ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE LINK BETWEEN DESCRIPTIVE AND SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION
AMONG PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES

Hilde COFFÉ
Victoria University of Wellington
hilde.coffe@vuw.ac.nz

Marion REISER
Leuphana University Lüneburg
reiser@leuphana.de

Abstract
Our study examines to what extent parliamentary candidates believe that Members of Parliament (MPs) from certain social groups are better equipped to represent that particular group. It also assesses to what extent candidates belonging to a specific social group are more likely to believe that MPs of that social group are better in representing the interests of citizens from that same social group. Using the 2009 German Candidate Survey, we look at four social groups: immigrants, women, religious people and East Germans. The descriptive results indicate that support for the link between descriptive and substantive representation is highest for women and lowest for East Germans. The explanatory analyses indicate that women are more likely than men to believe that women are better in representing the interests of women, and immigrants are more likely than non-immigrants to believe that immigrants are better in representing the interests of immigrants. The same holds for East Germans and religious people. The belief among candidates that MPs from a certain social groups are being better in representing that group, only holds for the candidate’s own group, with the exception of women who not only believe that women are better in representing women but also that immigrants are better in representing the interests of immigrants.

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INTRODUCTION

The question to what extent parliament should mirror society is a topic that continues to inspire scholars and the public debate. In particular those who believe that the representation of traditionally underrepresented has important symbolic and substantive effects on policy making argue that it is important to have a diverse parliament in which various social groups are represented. This claim on the link between descriptive and substantive representation has mainly been studied by gender scholars who generally confirm that female Members of Parliament (MPs) are better in representing women’s interests. The theory of the politics of presence (Philips 1995) suggests that female politicians are best equipped to represent the interests of women. From this perspective, men and women differ substantially in everyday life experiences, and female politicians, at least to some extent, share the experiences of other women and are thus better equipped to represent women’s interests (Wängnerud 2009).

More recently, some studies have looked into the representation of ethnic minorities and the substantive effect of their representation, suggesting that descriptive minority representation translates into better substantive representation (Bird 2011; Owens 2005, Preuhs 2007; Whitby 1997; Wüst 2011). Little is, however, known about group representation and the link between descriptive and substantive representation for other groups than women and ethnic minorities. This neglect is striking since there is evidence of mechanisms of group representation for a wide range of different groups (Krook and O’Brien 2010; Reiser 2011).

Little attention has also been given to the extent that (candidate) MPs think that descriptive representation relates to substantive representation of certain groups and which MPs think so. Yet, since they are the key players in parliament whose central function is to represent their voters, it is relevant to understand their opinion. Their opinion will frame their mode of representation and thus understanding their opinion may help to further understand MPs’ political activity and the link between descriptive and substantive representation. Even though Childs (2006), who looks at female representation, argues correctly that institutional characteristics may limit the possibilities for women to directly translate their attitudes in actual behavior, knowing which understanding on representation they have will provide further insights into the link between descriptive and substantive representation.

Therefore, the research question motivating the current study is: To what extent do political candidates believe that an MP should belong to a social group to effectively represent the interests of that group. To answer this question, we rely on the 2009 German candidate survey and focus on four specific groups: women, immigrants, East Germans and religious people. As such, we include two groups which have been traditionally politically underrepresented (immigrants and women) and
two groups which have not been underrepresented (religious people and East Germans) in German Federal Parliament. When answering the research question, we are particularly interested in the extent to which candidates belonging to one of a specific social group are more likely to believe that MPs of their social group are better at representing the interests of citizens from their group. For example, are female candidates more likely to believe that women are better in representing the interests of women than male candidates, and does such positive attitude towards the link between descriptive and substantive representation translate to other groups?

Before moving to a description of the data and our empirical analysis, the next paragraph introduces theories on descriptive and substantive representation relevant for our study.

**THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

**The Link Between Descriptive and Substantive Representation**

Over the last couple of decades, the representation of marginalized groups has become a central topic in the research on democracy and political representation (Phillips 1995; Young 2000; Mansbridge 1999; Dovi 2002; Krook 2010; Bird et al. 2011). The starting point of most research on the representation of marginalized groups is Hanna Pitkin’s influential work *The Concept of Representation* (1967). Pitkin (1967) identified four different views of representation: formalistic, descriptive, symbolic representation, and substantive representation. Among these four views, descriptive and substantive representation and the link between them are the most extensively investigated within the research, especially on gender (Childs and Lovenduski 2013: 491) and, to a lesser extent, on ethnicity. The central question in this research is whether descriptive or numerical representation leads to better substantive representation of a group’s interests and needs. The theory of *politics of presence* (Phillips 1995) provides reasons for expecting a link between descriptive and substantive representation. Mainly explored for women, the theory argues that due to their particular life-experiences, women politicians prioritise and express different types of values, attitudes, and policy priorities than men do, such as greater concern about childcare, health or education, and a less conflictual and more collaborative political style (Dovi 2002; MacDougal 1998; Mansbridge 2003; Lovenduski and Norris 2003). The idea is thus because people from a social group share a distinctive group identity, and similar life-experiences and interests, MPs from that group will be more likely to act for that group.

However, the empirical results regarding the link between descriptive and substantive representation show that descriptive representation does not automatically ensure effective substantive representation. Instead, the relationship between ‘standing for’ and ‘acting for’ is more complex and empirical evidence on the link is mixed (e.g. Celis and Childs 2012; Htun 2005; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Childs and Krook 2006; Devlin and Elgie 2008). Some research on
legislators’ attitudes and preferences finds evidence for gender differences in policy priorities and perspectives (e.g., Campbell et al. 2009; Swers 1998; Htun and Power 2006; Schwindt-Bayer 2006; Tremblay and Pelletier 2000; Wängnerud 2009), though the extent of the gender differences seems to vary depending on the policies and attitudes. Lovenduski and Norris (2003), for example, show that, once party affiliation is controlled for, there are no significant differences among women and men in support for the free market economy, European Integration, and traditional moral values. Gender differences, however, occurred for issues related to women’s autonomy. Other studies have revealed that because women legislators introduce different bills and topics to the policy agenda, their presence has an impact on the agenda setting process and during the political debate (e.g., Childs and Krook 2006; Devlin and Elgie 2008; Childs and Krook 2006; Htun 2005; Celis and Childs 2012; Mansbridge 1999; Swers 2005; Taylor-Robinson and Heath 2003; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Celis 2006; Piscopo 2011). The link between women’s representation and policy outcomes seems, however, more limited. Most empirical studies only find minor or no significant effect of women’s representation on policy outcomes. (e.g., Devlin and Elgie 2008; Vega and Firestone 1995; O’Brien 2013; Childs 2004; Childs and Krook 2006; Htun and Weldon 2012; Reingold 2000; Goetz 2003; Piscopo 2011; Childs 2006; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008).

Similar results regarding the link between descriptive and substantive representation have been found for ethnic minorities. Most studies on the representation of ethnic minorities argue that their presence does have an impact on the agenda, since minority MPs address more ethnic related issues in political debates and hearings than non-minority MPs (Wüst 2014; Bird 2011; Minta 2009; Minta and Sinclair Chapman 2013; Wallace 2014). Research for the United States also suggests a different legislative behavior of minority MPs (Owens 2005, Preuhs 2007; Gonzalez Juenke and Preuhs 2012). Empirical evidence on the direct impact on policy outcome is, however, lacking (Loncar 2016; Dunning and Nilekani 2013; Bird 2014). Loncar (2016: 18) thus concludes that “presence of minorities does not automatically translate into substantive representation.”

In sum, while some of the empirical research indicates a link between descriptive and substantive representation, it is a “multi-faceted and dynamic process” (Franceschet 2010: 60) that includes legislator attitudes, activity and legislative outcomes, and the link between descriptive representation and these various measures of substantive representation is not consistent.

While the link between descriptive and substantive representation has been studied extensively by looking at legislators’ activities and policy preferences and overall legislative outcomes, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the extent to which (candidate) MPs themselves think that MPs belonging to a certain group are better equipped to represent the interests of that group. Yet, this is highly relevant since attitudes are a prerequisite for behavior and frame MPs’ mode of representation (Young 2000; Htun and Power 2006; Tremblay and Pelletier
Thus, analyzing MPs’ views on the link between descriptive and substantive representation is one way to evaluate whether representatives will seek to substantively represent their own group (Childs 2001; Franceschet 2010; Lovenduski 1997). In addition, it allows exploring MPs’ general conception towards political representation (Brack et al. 2012; Lisi and Freire 2012). If they recognize a link between descriptive and substantive representation it would suggest that they find it important that (marginalized) groups are represented in parliament, and thus support proportional representation and a Parliament that (more or less) mirrors the composition of society.

Support for the Link Between Descriptive and Substantive Representation

Despite the concern that parliament should be demographically representative of diverse classes of citizens and the introduction of (in)formal initiatives to increase the number of representation of certain groups, even strong advocates of descriptive representation would agree that a parliament should not exactly mirror society but rather be more representative than it generally is. For example, no one will argue that lunatics should enter parliament to represent lunatics. The question then is: which group characteristics are considered important? There is evidence of mechanisms of group representation for a wide range of different groups. Krook and O’Brien (2010: 255), for instance, refer to existing quotas for “sex, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, caste, language, age, disability, profession, and location of residence”, indicating that these characteristics are seen as important in order to achieve a parliament that is more or less representative. Dahlerup (2007) points to the presence of geographical quotas in most countries, and Rahat (2007: 160) mentions “candidate-selection rights”, which are granted to interest groups affiliated with political parties, such as unions or employers’ associations. Looking at the German case, Reiser (2011) concludes that there is a broad universe of group representation. Predominantly, informal, yet highly institutionalised, intra-party quotas and rules guarantee the representation for social groups, such as women, minority ethnic groups, age cohorts, religion, professions, associations and geographical groups.

The relevance and salience of representation of certain groups differs between countries and is also subject to change. For example, Reiser (2011) has demonstrated for the German case that the descriptive representation of women has gained importance in the public and political debate over time. It can be argued that this reflects societal developments and changes such as individualization, value change, immigration, and changed voting behavior (Barnea and Rahat 2007; Inglehart 1977; Mair et al. 2004). These changes lead to new demands for descriptive representation and to the perception that some interests and groups have been underrepresented and need to be better represented in parliament.

Overall, we expect support for the link between descriptive and substantive representation to be strongest for groups whose identities are considered as salient and who have specific interests and needs. Of the four groups that we are investigating in the current study (women, ethnic
minorities, East Germans and religious people), both women and ethnic minorities have been traditionally underrepresented\(^1\) and their underrepresentation has been of special concern in post-industrialized societies, including Germany (Davidson-Schmich 2006; Hennl and Kaiser 2008; Reiser 2011; Wüst 2011; Xydias 2008). There seems to be some consensus that for a parliament to be representative of the broader society, these two groups should be better represented than they currently are in most countries. In Germany, as in many other post-industrialized societies, the political representation of women and gender quotas are still heavily discussed. In 1985, formal gender quotas were first introduced by the Greens. Since then, there have been controversial discussions in all other political parties and a contagion effect (Matland and Studlar 1996) has been observed. Today, the Social Democrats, the Greens and the Left Party have a formal 50 per cent quota. Since the 1990s, the CDU has employed a ‘soft’ one-third quota for electoral lists if there are enough qualified female candidates. The CSU and FDP have neither a formal nor an informal gender quota, though there are intra-party debates regarding the nomination of women. In the debate on an increase of women’s representation, a returning and common argument is that women’s representation would make a substantive and symbolic difference (e.g., SPD 2011). Empirical studies (e.g. Xydias 2008) has also confirmed that female MPs in the German federal Parliament are more likely to draw attention to female constituents and their interests.

There are no quotas for ethnic minorities in Germany, though there have been public debates about the representation of ethnic minorities as well as intra-party debates in the Green party and the SPD (Wüst 2011, 2014; Claro de Fonseca 2011). Similar to the debate on women’s representation, advocates of an increase in the political representation of ethnic minorities have focused on the symbolic effect it would have, as well as how it could lead to substantive changes in policies affecting ethnic minorities (e.g. SPD 2011). This perspective is supported by empirical research showing for example that ethnic minorities are more likely to ask migrant-related parliamentary questions (Wüst 2014).

The two other groups studied in this paper, religious people and East Germans have been relatively well represented in the German Federal Parliament. The German mixed-member electoral system (Klingemann and Wessels 2001) guarantees the proportional representation of East Germans since half of the 598 Members of Parliament (MPs) are elected in single-member constituencies, while the other half are elected on closed state party lists (proportional representation system). While the East German identity was a salient issue when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, of the importance of the East/West is less important by now. Research on MPs has shown that MPs from the East do not differ

\(^1\) Table A in the Appendix provides data on the representation of the various social groups studied in our paper in German Parliament at the time of data collection.
anymore from their colleagues from the West regarding their role perceptions, their attitudes, and self-understanding (Edinger and Vogel 2005).

Given that one of the major parties in Germany (CDU/CSU) has a Christian foundation, religious people tend to be well-represented in the German Federal Parliament. As a result of secularization, however, the religious character of the CDU/CSU and its MPs has become less salient. While the religiosity and confession of the candidates was highly relevant in the process of candidate selection within the CDU/CSU until the 1970s (Zeuner 1970), it has lost most of its relevance as a selection criteria to become a candidate for the German Bundestag during the last decades (Reiser 2017).

In sum, given the focus in the political and public debate on the political representation of women and ethnic minorities, the focus on these debates on the importance of the an increase in their representation for women and ethnic minorities’ substantive representations, and the initiatives that have been taken to increase their representation, we expect to find some support among candidate parliamentarians for the idea that women and ethnic minorities are better in representing their own groups. Because of the apparent lower salience of the East German and religious identity and their representation which gets relatively little attention in the public and political debate, we expect support for the link between their descriptive and substantive representation to be lower than for immigrants and women.

**Group-Differences in Support for the Link Between Descriptive and Substantive Representation**

The extent to which political candidates are expected to believe that a particular group is better in representing that group is also anticipated to differ between candidates. In particular, people belonging to a particular group are anticipated to be more likely to believe that that group will be better represented by someone belonging to that group (Bühlmann and Schädel 2012; Lisi and Freire 2013). Thus, we would expect women to be more likely to believe that women are better in representing women than men, immigrants to be more likely to believe that immigrants are better in representing immigrants than people with no migrant background. And the same would be expected for East Germans and religious people. In particular, because of self-interest, candidates are likely to support the idea that their group is best represented by someone of their own group. Furthermore, people belonging to a group share a group identity and values, and similar interests and concerns. For example, gender scholars claiming that the representation of women has a substantive effect on policy making refer to the fact that women share similar life experiences (e.g., Philips 1995). Consequently, female MPs have a better understanding of women’s interests and needs, and are thus better in representing those interests. Among immigrant and ethnic minorities, shared migration experiences, common mother tongues, cultural practices, religious affiliations and other ties can create strong group consciousness, which may increase the support for the belief that
representatives with a migrant background will be better in representation migrants’ interests.

While we anticipate candidates belonging to a social group to believe that that particular group is better represented by someone from that group, the question that remains is whether a specific group’s support for a link between descriptive and substantive representation would translate to other groups than its own. Thus for example, that women, who are expected to find that women are better in representing women, will also support such link for other groups, such as ethnic minorities, religious people and East Germans. It may indeed be that groups that have been traditionally marginalized or underrepresented are more likely to have an overall feeling that groups with specific identities, needs and interests are better represented by someone with a similar identity. In that case, support for the belief that someone from a specific group is better in representing that group will not be limited to one’s own group. It is, however, also possible that the feeling of people from a certain group being better in representing that group is limited to one’s own group. Various scholars stress that mechanisms for group representation are not necessarily complementary (for an overview, see Krook and O’Brien 2010), but rather hierarchical such that groups compete with each other for recognition (Reiser 2011; Borchert and Reiser 2010; Kymlicka 1995; Mansbridge 1999). This also relates to the issue of power, with groups who have been traditionally underrepresented or a strong identity arguing that they are better in representing the needs of their own group in order to gain (or keep) political power.

DATA AND MEASUREMENT
To answer our research question, we rely on the 2009 German Candidate Survey, which is part of the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES). It is a survey among the candidates to the German Bundestag for the German Federal Elections 2009. The survey comprises all 2077 constituency and party-list candidates of the political parties represented in the German Bundestag before and after Federal Election in 2009: Social Democrats (SPD), the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), Bündnis90/Die Grünen (Greens), the Liberals (FDP) and the Left Party (Die Linke). Of the 790 candidates who participated in the survey (response rate: 38 per cent), 25 per cent was successful at the elections, 75 per cent was not. The survey has been conducted between November 2009 and January 2010 and thus, after the Federal Elections which took place in September 2009 (see Rattinger et al. 2012).

Dependent Variables
To measure the extent to which candidates believe that a certain social group is better represented by someone belonging to that particular group, the survey asks: “To what extent do you think one

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2 More information about the survey can be found on the following link: http://gles.eu/wordpress/
should belong to a social group in order to effectively represent the interests of that group?” The groups studied here are: immigrants, women, religious people, and East Germans.

Answering categories range between (1) Totally agree and (5) Totally disagree and were recorded so that a higher value refers to more support for the idea that a group is better represented by someone belonging to that particular group.

**Independent Variables**

Ethnic background has the value of 1 when at least one of the candidates’ parents was not born in Germany. Gender is a dichotomous variable with the value of 0 referring to male, the value of 1 referring to female. We also include a variable measuring church attendance, divided into three categories: At least once a month, several times per year and once or less per year. The latter category is the reference category in the analyses below. We further include a variable measuring whether the respondent stood candidate in (1) East or (0) West Germany.

Besides the main characteristics that we are interested in, we include a few socio-economic and political characteristics of the candidates in the multivariate models presented below. Education has the value 1 when the candidate has a university degree (including PhD) and 0 when the candidate holds a degree lower than the university level. Age is a continuous variable and has – for ease of comparability – been recoded to range between 0 and 1. Party affiliation has five categories: SPD, CDU/CSU, FDP, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, die Linke. These are also the five parties that were represented in Parliament at the time of the survey. FDP is the reference category. Overall, left-wing parties have an ideology that focuses more on equality and egalitarianism than right-wing parties. In particular the right-wing FDP which has individualism as its core value and disfavours group-based solutions differs in this respect from the left-leaning parties. Left-wing parties also tend to have a higher proportion of women and ethnic minorities among their MPs and are more likely to introduce quota for women (e.g., Bird et al. 2011; Donovan 2007; Sobolewska 2013; Tiberj and Michon 2013; Krook 2010). We thus expect candidates from left-leaning parties (including SPD, die Linke and the Greens) to be more supportive of the idea that MPs from certain groups are better in representing these groups than right-wing and in particular FDP-candidates. Finally, we include a variable measuring whether the candidate has previously been member of a state or the federal parliament (1) or not (0). This variable is crucial, as MPs may change their attitudes related to the link between descriptive and substantive representation once in parliament.

Table 1 presents descriptive information for all variables included in the analyses.

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3 We also explored the effect of religious denomination. Since it was not significantly related to any of our dependent variables, it is not included in our analyses below.

4 We also included the squared value of age to explore possible non-linear effects. Since the squared was not significant in any of the models, we do not include it in the final analyses.
The results indicate that the means for all four groups are relatively low. They range between 2.59 and 2.88 on a 1 to 5-point scale, indicating that the mean scores all groups are thus below the mean of the scale (3). In addition, there is some variety in the belief that descriptive and substantive representation are linked depending on which group is studied. The belief that one should belong to a social group in order to effectively represent the interests of that group is lowest for the representation of East Germans and highest for women. Candidates’ belief that immigrants are better in representing immigrants and religious people better in representing religious people fall in between.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis
Before turning to a critical test of our hypotheses through multivariate analyses, we first explore descriptive analyses examining for each dependent variable the link with the main social background characteristics of interest in this study (migrant background, gender, level of religiosity and West or East German background).

As can be seen from Table 2, female candidates are significantly more likely to believe that women are better in representing the interests of women than male candidates. Female candidates are also more supportive of the idea that immigrants are better in representing the interests of immigrants. Furthermore, immigrants are more likely to believe that people with an immigrant background are better in representing the needs of immigrants. East Germans, in their turn, believe that the interests of East Germans are better represented by East Germans.

In sum then, why we do see clear links between social groups and support for a link between descriptive and substantive representation, this support is generally limited to the own social group and does not extend to other social groups.

Multivariate Analysis
We now turn to multivariate analyses. The scales representing support for the idea that one should belong to a social group in order to effectively represent the interests of that group, are analysed using Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regressions which are presented in Table 3.

5 We also ran the analyses through Ordered Logistic regressions. Since the results of these analyses were similar to those using OLS regressions, we decided to present the OLS regressions.
Starting with the support for the idea that immigrant MPs are better in representing the interests of immigrants, the multivariate analyses reveal that candidates who have at least one parent who was not born in Germany are only marginally (p<.10) more likely to support this idea than candidates whose both parents were born in Germany. An important part of the bivariate relationship between having an immigrant background and supporting the link between descriptive and substantive representation, can thus be explained by socio-demographic and political characteristics. In particular, being a candidate from the green party or die Linke increases the likelihood to believe that immigrants are better in representing the interests of immigrants. Furthermore, women are also more likely to share this belief than men. Having been Member of Parliament in a state or the federal parliament and – to a lesser extent – having a university degree, by contrast, decreases the likelihood to be supportive of a link between the descriptive and substantive representation of immigrants.

Turning to the belief that women are better in representing women’s interests, the results indicate that, even when controlling for various political and socio-economic characteristics, women are still substantially more likely to believe that women are better in representing their interests than men are. Furthermore, candidates from the green party and die Linke are more likely to share this belief than candidates from the FDP. Having a university degree and having already been member of a Parliament, on the contrary, decreases the likelihood to support the link between the descriptive and substantive representation of women.

Regarding the representation of religious people, our multivariate analyses reveal that church attendance significantly relates to support for the link between descriptive and substantive representation for religious people. Attending church at least once a month or more than once a year both increase the likelihood to be supportive of such link. Furthermore, candidates of the green party are slightly (p<.10) more likely to believe that religious politicians are better in representing the interests of religious people than candidates of the FDP. Age and having been MP before decrease the likelihood to believe that religious people are better in representing the interests of religious people.

Looking finally at the representation of East Germans, our multivariate analyses show that the positive link between being a candidate in East Germany and support for the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation of East Germans is robust and holds even once socio-demographic and political characteristics are controlled for. Furthermore, candidates of die Linke are slightly (p<.10) more likely to believe that East German MPs are better in representing the interests of East Germans. Having experience as MP, by contrast, decreases the likelihood to share this belief.

Given the literature on intersectionality (mainly looking at the intersection of gender and race) and (substantive) political representation (e.g., Barrett 1995; Barrett 1997; Hardy-Fanta 2011),
we also empirically explored interactions between the main characteristics of interest in the current study: gender, migration background, religiosity, regional (East/West) background. None of these interactions were, however, significant at a conventional level of significance (p<.05). The different characteristics do thus not seem to significantly interact with one another. Parliamentary candidates with multiple identifications seem to prioritize the identification that is studied. Thus for example, when looking at the extent to which women can more effectively represent women, migrant women seem to prioritize their gender identification and react in the same way as non-migrant women. When investigating the principle that migrants can more effectively represent migrants, however, being a migrant is the driving force and has the same effect among women and men.

CONCLUSION

To what extent do parliamentary candidates believe that MPs belonging to a certain group are better in representing that group? Our results, based on the 2009 German candidate survey, indicate that there is some support among political candidates that descriptive and substantive are linked, though the average scores are relatively low (below the mean of the scale), showing that political candidates do not have a strong belief in that MPs are better in representing citizens with similar characteristics. In addition, support for the link between descriptive and substantive representation is complex. First, the belief depends on the group that is considered. It is strongest for women, followed by immigrants and religious people, and weakest for East Germans. Being a woman thus seems to be considered as a salient identity and because of shared life-experiences making women MPs better to represent women. An East Germany identity, by contrast, does not seem as a salient identity in the eyes of the parliamentary candidates. At least not to the extent that an East German MP would be best equipped to represent East Germans.

Second, our results reveal that candidates of a particular group tend to be supportive of the idea that they are better in representing the needs of their own group. Specifically, women, East Germans, religious active people and (to a lesser extent) immigrants belief that MPs with their own characteristic are better in representing the interest of their group. That belief does however not transcend to other groups. With the exception of women who are significantly more likely to believe that immigrants are better in representing the interests of immigrants, support for the link between descriptive and substantive representation only holds for their own group. Hence, believing that a

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6 One interaction almost reached conventional level of statistical significance (p=.052): the interaction between female and attending church several times per year relates positively to the belief that women are better in representing women. This indicates that being a woman and attending church several times per year do reinforce one another. Women who attend church several times per year are the most likely to believe that women are better in representing women, and they support the idea significantly more so than women who rarely or never attend church and then all men.
member of a particular group is better at representing that group seems to be mainly based on self-interest or group identity rather than general social attitudes believing that MPs belonging to a group with a specific identity and shared life-experiences are better in representing that group.

Another strong finding is the negative link between experience as an MP and support for the idea that a group is better represented by someone with similar group characteristics. Candidates who have been MP are consistently less likely to believe that one should belong to a social group to effectively represent the interests of that group. That candidates who have been MP before are less likely to be supportive of the idea that one better represents a certain group if one belongs to that particular group indicates that experience as an MP seems to make candidates believe that one does not have to belong to a group to represent their interests effectively. Parliamentary candidates affiliated with the Greens and die Linke are more likely to believe that women and immigrants are better in, respectively, representing women and immigrants than candidates of the liberal party FDP.

In sum, our attempt to understand support for the principle that one should belong to a social group in order to effectively represent that interests of that group among parliamentary candidates, shows that the support is multifaceted. It depends on the social group considered and is affected by candidates’ own group membership and their tenure as MP. It would be interesting to further investigate – ideally through a panel-design – why and how experience in Parliament seems to decrease belief in the principle that group membership matters for the effectiveness of representation. One explanation could be that experience as MP makes candidates realize that one does not have to belong to a group to represent their interests effectively but that it is more important to be a ‘critical actor’ who – irrespective of his/her own background and identity – aims at advancing policy concerns of a particular group (Krook 2015). Another explanation for the attitudinal difference between candidates with and without parliamentary experience, could be the processes of legislative socialization, with, for example, those with parliamentary experience having the experience that party loyalty is more important than the belonging to the social group. They may have experienced that even though one may aim at representing a group does not mean that one is able to influence policy outcomes favouring that group, for instance because of party loyalty.

Future research could also usefully explore in greater detail why support for the principle that people from a certain group are more effective in representing that group is only supported for the group oneself belongs to. Do candidates believe that only their social group has a specific identity and particular needs and interests that are best represented by someone of their own group, or is it also a matter of power?

Finally, since our study used German data, the scope of the article is naturally limited to the German case. Therefore, it would be interesting to see to what extent our findings also hold in other countries. In particular, to what extent the support for the difference in support for the link between
descriptive and substantive representation for different groups may vary between countries. This may depend on the salience of particular groups, and the related focus on their (substantive) political representation in political and public debates. Here, we showed that, women and – to a lesser extent – immigrants have been seen as groups with specific identities whose representation should be increased and that support for the link between descriptive and substantive representation was also highest amongst for these two groups. While the representation of women and, again to a lesser extent, immigrants has been widely discussed in other post-industrialized societies, it seems fair to assume that support for the link between support for the link between descriptive and substantive representation will also be substantial for both groups in other countries. Nevertheless, other identities may be seen as more salient in another context or may become more important over time. For example, there seems to be a growing interest and focus on the (substantive) representation of lesbian and gay interests (e.g., Haider-Markel et al. 2000). It will be interesting to see how this would be reflected in support for the link between descriptive and substantive representation of gay people, and also to what extent support for such link would be limited to gay people or whether non-gay candidates would also believe in the link.

As society becomes more diverse in various ways, the issues of descriptive and substantive representation become even more important. Advocating a Parliament in which all groups are (more or less) proportionally represented can be based on various reasons, most notably numerical fairness, symbolic effects and substantive consequences. Here, we focused on the link between descriptive and substantive representation and found that overall the belief for such link seems relatively limited, also among parliamentary candidates who do support it but only for their own group, and even more so among candidates with parliamentary experience. This is important since parliamentarians are major actors in the political arena and may play a crucial role in the development of initiatives to increase the representation of marginalized or underrepresented groups. While our findings do of course not indicate a lack of support for such initiatives, it does show that the reasoning supporting such may not be primarily relate to substantive representation.

REFERENCES


Table 1  Means and Standard Deviations (S.D.) for Dependent and Independent Variables

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<td>Experienced MP</td>
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Source: Candidate Survey Germany (GLES), 2009

Note: 0-1 refers to continuous variable, 0/1 to dichotomous variable.
Table 2  
Mean Scores Support for Link Between Descriptive and Substantive Representation

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N: 645  643  644  642

Source: Candidate Survey Germany (GLES), 2009
Sign.: ~p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (two-tailed)
Note: Levels of significance calculated through OLS regressions.
Table 3  
OLS Regressions for Link Between Descriptive and Substantive Representation for Immigrants, Women, Religious People and East Germans

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<th>Women</th>
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<th></th>
<th>Religious People</th>
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<th>East Germans</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ref. Once per year or less)</td>
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<td>.16</td>
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</table>

Source: Candidate Survey Germany (GLES), 2009
Sign.: ~p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (two-tailed)
APPENDIX

Table A  Representation of Different Groups in the Bundestag and in the German Population in 2009 (in Percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bundestag</th>
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<tr>
<td>Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious People</td>
<td>59.0</td>
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Sources: Deutscher Bundestag 2012; Mediendienst Integration 2013; Statistisches Bundesamt 2016; Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2011.

Note: People with an immigration background are defined by the Federal Statistical Office as those people who have immigrated after 1950 and their descendants. Religious People are defined as those people who are affiliated with any church.