

Accountability of minority representation: methodological advancements

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(Received 4 June 2016; accepted 22 November 2016)

This paper aims to extend the focus of ethnic minority research in two ways: first, by introducing the notion of constitutive representation of ethnicity and second, by operationalizing accountability for empirical research of minority representation in accordance with the constructivist representative turn. The paper suggests that the analysis of ethnic minority representation would be significantly refined if it adopted a more constructivist understanding of representation. Consequently, we need to move beyond traditional understanding of accountability as reelection. As a response, previous research has introduced more discursive and plural ways of understanding accountability. This paper contributes to these theoretical advancements by developing methodological tools for evaluating minority representation. The paper suggests that there are three systemic conditions necessary for the accountability of minority representatives: publicity, competition, and outlets for objection. Based on them, the paper develops 18 indicators for evaluating minority representation. The system accountability indicators allow us to extend our research beyond the identification of minority claims and try to explain the differences among those who claim to represent minorities.

Keywords: minority representation; accountability; publicity; competition

Introduction

Much of the literature in the field of ethnic representation focuses on the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation of minority interests relying thereby on the traditional accounts of political representation (Lublin 1997; Tate 2003; Gamble 2007). However, our understanding of representation has moved beyond the traditional static and unidirectional approach. We now know that representation is a dynamic and multi-directional process in which both constituencies' interests and representatives are at least partially constructed (Saward 2010). By learning that the representatives construct their representative roles and the object of representation, we also realize that traditional mechanisms of accountability are not sufficient anymore.

This paper has two objectives: first, to introduce the notion of constitutive and performative representation of ethnicity, and second, to operationalize accountability for empirical research of minority representation in accordance with the constructivist turn. The paper indicates that the research on minority representation would benefit significantly from

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incorporating the constructivist advancements in the theory of representation. Besides that, recent contributions on accountability within the constitutive understanding of representation have been instrumental to our understanding of accountability beyond elections (Mansbridge 2003; Montanaro 2012). These contributions have turned our focus from reelection to the discursive accountability and from the static to relational and plural aspects of accountability. However, they themselves acknowledge that systemic conditions that enable accountability are insufficiently examined. This paper aims to contribute to the understanding of these conditions that are essential for the capacity of minority constituencies to hold representatives accountable.

The first section considers the limits of traditional understandings of descriptive and substantive representation and advances a constitutive understanding of ethnic representation. Mechanisms of accountability that work beyond elections are the focus of the second section. Finally, the third section develops system accountability indicators that allow for empirical evaluation of the conditions under which minority constituencies can hold representatives accountable. The paper suggests that there are three systemic conditions necessary for the accountability of minority representatives: publicity, competition, and outlets for objection.

Constitutive representation of ethnicity

Most of the literature on ethnic representation subscribes to the traditional account of political representation. It is particularly informed by Pitkin's understanding of descriptive and substantive representation. Pitkin defines descriptive representation as standing for the represented "by virtue of a correspondence or connection between them, a resemblance or reflection" (Pitkin 1967, 61). In this understanding, ethnic minorities are represented if members of their groups are present in representative institutions regardless of their actions or responsiveness. Descriptive representation defined as "standing for" has long been in the center of minority studies (Grofman 1998; Nakao 2011; Sobolewska 2013). These studies, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, tend to focus on the impact of electoral rules on the number of minority representatives in the legislature (Protsyk, Matichescu, and Chatre 2008; Bochslers 2010; King and Marian 2012; Protsyk and Sachariew 2012).

However, since descriptive representation itself is not evidence of effective minority representation, the research, particularly in the US, has shifted from mere descriptive representation to the analysis of its impact on substantive representation (Swain 1993; Bullock 1995; Lublin 1997; Whitby 1997; Canon 1999; Haynie 2001; Whitby and Krause 2001; Tate 2003; Gamble 2007; Tatari 2010; Minta and Sinclair-Chapman 2013). In these studies, substantive representation is defined as "acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them" (Pitkin 1967, 209). Substantive representation refers to speaking for, acting for, and looking after the interests of the represented (Pitkin 1967, 116). They share Pitkin's understanding that interests are somehow objective, transparent, and prior to representation. In addition, it is either explicitly or implicitly suggested that the role of descriptive representatives is to advance essential interests of the groups they belong to. The quality of substantive minority representation is evaluated at the time of reelection when minority groups have a chance to sanction a representative who did not respond to the group's substantive interests.

In doing so, the literature on ethnic representation fails to capture the constructed nature of ethnicity. As Brubaker (2002, 174–175; 2004, 17) rightly argues, "Ethnicity, race and nationhood exist only in and through our perceptions, interpretations, representations,

categorizations and identifications. They are not things *in* the world, but perspectives *on* the world.” As such, ethnic groups cannot have interests or identities. They consist of individuals who are at the same time members of different groups and whose identities, opinions, and attitudes are shaped through various life experiences and contacts within and outside of the group (Phillips 1994, 88; Butler 1999; Brito Vieira and Runciman 2008, 112). While the constructed nature of ethnicity has been widely acknowledged in nationalism studies, research on minority representation still tends to define ethnic minorities as homogenous and externally bounded unitary collective actors.

Because of the constructed nature of ethnicity, I suggest that the research on minority representation could benefit significantly from embracing the constructivist turn in political representation. Marked by the work of Saward (2006, 2010), Mansbridge (2003, 2011), and Disch (2011, 2015), the constructivist turn has contributed significantly to our understanding of representation. It has shown that representation has a more dynamic and performative nature than traditionally assumed.

Instead of simply articulating pre-existing minority identities and policy preferences, representatives also change and shape these interests. In other words, representative action does not always follow voters’ crystalized policy preferences, but instead representatives often tell their constituents what they should care about (Saward 2006). In representation, different interests are voiced, created, and confronted against each other. By making claims about themselves and their constituents, representatives construct both themselves as group representatives and ethnicity as the object of representation.

Previous literature has shown that representatives do not necessarily frame their claims based on the pre-defined preferences of their constituency, but rather on their own interests, beliefs, or party ideology. For example, Bochsler and Szöcsik (2013) have argued that the same minority party will radicalize their demands when in opposition, but make more moderate demands when they become part of the government. Depending on the position in power, a minority party will evoke a different image of the minority group and their interests. In both of these cases, the party will claim to speak for and about the group as a whole and try to convince both the affected constituency and wider audience to accept these claims as legitimate.

Therefore, a relationship between representatives and their constituents is not as static and unidirectional as usually assumed in the literature on ethnic representation. In addition, the constructivist turn expands our understanding of representation to include unelected representatives and diverse representative roles. A representative may claim to speak for different groups, interests, or identities and her constituents are not necessarily members of her electoral constituency. Evidence from empirical research, for example, suggests that representatives with minority background from majority parties make claims about minorities although their electoral success depends on the members of the majority ethnic group (Lončar 2016).¹ The question is how we should study representation of ethnic groups in light of the constructivist turn. I suggest that we need to be interested in the performance of representation of ethnic minorities – how representatives frame minority interests, communicate their claims to the affected constituencies, and under what conditions members of minority groups accept or reject these claims. Rather than asking who acts in the interest of minorities and assuming that we know what these interests are, we should be interested in the process of bringing minority groups and their interests into being through representative claims and democratic legitimacy of these claims.

Consequently, we need to reconsider accountability in ways that it reflects the complexity of representation. Since representatives often claim to speak for those with whom they do not have electoral relationships and have the power to construct a particular

image of a group and its interests, elections are not sufficient to ensure legitimate representation. Instead of focusing on elections, accountability should be defined in more dynamic and communicative terms. It is important that those affected have opportunities to actively engage with representative claims, challenge them and ask for additional explanations.

The following section will consider the contributions on accountability within the constructivist turn literature and explore their potential for empirical research on minority representation.

Toward relational and plural criteria of accountability

In the literature on representation, Mansbridge (2003) and Montanaro (2012) have advanced plural and relational accounts of accountability that work well with the constitutive nature of minority interests and performative understanding of minority representation. None of them, however, focuses on minority representation. Mansbridge is interested in accountability of electoral representation in general, while Montanaro focuses specifically on self-appointed representatives. Bringing together their contributions and adapting them to the representation of ethnic groups, I suggest that accountability includes two intertwined dimensions: answerability on the side of a representative and holding to account on the side of the represented. Representatives are accountable if they give reasons for their actions, that is, if they explain and justify their behavior to the constituents and engage in an ongoing deliberation with the audience. Holding to account, on the other hand, relates to the opportunities that the members of minority groups have to ask for reasons and object to what is done in their name. Based on the analysis of the mechanisms for account giving and asking for reasons, later in this article I develop a third dimension of accountability, which relates to the systemic conditions that enable the constituencies to effectively hold representatives accountable. I thereby suggest that the constituency's capacity to object is meaningful only if representative claims are made under the conditions of publicity, competition, and diverse outlets for objection.

Mansbridge (2003) has shown that elections are not a sufficient accountability mechanism even in electoral representation. Representatives sometimes claim to speak for individuals and groups outside of their electoral constituencies (surrogate representation) or act in accordance with their own moral judgment rather than reelection strategies (gyroscopic representation). For example, a representative with an ethnic minority background may feel responsible to speak about discrimination against members of minority groups not only in their district but wherever a problem exists. Those affected by representative claims cannot hold them accountable in the next election, but could publicly disagree or accept the claims. Even when representative behavior is motivated by reelection, elections may not be sufficient for holding representatives accountable. Instead of acting in accordance with the past promises, a representative may try to anticipate the preferences voters will have at the time of the new elections and act according to them, or may try to change voters' preferences so that her claims are more likely to be successful (anticipatory representation).

In addition, representatives are sometimes reelected regardless of their parliamentary achievements. This may be the case in ethnically divided societies, where members of minority groups tend to vote for minority parties because of ethnic loyalties. As a minority Serb representative in Kosovo argues:

I would never personally allow myself to vote for a member of the Albanian community ...
While I am here, I will always vote for Serbs, even the wrong Serbs ... Maybe this is about

patriotism ... I could not vote for an Albanian. I would always give a chance to my representative. (Jelena Bontić, Interview, 27 February 2014)

The above quote suggests that a vote for a minority representative may be a sign of resistance to the majority rather than an agreement with the representative's policy stances. Therefore, voters do not necessarily vote for a party or candidate because of their promises but because they do not have a better choice or vote negatively against another political party or ethnic group. Furthermore, in closed proportional electoral systems, a vote for a party does not necessarily lead to individual representatives' accountability to the constituents. If a party selects candidates and voters vote only for the electoral list as a whole, individual representatives may be oriented more toward their party leadership than the constituents. Members of minority communities may also need additional mechanisms to hold to account those representatives with a reserved parliamentary seat. Finally, there are usually very few representatives in parliaments who claim to speak for minorities. Because of their numbers, minority representatives do not usually have strong decision-making powers. Hence, their parliamentary achievements cannot be assessed based on the congruence between interests and policy preferences of minority constituents and policy outputs.

In all of these cases, the quality of representation, as Mansbridge rightly suggests, depends on the discursive criteria, that is, the quality of communication between the representatives and the audience. We can say that representatives are accountable if they explain and justify their behavior to the constituents. However, accountability should not be reduced to a unidirectional account giving. One cannot make oneself a representative simply by claiming to be and therefore one is not accountable simply by explaining one's actions. Representation, as a dynamic relationship, requires an active role of the constituents. It is an active process of claim-making, contestation, and claim-reception. Since representatives discursively construct minority groups as unified and bearers of particular interests, it is important that members of these groups actively participate in the representative process. If the represented have a voice during the representative process, they can approve, challenge, or reject the claims made in their name. Otherwise, an image of the constituencies presented to the audience will depend solely on the representatives.

This danger relates particularly to ethnic minorities compared to other groups because minorities in many multiethnic societies either do not speak the working language of the parliament or do not monitor parliamentary activities because of a lack of trust in representative institutions. Furthermore, active engagement in the representative process is even more important for ethnic minorities because they often make up the minority of the country's population and hence may expect only token representation. Since token representation does not secure competition within representative institutions, more pressure needs to come from the outside.

Montanaro's account on the democratic legitimacy of self-appointed representatives proves instrumental in the operationalization of the mechanisms for holding minority representatives accountable. Applying Hirschman's typology of voice and exit accountability, Montanaro (2012) argues that constituencies can hold representatives to account by expressing dissatisfaction and trying to change representative behavior (voice accountability), or by withholding support (exit accountability). Constituents can express their dissatisfaction either through organizations or the public sphere. In organizations, constituency can hold a representative accountable by threatening to withhold or withholding resources. For example, dissatisfied party members can withhold membership or deny donations. Members of political parties also hold the power over representatives if they select the

party leadership and the candidates for electoral lists. However, while this may be an effective mechanism in ethnic minority parties, it may not be equally effective for ethnic minorities in majority parties. Because of their numbers, their voice in the party may not significantly affect the representative behavior.

There are, however, other non-institutional mechanisms of accountability, which constituencies may employ. For example, public disagreement and challenging of representative claims can undermine representatives' public reputation. In addition to voice accountability where the constituency tries to change the behavior of representatives, the constituency may also employ discursive exit, which refers to the constituencies' counter claims and active refusal of the grounds of a representative claim (Montanaro 2012, 1103). Recently, for example, a group of British Muslims employed discursive exit by launching a campaign "Not in my name" in order to speak out against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and their representations of Islam. On their website, they have claimed that ISIS "does not represent them and that they reject their ideology." By speaking out, they have denied legitimacy to the claims made by the representatives of ISIS and invited the audience not to recognize ISIS as the representative of all Muslims.

It may be concluded that mechanisms such as organizational accountability or public disagreement are crucial for deliberative accountability. Without the constituencies' capacities for sanction, a representative may not be willing to explain their actions and engage in deliberation with the constituency. Until now, I have explored two dimensions of accountability: answerability on the side of a representative and holding to account on the side of the represented. The literature suggests that crucial mechanisms of answerability beyond elections are deliberation, providing information, and explaining and justifying representatives' actions. On the other hand, the constituencies' efforts to hold the representatives accountable may be expressed through providing information to the representatives, requesting additional explanations, dissatisfaction or withholding support, that is, through voice and exit accountability.

However, all these mechanisms are effective only under certain conditions. These conditions, as I will argue in the following section, represent the third dimension of accountability. For example, the sources of organizational accountability do not work if there are no meaningful voice and exit options. If members threaten to leave the party, this may affect party representatives only if exit serves as a source of empowerment. If the consequence of the party exit is silencing, then there is no pressure for a representative to respond to the dissatisfied party members. However, if the party and representative's reputations are publicly weakened by the exit of party members, then it may be expected that a representative will listen to the voice of constituencies. Since the previous literature does not offer a more detailed analysis of the necessary conditions for meaningful accountability, the next section will advance the necessary conditions under which minority constituencies can effectively use organizational and discursive mechanisms of accountability. I will argue that there are at least three conditions for the accountability of minority representatives: publicity, competition, and outlets for objection.

System accountability indicators

The previous analysis has made a distinction between two dimensions of accountability: answerability on the side of a representative and holding to account on the side of the constituency. Although the previous section identified several mechanisms for holding representatives accountable, it was noticed that accountability mechanisms are not always

Table 1. Dimensions and sources of accountability.

Principal dimension	Dimensions of accountability	Sources of accountability
Representative	Answerability	Deliberation
Constituency	Holding to account	Voice and exit accountability
System	Capacity to ask for reasons	Publicity, competition, outlets for objection

effective. Certain conditions need to be met for the accountability mechanisms to work (see Table 1).

For empirical studies that want to measure the accountability of minority representatives, the first question would be whether minority representatives give account for their action. The answer to this question may be found through the analysis of representative claims, for example, in the representative's parliamentary speeches or communication with the constituencies through social media outlets. A representative is accountable if she gives reasons for her actions, and explains the change of position or compromising the electoral promises. Although necessary, answerability on one's own initiative may not be sufficient evidence of accountability. Without a dialog with the constituency, the representatives may not be aware of the interests and perceptions of those affected by representative claims. Focusing on the representatives only, we cannot know whether the given explanation is sufficient and convincing. Does the explanation resonate among the constituencies? Do those affected by the representative claims have any objections? In addition, we cannot be confident that representatives will provide reasonable and convincing explanations voluntarily. Therefore, evaluation of accountability needs to include the analysis of conditions under which representative claims are made. If the constituencies express their dissatisfaction, an accountable representative is expected to search for the causes of dissatisfaction and offer potential solutions. However, if members of minority groups raise no objections, does that mean that the representatives are accountable? In many societies, members of minority groups either do not have access to those who claim to represent them, or are not adequately informed about the representative process to be able to participate. The constituencies can meaningfully raise their objections and pressure representatives to provide additional explanations or change their behavior only under certain systemic conditions.

Both answerability and holding to account have been the focus of much of the literature, but the systemic dimension has been largely neglected. I therefore aim to explore this dimension in more details below. In an effort to evaluate systemic conditions for the accountability of minority representation, I have developed indicators of systemic accountability (see Table 2). I have classified the systemic conditions for accountability in three categories: publicity, competition, and outlets for objection. The indicators are based on 18 statements that cover the systemic conditions for holding minority representatives accountable. The affirmation of the statement indicates greater systemic accountability. The indicators are meant to serve as directions for qualitative assessment of representative accountability. This means that they do not necessarily have equal weight and do not enable quantitative measurement of accountability. Further empirical research could encourage ranking of the indicators by priority and relevance for accountable representation.

In addition, the indicators are developed for my research on minority representation in post-conflict societies. Since in post-conflict societies claims to represent minorities are usually made by representatives with ethnic minority origin, I particularly had them in

Table 2. System accountability indicators.

Publicity

1. Parliamentary debates are live streamed on parliament's website and/or broadcasted on TV.
2. Minority representatives have parliamentary offices in minority areas.
3. Minority representatives use social media outlets (blogs, forums, and/or social networks) for a two-way communication with the constituency.
4. Minority claims are made in a language that members of minority groups understand.

Competition

5. Minority candidates are selected by the entire body of party members rather than selected by central party organs.
6. Electoral lists are either open or closed but unblocked.
7. More than one party competes for the votes of the same minority constituency.
8. More than one party in parliament claims to represent the same minority group.
9. Registering minority parties is constitutionally allowed.
10. Speaking time on the floor is allocated directly to individual MPs rather than parties or parliamentary groups.
11. Parliamentary seat is attractive enough for minority MPs to aim for reelection.
12. Members of parliament may be reelected without any restriction.

Outlets for objection

13. National minorities have strong civil society organizations (CSOs) capable to lobby, initiate, or challenge parliamentary claims.
14. Minority NGOs are independent from the state and political parties.
15. National minorities have independent media in their language.
16. There is more than one independent media in a minority language.
17. Representatives of every ethnic group may voice their concerns in the parliament.
18. Parliament provides channels for citizens' inclusion such as public hearings or public debates.

mind in searching for methodological tools to measure the representative accountability to members of ethnic minority groups. Finally, my indicators presuppose the existence of constitutional guarantees for the protection of basic political rights such as the right to political protest. These rights also include the right of members of ethnic minorities to be represented in political institutions. In countries where political representatives are not allowed to speak for minorities and promote minority culture and language, efforts to evaluate minority representation would be futile. For example, in Turkey, political parties are legally not allowed to "claim that there are minorities based on national or religious or cultural or confessional or racial or linguistic differences" (article 81(a)) (Almairac 2006, 9). Turkey's Law on Political Parties "also criminalizes the promotion of any culture or language other than the Turkish, which is defined as a threat to the integrity of the Turkish nation" (article 81(b)) (Almairac 2006, 9). The indicators presented below are, therefore, useful only for evaluating minority representation in countries that recognize minorities and protect basic political rights of minorities.

Publicity

In all types of representative–constituency relationships, the represented need to understand the claims that are made on their behalf, and engage with them critically. A necessary precondition for accountability is the existence of conditions for ongoing communication between the representatives and constituents (Mansbridge 2003; Montanaro 2012). Representative claims need to be made publicly for the constituency to be able to engage with them. If constituents are aware of the policy positions of their representatives, their moral judgments, and perceptions of their parliamentary role, they will be in a better

position to evaluate the behavior of their representatives and make voting decisions. In accordance with Saward (2010, 2014), I argue that the openness of the representative system is essential for accountability and democratic legitimacy of representation. In closed societies, it is hard to expect high levels of accountability even if claims are accepted by the appropriate constituency.

The first piece of evidence of publicity is live streaming of parliamentary sessions on the parliamentary web page or their broadcasting on TV. Some countries have parliamentary channels, while others use public broadcasting services for the broadcasting of plenary sessions. In other countries plenary and committee sessions are broadcasted on the parliamentary websites. While in some countries these channels may allow the interested public to monitor the work of their representatives, they are not sufficient in ethnically deeply divided societies, where members of minority groups do not watch mainstream media. In Kosovo, for example, parliamentary work is invisible to members of minority groups because minority communities do not watch the TV stations, which monitor parliamentary activities, either because of the language barrier or political reasons (Biserka Kostić, interview, 25 February 2014).

In such cases, minority representatives need to engage more directly in the communication with their constituencies. Accountability increases if those who claim to represent minority groups engage in dialog with their constituencies through social media outlets. Social media outlets serve three functions: to give information on the representative work, inform the constituency about public policies and parliamentary debates, and encourage public debate on the relevant minority issues. By exposing a representative to public criticism, social media can either increase or undermine a representative's public reputation. In many post-conflict societies and new democracies, internet is merely used for traditional information instead of encouraging a two-way dialog with the affected constituencies (Lončar and Stojanović 2015). Hence, for deliberative accountability, it is not sufficient that minority representatives have social media accounts, but it is important that they use them to open the public debate.

Since not everyone has access to social media or the capacities to use it effectively, the channels for direct communication with the constituency are important. The parliament is usually located in the capital city and minority representatives tend to spend most of their time in the capital. As a consequence, members of national minorities in other areas of the country do not have an easy way of contacting their representatives. Since national minorities are often geographically concentrated, the publicity would be increased if minority representatives had offices in places inhabited by minority groups.

Finally, members of national minorities do not necessarily speak the official language of the country. However, in most cases, members of parliament do not have a choice to speak in the minority language during parliamentary debates. To my knowledge, only in Kosovo representatives with minority backgrounds speak in their own language during plenary sessions. However, since members of minority groups in Kosovo do not speak Albanian and there are no subtitles during public broadcasting of the debates, representatives from the majority groups do not have incentives to speak for minority groups. Even if they claimed to represent minorities, the intended constituencies would not be able to receive the claim and recognize that it was made in their name. Therefore, a condition that minority claims are made in a language that the members of minority groups understand is not only necessary for accountability but also for the constitution of a representative.

Competition

The second group of systemic conditions for accountability of minority representation refers to competition. Political parties and parliament may either encourage or discourage competition among minority representatives. I identify four types of competition, which encourage accountable minority representation: competition within parties, competition for the same constituency, inter-party competition, and competition across ethnic groups.

Competition within parties depends on the intra-party democracy. Intra-party democracy refers to “a wide range of methods for including party members in intra-party deliberation and decision-making” (Scarow 2005, 3). Internally democratic parties with competitive and inclusive procedures for candidate selection may ensure that good and accountable representatives sit in the parliament even in young democracies or electoral systems that provide lower incentives for individual accountability of representatives (e.g. PR systems with nationwide electoral district) (Pedersen 2012b; Bird 2014). Party members with ethnic minority origin will have less power over their representatives if: the candidates’ electoral nomination is centralized and MPs are obliged to report to the party leadership about their behavior in parliament (Pedersen 2012a, 306–307). Tatari (2010), for example, shows that in the UK a strong party whip has a large impact on the behavior of Muslim representatives:

Most of the Muslim councillors voiced their concern about the strong party whip. Decisions are made within the party group meetings, and councillors are not allowed to dissent with party decisions in the council chamber. There are serious repercussions for dissent, such as suspension of party membership (Tatari 2010, 58). According to Tatari, party leaderships favor minority candidates for elected office who are “seen to avoid drawing undue attention to their ethnic origin, ethnic identity or public policy questions over racial inequality” (Tatari 2010, 58).

Hence, the answers to the questions who selects the candidates, who is an eligible candidate and to whom the candidates are accountable, are important for the analysis of individual MPs’ behavior (Rahat and Hazan 2001; Shomer 2009). It may be expected that more aligned with the preferences of party leaders and less accountable to the constituency are candidates who are: (1) selected by central party organs and, (2) responsible to the party for their behavior in parliament. Contrary to them, more accountable to constituents are candidates who are: (1) selected by party members with minority background and, (2) accountable to the party members with minority background rather than to the party center. The influence of party leadership is also higher in close-list electoral systems where the party makes the final decision on the list and ranks the candidates than in open-lists, where voters may change the initial ranking.

Open electoral lists and inter-party competition for the same minority constituency are particularly important in electoral systems with safe seats for minorities. There are now more than 28 countries that have introduced affirmative action such as reserved seats, threshold exemption, majority–minority districts, or party quotas to increase presence of minorities in parliaments (Htun 2004; Bird 2014). There is a reasonable doubt that in the absence of competition, “politicians may not even bother to cloak themselves in any garb of political ideas” (Phillips 1995, 102). Representatives elected for the safe uncompetitive seats may be more prone to co-option by the government or “secure privileged positions for a few self-interested ethnic leaders, who become enmeshed in the clientele networks of the ruling party” (Bird 2014, 19). The case of minority representation in Romania is a prominent example of the connections between low inter-party competition and low accountability. In 2004 several national minority MPs in the Romanian parliament

initiated and voted the amendments to the electoral laws, which raised the electoral threshold for minority organizations and granted national minority status to only those minorities already present in the parliament. In addition, they restricted competition by voting that only minority organizations already present in parliament can compete freely in elections, but others (provided that their minority is recognized) have to present the “list of members comprising at least 15% of the total number of citizens who in the latest census declared themselves as belonging to that ethnicity” (Cârstocea 2013, 15). The consequence of these changes was that only minority organizations present at that time in the parliament could compete in parliamentary elections in the future. These changes eliminated competition to minority organizations already present in the parliament and prevented other minority representatives from competing in parliamentary elections. Since restricting competition blocks channels for challenging representatives and allows representatives to be less accountable, it does not surprise that Romania has become known for “ethno-business.” The term “ethno-business” refers to “any practice that seeks to take unfair advantage of the existing legal framework for the protection of national minorities in order to obtain material, financial or political gain” (Carstocea 2011, 16).

Based on this, it can be expected that accountability to minority constituencies decreases with the lack of intra-party and inter-party competition for the votes of minority constituency. On the other hand, the accountability may increase if more than one candidate and more than one party compete for the votes of the same minority constituency. Party competition is necessary for both discursive and organizational accountability. Dissatisfied constituencies may meaningfully exercise discursive exit or leave the party only if there are other parties or candidates they can turn to.

On the other hand, electoral competition is not a guarantee that representatives will act in a manner accountable to their constituents. Representatives are always in a privileged position compared to the represented. They have the power to determine the agenda and include or exclude the voices of people (Severs 2010). The elected representatives can easily decide to ignore the objections of the minority constituents. Especially in the lack of intra-party democracy and non-institutional outlets for objection, the only ones who can successfully contest their claims are other parliamentarians. Public disagreement may not have any consequences (at least until the time of reelection) if political representatives do not decide themselves to include public objections. Besides that, the diversity of minority claims within parliament may inform citizens about political issues and give them an option to choose among different perspectives. The representative system needs to include the diversity of claims, diverse opinions, debates, and contestation about what is the interest of the minorities (Disch 2011). The diversity of issues and views about minority issues is important for evaluating minority representation. The whole system becomes more accountable when there is a debate, confrontation among perceptions, and interests that lead to a more informative decision-making. When only one-sided opinions are present, it is easier to convince the voters to adopt the representative’s perspective as their own. After all, construction of interest through representation is always an act of power, which is redeemed only retrospectively depending on the citizens’ evaluation of the way in which their interests were represented. When voters have the chance to hear diverse opinions they will be in a better position to evaluate their representatives, decide what their interest is, and make a better voting decision. Therefore, another condition for accountability is the inclusion of the diversity of people’s judgments in the representative process (Pitkin 1967; Urbinati and Warren 2008; Severs 2010; Disch 2011; Minta 2011; Minta and Sinclair-Chapman 2013).

Accountability to members of minority groups necessarily decreases if registering minority parties is constitutionally prohibited. Moreover, the question is whether democratic representation of minorities is at all possible in the societies that limit the right to expression and association. However, if such countries recognize minorities and mainstream parties claim to represent minorities, we could be interested in evaluating their accountability to minority constituencies. This is confirmed in the case of Bulgaria where registering minority parties is constitutionally prohibited (Székely and Horváth 2014, 435). An example of Bulgaria shows that, despite a legal ban on ethnic parties, members of several minority groups have been included in mainstream parties, while a *de facto* Turkish minority party, the Movement for Rights and Freedom, has even secured parliamentary presence by “thinly camouflaging their activity in civic terms” (Protsyk and Sachariew 2012, 315).

However, although members of the largest minority groups have been present in the Bulgarian parliament, the competition for these constituencies remains low. In addition, the question is who speaks for other minorities and under what conditions. Can we expect that representatives with majority background will compete for minority constituencies? Ethnic parties tend to be prohibited in ethnically divided societies with a history of ethnic conflicts. In such societies, it can hardly be expected that representatives from majority groups will actively claim to speak for minorities. In addition, political participation of members of minority groups may be low if they are denied the right to assembly. Hence, the existence of minority parties is particularly important in countries with the experience of ethnic conflict because ethnic conflicts have a homogenizing effect and reinforce unity.

In addition, representatives need to have the capacity to exert influence through equal speaking time. Individual accountability of a representative may depend on the question of who has access to the debate floor and under what conditions. It matters whether the speaking time is allocated on the individual, party, or parliamentary group basis, that is, whether each MP can take the floor or whether the parliamentary group determines who will speak and when. It may also be important whether the speaking time is allocated among parties or directly to individual MPs (Giannetti and Pedrazzani 2013). If speaking time is allocated among parties, those minority representatives who were low on the electoral list may rarely get a chance to speak on the floor. Without access to the floor, minority representatives cannot effectively give account for their work in parliament. If party discipline is strong, MPs are not independent from their party leaders in government and voters perceive that the actual power lies in the executive instead of the legislature, MPs will not be able to engage in public deliberation and build a strong public reputation. Finally, acknowledging that elections may serve as an important, although not a sufficient, incentive for accountable behavior, it may be expected that representatives will claim to speak for their constituents more if they are eligible for reelection and a parliamentary seat is attractive enough for them to aim for reelection.

Outlets for objection

Competition within political parties and parliaments may serve as an important outlet for objection. However, in addition to political institutions, members of minority groups can also express their objections through public disagreement or discursive exit. These accountability mechanisms are available only if citizens have outlets to express their disagreement such as civil society organizations (CSOs) and media. If there are no outlets, citizens cannot use this mechanism to hold MPs accountable. These outlets are meaningful only if there is a plurality of strong and independent minority CSOs and media in minority language. Civil

society and mass-media can hold representatives to account through articulating social demands, and news coverage.

Many CSOs have the necessary expertise to monitor the work of political representatives. They can turn the public eye to the particular representative claims, call representatives to explain their positions, or articulate alternative claims. Minority CSOs can bring new issues to the public attention and point to the problems minority political representatives are not aware of. Since minority representatives are often in minority in parliament, minority CSOs can sometimes support the representatives in pushing a particular minority issue to the parliamentary agenda. In addition, minority CSOs are particularly important when there is insufficient reflexivity and competition within parliament. Larger minority groups have higher chances to be represented in parliament, while small or hidden minorities are often excluded. If included, there are often very few representatives who claim to represent numerically smaller minorities. Hence, CSOs are crucial in giving voice to the excluded groups.

To serve this role, it is necessary that ethnic minorities have a vibrant civil society independent from political parties and the state. It is not rare in new democratic countries that minority CSOs are established and funded by minority parties. Dependent on the parties, it cannot be expected that they will hold minority political representatives accountable.

Previous literature supports the argument on the importance of an independent and strong minority civil society. For example, Cianetti (2014) compared minority representation in Riga and Tallinn in order to examine why city-level representation serves as a channel for minority empowerment in Riga, while in Tallinn it serves to demobilize minorities. Her analysis shows that Riga is an example of democratically legitimate minority representation because of the pluralism of voices within the party that claims to represent the Russian-speaking minority and a strong civil society. On the other hand, in Tallinn, the party that claims to represent Russian-speaking minority has a unified voice, while minority community is demobilized with small civic movements, dependent on political parties. This shows how intra-party competition and a strong and independent minority civil society are necessary conditions for accountable representation.

In addition to the civil society, minority media may serve an important role in holding minority representatives accountable. In post-conflict societies particularly, mainstream media rarely provide information relevant for ethnic minorities. Minority media then serve as the only source of relevant information. Parliamentary media reporters have an important role not only in providing publicity but also in challenging minority political representatives. Minority media have a strong capacity to hold representatives accountable if they confront minority representatives with alternative claims, critically analyze the consequences of the proposed or adopted policies, and open public debates between competing representative actors and claims. However, sources of accountability decrease if the media only broadcast party announcements and serve as a self-promotion tool for political representatives. Since minority media are also makers of minority representative claims with their own perspectives and ideological positions, it is important that members of minority communities have access to a plural and diverse media reporting. This is particularly relevant when members of minority communities only speak their native language and hence rely heavily on the information provided by minority media.

The critical and analytical function of the media can only be expressed if the media are independent from political parties and public institutions. The example from Serbia demonstrates this. Since the media in minority languages have a significantly smaller audience than the mainstream media, they are hardly competitive in the media market and need financial support for their existence. In Serbia, almost all of the minority media are established

and financially supported by minority political parties. In the case of the Hungarian national minority, this has even led to the adoption of “Media Strategy of Vojvodina² Hungarians 2011–2016” (Nacionalni savet mađarske nacionalne manjine 2011). The Strategy gives detailed instructions to the media in the Hungarian language on how, when, and on what to report. The Strategy has also defined a “value system of Vojvodina media in the Hungarian spirit.” According to the Strategy, the main tasks of media in the Hungarian language are to protect and strengthen Hungarian identity, deepen the feelings of mutual belonging to the community, and strengthen the family values. Since the most influential Hungarian minority party controls the majority of media in the Hungarian language, the media serve as a party outlet rather than a mechanism for holding minority representatives accountable.

In addition to the civil society and media, I have added two more criteria for systemic accountability. The first is that the parliament provides channels for the inclusion of citizens such as public hearings or public debates. Public hearings can serve as an important outlet for objection and alternative representative claims particularly if they are organized on a regular basis and minority representatives from civil society are invited to these hearings. Secondly, equal access to political institutions is an important condition for democratically legitimate representation. For the accountability of minority representation it is important that every minority ethnic group has opportunities to raise their concerns in parliament. This means either that every minority group should have at least one MP who claims to represent that group or that minority civic representatives occasionally attend plenary or committee meetings of the parliament to voice their concerns. In Slovenia, for example, parliamentary seats are reserved only for members of the Italian and Hungarian minorities, while other groups such as the Roma are denied these rights. Similarly, in Montenegro, affirmative action measures in order to secure parliamentary presence to minorities are granted only to the Albanian minority. In these countries, the voice of other minority groups cannot be heard in the parliament. In such cases, affirmative action measures could be complemented with the regular participation of the representatives of the minority CSOs at the meetings of the parliamentary committees.

It may be concluded that there are three necessary conditions for accountability of minority representation: publicity, competition, and outlets for objection. First, I have argued that publicity is a necessary systemic condition because the represented need to be aware of the representatives’ claims and actions. If representative claims are not made publicly, the represented cannot ask for reasons and hold the representatives accountable. Second, competition is necessary because it furthers debate, provides representation of conflicting interests, and offers alternatives to the constituency. Finally, if the represented do not feel represented well, they need to be able to express their dissatisfaction. Outlets for objection are, therefore, necessary channels through which they can express either their support or dissatisfaction. Without these three conditions, we cannot expect either answerability or holding to account to be effective.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the research on the representation of ethnic minorities could benefit significantly from incorporating the constructivist approach to representation. The acknowledgement that ethnicity is constructed is in opposition to the usual assumption in the minority literature that ethnic minority groups have essential and transparent interests. Minority communities and their interests are brought into existence by representative claim-making processes in the political and public sphere. Therefore, instead of looking at the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation of ethnic minorities, we

should focus on how minority interests are constructed and under what conditions representatives speak about minorities and give account for their claims.

The second argument of the paper was related to the traditional understanding of accountability as reelection. Following the representative turn means that the old criteria for assessing accountability are not sufficient anymore. If representation is understood in dynamic and relational terms, accountability mechanisms should reflect this. Several authors have already shown that the new criteria have to be more systemic, deliberative, and plural (Mansbridge 2003; Montanaro 2012). However, previous research has not developed the necessary methodological tools to translate these normative criteria into better operationalized criteria for empirical research. I have argued that representative accountability has three dimensions: (1) answerability of the representatives who give accounts for their actions; (2) efforts of the constituencies to hold the representatives accountable expressed through voice and exit accountability; and (3) conditions under which the constituencies' efforts to hold representatives accountable become meaningful. While the first two dimensions have already been operationalized in the previous literature, the systemic conditions have been under-analyzed. I have suggested the following three conditions necessary for accountability of minority representatives: publicity, competition, and outlets for objection. Finally, by looking at the content and meanings of publicity, competition, and outlets for objection, I have advanced the indicators of systemic accountability as a methodological tool for studying accountability of minority representation. The system accountability indicators allow us to extend our research beyond identification of minority claims and try to explain the differences among those who claim to represent minorities.

Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the workshop Representation of Minorities: Perspectives and Challenges, University of York, 15 May 2015. I would like to thank the participants of the workshop for their comments and suggestions. I am especially grateful to Monica Brito-Vieira, Nina Caspersen, Mihaela Mihai, Licia Cianetti, and an anonymous reviewer for their most valuable comments on the previous versions of this paper.

Notes

1. To reflect this complexity, the term “constituency” will be used in this paper for all those a representative claims to speak for, regardless of their electoral connections.
2. Autonomous province of Serbia where a Hungarian national minority is territorially concentrated.

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