

Article issued in: *Lover: Magazine on Feminism, Culture and Science*, June 2002. (Dutch) (The articles in this special issue were selected by professor Gloria Wekker on the inauguration of becoming professor: 'Gender and Ethnicity')

THE DOXIC ALLIANCE BETWEEN MALE AND NATIONAL DOMINANCE

Doxa's of conflicting loyalties in men coming of age

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I met and guided Mehmet during my field work research in psychiatric department of a military hospital. He was a conscript in the Dutch army and wanted to serve in the Turkish army as well. He was born in Rotterdam and proud of both his Dutch and Turkish nationality. Mehmet had been provoked repeatedly by his peers in school and in the army. Although he wasn't violent at all, he eventually assaulted the peers concerned. A report was drawn up and he was locked up for a few days. When his peers made an offensive remark about his mother a few months later, he molested a sergeant that failed to set limits and disapproved of his rightful verbal aggression. During and after his detainment he grew increasingly sombre. When his condition deteriorated to such an extent that he stopped eating, he was admitted to our psychiatric ward (note 1).

What has happened to Mehmet is not exceptional and thus provides an exemplary case. The incidents that regularly hit the news in the days that military service was still compulsory appear at first glance a severe way of bullying. I would like to subject Mehmet's vicissitudes to a profound intercultural analysis from a national and ethnic-regional, male perspective. His fate falls outside of the cultural awareness of most individuals involved, thereby allowing the persistence of similar acts of exclusion and oppression. The relatively invisible effect (out of cultural awareness) of established power relations is exposed in this article as much as possible with the help of the methodological concept of 'doxa' (note 2).

While constructing a frame of analysis for gender and ethnicity I found out, by clinical field work and a literature search, that the concepts masculinity and ethnicity are difficult to unite. Moreover, the positions that produce the ways in which knowledge is attained and distributed, co-determine what studies and research are selected and their contents and results. How can we, men and women from all corners and strata, construct a common frame of analysis? A frame work that preserves the exchange between everyday experiences (practice) and reflection (theory) that renders justice to important (historical) contexts in the (Dutch) multicultural society and one that even takes specific social positions into account? These may be positions within kinship networks, social and cultural (ethnic) groups and positions related to scientific and professional disciplines.

In publications exploring innovative frames of analysis, we stumble over the metaphors that intend to unravel the realities that surround gender and ethnicity. Rosi Braidotti speaks of nomadic thinking and travelling theories. Another metaphor is provided by the title of the splendid book '*Talking in The Dark*' (note 3). In her contribution to the *Caleidoscopic Visions*, Gloria Wekker, following Crenshaw, elaborated on the metaphor of 'intersectional thinking' on March the 9th, 2002. Openings that unravel gender and ethnicity can be found on the intersection of class, gender and ethnicity.

Metaphors also play a key role in unravelling realities involving masculinity and ethnicity. Stefan Dudink argued in the '*Tijdschrift voor Vrouwenstudies*' (a journal for gender studies) against a direct confrontation with dominant masculinity, in favour of a circumventing movement. "To prevent rendering masculinity indisputable, its history must first be written by means of other histories, requiring its incorporation into interfering histories". He compares this conventional masculinity with the sun, which sheds light on everything else, but remains itself outside of scrutiny. If you look into it, you are blinded. The editors of the magazine extend the metaphor in their introduction: "Research about masculinity might thus require the nature of a solar eclipse [...] to facilitate its observation without being blinded (note 4). Dirck van Bakkum (and others) didn't want to wait for a solar eclipse and took a more traditional turn. They hit on the metaphor of the prism: a prism breaks down the all blinding sun light of male dominance into many colours. In the prism, the light is broken into wavelengths of distinctive colours. In this way the edgy sunlight, and thus the aspect of male dominance can be studied and analysed. Therefore it reduces the power that overshadows everything else. One should research dominant masculinities by examining distinctive wavelengths (note 5).

As a 'clinical anthropologist', Mehmet's drama enabled me to make a major discovery. National dominance is intertwined with male dominance and residents of the Randstad area with a migration background are not just 'Dutch native' residents of Randstad. During my field work research I conducted frequently repeated 'collaboration experiments'. My hypothesis was that boys from Friesland would collaborate sooner and with more ease with boys from Amsterdam, rather than with Turkish or Antillean boys. This hypothesis turned out to be untenable. Young male conscripts from migrant groups connected more often with peers in groups that come from Friesland, Limburg, Twente, etc. This result eventually opened my 'by dominance blinded eyes' to the fact that they related to each other in their 'dependence of dominance', in being provoked by arrogant (especially urban) boys from the Randstad. After a number of field work trips into Dutch regions, I was able to confirm the existence of 'Randstad dominance' (note 6).

Pierre Bourdieu, the late, anthropologist and political philosopher, in addressing the topic of gender, he adopted a perspective of male dominance rather than from the view point of female oppression. As a male researcher and a supervisor of young men, the male perspective appeals to me more as well (note 7). Bourdieu applied an anthropological, culture comparative approach and studied the traditional Kabyle (Berber) peasant society in Algeria elaborately. There, male dominance and as a consequence female

subordination, is considered as a natural fact imposed by God and as an element in a 'natural order of things'. This 'natural order' or the way in which every one of us analyses and categorises the world, returns as key in how culture and ethnicity are experienced in many societies. To illustrate this, Bourdieu borrows a metaphor from the European linguistic legacy. He conceptualises our daily arsenal of conduct, including gender specific conduct, as the 'doxa'. The doxa is a precondition and is never called into doubt. For example, we never wonder how our daily, weekly or monthly routines of wage labour operate. Most people rashly abide by their time tables with all attendant consequences (note 8). As a social scientist and political philosopher, Bourdieu regards it as his task to reveal the effects of the doxa. I expect the doxa of gender and ethnicity, which are part of the socialisation of masculinity and femininity, to be profound, large and complex.

Taking a somewhat different perspective, analysis within the Dutch regions illustrates how young Turkish male conscripts from Friesland are different from the dominant Randstad fashion. The residents of Randstad can't perceive this, due to their 'by dominance blinded eyes'. How can this ignorance for diversity and the multi-coloured 'Otherness' of Dutchmen from the regions and migrant populations, be explained? It is not easy to pin down the doxa of male dominance, when as a man or woman you are part of those doxa yourself. To crack the doxa, Bourdieu makes use of a human skill that has been professionalised by the scientific discipline of anthropology: looking back at the male-female relations in your home society through the eyes of another culture. In the same breath, he cracks the classical epistemological problem within the scientific domain of European culture; that of subjectivity and objectivity. Now that I have referred to several culture comparative sources, I will embark on my own systematic reflection on gender and ethnicity. In relation to Bourdieu, this will focus on our national culture and European civilisation.

Bourdieu uses a number of related concepts from his other studies to expose the **doxa** of male dominance. One of them is the distinction between social capital and economic capital. Social capital is all that serves to distinguish people. In the male dominated, European world (in all its national and regional variations) positions of power have been identified, fenced off and conveyed with respect to other men in thousands of ways over centuries. Money and property are just one part of it. The ways in which you speak, eat, drink, gesticulate, walk, dress and live determine whether you are considered 'in' or 'out'. The 'cultural dynamics' of collecting and preserving social capital (through a career) and the maintenance of male power positions by men (and by women) has barely been studied. The dynamics are subtle, and convey a sense of conspiracy. Bourdieu explains that it is exactly this that constitutes the doxa in any culture, with or without large power differences. The accumulation of national and male dominance is one of the most tenacious doxa's.

Mehmet sought to unite his male pride with the national loyalties associated with his Dutch and Turkish citizenship. On a masculine level, that strong positive pride could not be tolerated by representatives of the dominant national Dutch culture. The representatives of this dominant culture (urban conscripts from the Randstad) forced Mehmet into a position

of severely conflicting national and ethnic loyalties. Prolonged conflicting loyalties without any discharge, have a detrimental effect on the cultural and mental stability of a person (note 9). A physical and emotional discharge releases an unsolvable internal turbulence. The insults on Mehmet's mother provoked him into such a discharge. He was pushed beyond his aggressive and cultural limits. The assault on the sergeant indicated the victory over the doxa, of the existent national and male dominance. Adult men frequently observe young men defending their established interests with satisfaction and contentment. The invested social and economical capital remains intact.

Multicultural Netherlands desperately calls for a disclosure of the mammoth alliance between national and male dominance. Disclosure would take any kind of 'symbolic violence' - against children, women, migrants, refugees and people that are 'different' - out of the blinding sunlight and expose it in plain daylight. Perhaps by exposing this alliance, the Mehments of the future can be saved from the humiliating offenses and traumatic psychiatric admissions.

Notes

1 For a more detailed description of Mehmet's vicissitudes, see Dirck van Bekkum, 'To Belong and To Be Different: Balancing National and Ethnic Loyalties in Male Adolescents.' In: J. Mucha (ed.), *Dominant Culture as a Foreign Culture: Dominant Groups in the Eyes of Minorities*, East European Monographs, Columbia University Press 1999, p.149-174. (of op www.ctt.nl publications)

2 Edward T. Hall, *Mental Health and Out of Awareness Cultural Systems*, p. 97-103, in: *Cultural Illness and Health: essays in human adaptation*, L. Nader and T.W. Maretzki (eds), Washington DC, American Anthropological Association, 1979. Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, Polity Press, 2001.

3 Gloria Wekker en Rosa Braidotti (red.), *Praten in het donker, multiculturalisme en anti-racisme in feministisch perspectief*, Kampen: Kok 1996.

4 Stefan Dudink, 'De vanzelfsprekende mannelijkheid.' In: *Tijdschrift voor Vrouwenstudies*, thema 'Mannelijkheid? Mannelijkheid! Over bankovervallers, eenzame helden, zorgverlof en het duel.' 1995 p. 204-217. Editorial p. 128-129.

5 Jos Bregman, Dirck van Bekkum en Nico van Oosten, *LeDZDoIt: Balanceren tussen lef, diversiteit, zorg, doen en internet*, De Hoef 2000. (hybride: boek-website www.ledzdoit.com)

6 Dirck van Bekkum, 'Adolescence and Ethnicity: An Interdisciplinary Model in Occupational Therapy and Vocational training.' In: *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 4 (1994), p. 253-69. (www.ctt.nl)

7 Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, Polity Press, 2010. Men coming of age internalise various (positive and negative) masculinities. They thus constitute an important research population to disclose dominant masculinities. See also: Dirck van Bekkum, *Masculinity & Ethnicity, Multiple Connections: Towards Intercultural Forms masculinity*, in: *The First Sex, Opinions on Masculinities*, Anja Meulenbelt (red), van Genneep, Amsterdam, 1998. (in Dutch)

8 Dirck van Bekkum, 'Leisure, Play and Work in Urban Settings: Search for Liminal Experiences in Male Adolescents.' In: *Leisure, Time and Space: Meanings and Values in people's lives*, Sheila Scraton (ed.), *Special Issue Leisure Studies Association*, nr. 57, 1998, p.59-72.

9 Dirck van Bekkum, *Culture and Mental Disorder in Male Adolescence: Overcoming Ethnocentrism in Psychiatric Diagnosis and Therapy*. Paper presented at congress: 'Mental Health, Race and Culture in Europe' (Bristol, 1994).