatukseen-osallistuu-keskimäärin-22-prosenttia-lapsista-1-3-luokkien-lahio-petukseen-9-prosenttia>
- Möhring, K., Naumann, E., Reifenscheid, M., Wenz, A., Rettig, T., & Krieger, U. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic and subjective well-being: Longitudinal evidence on satisfaction with work and family. *European Societies*, 23(4), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2020.1833066>
- Mols, A., & Pridmore, J. (2020). Always available via WhatsApp: Mapping everyday boundary work. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 9, 422–440. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157920970582>
- Morse, J. M. (2003). Principles of mixed methods and multimethod research design. In A. Tashakkori, & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (pp. 189–208). Sage.
- Nagy, B. (2020). "Mummy is in a call": Digital technology and executive women's work-life balance. *Social Inclusion*, 8(4), 72–80. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v8i4.2971>
- Nash, M., & Churchill, M. (2020). Caring during COVID-19: A gendered analysis of Australian university responses to managing remote and caring responsibilities. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 27, 833–846. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12484>
- Nentwich, J. C., & Kelan, E. (2013). Towards a topology of 'doing gender': An analysis of empirical research and its challenges. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 21(2), 121–134. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12025>
- Nippert-Eng, C. (1996). *Home and work: Negotiating boundaries through everyday life*. University of Chicago Press.
- OECD (2019). *Family policy database*. Retrieved February 24, 2020, from <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>
- Ohlbrecht, H., & Jellen, J. (2020). Unequal tensions: The effects of the coronavirus pandemic in light of subjective health and social inequality dimensions in Germany. *European Societies*, 23, S905–S922. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2020.1852440>
- Ollier-Malaterre, A., Jacobs, J. A., & Rothbard, N. P. (2019). Technology, work, and family: Digital cultural capital and boundary management. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 45, 425–447. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073018-022433>
- Osnowitz, D. (2005). Managing time in domestic space: Home-based contractors and household work. *Gender & Society*, 19, 183–103. Retrieved February 12, 2021, from www.jstor.org/stable/30044570
- Piszczek, M. M., & Berg, P. (2014). Expanding the boundaries of boundary theory: Regulative institutions and work–family role management. *Human Relations*, 67, 1491–1512. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726714524241>
- Plano Clark, V. L., Huddleston-Casas, C. A., Churchill, S. L., O'Neil Green, D., & Garrett, A. L. (2008). Mixed methods approaches in family science research. *Journal of Family Issues*, 29(11), 1543–1566.
- Power, K. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the care burden of women and families. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy*, 16(1), 67–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15487733.2020.1776561>
- Reichelt, M., Makowi, K., & Sargsyan, A. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on gender inequality in the labor market and gender-role attitudes. *European Societies*, 23, S228–S245. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2020.1823010>

- Rybnikova, I., & Krüger, J. (2015). Between work and non-work: Institutional settings of boundary management in case of German self-employed lawyers. *Management Revue*, 3(26), 253–275.
- Sayah, S. (2013). Managing work–life boundaries with information and communication technologies: The case of independent contractors. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 28(3), 179–196. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ntwe.12016>
- Shafer, K., Scheibling, C., & Milkie, M. A. (2020). The division of domestic labor before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada: Stagnation versus shifts in fathers' contributions. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 57(4), 523–549. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12315>
- Shanine, K. K., Eddleston, K. A., & Combs, J. G. (2019). Same boundary management preference, different outcome: Toward a gendered perspective of boundary theory among entrepreneurs. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 1(57), 185–205. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jsbm.12424>
- Statistics Finland (2019). *Työvoimatutkimus. Perheet ja työ vuonna 2018 [Labour Force research. Families and work 2018]*. Official Statistics of Finland. Retrieved January 1, 2020, from http://tilastokeskus.fi/til/tyti/2018/14/tyti_2018_14_2019-11-14_fi.pdf
- Statistics Finland (2021). *Etätyö yleisty eniten niillä aloilla ja alueilla, joilla sitä tehtiin ennen vähiten*. Retrieved May 21, 2021, from <https://www.tilastokeskus.fi/tietotrendit/artikkelit/2021/etatyoyleistyi-eniten-aloilla-ja-alueilla-joilla-sita-ennen-tehtiin-vahiten/>
- Sullivan, C., & Lewis, S. (2001). Home-based telework, gender, and the synchronization of work and family: Perspectives of teleworkers and their co-residents. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 8(2), 123–145.
- Vuolanto, P., & Kolehmainen, M. (2020). Gendered boundary-work within the Finnish skepticism movement. *Science, Technology & Human Values*, 46(4), 789–814.
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender and Society*, 1(2), 125–151.
- Xu, W., & Zammit, K. (2020). Applying thematic analysis to education: A hybrid approach to interpreting data in practitioner research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726717718917>
- Yerkes, M., Andre, S., Besamusca, J., Kruyen, P., Remery, C., van der Zvan, R., Beckers, S., & Geurts, S. (2020). 'Intelligent' lockdown, intelligent effects? Results from a survey on gender (in)equality in paid work, the division of childcare and household work, and quality of life among parents in The Netherlands during the COVID-19 lockdown. *PLoS One*, 15, e0242249. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0242249>
- Yerkes, M., Andre, S., Remery, C., Salin, M., Hakovirta, M., & van Gerven, M. (2020). Unequal but balanced? Highly educated mothers' perceptions of work-life balance during the COVID-19 lockdown in Finland and The Netherlands. *SocArXiv Papers*. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/652mh>

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Katri Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta is a Senior Lecturer at The Work Community Development Study Program at Huma University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki in Finland. Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta's research is informed by the sociology of work, organization, and gender specializing in equality and gendering practices in working life, intersectionality, well-being at work and action research. She has done intensive fieldwork at various workplaces, ranging from the military to knowledge-intensive firms.

Milla Salin is an University lecturer at Department of Social Research at University of Turku in Turku in Finland. Salin's research investigates mothers' working hours and employment, reconciling work and family life, attitudes towards work, family and gender roles. Her recent work has focused on COVID-19 pandemic and everyday life of families with children. She currently teaches quantitative methodological studies, labor market and labor policy, family policy, and international comparative research studies.

Mia Hakovirta is a Senior Research Fellow at Department of Social Research at University of Turku in Finland and works at a joint research centre Invest Flagship that aims at providing a new model for the welfare states that is more equal, better targeted to problem groups, more anticipatory as well as economically and socially sustainable. Hakovirta studies family policy, child support systems, poverty of children and families with children

and single parenthood, specializing in comparative welfare state analysis. She has published widely in the fields of social policy and comparative welfare state studies.

Anniina Kaittila is a Senior researcher at Department of Social Research at University of Turku in Finland. Kaittila's research interests focuses on money and monetary conflicts within co-residential unions and family relationships, intimate partner violence and family conflicts.

How to cite this article: Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta, K., Salin, M., Hakovirta, M., & Kaittila, A. (2021). Gendering boundary work: Experiences of work–family practices among Finnish working parents during COVID-19 lockdown. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12773>

APPENDIX 1: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF DEPENDENT VARIABLES

	%	<i>n</i>
Drawing the line between work and caring for children is easy during the corona lockdown		
Agree	26.5	65
Neither agree nor disagree	6.1	15
Disagree	67.3	165
Total	100	245
Issues related to childcare do not disturb my paid work		
Agree	13.1	32
Neither agree nor disagree	3.3	8
Disagree	83.7	205
Total	100	245