
Political representation and its descriptive conception

A thesis on the complexity of political representation as a pluralistic concept with a special focus on its descriptive conception

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Topic: Bachelor's Thesis
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Date: 16 August 2021
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Abstract

Parliamentarians in Western liberal democracies barely resemble the people they represent through their characteristics. Political consequences such as distrust, a loss in legitimacy, exclusion of political minorities and over-representation of political elites pose problems to the existing political structure. By answering the research question ‘*can a descriptive conception of representation be theoretically and practically unified with a substantive conception of representation within a democratic party system?*’, this thesis tries to provide a solution to the abovementioned problems. The thesis provides arguments for the intrinsic and instrumental importance of descriptive representation for political representation, a conception that is argued to be pluralistic in nature. After applying this new, pluralistic conception to a democratic party model that features cartel parties, five suggestions for improved representation arise: to connect representatives more to civil society, to disconnect them more from the state, to use quotes, better recruitment efforts or lotteries to ensure that electoral candidates represent the populace descriptively. Thus, the thesis provides a comprehensive, interdisciplinary, theoretical and practical analysis of what it means to represent in contemporary democracies.

Introduction

A core principle that defines democratic government is the principle of representation. Party members that reside in parliament ought to represent the people, having been explicitly mandated to do so through the vote. Although this core principle has been accepted by virtually all democratic theorists, the content of this principle is still under debate. In 1967, Hanna Fenichel Pitkin (226-7) kickstarted this debate when she wrote *The Concept of Representation*, in which she explored, and ultimately combined into one, four conflicting views on representation. After arguing that the four conflicting concepts are all incomplete, she argues for a concept of representation as ‘acting for’, which is a substantive concept of representation. The act of representing exists outside of the representative. It is not the representative him- or herself that represents, but his or her actions (Pitkin 1967, 114-15). One of the four views she discusses is the ‘descriptive view’ on representation, which states that representatives ought to mirror the population they represent in their characteristics (Pitkin 1967, 60). In arguing in favour of the substantive view, Pitkin regards the descriptive view as having missed the mark. It forms an unrobust basis for political representation because it provides no link between the representative and the people through which the representatives can be held accountable (Pitkin 1967, 89).

The partial disregard of descriptiveness as an important component of representation has found root within most liberal democracies, as it is commonly believed that ideas, not characteristics, are the object of representation (Phillips 1995, 5, 48). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that democratic party systems are not descriptively representative with regard to the population. Having conducted a case analysis in which eight liberal democracies were analysed in terms of the descriptive representativeness of their party members, Knut Heidar and Bram Wauters (2019, 175) have concluded that parliaments do not mirror the populace they represent.

A low level in terms of descriptiveness may be problematic for party systems in liberal democracies for both instrumental and intrinsic reasons. Political trust and legitimacy may decrease, minorities may be excluded from politics and political elites may become over-represented (Mansbridge 1999, 651; Bovens and Wille 2017, 73, 158; Phillips 1995, 31). At the same time, descriptiveness is an aspect intrinsic to political representation (Pitkin 1967, 60-61). A low quality in terms of descriptiveness therefore implies a lower quality of representation. Increasing the resemblance between the population and the party members that have been elected to parliament may contribute to the strengthening of representative institutions in liberal democracies.

Before the descriptive view on representation can be adopted, it is important to inquire into the possibility of such an adoption. As said before, a substantive view of representation is prevalent in most liberal democracies, and for good reasons. The substantive view allows for strong, explicit links of accountability, professionalism among elected party members, and a neutral yet well-articulated representation of interests (Pitkin 1967, 135, 143). Thus, it is not the replacement of the substantive view that ought to be aspired to, but a reconciliation between two conflicting views on what it means to politically represent (Phillips 1995, 1). Therefore, this research paper asks the question *can a descriptive conception of representation be theoretically and practically unified with a substantive conception of representation within a democratic party system?*

Although several aspects of the research question have already been explained in this introduction, several others are still shrouded in mystery. Firstly, *representation* is taken to mean ‘making present in some sense of something which is nevertheless not present literally or in fact’ (Pitkin 1967, 8-9). The broadness of this definition allows for inquiring into different conceptions of representation without problem, which is why this definition lends itself well for this research project.

The research question enquires into both the *theoretical and practical unification* of the descriptive and substantive conceptions of representation. This dual approach signifies the interdisciplinary nature of this research paper. Insights from political science are used to assess the resemblance between elected party members and the population of liberal democracies, and to explore the institutional mechanisms that underly the possible discrepancy between elected party members and the population. Political philosophy plays a role in determining the theoretical foundation for different conceptions of representation. The discipline lends itself well for a conceptual analysis of the concept of political representation. Moreover, it adds a normative side to the story, as this analysis compels one to adopt a certain concept of representation that influences the way political institutions are shaped, and how individuals may act inside them. However, the normative implications of this research project would miss their mark if their applicability is not taken into account. Therefore, a third section explores a party model from political science to assess the practical implications of a unification of conceptual views on representation. As such, the interdisciplinary nature of this research project ensures its’ conclusion’s theoretical and practical viability.

The last aspect of the research question that requires an explanation is the *democratic party system*. This system is explored in the third section, where a specific model of this system, the cartel party model, is used to assess the practical implications of a theoretical unification of views on representation (Katz and Mair 1995). It refers to the role parties play in most contemporary liberal democracies. The system is democratic because it supposes that the people rule indirectly through representative bodies. Parties fill up these bodies and fulfil several vital functions within the democratic process, such as providing links of accountability, selecting candidates for election, and aggregating and representing interests. Due to their being intertwined with most democratic systems, as well as the functions they perform, it is vital that any view on representation takes into account the way parties influence what is represented, and what is not.

The argument of the research paper is divided into three sections. The first section considers whether parties are representative as defined by the descriptive conception. By analysing existing case studies, this section shows that representation in most liberal democracies has not increased in descriptive terms, even though public awareness concerning the issue has risen. Furthermore, this section addresses several practical problems that may arise when little resemblance between the representative and the represented is achieved.

The second section answers the questions: *why must descriptive and substantive views on representation be unified? And is such a unification possible?* After explaining in detail both the substantive and the descriptive conception, this section how such a unification can be structured. The solution lies in a core principle of liberalism, namely a version of value-pluralism proposed by Isaiah

Berlin (1958, 216-17). This principle functions as a double-edged sword by explaining that the concept of representation consists of multiple components that require a comprehensive, unified view to be met sufficiently, whilst it also explains why function as a mirror is important in a diverse, multicultural society.

In the third section, the unified view on representation is practically applied to a model of a democratic party system as developed by Katz and Mair (1995). After this model has been explained, the implications of the pluralistic view of political representation for parties is described. It concludes by giving five suggestions to increase the quality of representation by parliamentarians.

Section 1: Are elected party members representative in descriptive terms?

Quality of descriptive representation

From the beginning of the twentieth century, the political party has played a key role in most liberal democracies (Dalton & Weldon 2005, 932). They play an intermediary role between the voters, the citizens, and the elected, the governors. Knut Heidar and Bram Wauters (2020, 6) suggest three important components of the linkage parties provide between the electors and the elected. Firstly, parties bring issues posed by certain societal groups to the table. To do this, they aggregate interests and opinions of societal groups, and advocate them in parliament. Secondly, parties are the main source of candidates for parliament. As such they form the primary recruitment pool from which representatives are selected, and, if they acquire enough votes, elected. Thirdly, the link parties provide increases public perception of political legitimacy and political trust. Groups that are included in the political process because their interests are advocated for are more likely to view the political process as legitimate.

Having stressed the importance of parties, Heidar and Wauters (2020, 2) argue that members of political parties play an important role in the representation of the citizens' interests, for they decide what interests are aggregated and advocated for and who are selected as candidates for parliament from their ranks. Given that most parliamentarians are connected to a party, it can indeed be argued that party members represent the citizens both indirectly, by influencing the party's internal policies, ideas and agenda, and directly, by getting elected and advocating for group interests in parliament. Therefore, Heidar and Wauters (2020, 2) are interested in the representativeness of party members, as they have perceived that party members may not accurately represent voters, especially in descriptive terms. Furthermore, they have noticed that party membership is in decline, which may negatively alter the level of representativeness. Lastly, membership decline may have political consequences because of the role of parties as intermediaries described above. Perceived political legitimacy, for instance, may decrease when the perceived representativeness of (elected) party members is low.

In order to assess the representativeness of party members in descriptive terms, together with its political consequences, Heidar, Wauters and their colleagues conducted eight case studies among several Western liberal democracies. For each case, researchers considered three characteristics of party members deemed most relevant, those being gender, age and level of education. In Canada, there is little congruence between party members and voters that vote on the same party in terms of the characteristics named above. On average, 76.8 percent of party members is male, whilst 64.1 percent of voters is male. At the same time, party members are 15.6 percent more likely to have obtained a post-graduate degree. Only in terms of age are party members and party voters alike, both having a mean age of 58.7 years. Moreover, the congruence declines further the higher one moves up 'the chain of party influence'. Elected party members are even less representative of their voters in descriptive terms. In short, elected party members are usually male, old, white and well educated (Heidar and Wauters 2020, 27). Similar results emerge in the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany and other European countries (Heidar and Wauters 2020, 43, 61, 81).

For Mark Bovens and Anchrit Wille (2017), the situation has become so dire that according to them it is no longer correct to speak of a democracy proper in most liberal ‘democracies’. Indeed, the subtitle of their book *Diploma Democracy* is ‘*The Rise of Political Meritocracy*’, as they claim that it are no longer the people that rule but a subset consisting of people with the highest level of education. After an in-depth analysis of several characteristics of elected party members, including level of education, age, gender and ethnicity, within six liberal democracies, they conclude that it are the white, old, well-educated men that fill up the political arenas. They have acquired their status as political leaders not through their representativeness (which would make their playing a part in the process more democratic), but through their own effort.

Indeed, although legally any citizen of majority age may be elected for parliament at an equal chance, this does not show in terms of education. A well-educated person is more likely to be elected for parliament, for several reasons. Firstly, the well-educated are more likely to participate politically, whether it be intensive forms of participation, such as running for candidate, or less intensive forms, such as voting. Indeed, the more intensive the form of participation, the more divergence exists in terms of participation between the well- and the less-educated (Bovens & Wille 2017, 70, 77). Furthermore, these people usually have more resources at their disposal, such as time, money and social capital (Brady, Verba, & Scholzman 1995, 282).

Ethnicity also plays a role, as it has been shown that most parliamentarians are white, whilst minorities such as blacks and Asians are underrepresented in descriptive terms (Ruedin 2013, 63). White people usually have more resources, do not face prejudices and do not have to overcome a possible language barrier, which makes it easier for them to join parliament, where the language used may be difficult due to the high level of professionalism.

Inequality of descriptive representation also features in terms of gender. A random parliamentarian is more likely to be a man than a woman. Heidar and Wauters (2020, 23) write that there may be several reasons for this. Firstly, men are more likely to candidate themselves for parliament. It is believed this is due to them being less doubtful of themselves, as well as an underestimation of the job. Women, on the other hand, are more careful when considering themselves as possible candidates, a job they do not tend to underestimate. As such, men are more likely to voice their ambitions and candidate themselves. Next to this inequality at the supply side, an inequality at the demand side might also exist. Heidar and Wauters (2020, 25-26) show that in a district system such as Canada, candidates for parliament from a certain district are more likely women when the party president in that district is also a woman. It is hypothesized that this may be due to the expectation that women that are already politically active are more likely to encourage other women to run for candidate as well. Women indeed seem to require generally more probing and encouragement than men. Given that most party presidents are men, an inequality also exists on the demand side for candidates, since men are less likely to create equal candidate encouragement.

The last main variable that has been researched generally is age. The average age of elected party members is generally higher than that of all party members, and that of the voting population in general (Gezgor and Scarrow 2010, 840). This inequality may be problematic, as interests of younger citizens may not be represented adequately, nor may they feel motivated to become politically active due to the age gap, which distances them from the political system (Stockemer and Sundström 2018, 471). Yet, this inequality is also the easiest to explain, since being an elected party member is usually the goal of a long political career, that requires years of training and getting used to the system. However, if it leads to low levels of representativeness, this approach to political careers may have to be revisited.

Political consequences

Now that the current level of descriptiveness within parliaments has been discussed, as well as possible causes for each variable, its political consequences can be taken under consideration. Four consequences are taken under consideration, although more may exist. The four considered consequences each concern the actual or perceived representativeness of elected party members. Each consequence forms another perspective on the link between the elected party member and the voter.

Firstly, minorities may be excluded from formal political arenas (Phillips 1995, 9). As said before, ethnicity is one of the variables that features inequality in terms of descriptive representation. Whilst whites are prevalent in parliament, minorities such as blacks, Asians and Latinos are less likely to be present in parliament. Jane Mansbridge (1999, 641) has investigated several consequences of this ethnic inequality, all of which show that due to the lack in descriptive representativeness, the interests of minorities may not be advocated for in parliament. Her first argument is that voters are more likely to appeal to those of the same ethnicity. White voters are more likely to contact white parliamentarians. Black voters are more likely to contact black representatives, et cetera. When there are few to none black representatives, it is more likely that black voters will not contact parliamentarians, which may result in their interests not being represented in parliament. Mansbridge (1999, 643-44) also argues that sometimes unexpected events require a political response, such as the outbreak of a war, a pandemic, or an economic crisis. In these cases, interests of voters have not been explicitly aggregated, because no one had foreseen the event adequately enough to already articulate a certain point of view. Only when parliaments feature a diverse, heterogenous group of elected party members can interests of all cultural and ethnical groups be taken into consideration, which ensures that in case of these unexpected events. Mansbridge argues that in such cases, interests are still ‘uncrystallized’, and can only become more concrete when parliamentarians have gained specific experiences that help them advocate for certain interests. These experiences may be connected to being part of a certain minority. Mansbridge (1999, 638) describes these consequences of low descriptiveness as ‘contingent’. She argues that only when a certain inequality has gained historical salience it may become a divide of political relevance. As an example she gives the case of African-Americans, who have long been explicitly oppressed in the Southern States, and now demand more political equality.

Secondly, a lack in descriptive representativeness may lead to a loss in political trust (Bertsou 2019, 227; Bovens and Wille 2017, 156-58). Those that feel excluded from political participation or representation may indeed think that whatever the parliament decides may not be in their interest. People may not feel heard, which makes them sceptical of any measure parliamentarians take. Moreover, they may no longer try to participate politically, for they believe that their voice will not be heard. When one thinks an attempt to have their interests articulated is futile, one no longer tries to voice their concerns. A loss in political trust may be detrimental to a government that bases its legitimacy on its linkage with the populace.

A third problem caused by low descriptive representativeness is the over-representation of political elites, in most cases the white, old, well-educated males discussed above (Bovens and Wille 2017, 154). This group functions as a political elite that keeps its resources to itself, including offices and jobs. Bernard Manin (1997) described this process in his book *The Principles of Representative Government*, in which he discusses several principles that are core to the idea of representative government as we know it today. He argues that the principle of elections brings about that only those with enough resources – such as social skills and funds for campaigns – stand a proper chance of getting elected (Manin 1997, 146).

Furthermore, the principle of distinction consists of the idea that those elected ought to be different from the populace (Manin 1997, 94). Parliamentarians ought to be professionals, who know better than the citizens what policies are necessary for running the country. The principle of distinction forms an antithesis to the idea of descriptive representation, which argues that resemblance is key to the

furthering of interests and the formation of good policies (Manin 1997, 160). Although elites may be historically connected to democracy, descriptive representation calls for a more diffuse political caste that closely resembles those governed.

The fourth problem is connected to all aforementioned problems. It concerns the loss in (perceived) democratic legitimacy that democratic parliaments may face if they lack proper descriptive representativeness (Mansbridge 1999, 650). When minorities are not included in parliament and their political participation is low, they may not feel connected to the democratic process. They will not view decisions made in parliament as ‘their own’, whereas it is core principle of democratic parliaments to be in effect an extension of the idea that ‘the people rule’. As such, a disconnection between parliament and certain groups decreases its claim that it acts in name of all citizens. Furthermore, a decrease in political trust may lead to a loss in perceived democratic legitimacy, as people will no longer view parliaments as being democratic. People may no longer view the parliament as having obtained any democratic legitimacy. Lastly, the overrepresentation of certain elites threatens not only the perception of legitimacy, but democratic legitimacy itself, as it can be argued that the people are only truly ruling when all interests are taken into account and parliament resembles the populace.

Summarising this section, we may conclude that representatives within most liberal democracies are not representative in descriptive terms, at least when assessed using several important variables such as age, education, gender and ethnicity. A lack in descriptiveness may be caused by a variety of reasons, such as an unbalanced distribution of resources, supply and demand of representatives, political connections and political participation. The established lack in descriptiveness creates or fosters four consequences that threaten the link between representative and voter. Minorities may be excluded from political participation, political trust may decrease, elites may be overrepresented and (perceived) political legitimacy may be under threat. Therefore, it is important from a purely analytic perspective to look into solutions to this alleged problem.

Section 2a: Why is descriptive representation important?

In her book *The Concept of Representation*, Hannah Pitkin (1967) analyses several possible forms of representation, ranging from the traditional ‘authorization’ view, which states that the vote forms an authorization to act in one’s name, to the ‘symbolic’ view, that stresses the importance of a united parliament as a symbol of national unity. She also discusses a view that she thinks lacks vital components for it to be a form of politic representation – descriptive representation.

Descriptive representation concerns what Pitkin (1967, 61) calls ‘representation as ‘standing for’’. This form of representation is opposed to other forms of representation due to the fact that representing is no longer (purely) an activity, but rather a passive characteristic of the representative. The representative body is said to be more representative if it more closely resembles a voter, constituency, party member, or the nation as a whole on certain aspects. These aspects can range from explicit or implicit interests, cultural background, career background or personal characteristics such as ethnicity, gender and age (Pitkin 1967, 87).

The reasons for which a conception of descriptive representation can be deemed important when considering political representation can be divided into two subsets. One subset concerns the idea that descriptiveness is an intrinsic component of political representation. Political representation increases in quality when the representative more closely resembles the represented. The other subset concerns instrumental reasons for adopting the descriptive conception of representation. Several of those have already been explained in the previous section, such as an increase in political legitimacy, an end to the overrepresentation of elites, and a chance for political minorities to be effectively heard in all political arenas.

Intrinsic importance

Why is descriptiveness of intrinsic value to political representation? According to Pitkin's working definition, 'to represent' means 'to make present what is in fact not literally present' (Pitkin 1967, 8-9). This can happen in a number of ways, for instance through action (Pitkin 1967, 114). A representative can for instance represent interests in his or her voting behaviour, or voice concerns from a certain citizen or group of citizens during a speech, or go to committee meetings with a certain groups' interests in mind, be it the nation or a certain sub-group, or even a group from outside the nation, for instance in the case of refugees. Representing can, according to those that support the descriptive conception, also be done through passive characteristics (Phillips 1995, 49). This view differs from most other conceptions due to the fact that it is not some explicit activity that makes someone representative of something or someone else, but rather an implicit characteristic (Pitkin 1967, 61). By being, rather than doing, representatives in parliament manage to 'make present what is in fact not literally present. Descriptive representation can make present what is not, and thus can serve as a concept by which we measure the quality of political representation. Indeed, it can be said that the people rule when the people's characteristics are made present in parliament, providing the linkage between representative and represented.

The paragraph above showed that descriptive representation can be of intrinsic value to political representation. It did not show that it should be, though. Why ought representatives resemble the populace? The term 'democracy' helps explain why that should be the case. A democracy entails that the people ought to rule, rather than a king or a political elite. Ruling, however, is an ambiguous concept. To explain why resemblance is important to ensure that the people rule, an argument analogous to the one proposed by Steven Lukes (2005, 63) is used. Lukes argues that power is more than its use. One holds power rather than uses it. Similarly, ruling is not just an activity. Rather, it is the ability to use actions such as setting an agenda or making political choices. A ruler is not just a ruler when he actively rules, but also when this ability is latent.

To ensure that the people rule, they have to be made present in parliament. Merely aggregating their interests is not enough, as cases might emerge when these interests are yet uncrystallized, for instance when disaster occurs or a new political issue pops up (Mansbridge 1999, 643). The people can only be certain that they rule when they are present in parliament, for otherwise a representative that is not them, that is not part of the people, rules. Instead of being a representative of the people, this person would then rule on his own, albeit facing limitations due to his or her explicit link through the vote. Ruling as an ability thus makes descriptive representation of intrinsic value to political representation. In a democracy, the people can only rule when descriptive representation is properly present.

Hannah Pitkin (1967 67-8) is wary of accepting descriptiveness as a core component of political representation. One of the reasons that are often offered is that a representative can never fully resemble a voter, group or the nation. Indeed, one primary difference is that the representative is in parliament whilst those he or she represents are not. His or her purpose exists because of this difference. Moreover, it is unclear what characteristics may be important when it comes to certain political issues. This raises a question about the value of descriptiveness when it comes to political representation, namely: what aspects of the represented ought to be 'made present' in parliament?

Different parties may view different characteristics to be of descriptive importance. Confessional parties use the religious divide to distinguish themselves from the others, they effectively claim that they make a certain religion present (Vollaard 2013, 93-94). Similarly, some parties claim to make present a certain culture, for instance when populist parties claim to defend the 'native culture' from 'outside threats'. Both types of party usually consist of representatives that not only advocate for a certain position, but have characteristics that connect them to those they represent (Caramani 2017, 62). Populists than be expected to share the same nationality of the voters that vote for them. Similarly, representatives from confessional parties can be expected to share the same religion as their voters. In both cases, the

representative connects with voters not only through his or her policy ideas, but also through similarity in a key characteristic. A populist can be religious, and a voter for a religious party can match the populist's nationality. Yet, what characteristic is made salient depends on the party and the political issue at hand.

The example of different parties using different characteristics at different times shown above illustrates that there is no clear-cut answer to the question concerning what aspects are relevant for descriptive political representation. The best answer given so far is articulated by Anne Phillips (1995, 53-54, 160), who writes that the relevant aspects are decided by looking at the historical context. A certain characteristic of the represented ought to be made present in parliament if this characteristic has caused the represented to be subjected to oppression, exploitation or marginalization in a certain political context. To explain this context-dependence of the relevance of aspects, she (1995, 91) uses the example of African-Americans who have in the past been actively discriminated against to such an extent that they have been subjected to exploitation through slavery and oppression and marginalization through discrimination, a theme that is still prevalent in the United States specifically and the Western democracies in general. According to Phillips (1995, 122), this means that African-Americans ought to be descriptively represented in parliament, to prevent exploitation and discrimination in the future, and to assure that they are 'made present'. Descriptive representation ought to go hand in hand with substantive representation, or the 'representation of ideas' so that both descriptive and substantive criteria are met.

Although context-dependence still does not provide a clear dividing line between relevant and irrelevant aspects for descriptive political representation, it does help to identify those aspects that at least ought to be taken under consideration. More women in parliament, for instance, often entails more focus on feminist issues and the combat against sexism (Tremblay 1998, 463). More ethnic minorities in parliament paves the way for the beginning of the end of ethnic discrimination (Bratton, Haynie and Reingold 2006, 72). Yet, one problem still remains. Some groups or people will not be able to show that a certain characteristic from their group is relevant, exactly because of a certain context. Those that have not acquired citizen status in a certain country, for instance, may lack the rights to participate politically and make present those aspects of their group that are relevant. At other times, groups are actively prevented from participating politically, an example of which is the active exclusion of women from any aspect of society that is not the household, a chain that was broken only after centuries of discrimination and oppression.

The example of the oppression of women through history, however, also shows that contexts change. Slavery has been abolished, discrimination based on gender has been diminished (albeit not completely abolished) and ethnic discrimination is now receiving attention in most Western democracies, too. These processes show that change is possible even in the most dire cases, such as the enslavement of many African-Americans until 1865. An interesting tool for achieving change has been dubbed *autoconsienza*, by feminist philosophers, which allows members of oppressed groups to come together and create their own political context from which they draw political ideas independent from the oppressive political environment that further their groups interests (Hirschmann 1996, 59-60).

Now that it has been shown that context-dependence is a valuable criterium for assessing the relevance of an aspect with respect to the need of political representation, a case can be made for the importance of the descriptive conception of representation. The word *democracy* is a Greek word that can be translated into a phrase such as 'rule by the people'. Through links of representativeness and accountability, the people rule indirectly in contemporary democracies. Rather than have millions of people vote on each possible issue, a group of representatives are elected to represent (parts of) the populace. Elections seem to present a fair chance to be elected to any citizen, yet Bernard Manin (1997, 146), as said before, suggests otherwise. He identifies core principles that have historically been attached to the concept of a representative government (Manin 1997, 6). He argues that each principle,

those being elections at regular intervals, independence on the part of the elected, freedom of opinion on the part of the electors and a trial of debate when it comes to public discussions, contributes to the fact that representatives are different than the electorate. As such, democracies are ruled by political elites, and the only political changes that have happened in the history of modern democracies is a shift in what elite is ruling (Manin 1997, 136-38).

The *principle of distinction* that Manin describes thus creates a political elite that might prevent the people from ruling, at least de facto. By bringing in more resemblance in terms of characteristics, this principle can be altered. Although levels of accountability need not change due to this alteration, the representativeness of those elected increases due to them no longer being a part of an elite. Rather, it is now truly the people that rule given that their characteristics are featured in parliament, and not those of any elite. Descriptiveness may thus increase the quality of representation in and of itself.

Instrumental importance

The argument above explains that descriptiveness constitutes a part of political representation. An increase in the quality of descriptiveness therefore implies an increase in the quality of representation. Next to the intrinsic argument, instrumental reasons for accepting descriptiveness as a criterium for political representation exist. These reasons have in common that the basis of their argument is the same: an increase in descriptiveness leads to an increase in substantive representation or the representation of interests.

Substantive representation distinguishes itself from descriptive representation in its acknowledgement of what lies at the core of political representation. Rather than resemblance, this view argues that it are the actions of the representative that define the quality of his or her representativeness. Hannah Pitkin (1967, 143) describes this form of representation as *'acting for' representation*. These actions concern everything the representative does when in function, which includes voting in parliament, participating in debates and in committees but also extra-parliamentarian activities such as participating in rallies and speaking at other events. When a representative votes for option A over B, it is said that he or she represents me when she votes what I would have voted. When a representative speaks about a certain topic during a speaker event, he or she is said to represent me when his or her views on the topic resemble mine or take my interests at heart.

The formulation of the substantive view as *'acting for' representation* does not immediately show what it is that is represented through actions. This could be *'the common good'*, when the representative tries to do what is best for the nation or even mankind as a whole, *'God's will'*, when the representative attempts to apply religious doctrines to the political sphere, or *'the morally right'* when it comes to ethical doctrines and ideologies such as utilitarianism, Kantianism, capitalism or communism. Hannah Pitkin (1967 208), however, is quick to identify one concept that plays a key role when it comes to representation within liberal democracies. She argues that it are the interests of the people that are made present in the political sphere. As such, any action a representative takes is said to take my interests at heart. Indeed, we often say that good representation means that the parliamentarian listens to our concerns, ideas and criticisms, and that he or she sticks to promises made so that he or she votes what we would have voted had we been in parliament. Thus, the substantive view of representation as *'acting for'* states that parliamentarians ought to make present the interests and views of those that are represented through his or her behaviour when in function.

The view above still leaves much open for discussion. Although these issues do not form a part of this research project, it is good to make explicit the complexity of the concept of representation and the ongoing debate it ensues. In fact, Pitkin already pointed out this complexity, arguing that no conception, even her *'acting for'* view, fully encapsulates what it means to represent someone or something (Pitkin 1967, 240) Firstly, it is unclear what *'interests'* exactly are. Some would argue that only those views made explicit by the represented can be said to be represented in parliament. This would imply that

proper representation means that the representative listens carefully to the voters and execute precisely what they explain is their view. On the other hand, it can be said that interests need not be made explicit, nor even be thought to belong to a certain group. It could be, for instance, that a parliamentarian argues that some environmental policy is in the interests of farmers. A policy that concerns the preservation of nutrients in the soil at the expense of crop growth, for example. Although the farmers can be expected to argue against this policy and state that it is not in their interests, the parliamentarian could argue that the policy takes their ‘actual’ or ‘true’ interests at heart by ensuring the quality of their soil in the long term. Even though this view on ‘interests’ gives the representative more freedom and helps expertise to influence policy more than when only interests made explicit count, it can also lead to forms of paternalism and independence from the electorate.

Next to the contents of the term ‘interests’, it is still open to debate how representatives ought to bring these interests to the table. It can be argued that the representative do exactly what the electorate wants him to do. As such, he is a ‘delegate’ who has been given detailed instructions on what to do. On the other hand, the representative can be given some freedom in how to behave and what to vote so the representative may use his or her own conscience. He or she is mandated to use his or her own judgment when it comes to articulating interests. The ‘mandate-delegate’ spectrum-debate has been around for decades (Pitkin 1967, 145).

Thirdly and lastly, it remains open to debate whose interests are to be represented by the representative. Does the representative take the interests of the nation at heart? Or does he or she represent a certain subgroup? Is this subgroup always the same or does it shift when issues change? Especially in the twenty-first century, in which voter volatility has increased whilst his or her party loyalty has decreased, it is important to establish whose interests actually are represented (Dalton 1996, 340).

Although all three issues mentioned further complexify of the concept of representation, none is discussed in this research paper due to limits of scope. The only issue at hand in this thesis is the possible reconciliation between the descriptive and substantive views on representation. This problem concerns not the contents of interests or how representatives ought to represent, but rather what lies at the core of the concept of representation.

How might more descriptiveness enhance substantive representation i.e. the representation of interests? Two such processes have been described in the first section. When descriptiveness increases, the overrepresentation of political elites can be expected to decrease, given the fact that this elite does not closely resemble the populace as a whole. Moreover, political minorities can expect to see their interests represented when their characteristics are made present in parliament. Mark Bovens et al. (2017, 154) write that political elites may be favoured by parliament when that parliament matches the elites in its characteristics. Having many entrepreneurs in parliament, for instance, may lead to policy decisions that favour entrepreneurial interests, such as low or flat taxes, little to no import tariffs and low minimum wages. Favoursing a certain elite can happen both explicitly and implicitly. Whilst explicitly favouring an elite verges on being corrupt, implicitly doing so can only be said to be due to a lack in professionalism. Favoursing in general occurs because representatives mistake the group’s interests for the nation’s interests, when they have difficulty seeing beyond the boundaries of their world view which is influenced by the elites interests, or when they believe the elites interests to be more important than the nation’s interests. All three processes are more likely to happen when one more closely resembles the political elite: a white, old, highly educated, male parliamentarian is more likely to favour elites than a black, young, lower-educated, female parliamentarian due to the fact that the latter is less influenced by the interests of the elite.

Regardless of how we morally label the favouring of political elites, it can be argued that more resemblance between the parliament and the nation as a whole will lead to a decrease of this practise. Two processes can be discerned that lead to this decrease. Firstly, given that a parliament that more closely resembles the populace less closely resembles the elite, fewer parliamentarians can be expected

to be influenced by the elite when representing through their actions. Secondly, when such influences do happen, they are more likely to be diminished by those that do not resemble the political elites, who may use different world views and interests to influence their decisions. Thus, less resemblance has a double effect on the overrepresentation of political elites.

A second process described earlier is the increased political participation of minority groups. Jane Mansbridge (1999, 628) describes two processes that increase representativeness through descriptiveness and argues that this increase is context-dependent, which means that only in certain contexts minority groups benefit from more descriptive representation. When there is cause for mistrust between the minority group and the parliament, communication may be improved by increasing the descriptive value of political representation. According to Mansbridge (1999, 641), having representatives resemble people from minority groups leads to better “vertical communication”, because of shared experiences. Having shared experiences facilitates vertical trust as well as quicker communication because one’s signs are easier to read. This enables the proper representation of minority group interests. Thus, in cases of political mistrust, substantive representation may increase when descriptive representation increases.

At other times, interests of minority groups may yet be uncrystallized. Mansbridge (1999, 644) gives the example of gender issues in the United States, a political topic that emerged during waves of feminism. In the United States, ‘conventional issues’ such as socio-economic topics were clearly defined, as well as each possible position in the debates. Feminist issues, however, had received less attention in a predominantly male parliament. Mansbridge argues that a woman in parliament can help crystallize the issue as she can use her experiences as a woman that inform the debate that might ensue. As such, she can help crystallize both the debate itself and the women’s standpoint. What is interesting about the case of uncrystallized interests is that the female representative need not – indeed, could not – bring all experiences of all women to the table, for she may differ from most in terms of characteristics other than gender, such as socio-economic class or ethnicity. This could lead to discussions within the feminist’s camp. Nonetheless, gender unites all feminists under one common, albeit debated, standpoint. In the case of gender inequality more resemblance leads to a better representation of feminist issues and interests.

Mansbridge (1999, 652) concludes that in these two cases substantive representation may increase when descriptive representation is enhanced. Her analysis, then, is context-dependent. Were there no uncrystallized interests or causes for mistrust between minority groups and parliament, there would be no instrumental benefit to descriptive representation when it comes to substantive representation. In this thesis, however, the argument is taken further: descriptive representation is valuable in all contexts, because of its intrinsic value to the concept of political representation. The value of descriptiveness as a component of political representation is thus two-sided: it contributes to the concept both intrinsically, as descriptiveness is inherently connected to representation, and instrumentally, as it reinforces other components of political representation, most importantly substantive representation. The duality brings forth a complex conception of representation as it now has multiple equally important components, a plural conception. In the following section, this pluralist aspect is further explored.

Section 2b: is political representation a plural concept?

Pluralism explained

The idea of value-pluralism was coined by Isaiah Berlin (1958) halfway through the twentieth century. Pluralism stands in stark contrast with monism on the one hand and relativism on the other. An explanation of both contrasts clearly delineates the concept. Monists assert that what is of value to human beings is to be measured using only system of values (Kekes 1993, 8). A good example of a monist approach comes from the field of ethics. Utilitarian approaches are indeed monist in nature, as

they all regard 'the good' to be possibly measured using one criterium only: utility (Sen 1979, 463). Although utility can be brought about in many ways, it is the only criterium to which moral value can be accorded. An example shows the implications of such monist thinking.

Imagine there are two societies, A and B. In society A, people live fairly free lives. They have acquired many freedoms over the past centuries, and the government functions merely as a 'night-watchman state'. The rather unlimited amount of freedom the people enjoy leads to an increase in utility, as it increases the general well-being in society, as freedom allows people to achieve their goals as they wish. It also leads to some disutility, however, because the freedom everyone enjoys means that there are few obligations towards one's fellow citizens. The rich have the freedom to use their riches as they see fit, and the poor remain poor, which brings about disutility. As such, society A has not achieved maximum utility, but scores rather well.

In society B, all is reversed. Freedom is rather limited, as a benevolent dictator rules the land and strictly decides what everyone is to do. This is a source of disutility, as the people are no longer able to secure their own well-being. They are sometimes hindered in achieving their own goals. The benevolent dictator, however, curbed freedom to ensure that all human action would be to the benefit of society. As a consequence, there is no true poverty in society B. In this respect, society B has acquired more utility than society A. Moreover, the equality between individuals is also a cause for well-being to increase. Although maximum utility has not been achieved, this society, too, scores rather well.

It becomes clear that in the case of monism only one criterium matters intrinsically. All others are merely instrumental to this paramount one. Society A and B 'score' exactly the same utility value, yet both are extremely different as to how they achieve this value.

A pluralist would disagree with this approach to what is valuable. Rather than accept that both freedom and equality are instrumental to one paramount notion of utility, a pluralist would claim that either concept contains an intrinsic value that cannot be expressed in terms of other values (Kekes 1993, 21). Freedom cannot be measured in terms of well-being, and neither can equality. Suddenly, society A and B no longer 'score' similarly. Indeed, they score completely different in terms of both values! This shows another important aspect of pluralism: incommensurability. Concepts such as freedom and equality are not only distinct from each other, it is impossible to compare the two. Therefore, no one could say that society A is more free than society B is equal. One could say, however, that society A is more free than B, and that B is more equal than A. It is furthermore only possible to judge between society A and B by adopting a stance regarding the question: 'is equality or liberty more important in society?'

Relativists, on the other hand, argue that the value of a certain concept solely depends on an individual's own experience (Kekes 1993, 8). Any property belonging to a certain object or concept is considered to be derived solely from its subjective context. Given that such properties do not belong to the concepts in themselves, any assessment concerning such properties can only be executed from a certain framework or context. No independent valuable properties exist, and therefore no independent judgement can be made. The truth-value of certain views is thus relative to a certain context, which makes it hard for outsiders to judge.

Take again the example of society B, in which a benevolent dictator rules who wants the best for his people but argues that individual liberty is not necessary and possibly inimical to the citizens' well-being. According to relativists, it is impossible to argue from an independent point of view that the dictator is wrong in his assessment, as it flows from his specific cultural, economic and political context. Although it is possible to create a different assessment from a different context (as indeed most inhabitants of a liberal democracy would do), it is impossible to prove that this new assessment is better or more apt than the dictators'. When it comes to assessing the contents and value of political

representation, as is done in this thesis, it is desirable that such an assessment is made possible, which means that relativism is not a standpoint one would want to take.

Pluralists and relativists agree that more than one possible criterium for value or truth exists. Moreover, they both agree that these criteria are often incommensurable, which means that comparing two such criteria is impossible. What then distinguishes pluralism from relativism so that pluralism is a more desirable epistemic standpoint? Relativists go one step further than pluralists when they claim that assessments of truth-values are also incommensurable. According to them, no independent objective ground exists for judging between any value (Kekes 1993, 32). Hence why no democrat can argue that the benevolent dictator is wrong from an independent point of view. Pluralists, however, argue that although different criteria may be incommensurable, different assessments need not be (Kekes 1993, 18). The reason for this is that pluralists think that the criteria themselves, such as liberty and equality, are context-independent. All humans value such criteria. Pluralists accept, however, that the content of each criterium is context-dependent. In some cultures, for instance, liberty is thought to be bound to the individual, in others, to the family of which an individual is a member. In both cultures, however, liberty is thought to be an important aspect of human life. Relativists, on the other hand, would claim that this latter statement is false.

In short, pluralists argue that multiple criteria exist for assessing certain concepts. These criteria are incommensurable, because they cannot be measured using a single, overreaching criterium. Standpoints on how these criteria are applied, however, can be compared and judged according to the extent to which they accept certain criteria for assessing a certain concept. Their views on the contents of such criteria are again incomparable.

Applying Pluralism to political representation

What does the pluralists' view imply when applied to the concept of political representation? It implies that the quality of representation is not measured along one axis only. As such, the dominant conception, the substantive view, no longer forms the only view on political representation. Next to the representation of interests through actions, other types of representation can be shared under a conception of political representation that can be valued according to multiple incommensurable and possibly conflicting views. One such type is the descriptive type put forward in this thesis. Hannah Pitkin (1967) identified five different types, all of which she found lacking because they failed to grasp fully the entire concept of political representation. In this thesis it is argued that Pitkin is correct: none of the views encompasses political representation in its entirety. Indeed, that is what pluralism stands for: that there are multiple ways to look at a certain concept that are all essentially correct yet at the same time incommensurable. However, Pitkin is wrong in thinking that a view is incorrect or wrong when it does not encompass all there is to say. Rather, one can acknowledge that a view is incomplete and that multiple, possibly incompatible views are required to come to a true definition, whilst arguing that a certain view is correct in and of itself. Someone could represent someone descriptively, and completely, whilst not representing him substantively. The same is possible the other way around. Thus, no conception is lacking, yet a more comprehensive take to the concept is possible.

This argument is different from Jane Mansbridge's argument that improved descriptive representation has instrumental value as it may increase substantive representation in some contexts. According to Mansbridge (1999, 654) and to an extent also Phillips (1995, 45-46), it are the interests of the people that are the subject of representation, and more descriptive representation makes the representation of interests more accurate. In this thesis, however, it is argued that descriptiveness in and of itself is of value. Someone can represent even if this person does not represent interests at a given point in time, just because this person resembles (a part of) the citizenry and as such ensures that his constituents are 'made present' in parliament. The idea of intrinsic value to each criterium thus comes together with the idea of incommensurability. In case of conflict, the value of representation may increase when its value increases according to one conception whilst remaining at a similar level according to the others. In

such cases, it is worthwhile to make changes to the political environment that foster this conception. A good example is electing parliamentarians who resemble political minorities and are able to represent substantively as any other.

Hannah Pitkin (1967, 51, 55, 61, 92, 143) described five different ways to represent. The first two concern authorization. The voter, who holds the source of power in a democracy, is thought to be the author of actions concerning that democracy, such as keeping the peace or creating laws. However, most citizens accept that they do not have the time and expertise to effectively participate politically. Therefore, they authorize an agent, the representative, to rule in their stead. As such, an explicit link is created between author and agent, voter and representative. This concept of representation has been at the foundation of many social contract theorists. Two forms of authorization exist: one through accountability and one through authorization in and of itself. Theorists that subscribe to the latter form think that, once authorized, parliamentarians ought to make their own decisions. Voters, therefore, vote prospectively. They vote based on what representatives promise to do in the future. Once voted in office, parliamentarians are expected to use their freedom of judgement together with their expertise to do what is best for the country. Accountability theorists, on the other hand, argue that parliamentarians are held accountable for what they did in the past. Voters ask themselves whether a certain representative has lived up to his or her promises, and decide to vote for a parliamentarian based on their 'score' along this scale. As such, voters authorize parliamentarians retrospectively. Next to these two views, the substantive and descriptive views exist, as well as the symbolic. The latter resembles the descriptive view in that it holds that representing is a passive characteristic. An example of symbolic representation is a flag standing for a country, or a parliament standing for the nation.

A zero-sum game need not appear between accountability and authorization. A parliamentarian may promise things that appeal to a certain voter, whilst having a good record. Yet, it could happen that a parliamentarian makes promises that voters do not believe in, whilst having a good record, or vice versa. Voters are then faced with a decision: to choose for the better promise, or for the better record. No definitive answer exists as to which choice is superior. Indeed, pluralists argue that it is impossible to decide between the two, hence the possibility of multiple incommensurable conceptions of representation.

One possible answer to the incommensurability of all conceptions of representation is to value one over the others, or monism. Yet, all conceptions have a certain value, a truth in them, that renders them valuable when considering political representation. It would be a shame to authorize a parliamentarian based solely on his or her promises, or past record. Both are important, although their importance may vary from context to context. Similarly, focusing on substantive representation would render another aspect, descriptive representation, less valuable. Yet it has been argued that the latter is important for both intrinsic and instrumental reasons, and thus cannot be ignored.

Therefore, the answer to a zero-sum game is to accept the incommensurability and pluralistic nature of all conceptions of political representation, whilst ignoring none of them. Otherwise valuable aspects of the concept of political representation would be lost. Thus, the first reason for a pluralistic conception of representation is that the concept of representation cannot be encompassed in one concept for it is a multi-faceted concept, each facet being thusly important that none can be taken out of the equation.

However, to take a pluralistic stance with respect to political representation is a double-edged sword. The second reason derives normative implications from a descriptive analysis. It argues that, given the fact that the populace of most Western liberal democracies are culturally, ethnically, economically and socially diverse, a pluralistic conception of political representation connects better with the context of these democracies specifically, for two reasons.

Firstly, all these people have different conceptions of political representation. To one, substantive representation is most important, whilst another might argue that representatives ought to match them descriptively. Likewise, one might argue that accountability is the most important aspect of representation, and that representatives ought to listen closely to their constituents, whilst another might argue that representatives are authorized to use their own judgement in certain cases. All of the aspects mentioned in this paragraph have value to them, and therefore it would be wrong, even impossible, to say that someone is incorrect when it comes to his or her view with respect to political representation. Multiple views ought to be able to exist in a pluralist society, which is why a pluralist conception of representation matches the socio-political environment of liberal democracies.

The second reason is that the diversity of the populace itself means that multiple conceptions of representation are valuable in liberal democracies. In order to better understand this argument, it makes sense to first discuss its antithesis. Bernard Manin (1997, 6) has identified several core principles of representative democracies that philosophically and historically form the basis of how democracies function today. He argues that one such core principle is the 'principle of distinction', which dictates that parliamentarians ought to be different from the populace they represent. Through their professionalism, better personalities, skills and network, representatives are indeed selected because they are thought to be better than anyone else when it comes to legislating, representing and fulfilling government functions. Elections form a mechanism through which the best manage to run for election due to their skills, expertise or network. Indeed, although in most democracies each and any citizens has an equal chance of getting elected formally, no such equality exists realistically because some have acquired the skills or identities that help them get elected, that others lack.

Manin (1997, 138) therefore describes the history of modern democracies not as one of progress towards a truly equal society. Rather, he describes the process of political change as a change in political elites. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it were the landed people who put themselves at the political forefront. With the rise of socialism and the mass party, it were the party bureaucrats who replaced them. In the latter half of the twentieth century, it were the meritocrats, who have been described by Mark Bovens and Anchrith Wille (2017) in the first section, who took over the reins. Interestingly, Michael Saward (2006) has identified a new political elite of those people who have the social skills to put the media in their hands. Rather than getting elected for who they are or what they represent, these representatives actively form the political landscape in such a way that they can get themselves elected. By forging problems or making latent issues salient, these people manage to put themselves on the map and get elected by the citizens, who have been relegated to the role of 'audience', electing the representative who successfully manages to put him- or herself on the map. Although not discussed in this thesis due to it being only loosely connected to the topic at hand, it still deserves an honourable mention as it has revolutionized the role of the representative.

The principle of distinction has been identified as a core principle of modern day democracy, and many different elites have made use of the principle to acquire and hold the reins. Yet Manin makes a mistake when he recognizes this principle as being of value both historically and philosophically. Although historically his analysis may be accurate, the philosophical importance of the principle is yet to be asserted. Why would representatives have to be different from the people they represent?

When political representation is used as a pluralistic concept, the nuance that comes with the principle of distinction becomes clear. Certainly there are reasons for representatives to be different from the populace. An increased level of professionalism is vital for them to be able to deliver on their promises on a work floor that has become rather specialized over the years. Moreover, it allows them to make better promises for the future too, in the sense that they are more likely to be attainable. As such, a difference between the citizen and the representative in terms of expertise favours both concepts of representation as a form of authorization described above.

Moreover, expertise allows representatives to make interests present in such a way that they influence the political process. When politicians know what strings to pull to achieve a certain effect, substantive representation can be expected to increase.

On the other hand, difference can provide problems for representation too. Hannah Pitkin (1967, 90) has described the descriptive conception as ‘delivering information about the populace’. When no similarity exists between the populace and the representatives, it could happen that the populace’s interests are no longer accurately represented. This can happen both because the political elite would no longer consider the populace’s opinion important, or because they misinterpret what that opinion is. Moreover, descriptive representation is intrinsically important, which means the *demos* is ‘made present’ when representatives resemble the populace. As such, the principle of distinction ought to be a principle of partial distinction. There ought to exist explicit similarities too. A pluralistic conception of political representation that includes descriptiveness as an intrinsic value is therefore vital to ensure the quality of representation in a comprehensive way.

Section 3: how can the pluralist conception of political representation be practically applied?

The pluralistic conception of political representation has certain consequences for the way parties function in Western liberal democracies. To assess this effect a model developed by Richard Katz and Peter Mair (1995) is used. The model describes contemporary parties as being part of a ‘cartel’ due to their being so closely connected to the government that they are ‘symbiotic with it’ (Katz and Mair 1995, 6). According to the two authors (1995, 9-13), parties have been through several stages of development, starting as ‘cadre parties’ that consisted of the bourgeois because of limits to suffrage. After them came the mass parties, based on universal suffrage and appealing to a certain socio-economic class. Those were soon followed by the ‘catch-all’ parties that used their mass organization in support of the party, dropping their links with certain class to appeal to a broader public. At the last and fourth stage, cartel parties took over. These parties have become providers of policy packages that can be voted for, rather than serving as a platform to aggregate public interest.

Katz and Mair (1995, 13) compare each party type with respect to their functioning in the space between civil society and government. Their model has been generally accepted to accurately capture the functioning of contemporary parties, who act like brokers as they present policies that can be voted for. They are, in a sense, no longer connected to civil society. Rather, they have grown closer to the government, as they strive to be in office and use subsidies to subsist.

The model is an interesting one to use, apart from it being in line with how parties function today. Firstly, Katz and Mair (1995, 14) claim that the model is easily connected to a pluralist conception of democracy. The same conception is accepted in this thesis, as it is argued that both political representation itself and the values of the citizens are pluralistic in nature. Furthermore, the model leaves room for different selection mechanisms that parties may adopt, so that it can be applied to multiple contexts. Moreover, the model focuses solely on interests being brokered. The model may have limitations because only one of multiple conceptions of political representation is accepted. Therefore, applying the comprehensive conception of political representation to the model can lead to interesting results.

The model assumes that parties provide linkage between civil society and the state. Cartel parties present the states’ policies on the one hand and the demands and interests of the populace on the other (Katz and Mair 1995, 13). Parties can provide this linkage from different positions. In the case of the cartel parties, they do so from within the state. Due to falling levels of political participation and party membership, parties have had to turn to the state for resources that help them continue to exist. They vie for state influence, providing policy packages to the populace that helps them acquire votes (Katz and Mair 1995, 13-16). The voters therefore have reduced influence, being able to choose only between

predetermined packages. The packages are a result from seeing politics as a profession that only few can participate in (Katz and Mair 1995, 22). Being disconnected from civil society as they are, cartel parties create several problems for themselves, including the problems of political distrust and lack of (perceived) legitimacy mentioned before (Dalton and Weldon 2005, 947-48; Mair 2009, 17; Van der Meer 2017, 12, 50). Moreover, the cartel parties' focus on their functioning within the state, as well as their increasing disconnection with civil society and their increased professionalism may have contributed to elites being overrepresented, one problem brought forward by Mark Bovens et al. (2017, 154).

The application of the pluralist conception of political representation, with its descriptive conception in particular, to the cartel party model has several important consequences that may mitigate the negative influences discussed in the paragraph above. The parties make a major mistake by viewing representing merely as brokering interests, as it takes into account only one view of the five included in the comprehensive conception, the substantive one. Although representatives still act in the name of interests, they can no longer be held accountable, according to the model, because their survival depends on the state's resources rather than on public acceptance. As a result, voters may find it harder to punish representatives for past actions (Katz and Mair 1995, 22). The authorization view also is not lived up to by the cartel parties, as they are authorized not by the votes of the populace (although formally it may seem that way), but by their ability to enter into and influence the state. Moreover, due to the focus on professionalism, cartel parties can be expected to not match civil society descriptively. Indeed, the need for such a link has disappeared altogether now that no connection has to be made. Even symbolically the parties become disconnected, presenting the state to the people rather than the other way around.

What should cartel parties do to ensure that the improved, comprehensive conception of political representation is adopted? They firstly ought to connect with civil society in a two-way structure again. Rather than provide policy packages, parties ought to deliberate with their party members and civil society as a whole, thus ensuring that interests can be properly represented as per the substantive view. Moreover, government and the individual parties ought to be less connected. Rather than vote in favour of government policies all the time, party members in parliament ought to critically assess the government's work to increase accountability. Furthermore, they ought to connect less with the state to ensure that their being authorized comes from the vote and not from their influence on the state. A renewed connection with civil society will also lead to a change in symbolic representation. Rather than represent the state, parties may represent the populace again. Lastly, parties ought to accept multiple criteria alongside professionalism. Rather than think that politicians ought to be professionals first and foremost, parties ought to view politicians as representatives that have to meet several criteria, such as resembling voters, acting in the name of interests, living up to past promises whilst making attainable new ones. By taking into account all different conceptions of political representation, parties ensure that they connect with civil society, ensuring that political representation is of high quality whilst avoiding problems such as political distrust and losses in legitimacy that they face today.

The question remains, however, how parties ought to divide their efforts among the different conceptions. This question derives from the fact that all conceptions are incommensurable. One cannot compare the importance of representing interests versus representing via resemblance. Nor can one compare the fulfilment of past promises and the quality of future promises, as all are measured along different dimensions. Although a representative who resembles his or her constituents could be better at representing interests, an insight used in several arguments throughout this thesis, this does not mean that descriptive and substantive representation can be compared, as it is not the resemblance itself that makes representing interests easier for the representative. Rather, the resemblance enables the representative to use insights and skills that enable him or her to represent better substantively. Incommensurability therefore does not imply that different conceptions cannot strengthen one another. It means that their importance is not derived from them complementing the others, but from an intrinsic value each of them have.

Therefore, the question on how to divide efforts between the different conceptions, is a wrong one. Parties ought to focus on each conception when asking party members to run for candidate, ensuring that there is a descriptive match with their constituents, whilst ensuring that past and future promises are dealt with accordingly and ensuring that interests are well represented. Indeed, hypothetically, one representative could fulfil all these requirements at the same time. However, taking into account each requirement properly differs from context to context. When constituents resemble one another almost completely, for instance, little focus on descriptiveness is required. Yet, one ought never to neglect its requirement that resemblance be present.

Taking descriptive representation specifically, because of all conceptions it is the least salient in Western liberal democracies and because generally, parliamentarians barely represent descriptively, several measures can be applied to increase its salience. Firstly, parties could introduce quotas that they would have to meet themselves. They could for instance declare that they aspire a certain percentage of their representatives to be women, or belong to a certain community. Although most certainly effective, this measure could be considered to be rather compulsive and therefore parties may be unwilling to accept the measure, especially because it are the current representatives themselves that may feel threatened if they apply it. A less compulsory but possibly less effective measure would be to increase recruitment efforts among minority groups to increase their presence in parliament. The latter option would have to be applied anyway, given that many party members are hardly representative of the voting population, either. A third option would be to select political candidates through lottery, a system that is commonly seen as being the most fair, but that also threatens the level of professionalism among representatives that obviously remains important (Mansbridge 1999, 631).

How these measures ought to be applied specifically, or which measure ought to be applied, cannot be determined in this thesis. As each party faces a different context, different measures may be required to achieve a satisfactory level of descriptive representation. Moreover, the lack of a universal model for each system precludes universal statements regarding their desirability and effectiveness. Rather, the measures mentioned above serve as suggestions that may help increase the descriptive quality of representation by parliamentarians.

Conclusion

In terms of descriptiveness, political representation is of low quality in most, if not all Western liberal democracies. White, well-educated old men tend to dominate all political arenas at the expense of non-whites, the less-educated, the young and those of the female gender. The descriptive imbalance in parliament leads to several problems such as political mistrust, an overrepresentation of elites, a perceived loss in political legitimacy and the exclusion of political minorities from parliament. Acquiring a higher quality of resemblance between representatives and the populace may alleviate these problems. Moreover, research suggests that an increase in descriptive quality could also increase the quality of substantive representation. The interests of the populace at large and minority groups in particular may be more accurately represented. Apart from having instrumental value, descriptive representation has an intrinsic value as the people, or 'demos' is 'made present' and actually gets to rule, as would be expected within a democracy.

In order to improve the quality of political representation, the research question *can a descriptive conception of representation be theoretically and practically unified with a substantive conception of representation within a democratic party system?* was answered in this thesis. After a conceptual analysis of descriptive representation, substantive representation and political representation in general it is concluded that theoretically, all different views on political representation can be unified in a comprehensive pluralistic conception that unifies all conception whilst taking into account possible conflicts and their inherent incommensurability. Then, the pluralist conception was applied to a model

for a democratic party system, the cartel party model. What followed were two suggestions to increase the quality of representation generally, namely connecting more with civil society whilst disconnecting more from the state. Moreover, three suggestions were made to increase the descriptive quality of representation, those being quotas, increased recruitment efforts among minorities and lotteries to decide on candidates for elections.

The research approach was entirely qualitative in nature, consisting of a literature review, conceptual analyses, normative analyses and the adjustment of an existing political model. Although the chosen research methods allowed for flexibility with respect to answering the research question, they had several drawbacks, including the heavy reliance on outside sources for quantitative and out-in-the-field data to back any conclusions made. Moreover, due to the scope of the research, several topics that relate to it could not be explored to the fullest, including Michael Saward's conception of representation as being a claim made by the representative themselves. Yet the scope of the research also allowed for a comprehensive view to emerge that has both theoretical and practical implications. Thus, the scope has both drawbacks and advantages.

Having connected political science to political philosophy, the thesis has managed to contribute to the literature on political participation by bringing descriptive research and normative research together. Taking the low quality of descriptive representation and its political consequences as a starting point, it used this data to research the importance of the concept when it comes to political representation. By connecting the philosophical subdisciplines of epistemology and political philosophy, a new, pluralist conception of political representation is developed that fits well into the pluralistic political environment that Western liberal democracies face today. Lastly, the philosophical analyses contributed to the model analyses by providing criteria to which cartel parties ought to adhere. Thus, the research project encompasses both descriptive and normative analyses of political representation, ensuring a comprehensive new conception.

Several questions remain unanswered, however, and further research will be necessary to fully embed the pluralist conception of political representation in both political philosophy and political science. Firstly, Michael Saward's insights regarding the active claiming of being representative by parliamentarians opens a whole new dimension along which the pluralist conception can be analysed. It could be that parliamentarians use several criteria to make their claim, for instance, whilst neglecting others. At the same time, the practical application of the three suggestions, those being quotas, improved recruitment methods and lotteries, has to be researched further to ensure tangible conclusions as to their effectiveness. Moreover, practical ways to connect more to civil society whilst disconnecting more to the state ought to be researched further as well. Lastly, a philosophical analysis into the way the different conceptions of political participation is in order to increase the knowledge about the contents of the comprehensive, pluralistic view.

Political representation is a complex concept and adding descriptiveness to the mix of important criteria does not make it easier to comprehend. Rather than unify many existing conceptions into one, such as Hannah Pitkin did more than fifty years ago, it is suggested in this thesis that political representation is a pluralistic concept. Many incommensurable aspects together create a comprehensive conception of political representation that helps understand its complex nature and context. With all aspects being of intrinsic value, descriptiveness has acquired a similar status. Therefore, parties within parliaments ought to pay attention to all different aspects, including descriptiveness. Thus, the argument in this thesis calls for increased resemblance between the parties' political candidates and the populace, especially when it comes to political minorities who are more likely to remain behind. Given that each context differs, no universal system exists to ensure this. Rather, parties ought to make choices within their own context. What ought to change, however, is their singular focus on political representation as ensuring that interests are represented. Although the importance of this aspect cannot be denied, the singular focus ignores the complex, comprehensive concept of political representation, and thus leads to a loss in its

quality. Only by taking the most comprehensive view, the pluralistic one, can parties come to understand that representation means more than advocating alone, bringing an end to the descriptive inequality that brought so many problems in its wake.

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