ABSTRACT

THE BORDERS BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE AS PROBLEMATIC

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In this paper I am arguing that there is a need to distinguish more clearly between public and private life, due to different reasons. However, what is public and what is private is subject to discussion and negotiation. It is important that women belong to those taking active part in such discussions.

In many ways the borderlines between the two spheres have become blurred in today’s society. Such a development may be welcome, and in accordance with the way many people, especially women, think about their own lives. Though, someone has to be the losing part if there is shortage of time and demands from all quarters. Today’s work organisations often demand almost total commitment from their members. This development may be harmful for families and private life. However, people may also find great pleasure in their work, but the pressure they feel, due to the different responsibilities, may be too great.

Mingling private and work relations is quite common in different work organisations. My research shows that this is not unusual among colleagues in female work areas and may not be regarded as problematic when on the same level. If the manager has close friends among her subordinates, the situation is different. Then it becomes clearer that there are different roles, implying different rules and relationships. Although friendship may contribute to a good working climate, mingling private and work relations could also have some negative consequences, especially if there are various groups and friendship constellations with differing kinds of relationship to the manager.

The private/public relationship is also a subject of current interest when it comes to questions of use and misuse of private life in the public sphere.