

Diverse Faces, Stronger Trust?

An empirical study to determine the importance of quality of representation for the political trust of citizens with an ethnic and racially diverse background in the Netherlands after the Dutch Parliamentary elections of 2023

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Abstract

Political trust is a known and thoroughly researched phenomenon, because of the importance of political trust in order to have efficient participation from citizens and trust in the legitimacy of the democratic system. However, the last Dutch elections of 2023 showed a surprising election result, which made people with an ethnic and racially diverse background scared of their future in that country. This election also resulted in a decline of people with an ethnic and racially diverse background in the House of Representatives. In this thesis, the effect of descriptive and substantive representation on political trust of people with an ethnic and racially diverse background is analyzed with a multivariate regression analysis using the data of the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study of 2023. The findings suggest that the effect of both descriptive and substantive representation on political trust is generally limited, with a few exceptions. While sympathy for VVD leader Dilan Yeşilgöz positively impacted political trust among ethnically and racially diverse respondents, when substantive representation of people with a migration background was perceived as "too much," it was linked to a decrease in political trust.

Key words: political trust, substantive representation, descriptive representation, ethnic and racial minorities

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1. Introduction

Political trust is crucial in order for a democracy to function accordingly and effectively. It forms the foundation for political participation and ensures that citizens accept the authority of politicians to make decisions with national impact (Dalton, 2004). When citizens have trust in their political representatives, they are more inclined to actively participate in the political process and accept policy decisions, which reinforces the legitimacy of the democratic system.

Political scandals and corruption can dramatically undermine political trust. Such scandals not only provoke national outrage but also reinforce the perception that politicians prioritize personal gain over the public's needs and preferences (Pharr & Putnam, 2000). Politicians are acutely aware of the impact that scandals can have on their public evaluation, and as a result, they often make efforts to restore trust through various strategies during elections. These strategies may include campaign promises and measures to combat corruption (Mansbridge, 2003). Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of these strategies in truly restoring trust, especially among marginalized groups such as racial and ethnic minorities, remains an ongoing challenge (Norris, 2011).

The situation in the Netherlands provides a clear example of these dynamics. The rise of populist parties such as the Party for Freedom (PVV) and Forum for Democracy (FvD) is closely linked to increasing polarization and a noticeable decline in political trust. These parties focus on contentious issues such as immigration and globalization, tapping into the dissatisfaction of citizens with the current political establishment (Kriesi et al., 2008). This trend has contributed to an increasing decline in the trust in mainstream political parties, exacerbating polarization and social fragmentation (de Lange, 2007).

A particularly striking example of how a political scandal can impact trust is the Dutch childcare benefits scandal, known locally as the 'toeslagenaffaire'. This scandal involved the wrongful classification of thousands of parents as fraudsters, resulting in demands for the repayment of childcare allowances. The scandal had far-reaching political and social repercussions, culminating in the fall of the Dutch government in 2021 (Amnesty International, 2021). Despite the significant political fallout, questions remain about whether this scandal has sufficiently restored political trust, particularly among racial and ethnic minorities (Valk, 2021). Following the latest elections, the PVV emerged as the largest party in the Second Chamber, yet the lack of racial diversity among its members is evident, with only one member having a non-Dutch

background. Moreover, the total number of members with a non-Dutch background has declined since the previous elections, affecting both the trust in the parliament and the efficiency of policy-making (Butter, 2024).

This study will examine how both descriptive and substantive representation play a role in maintaining and restoring political trust. By investigating how different forms of representation impact public trust, we can gain a better understanding of how to strengthen democratic systems and address the challenges they face.

1.1 Research question

Keeping the current state of politics in mind, it is interesting to look at the concept of representation in relation to political trust. For this thesis, I will expect that political trust will differ individually between people with and without an ethnic or racially diverse background. This difference will likely be caused by either descriptive representation (sharing similar demographic characteristics with the politician) or substantive representation (the policy carried out by politicians is in line with the needs of citizens). In order to determine the effect of these theories, this thesis will focus on the constituents with a migration background that voted in the Dutch elections of 2023 in order to answer the following research question:

To what extent does the quality of political representation (descriptive and substantive) matter for political trust for citizens with an ethnic and racially diverse background?

1.2 Scientific and societal relevance

This thesis is scientifically relevant for multiple reasons. First, by investigating political trust among people with ethnic and racially diverse backgrounds, it can contribute to understanding the dynamics of social integration and a sense of belonging within current democratic societies (Putnam, 2007). With the increase of polarized politics and polarization in society, it is useful to research whether the quality of representation could improve this issue. Previously there was limited research done on how political trust differs across different demographic groups in contemporary democratic systems (Zmerli & Newton, 2008). Now that the demographic has been significantly diversified in Western democracies, there is a growing need to discover how this increased diversity affects political trust (Hooghe & Marien, 2013).

Furthermore, this research is scientifically interesting because even though there has been research done about either descriptive or substantive representation of ethnic and racially diverse groups in Dutch society, this research mainly focuses on representation as an effect instead of a cause (Koning, 2009; Van der Zwan, Lubbers & Eisinga, 2019; Mügge, van der Pas, & van de Wardt, 2019). In this research, the descriptive and substantive representation of ethnic and racial minorities will be looked at as a cause of political trust within this demographic.

Another reason that the thesis is scientifically relevant is that it specifically will measure the actual state of politics and its effect on political trust, since the data that will be used is derived from the latest Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (DPES). This could provide an opportunity to look specifically at representation and political trust in relation to electoral behavior, since elections are the few opportunities as a citizen to voice your opinion about previous affairs that have occurred in politics. This is especially interesting in light of the Dutch childcare benefits scandal ('toeslagenaffaire') which has been proven to have a negative effect on political trust for racial and ethnic minorities in the Netherlands (Valk, 2021).

The thesis is also socially relevant because of several reasons. This research can potentially help motivate people with an ethnic and racially diverse background to be more engaged with politics, whether they are already trusting of politics or not, by voicing their perspectives on political trust, inclusion and representation (Maxwell, 2010). Research regarding political trust could also highlight the current disconnect between politicians and citizens' everyday lives, causing congruency issues with policy. When politicians are not in touch with the concerns of ordinary citizens, it causes a decline in public confidence in political institutions (Dalton, 2004). Additionally, research about political trust, specifically regarding substantive representation, could improve the implementation of policies, since citizens will be more likely to support and comply with laws that are perceived as legitimate and made in their best interest. (Hetherington & Husser, 2012).

For political parties specifically, the research could also be of added value. Insight into the influence of representation on political trust could help political parties craft messages to address specific concerns and issues regarding the trust of different demographic (minority) groups, especially if there is a gap in representation between the current institutions and the demographic (Fennema & Tillie, 1999). Understanding these perspectives and differences in

representation and trust, parties are able to design targeted and inclusive policies in order to generate more political engagement and trust within these groups in the population. By understanding these perspectives, parties can design targeted outreach programs and inclusive policies that foster greater political engagement and trust among these segments of the population. Personalized messages and campaigns that speak directly to these experiences could be beneficial in increasing political trust.

1.3 Structure thesis

After this introduction, this thesis will continue with the theoretical framework. This chapter will describe the definition of political trust, why political trust is important as well as what we know from existing research about causes of political trust. The theoretical framework will also focus on the theories of descriptive and substantive representation, which are important for the hypotheses to determine the answer for the research question described earlier in the introduction. In the third chapter, the data and methods will be explored that will be used for the analysis in chapter four. Besides discussing the data source and sample selection, specifically focused on the electorate with an ethnic and racially diverse background this chapter will move on to operationalizing the different variables that are useful for the analysis and show the overall descriptive statistics. In the fourth chapter, the results of the analysis will be presented and the models will be discussed separately, which will give answers to the hypotheses that are tested. Finally, the last chapter will conclude the thesis, give a critical view on the limitations of the research and discuss new possibilities for further research regarding this topic.

2. Theoretical framework: Political trust and representation

2.1 Political trust

2.1.1 Defining political trust

Political trust is a concept that is very difficult to define generally among authors, mainly because of the multidimensional character of the concept. Authors and scholars have tackled the definition of political trust through different lenses, depending on whom to trust and when trust is actually achieved. Some definitions are more instrumental, for example the definition by Luhmann (1979) which states that ‘political trust is a commodity that helps political actors to reach their goals’ and Warren (1999, p. 250) who discusses political trust as ‘people’s willingness to follow the political leadership of others’. Other definitions look more to the normative aspect of political trust, like Miller (1974; 964) with political trust ‘that is founded on how well the government operates by the normative expectations of people’. Hetherington (1998; 2005) acknowledged that it is important to incorporate both the instrumental and normative aspects of political trust in the definition. Therefore, multiple authors have referred to Easton’s definition of trust, since this definition is a sufficient combination of the instrumental and normative aspects.

Easton recognized several issues rising as the topic of political support was researched, such as measuring the fluctuations in support and models for explaining both the fluctuations and the consequences of political support on the long term, therefore made a re-assessment on the concept which has been the foundation for explaining political support for other scholars (1975). In the re-assessment, Therefore, Easton makes the distinction between ‘specific support’ and ‘diffuse support’. Specific support is the level of satisfaction citizens feel based on the perceived government outputs and the performance of political authorities. Diffuse support looks more at the public’s attitude towards the government or political authorities and what they stand for, regardless of performance. This distinction is linked to trust in the sense that although trust results from experience over time (diffuse support), it is also important to keep the constant evaluations of performance (specific support) in mind when discussing the concepts. Easton also states that even though trust and specific support are difficult to differentiate from each other in an empirical way, it is undeniably that there is still a difference in reality (1975).

Building on specific and diffuse support, Levi and Stoker (2000) explained two different approaches to trustworthiness. The first definition explains trustworthiness in terms of role

responsibility: trust is based on evaluations whether political authorities act according to the normative expectations from the citizens. Second, trustworthiness is explained as interest-based, focussing on the degree to which the trusting citizens believe that the political actor acts in their interest. According to Weatherford (1992), this makes trust a multi-level concept that needs to be integrated with each other in order to understand political trust completely. For this thesis, the definitions of Levi and Stoker will be used to define political trust. These definitions are relevant, since it includes both the normative and instrumental aspects of political trust, in line with Easton's distinction between specific and diffuse support. Therefore, their definition is suitable to use as an umbrella concept moving forward in the research.

2.1.2 Importance political trust

The effect of policy switches on political trust can be argued both ways. If representatives change certain policies, it can be perceived as both trustworthy and accountable, since the intention of the change can be to better accommodate the interests of the citizens (Levi & Stoker, 2000). On the other hand, it could also be perceived as untrustworthy by the citizens, when the representatives strategically used inconclusive policy promises in order to gain more votes during the elections.

Bianco (1994) researched the importance of political trust for legislators. When voters are still uncertain about the motives of the representatives or how the policy will affect the common interest, legislators want to convince them that they are trustworthy and are committed to the common causes. The main reason for that effort is mainly linked to the fact that citizens evaluate the government and their actions after the vote has been cast.

Political trust can also be considered domain-specific, where someone may trust the representative on certain policies but not on other policy domains (Levi & Stoker, 2000). This has been important in research, since previously it was mostly concerned with the trust of citizens in political actors in general.

The link between political trust and participation has come to be rather difficult in previous research, since there are two different and contradicting claims (Levi & Stoker, 2000). On the one hand, it is expected that trusting citizens are expected to participate more than distrusting

citizens. The main cause of this claim resides from early research about dissatisfaction and alienation (Almond & Verba, 1963), as well as the link with decline in VS voting turnout and decline in trust in government. That claim in the context of voting turnout has later been unconfirmed by multiple authors like Miller (1980) and Rosenstone and Hansen (1993). On the other hand, it is stated that distrust is an important factor for political participation, as long as those who are distrusting are politically effective (Gamson, 1968). This combination is important for political mobilisation, because there is the conviction that they can achieve change, even though they are not convinced about the current power structures.

Political trust is also a crucial factor in maintaining political stability and stability within society. Political trust is important for stability, because it can give the government room to be flexible when faced with challenges when performing their political responsibilities (Shi, 2001). This freedom and flexibility is essential in order to govern effectively (Hetherington, 1998). Building trust with citizens is therefore crucial because they will in turn accept the decisions that are made by the government, whether they agree with them or not (van der Meer & Zmerli, 2017). On the one hand, political trust is positively correlated with wellbeing, social capital and external efficacy (Catterberg & Moreno 2006). This contributes to a sense of social stability and belief that the political system acts in benefit of the public. On the other hand, Catterberg and Moreno (2006) also recognized that political trust can be undermined when corruption is tolerated by government and political radicalism is encouraged, which leads to reduced trust in political processes. The study by Marien and Hooghe (2011) examined that low levels of political trust are related to lower levels of law compliance with citizens. People with less political trust are more likely to accept law-breaking behaviour than people who have more political trust.

Political trust plays an important role in shaping voting behaviour, both for more established and rather new democracies (Rosema & Paskeviciute, 2009). This does not only include the more trusting citizens but applies for more critical voters as well. The positive effect of political trust on voting behaviour is important, since it is important for the increase of engagement with politics, specifically in newer democracies. Voting behaviour is also related to the legitimacy of political leadership (Mohamed & Othman, 2020). When political leaders perform effectively, it has a positive impact on the political trust of citizens which they will convey in their vote. However, if that trust is broken by the political leader, it is difficult to regain the trust of the

constituents since voters will keep that in mind when voting. Rivalling parties could use that distrust in their advantage, also shaping the voting behaviour of citizens.

When political trust declines, voters will either vote for alternative parties or not vote at all (Bélanger & Nadeau, 2005). This trend is especially visible in countries with multiparty systems. The impact of political trust on voting behaviour differs between different electoral and party structures. When there is no suitable alternative available to vote on, this could also affect the level of trust (Hooghe, Marien & Pauwels, 2011).

2.2 Explanations of political trust

2.2.1 State of the art

Political trust is a complex phenomenon influenced by several factors. Research argues that individuals' political trust is a combination of both individual characteristics and system characteristics (Jiang & Zhang, 2021). In this part of the thesis, the state of the science on these two categories and their influence on political trust.

2.2.1.1 Individual characteristics

Education plays a critical role in shaping political trust, as it impacts both political engagement and understanding. Higher levels of education are consistently linked with increased political interest, better comprehension of political processes, and greater engagement in public affairs. Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (1995) demonstrate that educated individuals are more likely to be engaged with politics and possess a deeper understanding of political institutions, which fosters a sense of political efficacy—believing that one's actions can influence political outcomes (Galston, 2001).

Moreover, education promotes civic engagement, which is instrumental in reinforcing political trust. Putnam (2000) argues that education fosters participation in elections, community activities, and public debates, helping individuals feel more connected to the political system. Education also encourages the development of democratic values such as tolerance and justice, which are essential for maintaining trust in a fair political order (Almond & Verba, 1963).

However, the relationship between education and political trust is complex. Newton (2001) points out that in contexts characterized by corruption or inefficiency, higher levels of political

knowledge can sometimes lead to decreased trust. This is because educated citizens may become more aware of institutional shortcomings, which can erode their confidence in political systems. Education also enhances critical thinking skills, which are crucial for evaluating political information and distinguishing between credible and non-credible sources. Additionally, while education fosters critical thinking skills necessary for evaluating political information, this enhanced scrutiny can sometimes lead to increased skepticism and reduced trust in institutions that fall short (Helliwell & Putnam, 2007).

Conversely, Ugur-Cinar, Cinar and Kose (2020) highlight that in meritocratic societies, where there is a focus on the representation of educated individuals, education can strengthen political trust. However, in corrupt environments, education may reveal the extent of corruption, potentially diminishing trust in political institutions.

The relationship between gender and political trust has proven to be a complex and multifaceted pattern. Throughout history, women often have exhibited lower levels of political trust in contrast to men, which can be attributed to historical underrepresentation and gender inequality in political institutions (Schlozman, Burns, & Verba, 1994). This difference in treatment and therefore trust has an impact on how people perceive and engage with political systems, while also being a reflection of larger society dynamics.

Research suggests that female voters' trust in politics is impacted by the presence of women in political institutions. According to Rosenthal (1995), women are more likely to consider a candidate's gender in their evaluation, and their preferences are positively influenced by group interests and feminist ideas. Building further on this, when women are represented in the legislative body, they are more likely to accurately identify and give more weight to the policy records of those legislators (Jones, 2014). This may result in a rise in female voters' trust and political engagement. Mansbridge (2001) emphasized the need to move past essentialist perspectives on gender and take into account the variety of experiences that women have. This change is essential to getting a better understanding of women's experiences in politics and to advance effective representation. Legislators can create more inclusive and responsive policies by taking into account the diverse experiences of people.

When looking specifically at the effect of gender representation on political trust, Atkeson (2003) found that female voters experience higher levels of political trust when women are

significantly represented in government institutions. The visible presence of women in politics can contribute to a heightened sense of legitimacy and involvement in the political system. Hinojosa (2017) adds that increased representation of women in politics not only enhances trust but also promotes political participation.

However, there are limitations to the impact of gender representation on political trust. Cowley (2014) notes that the presence of women in legislative bodies may not have a significant impact on trust in politics, except when there are people that find the representation of women a serious issue. This finding highlights the difference between symbolic representation, where the presence of women is merely a symbol without substantial change, and effective representation, which actually influences policy-making and implementation.

Hinojosa (2020) points out that while an increase in female representation is crucial for strengthening the connection between women and politics, local challenges and barriers, such as limited participation and insufficient attention to gender-specific issues, can undermine the effectiveness of local representation (Vijayalakshmi, 2002). This underscores the need for policies aimed at improving women's participation and influence at all levels of politics.

Racial and ethnic minorities may have varying levels of political trust, often depending on their experiences of discrimination and representation within the political system. Research consistently demonstrates that trust in political institutions is closely tied to their sense of inclusion and the fairness of the system. A lack of representation can therefore lead to lower political trust among these groups (Schildkraut, 2013).

Regarding ethnic and racial descriptive representation, Sobolewska, McKee and Campbell (2018) identified three motivations for minority representatives: perceived shared experiences, an intrinsic motivation to represent, and electoral incentives. Schildkraut (2013) discovered that attitudes about descriptive representation are influenced by certain group consciousness factors, for example group identification and perceptions of discrimination, both within white and non-white groups. This was further supported in later research, where it was found that white The attitude of Americans regarding descriptive representation is shaped by several factors, including their own identification as being white and how they think about discrimination. (Schildkraut, 2020).

Specifically looking at ethnic representation and political trust, Banducci, Donovan, and Karp (2004) noted that higher levels of ethnic representation in government correlate with greater political trust among ethnic minorities. According to Heideman (2020), leaders from the same ethnic or racial background, especially in mayoral positions, can increase political trust in local governance. On the other hand, it is argued that rather than descriptive representation, a perceived sense of justice plays a more crucial role in the rise of political trust for ethnic and racial minorities (Wu, Wilkes & Wilson, 2022). Ehsan (2019) contributes to the discussion by highlighting the role of social integration and negative interactions between different groups can impact trust levels among British ethnic minorities. Gay (2002) emphasizes that racial identification significantly affects how constituents relate to their representatives, specifically regarding of communication and evaluation. Finally, based on a local study in the United States, the study found that “Black descriptive representation has very limited direct effects on trust, but appears to affect the distribution of policing policies across cities, and that substantive police policies increase Black and White Americans’ trust in local police” (Marschall & Shah, 2007; pp. 629).

2.2.1.2 System characteristics

System characteristics refer to the broader institutional and economic factors that influence political trust. Some of these factors include economic performance, corruption, and representation, each of which plays a certain role in influencing how citizens perceive and trust their political institutions.

In previous research, there is a consistent positive relation between economic performance and political trust. Citizens generally exhibit higher levels of trust in political institutions when the economy is performing well, as economic success is often seen as indicative of effective governance (Kołczyńska, 2021; Kumlin & Haugsgjerd, 2017). Dahlberg and Holmberg (2014) highlight that government effectiveness is more crucial in shaping political trust than the electoral system. This underscores the importance of governance quality, including factors like corruption levels and the quality of electoral democracy, in influencing political trust (Kołczyńska, 2021).

Economic performance's effect on political trust can vary across countries. Van der Meer (2017) notes that while economic performance tends to positively impact political trust over time within a specific country, this effect is not consistent across different nations. In countries with

a flourishing economy, citizens generally show higher levels of political trust compared to those in countries with poor economic performance (Kumlin & Haugsgjerd, 2017). Furthermore, Meng (2020) emphasizes the significant positive effect of policy implementation performance on political trust, suggesting that effective execution of policies also enhances trust in political institutions. However, the relationship between macro-level economic performance and political trust is not always straightforward. In some regions, such as Asia, individual perceptions of economic well-being and inequality are more critical determinants of political trust than macro-level indicators (Lee et al., 2020). This indicates that subjective evaluations of economic conditions can play a significant role, sometimes overshadowing objective measures.

Subjective evaluations of economic conditions play a significant role in political trust, as these perceptions can differ from objective economic indicators (Van der Meer, 2018). For instance, the 2007-2008 financial crisis led to a significant decrease in trust specifically in countries with the most severe damage from the crisis (Kroknes, Jakobsen & Grønning, 2015). Additionally, the recovery of political trust may lag behind economic recovery, as observed in Iceland following the 2008 crash. This suggests that while economic performance is important, political factors also play a crucial role in rebuilding trust (Vilhelmsdóttir & Kristinsson, 2018).

Corruption significantly undermines political trust, impacting how citizens view their political institutions. Essentially, corruption—the abuse of power for personal gain—diminishes trust in the system. When people perceive high levels of corruption, they often lose confidence in political leaders and institutions, feeling that those in power are more interested in their own benefits than in serving the public (Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005). This erosion of trust extends beyond political figures to influence broader social and economic dynamics. Corruption exacerbates inequalities by benefiting the wealthy and powerful, leaving ordinary citizens even more skeptical about the fairness of their political systems (You & Khagram, 2005).

Moreover, the relationship between corruption and political trust is complex. Research shows that corruption not only decreases trust but also affects how people perceive corruption itself. Citizens who have low political trust more often view corruption as prevalent and judge political behavior harshly (Školník, 2023; Wroe et al., 2012). This effect can become more pronounced when the corruption in a given situation is perceived as less severe. Experiencing corruption firsthand can further diminish political trust, sometimes driving people toward radical political movements, especially in Europe. The extent to which this occurs can be

influenced by factors like institutional quality and the status of political opposition (Ziller & Schübel, 2015).

Corruption's broader impacts are significant. It can lead to political instability and reduced civic engagement, as seen in various studies (Anderson & Tverdova, 2003). Additionally, high corruption levels can deter investment and hamper economic growth by misallocating resources and damaging public services (Mauro, 1995). Furthermore, corruption can fracture social cohesion, making it harder for people to trust the government and its institutions.

To address these issues and rebuild trust, several strategies are recommended. Establishing independent anti-corruption agencies, enhancing government transparency, and promoting public participation in governance are crucial steps. These measures aim to improve accountability and reduce opportunities for corrupt practices, ultimately fostering a more trustworthy political environment (Kaufmann, 2005; Lindstedt & Naurin, 2010; Fung, 2006).

Research indicates that both descriptive and substantive representation are crucial for fostering political trust. Descriptive representation, where elected officials reflect the demographic characteristics of the population, enhances political trust by making citizens feel included and heard (Mansbridge, 1999). When individuals see representatives who resemble themselves in terms of race, gender, or socioeconomic status, they are more likely to trust the political system.

Substantive representation, which involves elected officials actively advocating for and implementing policies that address the interests of their constituents, also impacts political trust. Effective advocacy and policy-making build confidence in the government's responsiveness and legitimacy (Pitkin, 1967). Citizens are more likely to trust political institutions when they believe that their representatives are working to advance their interests.

The behavior of political leaders also impacts trust significantly. Leaders who engage in inclusive and respectful dialogue foster a sense of unity and trust among citizens, while exclusionary rhetoric can have the opposite effect (Hajnal & Trounstein, 2014). The way leaders approach representation and discourse thus directly influences the level of trust in the political system.

Inclusive policies are another vital aspect. Laws and programs aimed at reducing discrimination, such as anti-discrimination laws, affirmative action, and social welfare initiatives, show a commitment to fairness and equality. These measures can enhance political trust by addressing systemic inequalities and demonstrating that the government is actively working to improve social justice (Phillips, 1995). Additionally, participatory governance practices—like participatory budgeting and public consultations—allow marginalized groups to have a say in policy decisions, further strengthening trust in political institutions (Fung, 2006).

Despite these efforts, challenges remain in achieving effective representation. Symbolic representation, where diversity is only superficial, can lead to disillusionment if it does not translate into meaningful change (Phillips, 1995). Structural barriers, such as discriminatory practices and socioeconomic disparities, often prevent true representation (Norris, 2004). Political polarization can also hinder progress towards more inclusive representation (McCoy et al., 2018). To address these issues and improve political trust, several strategies are recommended. Electoral reforms can better reflect the diversity of the population (Lijphart, 1999). Leadership development programs can increase the number of qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds (Dovi, 2002). Civic education initiatives can empower marginalized groups and encourage their active participation in politics (Verba et al., 1995). By focusing on these areas, it is possible to enhance representation and build greater trust in political institutions.

Research on the winner-loser gap in political trust reveals that electoral outcomes significantly impact citizens' perceptions of political legitimacy. Voters who support winning candidates tend to exhibit higher levels of trust in government and democratic institutions than voters who support losing candidates (Anderson & LoTempio, 2002; Lelkes, 2016; Craig et al., 2006). This "winner effect" occurs even in the absence of elite cues or claims of electoral fraud, suggesting that it stems from mass attitudinal shifts following the announcement of election results (Reller et al., 2022). Losers also tend to have lower satisfaction with democracy and less confidence in the responsiveness of political institutions (Craig et al., 2006)

This gap is influenced by various factors, including media environments and institutional structures. Countries with higher levels of political parallelism in media systems experience larger winner-loser gaps in institutional trust and satisfaction with democracy (Lelkes, 2016).

The impact of electoral loss on trust can be particularly pronounced among strong partisans, as demonstrated in the 2016 U.S. presidential election (Spina, 2021). Institutional factors, such as consensual political systems, can help mitigate the gap by increasing support among losers (Martini & Quaranta, 2019). However, improvements in political process quality and economic performance tend to positively affect both winners' and losers' support, rather than narrowing the gap (Martini & Quaranta, 2019).

The relationship between media and political trust is multi-dimensional, regarding both traditional and social media. The strength of this relationship varies across different countries, with factors like media autonomy, journalistic professionalism, and party/press parallelism (Ariely, 2015). The perceived credibility of traditional and social media serves as a crucial mediator in the relationship between media and political trust, with traditional media credibility having a greater impact than social media credibility (Gong, Verboord & Wang, 2022). The media has an important role in shaping the perception about institutional attributes and performance, especially in transitional societies (Camaj, 2014). Within European countries, study has shown that both the press and internet have a significant effect on public political trust (Memoli, 2020). Avery (2009) found that the influence of media on political trust is depends on the source of the news and the level of political trust already existing.

Transparency and accountability are key components of political trust. Research regarding this relationship between transparency, accountability, and political trust shows mixed results. While Crepaz and Arikian (2023) find that transparency in political donations and asset declaration can improve trust in political parties and reduce perceptions of corruption, Brusca, Manes Rossi & Aversano (2018) suggest that transparency regarding their budgeting policy can positively affect the perception of corruption. Nonetheless, Brusca et al. (2018) also note that transparency and strengthening of audit institutions do not necessarily increase trust. Bauhr, Grimes & Haring (2010) add another layer to the discussion, suggesting that in corrupt countries, transparency may initially lead to decrease in political trust but ultimately lead to greater accountability and better government. Mabillard and Pasquier (2015) further complicate the total picture by highlighting the two-way relationship between transparency and trust, suggesting that trust can also influence citizens' perceptions of transparency.

After viewing the state of the art regarding the researched explanations of political trust, this thesis will be specifically focused on representation. The following section will explain what representation means, specifically focusing on descriptive and substantive representation.

2.2.2 Representation

2.2.2.1 *What does representation mean?*

When defining representation, Hanna Pitkin's 'The Concept of Representation' gives a proper insight, as she recognizes that representation is multidimensional and complex to determine (1967). When defining the word 'representation' literally, it refers to "the making present in some sense of something which is nevertheless not present literally or in fact" (1967: pp 8-9). But because of the multidimensional character of the concept and representation being a human idea, Pitkin stated that the literal definition does not help to exactly define what representation entails. Pitkin even says as much to suggest that the concept of representation is "a rather complicated, convoluted, three-dimensional structure in the middle of a dark enclosure." where political theorists provide "flash-bulb photographs of the structure taken from different angles" (Pitkin, 1967: pp 12-13).

Apart from the previous distinction, Hanna Pitkin recognized four different dimensions of representation: formalistic-, descriptive-, symbolic- and substantive representation (1967). Formalistic representation refers to the procedural mechanisms by which representatives are selected in order to make representation work, focusing on both authorization and accountability. This includes electoral processes and legal frameworks. Second, descriptive representation focuses on the demographic characteristics that are shared between the representatives and their constituents, for example race, gender, or socioeconomic status. This can impact the degree of identification and trust between representatives and constituents. Symbolic representation is the symbolic significance the representative has for the constituents as symbols of collective identities, which shapes the perception of the constituents towards the representative. Finally, substantive representation looks at the actions of the representatives and whether these align with the policy preferences of the constituents. Since the focus of the thesis will primarily lie in descriptive and substantive representation, these dimensions will be elaborated further in the theoretical framework.

2.2.2.2 *Descriptive representation*

Descriptive representation is a form of representation that looks to the extent representatives are able to mirror the demographic characteristics of the population they represent, for example gender, ethnicity, age, religion, or socio-economic background (Pitkin, 1967). Regarding descriptive representation, it is important to discuss the importance of identity and the inclusion of different perspectives in the political process, which can ensure more political trust for marginalized groups.

With descriptive representation, it does not only have to be limited to visible characteristics, but can also involve shared experiences with the constituents, for example a representative with farmer experiences representing constituents who share this experience (Mansbridge, 1999). Descriptive representation is based on the fact that a government that mirrors the diversity of its constituents is more likely to be trusted because people can recognize themselves in their representatives. This contrasts substantive representation since that is focused on the similarity between citizens' policy preferences and actual policy outcomes implemented by the political actors. While substantive representation is about policies, descriptive representation is about who is in charge of making those policies. Because citizens see political actors that share similar characteristics with them, it can create a sense of belonging and understanding, increasing the level of political trust in the political system. Descriptive representation is therefore an important explanation, specifically for marginalized and underrepresented groups in a political system. For example, Phillips (1998) states that a representative body that is similar to the diversity in society is more attentive to the needs and interests of all citizens, resulting in more political trust.

An important factor in political trust is identity. According to Mansbridge (1999), descriptive representation can improve the political engagement of historically underrepresented groups and help in addressing historical injustices. When people see leaders who share their identity, it can strengthen their connection to the political process and increase trust in government institutions. According to Hernández-Lagos and Minor (2015) found that trust is influenced by the partisan identity of the trustee, with incorrect stereotypes about the other's trustworthiness playing a significant role. Berg and Hjerm (2010) supported this theory further, providing more evidence showing that high ethnic national identity has a negative impact on political trust and vice versa.

Another important aspect descriptive representation is intersectionality. Intersectionality highlights the unique experiences and challenges faced by groups, for example women of colour, which are overlooked in both feminist and antiracism discourses since the advantages add on to each other instead of co-existing separately (Crenshaw, 1991). This invisibility of challenges is further shown by the tendency to homogenize the experiences of these women, thus ignoring the diversity within the group, affecting their political trust (Jordan-Zachery 2013). The need to recognize and address these intersecting forms of oppression is crucial in understanding and combating violence against women of colour. Intersectionality plays a significant role in shaping political trust. Cassese (2019) highlights the role of intersectional stereotypes in political decision-making, which can potentially impact the trust in political institutions.

2.2.2.3 Substantive policy representation

Substantive policy representation refers to the extent to which the policies that are implemented are matching with the needs and expectations of the citizens (Pitkin, 1967). When using substantive policy representation to explain political trust, it is important to look at policy performance and content, as well as the gap between citizens and policymakers.

According to research, there is a positive correlation between policy performance and political trust (Meng et al., 2020). This trust is influenced by the perceived willingness, competence, and integrity of the political actor (Priedols et al., 2022). With those factors taken into consideration, success is accredited to trusted actors, while failure is attributed to untrusted actors. On the other hand, when a gap occurs between the policy preferences of citizens and the actual outcomes delivered by political authorities, it can lead to a decline in political trust. Hooghe and Zmerli (2011) stated that this gap was a reason for the decline in political trust in Western democracies since the 1960s.

Like policy performance, policy considerations are a crucial element when looking at political trust (Hetherington, 1998). If citizens believe that political authorities are implementing policies that align with their interests, their trust in the government increases. Miller (1974) found a distinct relation between issue positions of citizens and their trust in government, especially the fact that the further the issue position of the citizen lies from where the government is found to be on the left-right scale, the less they will trust the government. This shows that if there is a lack of opinion representation in government, it impacts political trust (Norris, 1999). One

specific example of a decline in trust when the policy preference of citizens is not in line with the policy decision of the government is on stances regarding immigration (McLaren, 2017).

A key reason for the loss of political trust in Western democracies, especially since the 1960s, is the gap between citizens' policy preferences and the actual policy outcomes. If citizens feel their voices are not heard or that policymakers are not acting in their best interest, it can lead to distrust and cynicism toward the political system. Hetherington (1998) noted that citizens are more likely to trust the government if the policy aligns with their interests. The extent to which this gap is closed can directly affect the restoration of political trust. To repair declining political trust, Weymouth, Hartz-Karp and Marinova (2020) suggests a shift from informing/consulting to a partnership relationship in public participation, which has been shown to improve trust and aid in the implementation of sustainability policies. By involving citizens in the policymaking process, it could possibly contribute to closing the gap between these groups. However, giving someone a voice without having actual influence has more damaging consequences for political trust than not giving them a voice at all (Ulbig, 2008). To conclude, it is important to think thoroughly about how the gap can be closed between citizens and policymakers in order to increase substantive representation and political trust.

One of the gaps that can disturb substantive policy representation is the education gap between citizens and policymakers (Noordzij, de Koster & van der Waal, 2021). The education gap could impact the level of trust depending on whether they culturally feel represented by them. The degree of information citizens receive about politics goes through three factors: ideology, issue salience and complexity (Walgrave & Lefevere, 2013). When specifically looking at the education gap and issue salience and complexity, the gap causes disengagement with the group of citizens that either does not relate to the issues that are addressed or are too complicated by the process. The effect of the education gap on substantive representation could also be different depending on the context of the country. While in meritocratic countries (countries where the social-economic position of individuals is determined by their merits) the focus on substantive representation could increase the political trust, this could possibly be different for more corrupt countries (Ugur-Cinar, Cinar, & Kose, 2020). The difference is caused due to the fact that in meritocratic countries, education may increase engagement with the political system, leading to increased political trust. In corrupt countries, education leads to a more concise understanding of corruption, which results in a decrease in political trust.

2.3 Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: “The higher the descriptive representation of individuals with ethnic and racial backgrounds, the higher the political trust among people with ethnic and racial backgrounds.”

This hypothesis argues that higher levels of descriptive representation – elected officials mirror the demographic diversity of their constituents or even exceed the percentages —will result in increased political trust among those constituents. The theoretical framework supports this theory, suggesting that visible representation not only boosts engagement among historically underrepresented groups, but a representative body is also more attentive to the needs and interests of citizens, therefore increasing overall political trust. Therefore, it is expected that the quality of descriptive representation has a significant effect on the political trust of people with ethnic and racially diverse backgrounds.

H2: The higher the substantive representation of individuals with ethnic and racial backgrounds, the higher the political trust among people with ethnic and racial backgrounds.”

This hypothesis suggests that higher levels of substantive representation—where policies that are implemented are matching with the needs and expectations of the citizens from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds—will lead to greater political trust among citizens sharing these backgrounds. The literature supports this theory, based on the fact that policies that are responsive to the interests of diverse groups can enhance their perception of governmental effectiveness and political legitimacy. Therefore, it is expected that the quality of substantive has a significant effect on the political trust of people with ethnic and racially diverse backgrounds.

3. Data and methods

After describing the theoretical framework on political trust and representation and developing the hypotheses regarding the effect of both descriptive and substantive representation on political trust, this chapter is dedicated to the data and methodology that will be used for the

analysis. In this chapter, the data and case selection, the operationalization of the variables and the research method will be discussed.

3.1 Data and case selection

For this research, the data source that will be used stems from the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (in Dutch Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek, NKO), which is used as the base for the dependent and independent variables in the analysis. Specifically, the main source of the data will stem from the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study from 2023 (Jacobs et al., 2023). The DPES is a study held since 1971 and is commonly used as a data source in research regarding political trust in the Netherlands (van Elsas, 2015; Kutiyski, Krouwel & van Prooijen, 2021). This year, the data was collected in three different waves (pre-election survey, first post-election-survey and second post-election survey) from two different panels (LISS-panel and I&O panel). The study consists of data from 5640 respondents combined from the two panels.

For this research specifically, we will only look at the respondents with an ethnic and racially diverse background, therefore the sample size will be reduced to 1351 respondents. This focus is especially interesting in this edition of DPES, because the researchers performed an additional sample in groups that have been underrepresented in previous election studies: “people with a migration background from Africa, Asia or Latin-America and people with an education background up to medium vocational education” (Jacobs, 2021, p. 4). The fact that people with a migration background were underrepresented in previous research could possibly be explained through the general underrepresentation of this group in politics in general (Van der Zwan, Lubbers, & Eisinga, 2019). In the dataset, both the respondents from the additional sample and the respondents from the ‘regular’ representative sample group are included in order to increase the sample size instead of only using the ‘regular’ sample group.

The dataset that will be used will consist of respondents that answered the question ‘*Origin/Herkomstgroup*’ with either ‘First generation foreign, non-western/Western background’ or ‘Second generation foreign, non-western/Western background’. Even though the distinction of ‘Western’ and ‘non-western’ are now removed from the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) because it was not found to be scientifically based and caused negative associations and exclusion, the distinction is still used in research and gives important insights

for the possible representation gap between these groups (Frijters, 2022). The origin of the respondents is described in table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive table regarding the origin of the respondents.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Born abroad, but both parents have been born in the Netherlands	35	2.6	2.6	2.6
	First generation foreign, Western background	132	9.8	9.8	12.4
	First generation foreign, non-western background	366	27.1	27.1	39.5
	Second generation foreign, Western background	313	23.2	23.2	62.6
	Second generation foreign, non-western background	505	37.4	37.4	100.0
Total		1351	100.0	100.0	

For the Dutch Parliamentary Elections Study of 2023, the researchers proceeded with the new categorization that was announced by the Central Bureau for Statistics. The new categorization

level 3 divides 'Other Outside-Europa' into 'Other Africa', 'Other Asia' and 'Other America and Oceania' (Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek, 2022). Important note regarding the data is that due to logistical issues with classification, the respondents from Indonesia will not be included in the data analysis. Nonetheless, the sample group is still diverse enough to be able to analyze the effect of representation on political trust. The remaining ethnic and racial backgrounds that are treated as cases in the analysis are 'Europe (excl. the Netherlands)', 'Turkey', 'Morocco', 'Suriname', 'Dutch Caribbean', 'Other Africa', 'Other Asia', 'Other America and Oceania' and 'MENA (Middle East and North Africa)'.

In table 2 the percentages are found of the country of origin of the respondents in the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study of 2023. When comparing the percentages of the dataset with the latest data of the Central Bureau of Statistics in the Netherlands, this sample overall is fairly representative of the Dutch population of people with an ethnic and racially diverse background, but there are some remarks (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Whilst Europe and Turkey are almost equally representative in this dataset compared to the actual Dutch population and Suriname and the Dutch Caribbean are even overrepresented in this dataset, Morocco and Other Asia are underrepresented in comparison to the actual Dutch population. It is good to mention that while the Central Bureau of Statistics documents all of the citizens in the Netherlands, the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study relies on the voluntary participation of citizens. Another important sidenote is that the researchers performed an additional sample for this part of the dataset, so that can cause disproportionate levels of the respondents.

Table 2: Descriptive table regarding the country of origin of the respondents according to CBS categorization level 3.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Europe (excl. Netherlands)	419	31.0	31.0	31.0
	Turkey	111	8.2	8.2	39.2
	Morocco	88	6.5	6.5	45.7
	Suriname	286	19.8	19.8	65.6
	Dutch Caribbean	130	9.6	9.6	75.2
	Other Africa	57	4.2	4.2	79.4
	Other Asia	117	8.7	8.7	88.1
	Other America and Oceania	101	7.5	7.5	95.6
	MENA	60	4.4	4.4	100.0
Total		1351	100.0	100.0	

3.2 Dependent variable

In the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study of 2023, there are three political institutions linked to political trust: the government, national parliament ('Tweede Kamer'), and political parties (Jacobs et al., 2023). Another institution that is used to assess the level of political trust with the respondent is the party the respondent voted for in the parliamentary elections of 2023. The question that is asked to determine the level of political trust per political institution was: *“The following question is about your trust in a number of institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you trust it a lot, trust it somewhat, do not trust it very much, or do not trust it at all?”* (Voogd et al., 2023, p. 193). The possible answers for this question vary on a 4-point scale from 1-4, with “Trust a lot (Erg veel vertrouwen)”, “Trust somewhat (Tamelijk veel vertrouwen)”, “Do not trust very much (Niet zo veel vertrouwen) and “Do not trust at all (Helemaal geen vertrouwen). The respondents were also able to answer that they either did not know the answer or that they did not want to answer the question.

In this analysis specifically, the institution that will be focused on to determine the level of political trust among people with an ethnic and racially diverse background will be the national parliament. The main reason for this choice is that the national parliament is that this institution is viewed as the key representation of the country's population and the representatives are directly elected by the constituents. While the government and political parties are also an important part of the political process and representation, the national parliament is more directly evaluated by citizens since they directly come up with and decide on law proposals and amendments. Thus, individuals trust their national parliament to advocate for their policy preferences when policy is made (Dunn, 2015). Both the government and political parties are linked to the process but are not the direct voice of the constituents, and therefore are not linked to either descriptive or substantive representation in this analysis. Another reason why the dependent variable includes only the level of political trust in the national parliament is that the independent variables, descriptive and substantive representation, are only measured concerning the national parliament.

3.3 Independent variables

Following the operationalization of political trust in the national parliament as the dependent variable, the following section will focus on the operationalization of the independent variables in the analysis, the quality of representation with descriptive and substantive representation.

3.3.1 Descriptive representation

With the operationalization of descriptive representation, it is good to note that since the data we will use is only from one time period (the Dutch parliament elections of 2023), it is not possible to measure the trend of descriptive representation. It is however still possible to operationalize the descriptive representation based on the previously described definition of descriptive representation and questions asked in the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study of 2023. As previously described, descriptive representation is defined as the extent to which political representatives reflect the demographic characteristics of the population they represent like gender, ethnicity, age, religion, or socio-economic background (Pitkin, 1967). In this case, the analysis will focus on the descriptive representation of citizens with an ethnic and racially diverse background. This aspect of descriptive representation is particularly interesting when looking at the Dutch elections of 2023, especially after the rise of the Party for Freedom (PVV) and the damning effects of the childcare benefits scandal.

Another reason that this analysis will specifically be focused on constituents with an ethnic and racially diverse background is the current ratio of representatives in the House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer). As of the Dutch elections in 2021, there were 2.5 million people with a migration background that were eligible to vote in the Netherlands, almost 20% of the constituents (Lubbers, 2021). The level of descriptive representation in the Dutch national parliament would thus be high if at least that same percentage or more of constituents was represented in the House of Representatives. While in 2021, the number of politicians with an ethnic and racially diverse background in the House of Representatives was 28 out of 150, this declined in 2023 to 24 out of 150 (Butter, 2024). Although the percentage of constituents with an ethnic and racially diverse background represented in the House of Representatives (16%) is still close to the total percentage of constituents with an ethnic and racially diverse background, this decline still implies a decline in the descriptive representation in the national parliament for citizens with an ethnic and racially diverse background, which makes it interesting to analyze in relation to political trust.

In order to measure descriptive representation, it would be ideal to look at which exact candidate respondents voted for in the election. This pairs with the expectation that people who voted for a candidate with an ethnic and racially diverse background would have more political trust. Unfortunately, the questionnaire of DPES did not include this type of question, therefore descriptive representation will be measured by looking at the sympathy scores of certain party leaders.

To measure the opinion of the respondents regarding the quality of descriptive representation, the analysis will look at the question: *“How sympathetic do you find the following party leaders? To this end you can give points between 0 and 10 to the respective party leaders. 0 means that you find this party leader very unsympathetic and 10 means that you find this party leader very sympathetic. If you don’t know a party leader, please feel free to say so.”* which is followed by a scoring option from 0 (‘very unsympathetic’) to 10 (‘very sympathetic’) (Voogd et al., 2023, p.56).

The party leaders that will be focused on are the party leaders Stephan van Baarle from ‘DENK’, Edson Olf from the party ‘BIJ1’ and Dilan Yeşilgöz-Zegerius from ‘VVD’. The reason that only these party leaders are chosen to include in the analysis is the fact that they are the

three only party leaders with an ethnic and/or racially diverse background in the House of Representatives. Both the parties DENK and BIJ1 are also the two parties in the House of Representatives that are ethnic-minority-interested (Lubbers, Otjes & Spierings, 2023). By only looking at the sympathy score of the party leaders, there is an opportunity to pay attention to personal characteristics, inspired by the theory of presidentialization (King, 2002). Another reason that is interesting to look at these party leaders' sympathy scores specifically to determine the quality of descriptive representation is that for all the party leaders mentioned earlier, it was the first time that they led their respective parties during the Dutch elections of 2023. This means that this score will be more likely to be judged solely on their characteristics since they have not yet had the chance to act as a party leader in the House of Representatives.

3.3.2 Substantive representation

As described in the theoretical framework, substantive representation looks at the extent to which the policies that are implemented match the preferences of the citizens (Pitkin, 1967). Even though there is only one data point used to analyze and measure substantive representation, so we cannot study changes over time, the operationalization of this variable is still possible since respondents are questioned about their experience of substantive representation before the elections through the pre-election survey (Jacobs et al., 2023). According to the last Dutch Parliamentary Election Study of 2021, the respondents with a migration background felt underrepresented in their interest representation in the House of Representatives (Sipma et al., 2021).

To be able to measure what the respondents think about the substantive representation, the data that will be looked at in the analysis will be based on the following question: *“Do you think the interest of citizens belonging to the following groups are represented too little or too much in parliament?”* (Voogd et al., 2023, p. 52). The interest of citizens regards the substantive representation of certain groups in society. The groups that will be the most important to focus on for the analysis will be ‘People with a migration background’ and ‘People of Colour’ since that will line up with the definition of descriptive representation regarding the shared characteristics. The possible answers for this question vary on a 5-point scale from 1-5, with answers ranging from: (1) “Way too little (Veel te weinig)”, “Too little (Te weinig)”, “Exactly enough” (Precies genoeg), “Too much (Te veel) and “Way too much (Veel te veel)”. In the analysis, ‘way too little’ and ‘too little’ are combined, as well as ‘too much’ and ‘way too much’.

3.4 Control variables

Aside from the independent variables, there are control variables that are used to be able to do the analysis as accurately as possible. The chosen control variables are ‘education’, ‘winner/loser’, ‘age’, ‘gender’, ‘origin’ and ‘country of origin’. These variables were chosen based on the fact that these explanations are also found in current research about political trust, and thus are able to control whether the effects for descriptive and substantive representation are accurate enough to explain political trust. The question that is used to determine the ‘education’ variable is *‘What is the best description of the educational level where you last obtained a diploma or certificate?’* (Voogd et al., 2023, p. 86). The researchers already recoded this variable into less categories, but to be able to use this variable in this analysis, the labels were further filtered down to 1 (=‘low education’), 2 (=‘middle education’), 3 (=‘high education’) and 4 (=other answers).

For the winner/loser variable, the question used to retrieve the information from is *‘Which party did you vote for?’* with the label *‘Party voted for in 2023 parliamentary election’*. After that, calculations based on the results from the 2021 parliamentary elections and 2023 parliamentary elections made the further distinction into 1 (=winners of the election) and 0 (=losers of the election) based on the seat difference between both elections. This means concretely that voters who voted for PvdA/GroenLinks, PVV, BBB and NSC were coded as winners; and voters who voted for VVD, DD6, CDA, SP, FvD, PVdD, ChristenUnie, JA21, SGP, DENK, 50Plus and BIJ1 were coded as losers. If a party keeps the same number of seats, meaning there was no seat difference between the elections of 2021 and 2023, they are coded as losers as well.

To control for age in the analysis, the question that will be looked at is *‘Age at election day in categories’*. The categories are divided in categories of each four ages, for example ‘21-25 years’, with the exception of respondents that are 18 to 20 years old and 61 to 66 years old. There is also a separate category for respondents that are 67 years and older. For the gender variable, the question that is used to be able to measure it is *‘What is your gender?’*, which is followed by the options ‘male’, ‘female’ and ‘other’.

In order to control for the difference in origin between first generation and second generation migration background, the control variable that will be used is *‘Origin’* as shown in Table 1.

For the country of origin, the analysis will look at the ‘*Country of origin*’ with the categories adapted from CBS categorization level 3, demonstrated in Table 2.

3.5 Descriptive statistics

This following section will show the descriptives of the dependent variable, independent variables and control variables that will be used for the analysis.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
<i>Dependent variable</i>					
Trust in House of Representatives	1233	2.80	0.75	1	4
<i>Independent variables</i>					
Descriptive representation – sympathy VVD	1121	5.83	3.61	0	10
Descriptive representation – sympathy DENK	965	8.69	3.65	0	10
Descriptive representation – sympathy BIJ1	930	9.63	2.91	0	10
Substantive representation – people of colour	1013	2.30	1.00	1	5
Substantive representation – people with migration background	1057	2.49	1.08	1	5
<i>Control variables</i>					
Education	1328	2.56	0.73	1	4
Winner/loser	1351	0.39	0.49	0	1
Age	1351	6.71	3.19	1	11
Gender	1351	1.56	0.50	1	3
Origin	1351	159.60	54.38	1	202
Country of origin	1351	5.05	2.20	2	11

N = number of observations, SD = standard deviation, Min = minimum value, Max = maximum value

Source: Dutch Parliamentary Election Study 2023

3.6 Methods

This section of the thesis will look at the methodology and research design that will determine the outcomes of the analysis. The thesis will use macro-level predictors from the Dutch Parliamentary Elections Study of 2023 to determine the influence of these factors on political trust for people with an ethnic and racially diverse background in the Netherlands. Since the study is focused on only one single country and retrieves data from one single election, it is a cross-sectional analysis instead of a longitudinal analysis which would require multiple time periods to be included.

To evaluate the hypotheses and understand the possible factors for political trust, a multivariate regression is used. Given that the data does not allow for cross-country comparisons, the choice has been made for a random effects model instead of a fixed effects model. The random effects model can estimate variance within the country rather than between countries which is not relevant to the current data set. To properly determine the effect certain factors have on political trust, the regression will be analyzed in stages. First, an empty model will be run that only includes the dependent variable (trust in House of Representatives) in order to evaluate the variance at the individual level. Next, the control variables are added to the empty model forming a new model, to determine how much macro-level variation remains after accounting for these factors. After, there will be additional models built by adding the independent variables one at a time to assess their individual impact. Finally, there will be a full model including all the dependent-, independent- and control variables. With this built-up of the models, it will be possible to determine the exact (individual) impact of each factor that can determine political trust in the Netherlands.

To ensure that the analysis and the results are not biased or distorted, it is crucial to conduct diagnostic checks before going through with the analysis. For this thesis specifically, there will be checked for multicollinearity and linearity, in order to guarantee the robustness and reliability of the analyses.

First, there will be checked for multicollinearity. Multicollinearity occurs when two or more independent variables in a regression model are highly correlated, which makes it difficult to properly determine individual effect of each variable on the dependent variable (Daoud, 2017). When multicollinearity is present, it can cause the standard errors to increase and therefore make certain variables wrongfully insignificant and results incorrect when interpreted. To test

for multicollinearity, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is estimated. The VIF measures the extent to which the variance of a regression coefficient is inflated due to multicollinearity (Shrestha, 2020). Typically, when the VIF is equal to one, or the VIF value is below five, there is no cause for major concern regarding multicollinearity. Although values above five will require attention, since that implies a high correlation. Fortunately, when checking the VIF scores for all independent variables, all values were below five, meaning that there is not a serious problem of multicollinearity. When adding the control variables, the VIF values inflated lightly, but still stayed below five, which is still acceptable for the analysis.

Linearity, which assumes a linear relationship between the independent factors and the dependent variable, is another crucial assumption to check for before conducting the analysis (Niermann, 2007). This implies that changes in an independent variable should lead to proportional changes in the dependent variable. If this assumption is violated, the model may not accurately capture the true relationships between the variables, leading to incorrect results. For this study, linearity is controlled by creating a scatterplot of each independent variable against the dependent variable. When a linear pattern is shown in the scatterplot, it is to be assumed that the linearity assumption is met, while a curved or non-linear pattern suggests that a non-linear relationship exists. In this analysis, the scatterplot showed all linear patterns, meaning that linearity can be assumed between the independent factors and the dependent variable.

4. Results

In this chapter, we will analyze the results following the research question regarding the effect of the quality of political representation (descriptive or substantive) on political trust for citizens with an ethnic and racially diverse background in the Netherlands, specifically regarding the Dutch parliamentary elections of 2023. Based on these results, the different models will be reviewed separately, which will determine if the hypotheses will be supported or rejected. For this analysis, a linear regression model has been performed with political trust as a dependent variable, descriptive and substantive representation as independent variables, and education, winner/loser effect, age, gender, origin (first- or second-generation migrant) and country of origin as control variables.

4.1 Model 1

Prior to examining the effects of the independent variables (descriptive and substantive representation) on political trust, it is important to first look at the model with only the independent-level control variables. For that reason, the first model only includes the control variables in relation to the dependent variable political trust. When reviewing all the control variables, some of the predictors are found to be significant. The lower and middle education levels are negatively related to the dependent variable at $p < 0.001$, compared to the reference group (high education level). These variables also have the highest scores, with individuals with low education levels expecting to score 0.34 units lower on political trust and individuals with middle education levels expecting to score 0.37 units lower. Age also shows a significant positive relation with political trust, even though the increase in political trust of older respondents is small (B: 0.03). The country of origin also has a small significant positive relation with political trust. On the other hand, the winner/loser effect, gender, and the origin of respondents did not show a significant effect on the level of political trust.

4.2 Model 2

In Model 2, the analysis is discovering the relation between descriptive representation and political trust. The hypothesis proposed that the higher the descriptive representation of individuals with ethnic and racial backgrounds is, the higher the political trust will be among people with ethnic and racial backgrounds. This assumption is consistent with the theoretical frameworks developed by Mansbridge (1999), as well as Philips (1998). According to their

research, people want a decision-making body that matches their own sociodemographic traits because they believe that this alignment will increase acceptance of political decisions and, therefore, trust.

When analyzing Model 2, the results for descriptive representation are mixed. The sympathy score for Dilan Yeşilgöz, the party leader for VVD, shows a statistically significant positive effect on political trust ($B = 0.10, p < 0.001$). This suggests that individuals who sympathize more with the VVD party leader tend to exhibit higher levels of political trust. This finding indicates that despite her recent entry into the political landscape as a party leader, Yeşilgöz's leadership suits well with those who align with her policies and political stance. The VVD is a major center-right political party in the Netherlands that emphasizes the free market and its conservative views on a range of social issues. The leadership of Yeşilgöz could be viewed as competent with her focus on governance and security in the past. When focusing specifically on descriptive representation, another reason why individuals who find Dilan Yeşilgöz more sympathetic may have more political trust is that she is perceived as a fresh and unconventional figure within the party. Supporters might prefer her over more established figures because they feel better represented by her unique background and approach. Thus, when the supporters feel that they are represented well through Yeşilgöz, their political trust will be increased.

On the other hand, the sympathy scores for both Stephan van Baarle (party leader DENK) and Edson Olf (party leader BIJ1) show different results. The coefficient sympathy score of DENK is negative ($B = -0.04$) but the effect is not significant, suggesting that support for van Baarle does not translate in either higher or lower political trust. The sympathy score of BIJ1 however shows a significant positive effect on political trust ($B = 0.07, p < 0.05$), which indicates that individuals who sympathise with Olf have more political trust. This can be explained through the party identity of BIJ1, emphasizing on anti-establishment politics and advocacy for marginalized communities. This identity may resonate with supporters who see the party as a good representative of their interests.

When we closely examine the role of the party leaders in descriptive representation, it's clear that both Stephan van Baarle (DENK) and Edson Olf (BIJ1) represent parties that prioritize racial and cultural diversity. Both leaders also come from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds. The differences in perceptions between DENK and BIJ1 might explain the varying levels of political trust. Stephan van Baarle's DENK is seen as a party that operates

within the existing political system and is relatively open to collaboration with other parties, which might contribute to lower political trust among its supporters. In contrast, Edson Olf's BIJ1, with its more anti-establishment stance, may appeal to those who are dissatisfied with the current political status quo, potentially leading to higher levels of political trust among its supporters.

An important note for this model is that the N is decreased significantly in Model 2 (147) compared to Model 1 (1200). This has occurred because many participants indicated they were unfamiliar with the party leaders, leading to missing data for sympathy scores. This reduced sample size can affect the reliability of the findings, potentially skewing results and reducing the ability to detect significant relationships. Thus, the non-significant results for the descriptive representation variables may partly reflect this limitation in sample size and data coverage.

Given these results, the hypothesis that higher levels of descriptive representation lead to increased political trust among people with ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds cannot be fully accepted. Although the theory suggests a positive relationship between descriptive representation and political trust, the empirical data from Model 2 does not consistently support this. The non-significant effects for DENK, combined with the significant positive effect for BIJ1 and the significant positive effect for the VVD, indicate that political trust is not uniformly influenced by descriptive representation as measured by sympathy for certain party leaders.

Moreover, when including the control variables, like age, education, and country of origin, they reveal other complexities. For example, while education was previously significant, does not have a significant effect in this model, with lower ($B = -0.05$) and middle ($B = -0.23$) education levels showing non-significant coefficients. Age has a negative effect on trust ($B = -0.05$), although this relationship is also not as significant as before. Interestingly, individuals who are first-generation immigrants from outside Europe ($B = 0.46, p < 0.05$) and second-generation immigrants from Europe ($B = 0.54, p < 0.01$) show significant positive effects on political trust, suggesting that these groups may feel a stronger sense of trust in political institutions compared to groups from other migration origins.

When comparing the R-squared values, we see a notable increase from 0.07 in Model 1 to 0.27 in Model 2. This significant rise indicates that adding descriptive representation variables to the previous model significantly enhances the model's explanatory power regarding political trust.

However, the non-significance of the DENK sympathy score and the mixed results overall suggest that while descriptive representation somewhat plays a role, it does not entirely drive political trust.

Therefore, although descriptive representation may influence political attitudes to some extent, its effect on trust is not as robust or significant as initially hypothesized when taking into account the broader context of control variables and individual characteristics. This leads to the conclusion that hypothesis H1 must be rejected.

4.3 Model 3

When analysing Model 3, the results for substantive representation reveal a nuanced picture. The coefficients for the different levels of substantive representation of people of colour show varying effects on political trust. Specifically, the coefficient for the substantive representation of people of colour categorized as 'exactly enough' is positive ($B = 0.14$), and the effect is significant. This suggests that feeling that people of colour are sufficiently represented in parliament may positively influence political trust. The coefficient for 'too much' representation of people of colour also shows a positive effect ($B = 0.10$), but this is not statistically significant. This indicates that a higher level of substantive representation of people of colour might slightly increase political trust, but this effect is not significant. These results could be explained by the complex dynamics of political trust, where a combination of factors possibly explains someone's level of political trust.

In contrast, the substantive representation of individuals with migration backgrounds shows a significant negative effect on political trust when categorized as 'too much' ($B = -0.42$, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that an excessive level of representation of individuals with migration backgrounds may lead to lower levels of political trust. This finding suggests that when citizens perceive the interests of individuals with migration backgrounds as being represented too much in parliament, it can lead to lower levels of political trust. This might be due to the perception that an overrepresentation of these groups could be seen as prioritizing their interests excessively, leading to concerns about the fairness or effectiveness of political representation. The coefficient for 'exactly enough' representation of individuals with migration backgrounds shows a positive, though not statistically significant, effect ($B = 0.10$).

The difference between these two types of substantive representation implies that, although representation is important, the effect it has on political trust differs depending on how well representatives are perceived to advocate for their communities' interests. This highlights the importance of balancing representation to ensure it is perceived as fair and effective in addressing the needs of all communities.

Additionally, the inclusion of control variables in Model 3 adds further depth to the analysis. Education plays a significant role, with lower and middle levels of education being associated with lower political trust ($B = -0.20, p < 0.01$; $B = -0.36, p < 0.001$). This could indicate that individuals with lower education levels have lower political trust, potentially due to differing expectations of political institutions compared to those with higher education. Age also remains a significant factor, with a positive relationship ($B = 0.03, p < 0.01$), suggesting that older individuals might be more trusting of political systems. Additionally, the variable for first-generation immigrants from outside Europe shows a negative and significant relationship with political trust ($B = -0.18, p < 0.05$), which might reflect a sense of disillusionment or frustration with the political system in their new country.

The R-squared value for Model 3 is 0.12, indicating that the model explains 12% of the variance in political trust, suggesting an improvement when compared to the empty model (0.07). This suggests that while substantive representation, particularly the representation of individuals with migration backgrounds, contributes somewhat to understanding political trust, the overall variance explained remains limited compared to the R-squared with descriptive representation (0.27).

In conclusion, the hypothesis that higher substantive representation of individuals with ethnic and racial backgrounds leads to higher political trust among these groups finds partial support in Model 3. While the representation of people of colour shows a positive effect on political trust, neither 'exactly enough' nor 'too much' representation reaches statistical significance. On the other hand, the substantive representation of individuals with migration backgrounds shows a significant negative effect when perceived as 'too much'. This underscores that while substantive representation may influence political trust, its significance varies depending on the level of representation and the broader context. This leads to the conclusion that hypothesis H2 will also be rejected.

4.4 Model 4

In Model 4, both descriptive and substantive representation are included simultaneously, allowing us to observe how the inclusion of both variables influences their respective effects on political trust. This is crucial for understanding whether these forms of representation interact with or moderate each other's impact on political trust.

The combination of both descriptive and substantive representation has led to a significantly lower N in Model 4 compared to Model 1 and Model 3. As previously explained in the section of Model 2, many participants responded that they did not know the party leader, therefore were not able to give out a sympathy score. Since these results were not included in the analysis, it caused the number of respondents to lower in the final model. This is important to keep in mind when looking at the following results.

When comparing the coefficients of descriptive representation across Models 2 and 4, the results remain mostly the same. In Model 2, the sympathy score of VVD party leader Dilan Yeşilgöz had a significant positive effect on political trust ($B = 0.10$, $p < 0.001$). In Model 4, where both descriptive and substantive representation are analysed together, this positive effect remains significant ($B = 0.10$, $p < 0.001$) and unchanged. This consistency suggests that the introduction of substantive representation variables into the model does not have influence on the effect of the sympathy score on political trust. This could indicate that the trust associated with VVD supporters is relatively independent of substantive representation factors, possibly driven by broader ideological or policy-based considerations.

The sympathy score of DENK party leader Stephan van Baarle had a negative and non-significant effect on political trust ($B = -0.04$). This coefficient remains the same in Model 4 ($B = -0.04$), still lacking statistical significance. This stability suggests that for DENK supporters, the introduction of substantive representation does not influence the already minimal impact of their descriptive representation on trust. For the sympathy score of BIJ1 party leader Edson Olf, the coefficients of Model 2 and Model 4 remain the same ($B = 0.07$) and continue to be non-significant. This consistency suggests that, similar to the DENK score, the inclusion of substantive representation does not affect the influence of BIJ1 sympathy on political trust. This may indicate that the trust relationship for BIJ1 supporters is not easily swayed by the level of substantive representation, or that other factors beyond representation are more influential.

In Model 4, the coefficients for substantive representation show some notable changes compared to the earlier models. The coefficient for 'exactly enough' representation of people of colour is now negative and non-significant ($B = -0.04$), whereas it was positive and significant in Model 3 ($B = 0.14$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient for 'too much' substantive representation of people of colour remains non-significant, but has changed to negative in Model 4 ($B = -0.08$), in contrast to its positive value in Model 3 ($B = 0.10$). These changes suggest that the specific impact of substantive representation for people of colour on political trust decreases when both descriptive and substantive representation are considered. When both types of representation are considered together, the impact of substantive representation for people of colour may be overshadowed by the broader context of how well individuals feel represented overall. This explains that while the positive impact observed in Model 3 shows a perception that substantive representation alone could address the needs of people of colour, Model 4 reveals that having representatives from diverse backgrounds is not sufficient to foster political trust if individuals do not feel fully and authentically represented in their broader political context.

For people with migration backgrounds, the coefficient for 'exactly enough' representation remains positive but non-significant in Model 4 ($B = 0.02$). The 'too much' representation remains to have a negative impact on political trust ($B = -0.21$), but has decreased and become non-significant in comparison to Model 3 ($B = -0.42$, $p < 0.001$). The slight reduction in the coefficient for 'exactly enough' and the negative value for 'too much' suggest that while substantive representation continues to affect political trust, this relationship is moderated by descriptive representation. This reflects a nuanced view of how over-representation of migrant backgrounds influences political trust. The decrease in significance for 'too much' representation could indicate that perceptions of over-representation might be moderated by other factors, such as the political context or the effectiveness of the representatives in addressing the needs of these communities. Overall, the impact of substantive representation on political trust varies depending on the specific minority group and their perceived representation within the political system.

The inclusion of both descriptive and substantive representation in Model 4 also impacts the control variables. For example, the coefficients for low and middle education show notable changes. In Model 4, the effect of low education on political trust becomes positive and non-significant ($B = 0.02$), and the effect of middle education also turns non-significant ($B = -0.15$).

The effect of age on political trust is again negative in Model 4 ($B = -0.06$, $p < 0.05$). The several changes of the coefficient of age on political trust can be explained through the fact that different age groups view both descriptive and substantive representation and their importance differently.

Even though the results of Model 4 provide a more comprehensive understanding of how descriptive and substantive representation interact to influence political trust, the R-squared remains at 0.28 in Model 4 compared to 0.27 in Model 2. This implied that the overall explanatory power of the model stays stable even when both independent variables interact in the model. These results suggests that while representation is important, other factors that are not factored into the model might also play significant roles in shaping political trust. To conclude, the non-significant results for several variables, particularly those related to descriptive representation, increase the complexity of political trust as a dependent variable. The results suggest that political trust is influenced by multiple factors and that the direct effects of representation may not be as significant as initially expected in the hypotheses.

Given the results from Model 4, future research should consider several different strategies to further investigate the relationship between representation and political trust. For example, future studies could explore potential interaction effects between descriptive and substantive representation. Making these variables interact with each other could possibly solve for the complexity of their dynamics and therefore give a clearer answer as to how these forms of representation can influence political trust.

Another way to help determine if the effects of representation on political trust change over time is by performing a longitudinal study. This analysis only regards the Dutch elections of 2023. By comparing several results over time, it could provide insights if the effects of representation on political trust are stable or fluctuate with changes in political context or public opinion. Future research should also consider other macro-level factors that might influence political trust, such as economic conditions, media influence, or institutional performance. Including these variables could provide a more holistic understanding of the factors of political trust.

Perhaps the most ideal way to offer deeper analysis into the quality of representation and political trust is to combine quantitative analyses with qualitative research. This way, it could

explain why certain forms of representation fit better with different groups in society. Interviews or focus groups with citizens from different socio-demographic backgrounds could provide richer data on their perceptions of representation and trust.

Table 4: Linear regression analysis for the effects of descriptive and substantive representation for political trust for citizens with an ethnic and racially diverse background during the Dutch parliamentary elections of 2023.

Model	1	2	3	4
	B	B	B	B
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Descriptive representation – sympathy VVD		0.10*** (0.02)		0.10*** (0.03)
Descriptive representation – sympathy score DENK		-0.04 (0.04)		-0.04 (0.04)
Descriptive representation – sympathy score BIJ1		0.07* (0.03)		0.07 (0.04)
Substantive representation – people of colour exactly enough			0.14* (0.07)	-0.04 (0.21)
Substantive representation people of colour too much			0.10 (0.10)	-0.08 (0.28)
Substantive representation – people with			0.10 (0.07)	0.02 (0.19)

migration background exactly enough				
Substantive representation – people with migration background too much			-0.42*** (0.09)	-0.21 (0.25)
<i>Control variables</i>				
Education - low	-0.34*** (0.07)	-0.05 (0.18)	-0.20** (0.08)	0.02 (0.20)
Education - middle	-0.37*** (0.05)	-0.23 (0.14)	-0.36*** (0.06)	-0.15 (0.17)
Winner/loser	0.01 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.13)	0.06 (0.05)	0.01 (0.14)
Age	0.03*** (0.01)	-0.05 (0.03)	0.03** (0.01)	-0.06* (0.03)
Gender - women	-0.08 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.12)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.14)
Origin – first generation outside Europe	-0.11 (0.08)	0.46* (0.21)	-0.18* (0.09)	0.38 (0.25)
Origin – second generation Europe	0.07 (0.07)	0.54** (0.21)	0.07 (0.08)	0.43 (0.24)
Origin – second	-0.09 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.21)	-0.14 (0.09)	-0.10 (0.25)

generation				
outside Europe				
Country of origin	0.02** (0.01)	0.02 (0.03)	0.03 (0.01)	0.02 (0.03)
Constant	2.12*** (0.10)	1.63*** (0.34)	2.06*** (0.12)	1.87*** (0.40)
N	1200	147	938	127
R-squared	0.07	0.27	0.12	0.28

B = unstandardized coefficient

SE in parantheses

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Source: Dutch Parliamentary Election Study 2023

5. Conclusion and discussion

In this last chapter, there will be looked back at the goal of the thesis, the results of the analysis will be summarized in order to answer the research question. Furthermore, the limitations of the research will be reviewed and possible suggestions for research topics expanding the research subject of the thesis.

5.1 Conclusion

While conducting this thesis, the goal was to explore the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation and political trust among individuals from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds, specifically after the Dutch elections of 2023. The research question the thesis started with was: *To what extent does the quality of political representation (descriptive and substantive) matter for political trust for citizens with an ethnic and racially diverse background?* Specifically, the research question aimed to discover whether higher levels of descriptive representation led to increased political trust, as stated in Hypothesis 1, and whether substantive representation similarly influences political trust, as described in Hypothesis 2. These questions are important to reflect on a broader discourse on the role of minority representation in political institutions and how such representation can shape the perceived legitimacy of democratic processes. The expectations that higher levels of both descriptive and substantive representation will result in more political trust were previously contributed to existing research on representation and political trust. Scholars such as Mansbridge (1999) and Philips (1998), generally supported the idea that increased descriptive and substantive representation would naturally lead to higher levels of political trust.

The regression analyses provided a nuanced view of how descriptive and substantive representation impact political trust. For descriptive representation (Hypothesis 1), the results were mixed. Sympathy for VVD party leader Dilan Yeşilgöz was associated with a positive effect on political trust, suggesting that supporters of this leader experience higher trust in the political system. In contrast, sympathy for party leaders of more multicultural-oriented parties, such as Stephan van Baarle from DENK and Edson Olf from BIJ1, did not have a significant impact on political trust. This indicates that the anticipated positive relationship between descriptive representation and political trust does not hold uniformly across different political contexts, even though these leaders represent ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds.

Regarding substantive representation (Hypothesis 2), the results were also complex. In Model 3), both the positive effect when the substantive representation of people of colour is seen as 'exactly enough,' and the negative effect when the substantive representation of people with a migration background is seen as 'too much' were found significant. The last result indicates that perceptions of excessive substantive representation may reduce political trust. In Model 4 on the other hand, the effects of substantive representation are generally not significant. This difference between the models may indicate that the impact of substantive representation depends heavily on other factors included in the specific model, such as descriptive representation or other control variables. Thus, the results show that the relationship between substantive representation and political trust is not unambiguous and seems to depend strongly on the context and perceptions of the groups involved.

Despite the fact that both hypotheses were not found to be entirely conclusive, the broader implication of this research could be very useful for policymakers and political parties. The study suggests that fostering substantive representation of marginalized groups could be an effective strategy for improving political trust for people with an ethnic and racially diverse background. Policymakers should therefore aim not only to achieve a representative composition within political bodies but also to ensure that such representation genuinely reflects and addresses the interests, needs, and concerns of the citizens. This approach could enhance the inclusiveness of the political process and strengthen confidence in political institutions. For political parties, these insights also offer valuable guidance on how to better align their platforms and candidate selections with the preferences and needs of marginalized groups. With these insights, they could potentially improve their sense of inclusion and as a result, create more political trust within their electorate.

Even though the thesis could give useful guidance to policymakers and political parties, the research also had certain limitations. First, the research was only conducted in the Dutch context, therefore it limited the opportunity for the research to be generalized and applied for other countries with their different political and cultural systems. Additionally, the study was limited with only two macro determinants, even though it could also take account for other important factors that influence political trust, for example economic performance and the effect of media. Moreover, the measurement methods and operationalizations used in this study may have overlooked certain subtleties. For example, using sympathy scores of party leaders to determine descriptive representation did not fully capture the essence of this variable, since

it does not capture in what way they actually represent their background. Thus, future research could improve this by looking at who constituents voted for and why.

5.2 Discussion

Future research on descriptive and substantive representation can provide valuable insights into how representative democracies function and how they might be improved. One promising area of investigation is the impact of descriptive representation on substantive representation. This involves examining how the presence of representatives who demographically match certain groups affects the effectiveness of representing their interests and policy priorities. For instance, in countries with high levels of gender or ethnic representation, it could be useful to explore how this representation influences policy formulation in various domains, such as healthcare or education.

Another important area of study is the relationship between descriptive representation and political engagement. Research could focus on how the representation of marginalized groups in parliaments and other institutions influences the participation of these groups in elections and other political activities. It would be interesting to see if greater visibility of representatives from diverse backgrounds leads to increased engagement of those groups in political processes.

Furthermore, a different type of research that would be interesting is how the backgrounds of policymakers affect the policies' content. We can learn more about how various viewpoints influence policy-making by examining how the gender and ethnic backgrounds of legislators affect policy priorities and the success of policy initiatives. Case studies that look at particular policy measures that have been started or supported by legislators with certain demographic traits could be used to investigate this.

6. References

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