'Minority Representatives' in the Netherlands: Supporting, Silencing or Suppressing?

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This article focuses on how often and in what ways 'minority representatives' address cultural and/or religious rights and freedoms by analysing parliamentary questions between 2002 and 2012. The research first analysed to what extent, if any, Member of Parliaments of minority origin highlight minority-related issues in their parliamentary questions. Thereafter, it analysed the content of those questions in more detail. Unlike much previous research, we did not take a favourable content for granted. The idea of 'suppressive representation' was introduced to describe those cases in which 'minority representatives' were restrictive towards cultural and/or religious freedoms of 'immigrant minorities'. Representation patterns show differences across group- and individual-level identities.

Keywords: Content analysis, Minority, Political representation, Supportive and suppressive representation, The Netherlands

1. Introduction

Ayaan Hirsi Ali attracted significant media attention within the first half of the 2000s with her statements on the incompatibility of the Muslim religion with the liberal societies of the western world. Becoming a leading figure in the anti-Islam discourse (Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2008, pp. 2–3), the Dutch Member of Parliament (MP) of Somali origin challenged those attributing a profound role to the representation of ethnic and religious minorities by elected officials from similar backgrounds. Hirsi Ali's publicity considerably personalised the discourse on the issue. However, many other MPs of minority origin demonstrate similar attitudes in dealing with minority-related issues or choose to

remain silent when it comes to the problems, demands and wishes of 'immigrant minorities'.[1]

Studies on political representation of ethnic and religious sub-groups are usually concerned with the actual presence of minority figures in the political arena. The presence of legislatives of minority origin is an achievement in itself. Yet, such presence does not guarantee the reflection of minority interests in legislation (Celis and Childs, 2014).

To what extent, if any, do 'minority representatives' place issues concerning minority constituencies on the political agenda? Does the minority background automatically lead to a supportive framing that favours ethnic and religious groups? If not, what are other possible framings? What possible explanatory factors might account for variations in the representation of minorities? To answer these questions we investigated the parliamentary work of MPs of minority origin on minority-related issues within the Netherlands between 2002 and 2012. Content analysis was carried out to detect how 'minority representatives' frame groups sharing similar backgrounds with themselves, and possible reasons for this framing.

This study endeavours to contribute to the literature by proposing different framings within minority representation. We develop the idea of 'suppressive representation' to explain those cases in which MPs of minority origin adopt restrictive framings towards cultural and/or religious rights and freedoms of immigrant minorities. Occasions on which those MPs support cultural and/or religious freedoms of ethnic and religious constituencies are identified within the 'supportive representation' frame. The data analysed for this study revealed the impacts of the retreat from the group rights-based understanding of multiculturalism and the transition towards a more integrative form of citizenship. Individual and group-related factors such as gender identity, party ideology, and ethnic and religious backgrounds of constituents, as well as representatives, also come into play as significant factors shaping the agendas of 'minority representatives'.

2. Studies on political representation of minorities

European literature on political representation has made significant contributions to our understanding of the descriptive presence of immigrant minorities in decision-making processes (see Saggar and Geddes, 2000; Togeby, 2008; Bloemraad, 2013; Michon and Vermeulen, 2013; Schonwalder, 2013; Thrasher *et al.,*

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[1]The word minority is defined according to the official definition of the Central Bureau for Statistics of the Netherlands. By minority, this study refers to those people, at least one parent of whom was born outside the Netherlands. Accessed at http://www.cbs.nl/nlNL/menu/themas/dossiers/allochtonen/methoden/begrippen/default.htm?ConceptID=37, on 10 December 2013. This study follows Michon and Vermeulen (2013) in describing ethnic and religious groups in the Netherlands as 'immigrant minorities'. See Michon and Vermeulen (2013).

2013). However, empirical research on the substantive representation of ethnic and religious minorities is less than conclusive. Pitkin (1967) presumes that representatives' activities would be in line with the needs, wishes and interests of 'immigrant minorities'. Nevertheless, coming from ethnic and/or religious groups does not necessarily lead to supporting minority interests which, within the scope of this study, are described as cultural and religious freedoms. Existing literature views any reference to ethnic and/or religious groups as substantively representing the interests of minorities (Bird, 2005; Saalfeld, 2011; Saalfeld and Kyriakopoulou, 2011; Saalfeld and Bischof, 2013). Those studies say little on the content of what 'minority representatives' say. The question of whether MPs with migratory backgrounds act in the interests of ethnic and/or religious groups or not remains unanswered.

The theory of political opportunity structures attributes importance to citizenship regimes in explaining the claims made by minority members in public arenas (Koopmans and Statham, 2000). In this regard, recent studies on the Dutch national model of 'migrant incorporation' draw a pessimistic picture with claims on the demise of multiculturalism, or the traditional 'group rights' approach within the pillar structure (Entzinger, 2006; Koopmans, 2006; Vink, 2007). When those studies are taken into consideration, one would expect that 'minority representatives' feel themselves discouraged from supporting minority constituencies. Rather, those representatives are more likely to remain silent, or lean towards a more integrative contextualisation, in cases where they do support immigrant minorities. Following this line of reasoning, 'minority representatives' would target issues hindering incorporation such as socio-economic marginalisation, insufficient language and other cultural skills, discrimination, and lack of intercultural contacts (Koopmans, 2006). Bonjour and Lettinga (2012), on the other hand, are critical of casting national models aside. According to their perspective, unique interpretations of equality and diversity, which are fundamental in shaping 'migrant incorporation' policies, are institutionalised within the tradition of pillarisation. The authors, however, address political parties and the power relations between them as significant determinants of how migration and integration policies are framed within national models. Other studies verify the role of political party attachment as a route towards supporting minority identities and practices. Empirical studies on claim-making abilities of 'minority representatives' show that such representatives are often more closely engaged with the party elite, rather than larger ethnic and religious groups (Bird, 2005, p. 44; Durose et al., 2012, p. 263). Having little liability to the grassroots, minority legislatives often adopt restrictive frames when addressing issues concerning their ethnic, religious or cultural backgrounds. In many other cases, they choose to remain silent.

Saalfeld (2011), Saalfeld and Bischof (2013) and Saalfeld and Kyriakopoulou (2011) contribute to the literature on the political representation of immigrant minorities by focusing on the salience of minority-related issues on the agendas of

'minority representatives'. The first study reveals that black and ethnic minority MPs are more attentive to ethnic and religious minorities when compared with non-minority MPs. The later studies underline the role of different contexts and claim that 'minority representatives' choose to emphasise their minority identities when they are speaking to minority constituencies, and to de-emphasise their minority identities when they are facing a broader public audience. While being highly informative, these studies could be criticised for using a limited operationalisation of the substantive representation of minority interests. They count any reference to minorities as a significant element within the interests of any one particular representative. Relevant literature overlooks those cases in which representatives with minority background persistently act against minority interests (Anne, 2012). In other words, how 'minority representatives' frame issues concerning minorities, and the underlying reasons remain to be studied. Investigating possible variations in representation and the possible reasons behind those variations could not only lead to a more sophisticated understanding of political representation, but should also illuminate how different structures and actors shape such representation.

A group of scholars have used the claims-making approach (Koopmans and Statham, 1999; Saward, 2006; Celis *et al.*, 2008) in their investigation of by whom, under which conditions, where and how claims are made. This article follows those studies (Vliegenthart and Roggeband, 2007; Bonjour and Lettinga, 2012; Bonjour, 2013) adopting the framing approach to gain more in-depth focus on how actors shape the relevant debate. This method serves as a conceptual tool providing a framework to detect salient aspects in the perceived realities of immigrant minorities; enables us to see how 'minority representatives' define problems; and provides an analytic tool to analyse their formulation of causal interpretations, moral evaluations and/or treatment recommendations for issues concerning ethnic and religious groups (Entman, 1993).

3. Political context, data and methods

A content analysis was conducted to identify patterns, underlying connotations and implicit meanings of parliamentary questions. The data consisted of the parliamentary questions of MPs of minority origin in the Netherlands between 1 January 2002 and 31 December 2012.[2] Other than the lively debates on migration and integration throughout the 2000s, the Dutch case is of particular importance for having a high number of MPs coming from ethnic and religious groups. The Dutch electoral system is one of the proportional representations thus facilitating diversity in the

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[2]The year 2002 is of particular importance for the Dutch context as that year corresponds to the rising criticisms against the multicultural understanding in migration policies as well as the rise of Pim Fortuyn as the anti-immigrant politician and his subsequent assassination.

parliament. Usually, around 10 parties occupy the 150 seats in the *Tweede Kamer*. Members are elected based on the position they take on the party list, though candidates ranked lower can overtake the position of others by receiving preferential votes. According to Bloemraad's recent index of representation, the Netherlands appears to be the most proportional country within the western world (Bloemraad, 2013). However, little has been said on reflecting minority interests, wishes and needs through the network of 'minority representatives'. The style of written parliamentary questions in the Netherlands further adds to the relevance of choosing the Dutch case. MPs in the Netherlands have to submit individual documents, which have introductory, main and conclusive paragraphs.

Data for this study were collected through two keyword searches on parliamentary questions in the archives of the parliamentary website.[3] Although legislators can express their policy preferences in many different platforms, parliamentary questions were deliberately chosen since they allow greater freedom to MPs in representing their electorate. 'Minority representatives' are thought to be more independent in expressing their ideas and policy positions in their individual questions, when compared with parliamentary debates or other platforms. Firstly, all the parliamentary questions asked by MPs of minority origin were downloaded by entering the names of MPs of minority origin.[4] The total number of questions collected from this first search was 6210. Thereafter, only those documents related to migrant minorities were selected via a second keyword search. The second search was conducted according to the most relevant and salient issues through a preliminary qualitative analysis using Nvivo software. The keywords used in the second search were: Migrant OR immigrant OR minority OR integration OR non-Western OR *allochtoon*[5] OR genital mutilation OR imam OR mosque OR family reunification OR Islamic OR Muslim OR Turk OR Moroccan OR Surinamese OR Antillean.[6]

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[3]All the questions posed by MPs since 1995 in the Dutch National Parliament (TweedeKamer) were accessed at https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/zoeken/parlementaire_documenten, accessed between 1 August 2013 and 20 August 2013.

[4]The selection of MPs of minority origin is based on research into the first names, surnames and photo images of MPs from the parliamentary website of the Netherlands. The list was thereafter compared with the names provided by the website of the Institute for Public and Politics (Instituut voor Publiek en Politiek). Available at http://www.prodemos.nl, accessed 15 July 2013.

[5]The word *allochtoon* is used to describe ethnic and religious minorities in the Netherlands.

[6]Those keywords were typed as follows in Dutch: Migrant* OR immigrant* OR minderhe* OR niet-Westers* OR allochto* OR Meisjesbesnijdenis OR Imam OR integratie OR moskee OR gezinsher! OR inburgering OR Islamitisch OR Moslim* OR Turk* OR Marokka* OR Surina* OR Antillia*.

A total number of 35 MPs of minority origin served in the Dutch parliament between 2002 and 2012. Of this number, 21 were females and 14 were males. The Dutch Labour Party (PvdA) had the greatest number of 'minority representatives' in its composition with 14 'minority representatives' within the party during this period. The Green Party (GroenLinks) was in second place with 8 'minority representatives'. Other parties have allocated less space to MPs coming from ethnic and religious minorities. There were three MPs from the Dutch Christian Democrats (CDA), three from the Dutch Social-Liberal (D66), three from the Socialist Party (SP) and four from the liberal-conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD).[7] The Anti-immigrant List of Pim Fortuyn (LPF) saved one seat for the minority voice (for less than a year) during the 11-year period under consideration. MPs of Moroccan and Turkish background had the largest presence with 13 and 12 MPs, respectively. There were six MPs of Surinamese origin, with four MPs coming from other ethnic groups. There was no MP of Aruban and/or Antillean origin despite their large population within the composition of ethnic minorities in society as a whole.[8]

MPs of minority origin asked questions on a wide range of issues such as healthcare, fiscal structure, employer rights, trade, education, foreign relations and the like. A comparison between the interest in cultural and religious rights and/or freedoms between 'minority representatives' and non-minority representatives goes beyond the limits of this study. Nevertheless, our second keyword search illustrates that 'minority representatives' showed a limited interest in minority-related issues. Only 261[9] of the original 6210 questions, namely 4%, were related to immigrant minorities. A content analysis on these final 261 questions facilitated the explanation of different representative patterns on issues related to minorities. Not all MPs of minority origin were seemingly interested in minority-related issues, with 11 of the aforementioned 'minority representatives' refraining from asking any question specifically related to minorities. 18 of them asked fewer than 10 questions on issues concerning minority constituencies. 68% of all the questions analysed for this research were produced by five females and one male MP, with Turkish or Moroccan

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[7] Ayaan Ali Hirsi, a Dutch MP of Somali origin, left the Labour Party (PvdA) and became a member of the Liberal Party (VVD) in October 2002.

[8] According to the official statistics, there are 1,095,731 residents of non-Western minority origin in the Netherlands. There are 396,414 residents of Turkish origin, 374,996 residents of Moroccan origin, 348,291 residents of Surinamese origin and 146,855 residents of Aruban and Antillean origin. Accessed at http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=37325&D1=a& D2=0&D3=0&D4=0&D5=0-4,137,152,220,237&D6=0,4,9,(l-1),l&HD=130605-0936&HDR=G2,G1,G3, T&STB=G4,G5 on 29 December 2014.

[9] 15 of those documents are counted twice as MPs of minority origin posed them collaboratively.

origins and belonging to different parties: Dutch Labour Party, Socialist Party, GreenLeft, D66 and VVD.

With regard to a more detailed description of our methodology, we followed the directed approach in qualitative content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Initial coding started with the findings of earlier studies, which presuppose any reference to minorities as advocating minority interests. In the first step of our analysis, we sought to establish whether those references contained favourable problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations and/or treatment recommendations about cultural and/or religious rights and freedoms. Our interpretation of the underlying context revealed a systematic tendency of MPs of minority origin to frame minority-related issues under a restrictive enclosure.

41% of the questions portray minority practices and symbols as problematic to the country of settlement and/or calling for strong measures. We developed a second category of 'suppressive representation' to address those restrictive framings. Thereafter, we sought explanations to deduce the underlying reasons for variances in framing cultural and religious symbols and practices of immigrant minorities. Taking the prevailing patterns in the analysed data into consideration, we formulated preliminary explanations of contributing factors. Those preliminary explanations were revised or completely changed when compared with cases which refuted the first explanation (Berg and Lune, 2004, pp. 358–363). Our study is built on context-based interpretations and does not attempt to formulate generalisable conclusions. Nevertheless, the data analysis revealed systematic variance in the use of the different frames, which will be further explored below. Findings from the analysis were quantified as far as possible, to substantiate our qualitative examination of how 'minority representatives' justified their positions. For the sake of clarity, only the numbers and/or percentages of the supportive and suppressive framings are discussed in detail. Neutral framings are reported only in the figures and in Table 1, which also includes figures for unclassifiable texts. Our codebook allowed multiple coding when questions contained supportive and suppressive messages at the same time.

4. Minority interests and different patterns of minority representation

The data analysis confirmed our initial expectations in terms of revealing variations in framing of minority-related issues in the works of MPs of minority origin. 'Minority representatives' are concerned with problems, wishes and needs of people with whom they share similar backgrounds. Nevertheless, our empirical analysis challenges the direct relationship established between coming from a minority background and a more colourful understanding of representation, or sympathy for cultural and/or religious rights and freedoms in parliamentary work.

Table 1 Absolute frequencies and percentages

	Supportive framing	Suppressive framing	Neutral framing	Other	Total	
	Number of questions	Number of questions	Number of questions	Number of questions	Percentages	Number of coding
Issues						
Discrimination	41	3	1	1	17	46
Integration	38	6	4	4	20	52
Religion	7	23	–	1	12	31
Fund. & Terr.	–	28	–	–	11	28
Crim. & Del.	3	11	–	–	5	12
Culture	4	26	2	–	11	30
Gender	2	36	–	1	15	39
Miscel.	11	–	25	14	20	51
Total	106	133	32	21	111	289
Gender						
Male	35	19	11	7	28	72
Female	66	87	20	23	75	196
Total	101	106	31	30	103	268

Party						
CDA	7	5	0	1	5	13
D66	12	1	1	1	6	15
GL	28	8	19	6	23	61
LPF	0	1	0	0	0.4	1
PvdA	39	38	5	14	37	96
SP	15	30	6	6	21	56
VVD	0	23	0	2	10	25
Total	101	106	31	30	102	268
Ethnicity						
Moroccan	65	55	22	19	62	161
Surinam	6	8	0	2	6	16
Turkish	30	31	9	6	29	76
Other	0	12	0	3	6	15
Total	101	106	31	30	103	268

Note: The sum of questions coded in each category may exceed the total number of questions as the questions are coded more than once when they covered more than one issue or when they had references both to 'supportive representation' frame and 'suppressive representation' frame. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Taking such variations into account, this research proposes a representation model, which distinguishes between supportive and suppressive framings on cultural and/or religious rights and freedoms. We placed those references supporting cultural and/or religious rights and freedoms of ethnic and religious groups within the category of 'supportive representation'. As stated above, we proposed the 'suppressive representation' category to describe those cases in which 'minority representatives' act against ethnic and/or cultural rights and freedoms.

5.   Supportive on integration vs suppressive on identity

Data analysis confirmed our expectations regarding a diversified framing of issues concerning ethnic and religious minorities in the parliamentary work of 'minority representatives'. 39% of the data analysed was coded as 'supportive representation' and 41% as 'suppressive representation'. 3% of the data analysed included references both to 'supportive representation' frame and to 'suppressive representation' frame and was coded twice. 11% had no reference to the promotion or suppression of cultural and/or religious freedoms and was coded as neutral. The remaining 11% was not subjected to analysis on the grounds of not being directly related to the subject area. Our data analysis shows that the issue a question addresses can partly account for variations in framing. 'Minority representatives' act as delegates representing minority voters and adopt a supportive framing on daily problems within the country of origin such as fighting against discrimination and strengthening integration. The same representatives, however, adopt suppressive framings when it comes to religious and/or cultural identities and/or practices. 'Minority representatives' appear to restrict a 'fellow feeling' almost solely to those concerns overlapping the general policy of contribution to 'integration processes'.

MPs of minority origin are most assertive when it comes to fighting discrimination against ethnic and religious constituencies. This is especially the case when such discrimination concerns integration to the labour market. 17% of the questions (46 out of 261) focused on discrimination, stigmatisation, and/or violence against ethnic and/or religious minorities. 89% of these (41 out of 46) were coded within the 'supportive representation' frame. Many of these supportive questions included calls for action from relevant agencies or social institutions. For instance, on 9 November 2007, a labour MP of Moroccan origin criticised the Public Prosecutor for discriminating on ethnic and cultural grounds by addressing young people of Moroccan origin twice as often as those coming from the native population.[10] Another minority MP, from the social-liberal party D66, addressed

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[10]Bouchibti, Samira., Question Number: 2070804510, 9 November 2007.

institutional discrimination against police agents of minority origin in her question submitted on 24 August 2006.[11]

20% of the analysed data (52 out of 261 questions) focused on integration and targeted issues such as educational disadvantages, low socio-economic status, difficulties in accessing healthcare and neighbourhood segregation. Again, 'minority representatives' adopt an ambassadorial role when it comes to obstacles on the route towards a more 'integrated' society. 73% (38 of these 52 questions) were coded as 'supportive representation' whereas only 12% (6) were deemed to be 'suppressive representation'. Particular attention was paid to the integration of minority children to the education system as full and active participants, or the diversification of student populations in schools. 'Minority representatives' drew attention to increasing the school participation of minority children, improving their grades at school, making university education more popular amongst minority youth and increasing their language capabilities. In this regard, low levels of advice on schooling and 'black schools', which are schools with a high percentage of minority pupils, together with language issues, are all presented as important problems to be solved.[12] Such an integrationist tone, unsurprisingly, is not very supportive of faith schools isolating Muslim children from the rest of society.

'Minority representatives', however, tend to remain silent or become restrictive regarding group-based rights, which usually require institutionalised arrangements. At this point, the Muslim background of 'minority representatives' hardly adds to the representation of Muslim minorities in the country. Due to difficulties in operationalising religious identity, this article intentionally abstains from quantitative analysis on the impact of the representative's religious background when framing questions related to religious rights and freedoms. Indeed, religious identity may remain hidden even among MPs who are supportive of minority constituencies. 'Minority representatives' are active in fighting discriminatory practices against ethnic and/or religious groups. Those representatives, however, become silent or even suppressive when it comes to the promotion of cultural and/or religious rights and freedoms. With regard to the latter, 'minority representatives' are more inclined to keep silent or adopt strategies necessitating institutional arrangements such as building mosques and maintaining religious associations. 11% (31 out of 261) of questions analysed referred to religious rights and freedoms. Of those, some 23 questions addressing minority religion made confrontational aspects salient and proposed restrictive policies, namely they adopted the

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[11]Koser Kaya, Fatma., Question Number: 2050617970, 24 Augustus 2006; Azough, Naima., Question Number: 2040506800, 24 January 2005; Koser Kaya, Fatma., Question Number: 2060702800, 9 November 2006; Karabulut, Saadet., Question Number: 2009Z14098, 17 July 2009.

[12]Ten, Tjon A., QuestionNumber: 2020309250, 23 March 2003; Celik, Metin., Question Number: 2012Z10458, 24 May 2012; Azough, Naima., Question Number: 2030420210, 27 Augustus 2004.

'suppressive representation frame'. Only seven questions discuss those rights and freedoms within a supportive frame.

Analysed texts in this regard target Dutch officials as well as minority organisations, such as faith schools and mosques, for opening the way to 'parallel societies' in the country. Sharia marriages appear to be under close scrutiny at this point with the accusation of forming 'parallel laws'. For instance, a female MP of Moroccan origin criticised Dutch officials for turning a blind eye to marriages solemnised in mosques according to Sharia principles with the following words:

> Will you put Dutch law into practice at this point? If not, why do you think it is socially irrelevant to refer to the current law? Do you agree that these informal Islamic marriages will lead to the acceptance of polygamy and toleration of the inequality between men and women within Muslim communities if there are no criminal investigations held on these marriages?[13]

A significant number of texts portrayed minority religion as causing problems in the Netherlands and recommended restrictive policies. Representatives coming from Muslim backgrounds show a general tendency to associate Muslim minorities, or the Muslim belief per se, with fundamentalism, radicalism, extremism and violence. 'Minority representatives' are concerned with issues such as inviting fundamentalist figures from Islamic countries, building mosques, implementing sharia marriages, and establishing faith schools. Those addressing religion portrayed Islam as a dangerous faith, or highlighted those sects that are more inclined to use violence, and described existing Muslim minorities as carriers of such violence to the Netherlands.[14] This critical stance sharpens when there is an institutional connection with the countries of origin, or other Islamic states. 11% (28 out of 261) of the questions addressed religious fundamentalism and terrorism. All of these were coded within the 'suppressive representation' frame. Yet, safety and security problems are not restricted to threats emanating from religious extremism. 5% of the data analysed (12 questions out of 261) referred to criminality and delinquency among immigrant minorities. 11 out of those questions problematised the minority identity, whereas three[15] also have a positive connotation.

Those messages favouring cultural and/or religious rights and freedoms were usually formulated on an individual basis with a deliberate silence on group-based privileges or the traditional structure of Dutch pillarisation. In those supportive

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[13] Arib, K. and J. Dijsselbloem, Question Number: 2070811190, 11 February 2008.

[14] Griffith, Laetitia. Question Number: 2060705880, 19 January 2007; Ali, Hirsi. Question Number: 2050612530, 1 May 2006; Karabulut, Saadet., Question Number: 2010Z06778, 15 April 2010.

[15] Only absolute scores are given in those cases with small numbers. Texts are coded more than once when there was a reference to more than one category.

interpretations, various recommendations were proposed for strengthening rights and freedoms such as wearing headscarves at the office, making the healthcare more intercultural and fighting against discrimination as a route towards a more diverse society.

Ethnicity is usually discussed using the 'suppressive representation' frame. However, ethnic identity is seldom addressed other than in those cases in which it is closely associated with religion. The country of origin is almost always described as a threat to the 'well-being' of those of minority origin in the Netherlands. In line with a religiously coloured notion of ethnicity, Morocco and Turkey are described as causing problems and/or disadvantages. These countries are portrayed at the forefront of paternalistic cultures and 'oppressive religious practices' such as child kidnapping, forced marriages and issues hindering female emancipation and women's rights. A 'holistic understanding of cultures' and a clear preference for 'the Dutch culture' featured prominently in the data analysed. Cultural and religious rights and freedoms are only welcomed when they have a symbolic meaning, which does not contradict the general norms and value system of the country of settlement, and when they are expected to strengthen incorporation to the mainstream society.

Maybe surprisingly, in issues concerning women's rights, MPs of minority origin hardly appear as ambassadors representing ethnic and/or religious minorities. Instead, 'minority representatives' make oppressive practices against females (and in a few cases homosexuals) salient, and call for restrictive policies to save women from threats emanating from minority culture and religion. Minority traditions and values are described as harmful to the 'emancipation' of minority women, and stronger integration to Dutch values and norms' is proposed as the remedy. In almost all cases MPs refer to Islamic figures as extremists and perceive them as representatives of Islam as a whole. 15% (39 out of the 261) of the questions analysed addressed gender issues such as forced marriage, female circumcision, genital mutilation, incest, domestic violence, honour killings and intolerance of homosexuality. 36 out of the 39 questions referring to women's rights were coded within the frame of 'suppressive representation', whereas only two of those questions frame minority culture and/or religion within the frame of 'supportive representation'. In this context, the findings of the content analysis verified earlier studies (Bird, 2005; Roggeband and Verloo, 2007) with regard to the gendered nature of debates on immigrant minorities within host societies. Patriarchal behaviour and instances of oppression are salient in the data concerning minority women. Minority identity and culture are defined as problematic, and damaging to basic values and freedoms such as equality between men and women. Minority cultures and religions are portrayed as being the source of oppression and discrimination based on gender. As stated above, gender-related issues are framed extensively within a suppressive context throughout the 11-year period.

6.   A gendered portrayal of ethnicity and religion

Female representatives appear to be more active than their male counterparts. Female MPs of minority origin posted 74% of the total number of questions (192 out of 261) analysed in this research, whereas their male colleagues asked a mere 26% (69 questions). Nevertheless, males were more supportive of cultural and/or religious rights and liberties than females in our data. 50% of the questions (35 out of 69) posted by male MPs of minority origin were coded as supportive whereas this percentage was 34% (66 out of 191) for female MPs of minority origin. Similarly, the percentage of questions coded as suppressive were 28% (19 questions) for males and 45% (87 questions) for females. The salience of gender-related problems in minority societies among female MPs of minority origin can possibly be considered an explanation for this phenomenon.

The stereotypic discourse on Muslims would appear to shape the corresponding discourse on Muslim women. Parliamentary questions in general often refer to the speeches of extremist representatives of religious groups in their home countries regarding gender relations, and draw attention to their negative impact on the integration and emancipation of minority groups in the Netherlands. MPs studied for this research have a tendency to show a complete adoption of 'the Dutch culture' as the only solution to 'the emancipation problem'. There were numerous questions calling for Dutch officials to take action against 'foreign intervention'. Such emphasis on gender-related issues leads to significant differences between the content of questions posed by male and female MPs of minority origin.

7.   The party dimension

In line with being the party with the largest number of 'minority representatives', the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA) posted the largest number of questions on immigrant minorities with 36% (93 questions out of 261). The Greens and Socialists emerged as the second and third most interested parties on minority constituencies by posting 23% (61 questions) and 21% (54 questions) of the total number of questions, respectively. Surprisingly, the Dutch Labour party was not more supportive than conservative parties within the Dutch political spectrum (see below). 39 (42%) of all questions from Labour MPs were coded as supportive and 38 (41%) were coded as suppressive. Furthermore, the higher salience of minority-related issues within the socialist party did not lead to stronger support for cultural and/or religious rights and freedoms. Despite the fact that they are situated on the left side of the political spectrum, the Dutch Socialist and Labour Parties score quite similarly to the Christian Democrats on the ratios between 'supportive and suppressive representations'. Only 15 (28%) of the 54 questions posted by the

Socialist party members were coded as supportive whereas 30 (56%) called for a restriction of rights and freedoms that put them firmly in the suppressive camp.

The Christian Democrats only posted 5% (12 out of 261 questions) of the total number of questions. Of these 5 were coded as suppressive and seven as supportive. The social-liberal D66 Party appeared to frame minority-related issues most supportively, with 12 of the 15 questions from this party supporting cultural and/or religious rights and freedoms. Only one question from D66 was coded within the suppressive representation frame. The Greens can also be grouped under supportive parties. 28 of the 61 questions by its parliamentarians were supportive whereas only eight of them were coded within the suppressive representation frame. Green parliamentarians were the only ones addressing cultural and religious freedoms within the supportive scope. No MPs other than those from the Green Left formulated the stigmatisation of Muslims as a problem in the heydays of the anti-terrorism debates. Again, citizenship rights relating to family (re)unification and cultural and religious freedoms, with special focus on practicing cultural and religious rituals, appear in a few exceptional questions posed by figures from *Groen-Links*. Azough, for instance, is the only MP defending the right to wear the headscarf in her question posed in 2003.[16] Another important note at this point is that representatives from the Greens abstain from addressing minority culture or religion as the source of gender-related problems. Azough endeavoured to support gay rights within minority societies in her question on 7 June 2004. The MP criticised budget cuts on organisations supporting gay rights and asked for the promotion of debates bridging minority religion with the gay rights movement. Her exceptional understanding would seem to be of particular importance in a discourse which proposes the restraint of minority cultures and religions as the only remedy to gender issues and gay rights.[17]

The single MP of minority origin from the anti-immigrant party LPF (List of Pim Fortuyn) was largely absent in our data. She posted only one question, which was coded as suppressive. Data analysis points to the liberal VVD as the most suppressive party on cultural and/or religious rights and freedoms. 23 of the 25 questions coming from the VVD were coded as suppressive. There was not a single supportive question. This is even the case in issues concerning incorporation to the labour market. For instance, a liberal MP of Surinamese origin, Griffith, deviated from the general pattern of stimulating a more diversified labour market. She described the presence of police employees of minority origin as a problem, by referring to some statistics on family members with criminal backgrounds in her question on 30 January 2009.

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[16]Azough, Naima, Question Number: 2020305610, 14 January 2003.

[17]Azough, Naima, Question Number: 2030415440, 7 June 2004; Griffith, Laetitia, Question Number: 2080911390 30 January 2009.

8. Ethnicity and religion

As stated above, those of Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds have the largest numbers of seats in the period analysed with 13 and 12 MPs, respectively. Six MPs of Surinamese origin, together with four MPs from other ethnic groups, served in the Dutch national parliament between 2002 and 2012. There was no MP of Antillean and Aruban origin in the time period analysed. Representative patterns show differences across ethnic groups. However, our data analysis hints at a complex set of identity-related variables, closely linked with ethnic background rather than signifying ethnicity as a key variable on its own. Despite the intense debates on Muslims in the last decade, Muslim communities are better represented than non-Muslim minorities. There is a greater number of MPs from Muslim groups with no history of colonial experience with the Netherlands, than ethnic minorities from other religious backgrounds having a colonial past. Such a difference can also be seen in the number of questions posted by representatives from each ethnic background within the Dutch parliament.

Representatives with Muslim backgrounds also have a less-restrictive approach when the relatively low percentage of suppressive framings in their parliamentary work is taken into account. MPs of Surinamese origin scored highest in this category, with 53% of all their questions coded as suppressive. MPs of Turkish origin came second with 41%, whilst MPs of Moroccan origin appeared to be the least suppressive ethnic group with 35% restrictive questions. Nevertheless, differences in the salience of minority-related issues on the agendas of MPs of Turkish and Moroccan origins challenge such simplistic explanations of their behaviour. Although Moroccan and Turkish immigrants had similar numbers of parliamentarians in the time period under consideration, MPs of Moroccan origin posted the largest proportion of the questions analysed with 61% (158 out of 261 questions). In comparison, MPs with a Turkish background produced 28% (74 out of 261 questions) of the data analysed. Those of Surinamese origin posted only 6% (15) of the total number of questions. 5% of the questions (14) on immigrant minorities were from MPs coming from other ethnic backgrounds. The relative correspondence of the 'supportive framing' distribution among those of Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese origin requires more in-depth investigation of the background, attitudes and motives of the respective MPs, which lies outside the limits of this study. 41% of all questions coming from MPs of Moroccan and Turkish origin were supporting cultural and/or religious rights and freedoms. The percentage of supportive questions from MPs of Surinamese origin was 40%.

9. Conclusions

This study investigated patterns within the questions asked by 'minority representatives' within the political representation of minorities. The findings of our study

verify the literature on the demise of Dutch multiculturalism, which is shaped by the promotion of differences and group-based rights. Our data analysis implies a transition towards a more 'integrative' understanding of 'immigrant incorporation', at least within the scope of the relevant data. There is a greater emphasis on individual equality and inclusion, rather than the promotion of difference and/or group rights, within the parliamentary discourse of MPs of minority origin. Findings from the content analysis show that 'minority representatives' are rarely interested in cultural and/or religious rights and freedoms. Our data analysis also reveals a sophisticated understanding of the content of messages on ethnic and/or religious constituencies. 'Minority representatives' do not always automatically support the cultural and religious rights and freedoms of constituencies with whom they share similar backgrounds. Contrary to the common belief, MPs of minority origin often adopt restrictive framings. This research endeavoured to contribute to the existing literature by claiming the existence of varied perspectives on cultural and/or ethnic issues in this regard. To map these differences, we introduced a representation model, which distinguishes between supportive and suppressive framings.

Data analysis revealed the transition towards a more integrative form of citizenship regime, with both group- and individual-related identities as important factors behind variances in framing cultural and/or religious rights and freedoms in the parliament. The shift from a multicultural to a monolithic understanding of citizenship leads to a reluctance to formulate moral evaluations sympathetic towards group-based rights and/or treatment recommendations consolidating minority identities. 'Minority representatives' generally refer to ethnic and/or religious rights and freedoms in a supportive representation frame, when those rights and freedoms are exercised at an individual level and when they can be incorporated within the general idea of a more integrated country. Such MPs are usually sympathetic to minorities when the subject area is related to enriching Dutch society as a whole: through improving the socio-economic situation of ethnic and religious groups, fighting against discrimination and increasing the frequency of intercultural contacts (Koopmans, 2006). Nonetheless, the stance becomes quite restrictive when it comes to issues concerning institutions and the group-based exercise of cultural and/religious rights and freedoms.

Suppressive representations are encumbered with a heavily gendered debate of culture and religion. Questions addressing minority women usually lay emphasis on patriarchal practices and propose the restriction of minority traditions as treatment recommendations in their interpretations of immigrant minority groups. The ethnic origins of immigrant minorities are usually addressed to denote religious identity rather than leading to a discussion in itself. In this context, coming from a Turkish or Moroccan background is used interchangeably with being Muslim. Ethnic origin per se does not appear to be a salient subject area. Party membership appears to have a significant impact in shaping the relevant

discourse. Representatives from liberal and leftist parties, usually favouring immigrant minorities, are supportive towards cultural and religious rights. 'Minority representatives' from the Dutch Labour Party or the Dutch Socialist Party do not divert from the mainstream right parties in framing minority-related issues.

Our study is not without shortcomings. First of all, we focused on the questions asked by MPs. This is only one of the many activities MPs in which parliamentarians are engaged, and one that is argued to be mainly symbolic in nature and most often without any policy consequences (Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006). Secondly, the single country design of our study makes generalisation difficult. This research is a preliminary endeavour aimed at raising the levels of understanding of political representation of ethnic and religious minorities in Western Europe. Further research is needed to show whether results hold up across a broader range of political activities carried out by MPs, as well as the varying political and cultural contexts in which those MPs operate. Comparing different framings across issues might shed further light upon the question of whether frames are issue specific or generic.

Acknowledgements

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