The Representations of Ethnic Minorities in National and Regional News Programmes on the Dutch Public Broadcasting Television Channels

a content analysis on the portrayals of ethnic minorities in national and regional news programmes

Vincent Jagers (10458816)
Master’s Thesis - Entertainment Communication
Master’s programme of Communication Science - Graduate School of Communication
Supervisor: dr. J.M.F. (Annemarie) van Oosten
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Abstract

The present study investigates the representations of ethnic minorities in four Dutch public television broadcasted news programmes. Three of these news programmes were broadcasted by regional public broadcasters (‘AT5’, ‘Omroep Brabant’, ‘RTV Oost’) and one by the national public broadcaster (‘NPO’). This study focuses on public broadcasting television channels since they are obliged by the ‘Media Act of 2008’ (‘Mediawet 2008’) and by the concession policies made by the broadcasters themselves to uphold their societal responsibility and provide a fair, pluriform, well-balanced representation of the Dutch population and society as a whole. A content analysis was conducted on a total of 48 news broadcasts and it was found that there is a skewed representation of ethnic minorities compared to the ethnic majorities in the programmes of all four Dutch public broadcasters. The amount of ethnic minorities found in this study is not relatively equivalent to the societal composition of certain provinces and the Netherlands as a whole. Secondly, a significant moderate association was found between ethnic minorities in the news and minority-related topics in one of the regional public broadcasters.

*Keywords*: public broadcaster, content analysis, ethnic minorities, representation, Netherlands
Introduction

During the 20th century, television has evolved into an indispensable mass medium, viewed by billions of people globally. In the midst of emerging popular new media channels and technologies the television regains its popularity. The media has a powerful influence on how people perceive the world around them. But with great power comes great responsibility. In the Netherlands, the Dutch Public Broadcasting System is partially responsible for the content being displayed on the television screens in people’s homes. With the current societal debates on immigration and the ongoing so-called ‘zwartepietendiscussie’ it is important to assess how the Dutch Public Broadcasting channels manage their responsibility to represent today’s society accurately in terms of presenting all different cultural and ethnical groups that live in this country.

This study aims to investigate the representations of ethnic minorities in the content of news television programmes that are being broadcasted on the Dutch public broadcasting system on both a national and a regional level to see how the public broadcasters handle their responsibility to mirror today’s society.

According to the ‘Media Act of 2008’ all public broadcasting companies are obliged to fulfil public values by meeting the democratic, social and cultural needs of the Dutch society by providing well-balanced, pluriform, and varied content that mirrors the population and its diversity of convictions, views, and interests in a societal, cultural, and philosophical way (art. 2.1 lid 2 Mediawet 2008). Every five years the Dutch Foundation for Public Broadcasting (‘NPO’) provides strategies on how the NPO will fulfil its responsibility formulated in the ‘Concessiebeleidsplan 2016-2020’ (CBP). According to the CBP, the NPO not only wants to make contradictions between representations and societal compositions transparent, but also wishes to contribute to bridging these contradictions by presenting content that is diverse to break down prejudices and stimulate new forms of solidarity amongst the people (Nederlandse Publieke Omroep, 2015). The Regional Public Broadcaster (RPO), which unites and represents all thirteen regional public broadcasters,
also created a concession policy plan in which they claim to aim to provide a representative reflection of the inhabitants of the regions, including their social and geographical background (Regionale Publieke Omroep, 2017). In 2010 the NPO stated that “in 5 years the representations of women and immigrants on defining television broadcasting channels will be improved” (Prestatielevereenkomst 2010-2015 als bedoeld in artikel 2.22 van de Mediawet 2008). However, their main goals weren’t fully achieved. According to the Commissary for the Media the NPO did marginally increase representations of immigrants on national public television in the five year period (Commissariaat voor de Media). However, the Commissary for the Media pleaded for even more representations of women and ethnic minorities.

The majority of research on the representations of ethnicity has been conducted abroad, i.e. in the context of commercials (Bartsch, Burnett, Diller & Rankin-Williams, 2000; Eisend, 2009; Mastro & Stern, 2003; Stern & Mastro, 2004), sports (Angelini & Billings, 2010; Turner, 2013), fiction (Emons, Wester, & Scheepers, 2010; Lauzen, Dozier & Horan, 2008), and non-fiction programmes (Segijn, Bartholomé, Pennekamp & Timmer, 2014; Dixon & Williams, 2015).

Most of these studies found that ethnic minorities and women are underrepresented, whilst ethnic majorities and men are overrepresented on television, when compared to their respective societal demographics composition (De Vuyst, Vertoont & Van Bauwel, 2016; Segijn et al., 2014; Tukachinksy, Mastro & Yarchi, 2015). Moreover, studies have shown that ethnic minorities are commonly associated with negative themes when represented in a television programme. Research from Great Britain and the United States both found that ethnic minorities were more likely to be associated with crime in both fiction and non-fiction television programmes (Alia & Bull, 2005; Downing & Husband, 2005; Entman, 1994; Harwood & Anderson, 2002).

It is important to note that both the systematic underrepresentation as well as the abundance of stereotypical representations of ethnic groups in the media have detrimental effects on the depicted groups’ psychological well-being (Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez & Fryberg, 2015; Schmader,
This study delimits itself to televised news programmes broadcasted by the Dutch Public Broadcasting channels and is conducted in the tradition of the cultivation theory. Media and communication theory posits that television is a primary contributor to people’s conceptions of social reality which presents a cohesive and cumulative story over time, and that it should be studied as a collective symbolic environment with an underlying formulaic structure (Gerbner, 1998). This study analyses the NPO’s most watched news-bulletin of 2018, being the ‘Acht Uur Journaal’ (Stichting Kijkonderzoek, 2018) and three news-bulletins of regional broadcasters being ‘AT5 Nieuws’ broadcasted by AT5, ‘Brabant Nieuws’ broadcasted by Omroep Brabant, and ‘Overijssel Vandaag’ broadcasted by RTV Oost.

Previous content analyses have already analysed specific portrayals of gender, race, and ethnicity in television news programmes. However, none of these studies have simultaneously looked at regional public broadcasters. Consequently, this study addresses a clear knowledge gap within literature.

More specifically, this study focuses on public television news instead of commercial news because research has consistently shown that public television news is less sensationalist and embody less tabloid characteristics than commercial news (Jacobs, Meeusen, & d’Haenens, 2016). However, research shows that public local news programmes are more likely to be more sensational than public national news programmes (Heider, 2014; Kim & Lowrey, 2018; Lipschultz & Hilt, 2014).

Considering all of this information, this study aims to answer the following question:

RQ: To what extent is there a fair representation of ethnic minorities in news television programmes that are broadcasted on the Dutch Public Broadcasting television channels on a national and regional level?
Theoretical Framework

This section outlines the theoretical concepts, based on existing literature, providing a framework on which the hypotheses for the empirical research are based.

Firstly, the definition and context of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands will be given, followed by the concept of minority stereotypes. This study aims to not only focus on the quantitative presentation of ethnic minorities, but also on the qualitative representation, for which literature will be reviewed. Finally, the concept of minority and non-minority topics will be explained.

Ethnic minorities in the Netherlands

An ethnic minority is defined as “a group within a community which has different national or cultural traditions from the main population” (Cambridge University Press, 2018). The problem with scientifically studying ethnic minorities is that every country has its own groups of minorities and the numbers are continually changing. Therefore, it is harder to generalise certain findings because they are less transmissible. However, that does not nullify the relevance of conducting minority studies.

Statistics Netherlands (‘Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek’) collects statistical information on the population and geographical backgrounds of the Dutch citizens. According to their statistics the four most common non-Western ethnic minority groups are: Turkish, Moroccans, Antillean, and Surinamese. Since the 1960s these minority groups immigrated to the Netherlands because of growing job opportunities and welfare opportunities provided by the Dutch government. These post-colonial migrants and guest-workers were classified as members of an ‘ethnic minority’ based on their country of birth and the country of birth of their parents (Guiraudon, Phalet & Wal, 2005). The Netherlands is the only country that takes the country of birth of their parents variable into the classification protocol. Up until 2016, immigrants have been labeled as ‘allochtoon’. That word was
used to describe people with at least one parent born abroad, and the term ‘autochtoon’ was used for people whose parents were born in the Netherlands. However, these labels are outdated, mostly because current migrants are different as regards country of origin and the reason for migration, so they can no longer be covered by these umbrella terms (Bovens, Bokhorst & Jennissen, 2017). These outdated terms have been transformed into the categorisation ‘a person with a Dutch background’ and ‘a person with a migration background’ (CBS, 2018).

In the future these new labels will also be outdated to classify an ethnic minority group, but this problem is not only apparent in the written literature. Studies on the representations of ethnic minorities have had similar difficulties when coding ethnic minorities based on spoken word, foreknowledge, and physical attributes. A general consensus on how to code ethnic minorities is missing. Because of the scope of this specific research the choice was made to code all different non-Western ethnic minorities under the umbrella term ‘ethnic minority’. No distinction was made between different backgrounds and origins, simply because these details remain unheard and unwritten in news programmes. In order to conduct this study objectively an ethnic minority was coded based upon physical characteristics and explicit mentioned verbal and written information (See: Appendix A).

Minority stereotypes

The degree of correct representations in the media are of great importance, because a lack of correct representations can lead to (incorrect) stereotypes. Stereotypes are certain traits that are assigned to a social group, without taking individual differences within the social group into consideration. Especially groups to which people don’t belong, are perceived as homogeneous (Mullen & Hu, 1989). Stereotypes can be formed through what people see and hear in the media (Babad, Birnbaum & Benne, 1983; Smith & Granados, 2009). Results shows that regular exposure to stereotypical news coverage creates negative implicit attitudes which in turn alter explicit attitudes (Arendt &
Northup, 2015). Apart from teaching the ethnic majority about ethnic minorities through correct
representations in the media, it is also important for ethnic minorities to recognise themselves on
certain broadcasting channels. There is a strong correlation between the amount of ethnic minorities
recognising themselves on a channel and the amount of times they watch the channel (Pennekamp,
2011). Moreover, research on the receiving end of the ethnic minority public shows that portrayals
of ethnic minorities indicate that many images of ethnic minorities are negative, inaccurate, and
offensive. Further, their responses to this illustrates their concern about the impact of these images
on how majority groups may perceive ethnic minorities overall (Adams-Bass, Bentley-Edwards, &
Stevenson, 2014)

This study also takes into consideration the qualitative perspective of the representations of
ethnic minorities in television news programmes. In other words, it was researched if ethnic
minorities were portrayed according to specific stereotypes. This is important because programmes
from the public broadcasting channels - especially news programmes - release a lot of content into
the public sphere. Every contributor within the content plays a part in telling a news story to the
public, as such they function as a representative of the public sphere (Gans, 2011). Therefore, it is
important that ethnic minorities are correctly represented.

Quantitative representation

This study focuses solely on the medium television and is conducted in the tradition of the
cultivation theory. Long-term exposure to this medium would result in viewers perceiving that the
“real” world is similar to the world that is depicted, even though the two may be widely divergent
(Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). Since the emergence of digital media,
people are exposed to multiple influences of different media outlets, however, television keeps
playing an important role in the construction of reality, since it has become a cultural artefact. This
study’s sample consists of non-fictional televised news broadcasts. Media content that is perceived
as “realistic” is thought to have the strongest effect on viewers’ beliefs and cognitions (Potter, 1986, 1988). Stereotyping and misrepresentation, in realistic content, then, becomes a cause for concern.

Research on the representation of men, women and ethnicity in television programmes shows that the depictions of groups on television can contribute to the extent of recognisability of groups, but it can also contribute to generalising, stereotypical ideas on certain groups in a society (Pennekamp, 2011).

Yet a Dutch study has recently shown that ethnic minorities are underrepresented in local news programmes in the Hague (Schepens, 2018). Therefore, this study aims to test the following hypotheses:

\[ H1a: \text{The amount of ethnic minorities portrayed in ‘Acht Uur Journaal’ of the NPO is relatively lower than the amount of ethnic minorities living in the Netherlands.} \]

\[ H1b: \text{The amount of ethnic minorities portrayed in ‘AT5 Nieuws’ broadcasted by AT5 is relatively lower than the amount of ethnic minorities living in the Noord-Holland province.} \]

\[ H1c: \text{The amount of ethnic minorities portrayed in ‘Overijssel Vandaag’ broadcasted by RTV Oost is relatively lower than the amount of ethnic minorities living in the Overijssel province.} \]

\[ H1d: \text{The amount of ethnic minorities portrayed in ‘Brabant Nieuws’ broadcasted by Omroep Brabant is relatively lower than the amount of ethnic minorities living in the Noord-Brabant province.} \]

**Qualitative representation**

Equally important is the way in which ethnic minorities are represented in these news programmes. In the United States Mastro and Greenberg (2000) found that African Americans were portrayed in roles generating the lowest level of respect in entertainment programmes. A replication of this study
found that Latinos have taken over this role (Monk-Turner, Heiserman, Johnson, Cotton, & Jackson, 2010). A study conducted on the occupational roles on primetime television in Belgium found that ethnic minorities scored a lower average score for occupational status (Jacobs, Claes, & Hooghe, 2015). However, in the Netherlands there have been less studies on the portrayals of ethnic minorities in news programmes. One study on gender roles in non-fiction public and commercial television programmes concluded that there was no correct representation from the Dutch society. Men were more likely to appear as an expert or in other positions of high regard in comparison to women (Koeman, Peeters, & D’Haenens, 2007). It is highly relevant to assess how exactly television depicts ethnic minorities in terms of their socioeconomic position, as this is linked to broader patterns of inequality and prejudice in society. Therefore, I argue that the roles of ethnic minorities in television news programmes are in regard than the ethnic majority:

\[ H2a: \text{The professions of ethnic minorities portrayed in ‘Acht Uur Journaal’ of the NPO are lower in status than the professions of ethnic majorities.} \]

\[ H2b: \text{The professions of ethnic minorities portrayed in ‘AT5 Nieuws’ of the AT5 are lower in status than the professions of ethnic majorities.} \]

\[ H2c: \text{The professions of ethnic minorities portrayed in ‘Overijssel Vandaag’ of the RTV Oost are lower in status than the professions of ethnic majorities.} \]

\[ H2d: \text{The professions of ethnic minorities portrayed in ‘Omroep Brabant’ of the Omroep Brabant are lower in status than the professions of ethnic majorities.} \]

Based on accessible general information on television editors and producers of news, current affairs, and talk show programmes, predominantly ethnic majorities and men make up most of the work floor compositions in the Netherlands (Papaikonomou & Dijkman, 2018). This knowledge leads to a third exploratory hypothesis in which a comparison will be made between the NPO and
one regional public broadcaster; since it is more likely that there are more ethnic minorities working for the NPO than for a smaller regional broadcaster. However, due to lack of general knowledge and prior research, the third hypothesis was formulated:

**H3:** The professions of ethnic minorities portrayed in ‘AT5 Nieuws’ are lower in status than the professions of ethnic minorities portrayed in ‘Acht Uur Journaal’ of the NPO.

**Minority topics**

Apart from looking at the quantity of appearances and professions of the portrayed ethnic minorities, it was also taken into account what topics were covered in the news segments. Previous research on gender roles and topics of discussion has found that female reporters in news broadcasts were more likely to talk about human interest and health-related sources, while men were more likely to present political stories (Desmond & Danilewicz, 2009). Other research found that black experts were mostly quoted in stories about black issues but rarely in stories about non-black issues (Entman, 1994; Entman & Rojeckie, 2010; Poindexter, Smith, & Heider, 2003) and minorities were less likely to speak on political topics (Segijn et al., 2014). This thesis argues that ethnic minorities are more prone to talk about minority-related topics and issues. A minority-related topic consists of a story revolving around people of colour or issues on ethnic minorities in the Netherlands. The opposite of a minority-related topic is a non-minority related topic. A non-minority related topic discusses any national story with no overt racial or ethnic context (Pritchard & Stonbely, 2007).

Based on frames of references, it’s difficult for predominantly white people to create versatile perspectives on specific issues experienced by minorities. Research findings suggest that diverse television news directors encourage more coverage of minority communities (White, 2018). This is why there will probably be little minority-related topics in the news. This knowledge formulates the last set of hypotheses:
H4a: Ethnic minorities are more likely to be portrayed in news items that discuss minority-related topics.

Research shows that local news programmes are more likely to portray ethnic minorities in stories of crime than ethnic majorities (Lipschultz & Hilt, 2014). Therefore, the next hypothesis has been formulated:

H4b: Ethnic minorities in regional news programmes are more likely to be portrayed in news items covering minority-related topics than ethnic minorities in national news programmes.

Method

Research design

A content analysis was conducted on four television news programmes, all broadcasted on public broadcasting channels. These programmes were (1) the national Dutch Public Broadcaster’s (NPO) ‘NOS Acht Uur Journaal’, (2) Amsterdam’s regional public broadcaster’s (AT5) ‘AT5 Nieuws’, (3) Overijssel’s regional public broadcaster’s (RTV Oost) ‘Overijssel Vandaag’, (4) and North Brabant’s regional public broadcaster’s (Omroep Brabant) ‘Brabant Nieuws’. A content analysis is a research technique that is used to describe and systematically analyse the content of written, spoken, or pictorial communication (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 1980; and Weber, 1990). It is often broadly defined as "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1969). This technique was used to discover potential existing patterns of minority representations within and in between these broadcasters. The overarching goal is to understand the role that these mass media outlets play in Dutch society, and how societal attitudes could be shaped by the visibility of ethnic minorities in these programmes.
Sample

For the content analysis, the archives that were used to gather the data were ‘NPO.nl’, ‘AT5.nl’, ‘omroepbrabant.nl’, and ‘RTV oost.nl’. All analysed programmes generate daily news broadcasts. All programmes were aired in the year 2018, since this was the most recent full year to analyse when this study was conducted. A stratified sampling technique was used to extract the eventual sample. For each month an episode was randomly sampled. For every broadcaster the same dates were used. The reason behind this being is that the topics in both programs on the same day are more or less the same which makes potential comparisons between the four programs more valid. The eventual sample consisted of 48 news broadcasts, which consisted of half an hour each. For each episode every individual in the form of a presenter, journalist, spokesperson, commentators, and experts were coded. This resulted in a total of 681 units of analysis. Every individual was only coded once in each episode. See Appendix B for a complete list of all the episodes.

Variables in the codebook

A codebook capturing all the research variables was conducted. Up to eleven variables and characteristics were coded per unit of analysis. Firstly, a unit was analysed to see whether or not it was a member of an ethnic minority, based on cultural bound characteristics like clothing, headscarfs, certain religious acts and external physical characteristics, like skin colour or facial features, or the use of a non-western name, or whether someone’s heritage was explicitly announced by using words as: migrants, refugees, ethnic minorities, illegals, etc.. Or the ethnicity was explicitly mentioned. Then the sex, profession, origin, nationality, and religion were analysed and coded. During coding only explicit mentioned variables were included in the coding. Otherwise, certain variables were coded as ‘unknown’.

The next section of the codebook relates to the the topic of the news items. A distinction was made between minority-related topics and non-minority related topics. For every analysed topic it
was determined if the focus of the story was on people of colour, or issues connecting to Dutch ethnic minorities such as topics on Moroccans in the Netherlands. Non-minority topics are items that covered issues of broad relevance with no overt racial or ethnic context (Pritchard & Stonbely, 2007). Only news items concerned and focused on national news were included into the sample. Therefore, all news segments incorporating international relations were excluded.

Lastly, two variables concerning the content of the news item were analysed. A difference was made between victims and perpetrators, since ethnic minorities have been found to be linked to news items concerning crime. Two variables were constructed to see whether or not an individual was presented as a victim or a perpetrator of a certain crime. The exact operationalisation of all the variables can be found in the Codebook (Appendix A).

Reliability

Before the data collection commenced, seven episodes of the in total 48 episodes were coded twice by two different coders in order to calculate the inter-coder reliability. In these seven episodes there were 127 units of analysis, which makes up 18.7% of the total units of analysis. The results of the inter-coder reliability tests are mentioned in Table 1. The inter-coder reliability tested for Cohen’s Kappa and Krippendorff’s Alpha (α). The variables ‘ethnic minority’, ‘profession’, ‘origin’, and ‘minority topic’ were all found almost perfectly reliable with values over .90 in the Krippendorff’s Alpha test. And according to Cohen’s Kappa test all tested variables qualify as ‘almost perfect’ since they score a value of .8 and higher (Landis & Koch, 1977).
Table 1.

Inter-coder reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kappa</th>
<th>Krippendorff’s Alpha</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>0.955</td>
<td>0.956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>0.990</td>
<td>0.990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin</td>
<td>0.841</td>
<td>0.841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority topic</td>
<td>0.943</td>
<td>0.881</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategy of analysis

Every single unit of analysis in this study contributes to the analysed news broadcasts. A unit was coded when it commented spoken word in a news segment. Each unit was only coded once each episode. This means that the newsreader was also coded once each episode. While each person was coded individually, the coders managed to also code the topic of discussion. Every news segment was assigned to be a minority-related topic or to be a non-minority related topic. The initial focus of the current study is to expose the visibility of ethnic minorities in the news programmes of the public broadcasters by conducting a quantitative content analysis. Likewise, this study focuses also on the occupational roles ethnic minorities play and professions they exercise in news broadcasts.

In the following section a sequence of statistical testing provides results for the predetermined hypotheses. These quantitative and qualitative results are followed by a more thorough interpretation and conclusion.

Results

Quantitative representation of ethnic minorities

The first findings from the data collection were compared to the official statistics of the Dutch population, based on information retrieved from the Statistics Netherlands (CBS) as presented in
It was found that the representation of the ethnic majorities (‘Dutch Only’) was relatively higher in the total sample than the population’s representation. According to these findings, the ethnic majority makes up 88.8% of the total units of analysis from this study, while the ethnic majority of the Dutch population makes up 77.4%. Therefore, by comparing these percentages, I conclude that ethnic majorities on the Dutch public broadcasting channels are well over-represented by more than 10 percent. The ethnic minorities in the sample consists of 11.1%, while they make up 22.6% in the Dutch population. I also conclude that ethnic minorities are underrepresented in the Dutch public media landscape.

The underrepresentation of ethnic minorities were found in every comparison of province and regional public broadcaster. Therefore, the first hypotheses (H1a/H1b/H1c/H1d) can be confirmed, and one can say that there is a discrepancy in the Netherlands between the prevalence of ethnic minorities in society and in the ‘Acht Uur Journaal’, ‘AT5 Nieuws’, ‘Brabant Nieuws’, and ‘Overijssel Vandaag’, when looking at the units of analysis (see: Appendix C).

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representation of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dutch population</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background other than Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Western</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Non-Western</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This study also tried to research whether the professions of ethnic minorities were portrayed in the news programmes. And if so, do the professions ethnic minorities carry out have any resemblance with the professions that ethnic majorities carry out? In order to research these next hypotheses the variable ‘profession’ had to be split up. The first group consisted of the ‘high status’ professions, which included the professions: ‘journalist’, ‘politician’, ‘jurist/lawyer’, ‘emergency services’, ‘scientists’, and ‘expert/head of organization’. The ‘low status’ professions consisted of ‘caregivers’, ‘teaching staff’, ‘scholar/student’, ‘artist’, ‘retired’, ‘jobless’, and ‘other’.

A significant association was found between ethnic minorities and the statuses of professions in the ‘Acht Uur Journaal’ (N=182). A Chi-square test of independence for cross tabs was conducted. The assumption of the Chi-square test was not violated. The association between these variables was found to be statistically significant, χ²(1)=3.87, p<0.05. Based on the results, there is a weak association between being part of an ethnic minority and being part of a low-status profession φc=.168, p<.05. These statistical results conclude that there is an association between ethnic minorities and ethnic majorities and the status of their professions, however slightly, as seen in Table 3. Therefore, theoretically the alternative hypothesis can be retained. However, taken the strength of the association into consideration, the hypothesis is not fully retained or rejected, but supported with the findings.

Another significant difference was found in ‘AT5 Nieuws’. The association between these variables was found to be statistically significant, χ²(1)=3.96, p<0.05. Based on the results, there is a weak association between being part of an ethnic minority and being part of a low-status profession φc=.187, p<.05. While performing the same tests for ‘Brabant Nieuws’ and ‘Overijssel Vandaag’ the results came back insignificant and the assumptions of the Chi-square tests were violated (see: Appendix C). In short, we can retain hypotheses H2a and H2b and reject H2c and H2d.
The third hypothesis wanted to find significant comparative findings between the nationwide broadcasted ‘Acht Uur Journaal’ and the regional broadcaster ‘AT5 Nieuws’. However, no statistically significant findings were found, $\chi^2(1)=1.21, p>0.05$. Although no assumptions were violated, the results came back insignificant. This is most probably due to the relatively small sample size. The third hypothesis (H3) cannot be confirmed and has to be rejected.

Table 3.

$x^2$-test results comparing ethnic minorities and ethnic majorities on high and low profession status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High status profession</th>
<th>Low status profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(journalist, politician, emergency service)</td>
<td>(caregiver, teaching staff, scholar, artist, jurist, scientist, expert)</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Acht Uur Journaal'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic majority</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. *$p<.05$; **$p<.01$; ***$p<.001$.

The fourth hypothesis focuses on potential associations between ethnic minorities in the news and items covering a minority-related topic. The association between these variables was found to be statistically significant, $\chi^2(1)=32.03, p<0.001$. As shown in Table 4, there is a moderate association between being part of an ethnic minority and news items that cover minority-related topics, $\phi_c=0.412, p<0.001$. Other Chi-square tests on the other two regional public broadcasters all came back insignificant. Also the test focusing on the national public news
programme came back insignificant. It has been partially proven that ethnic minorities are more likely to be portrayed in minority-related topics in the news (H4a). Even though a moderate association was found in ‘AT5 Nieuws’, there were no significant associations found by the other public broadcasters, so the hypothesis is partially rejected.

The final hypothesis on comparing ethnic minorities in regional news programmes to ethnic minorities in national news programmes when controlling for minority-related topics has to be rejected since there are no significant results for the nationwide broadcaster on minority topics.

Table 4.

$\chi^2$-test results comparing ethnic minorities and ethnic majorities on minority-topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minority topic</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Non-minority topic</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Cramer’s V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT5 Nieuws</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11,1%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11,6%</td>
<td>0,412***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic majority</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7,9%</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>69,3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td>150</td>
<td>189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Conclusion & Discussion

This study investigated the extent to which there is a fair representation of ethnic minorities in news television programmes broadcasted by the Dutch Public Broadcasting television channels on a national and regional level. Based on the results of the content analysis, which focused on four television news programmes, this study concluded that ethnic minorities are not fairly represented in the televised news programmes of the public broadcasting channels. Three regional public broadcasters and one national public broadcaster were chosen to be part of this research.

The results of the quantitative content analysis have shown that the composition of ethnic
minorities portrayed in the programmes ‘Acht Uur Journaal’, ‘AT5 Nieuws’, ‘Overijssel Vandaag’, and ‘Brabant Nieuws’ do not coincide with the societal composition of the Netherlands. Differences in percentages have shown that there is a discrepancy in the Netherlands between the appearances of ethnic minorities in society and ethnic minorities presented on the television screen. The same results were found on a regional level. Comparisons were made between the amount of appearances of ethnic minorities in regional news programmes and the official statistics provided by the Statistics Netherlands. Therefore, the first set of hypotheses were retained. These findings concur with previous studies on the representations of ethnic minorities in non-fiction programmes in the Netherlands (Segijn et al., 2014). This partial conclusion is quite alarming, yet it has been recognised by the NPO, the RPO, and the Commissary for the Media and potential solutions have already been included into the concession policy plans of the national and regional public broadcasting companies.

This study attempted to discover associations between the portrayals of ethnic minorities and their professions. Two significant associations were found between ethnic minorities and the status of a profession. In both the ‘Acht Uur Journaal’ and ‘AT5 Nieuws’ a weak association between these two variables coincided. However, due to the relative small sample size, this study was unable to uncover stronger associations. Also, the distinction between a ‘high status profession’ and a ‘low status profession’ was not as concise as it could have been, due to a lack of prior conducted research. Although the hypothesis was partially rejected, further research will be needed to discover more generalisable conclusions.

This thesis wished to bridge a knowledge gap within the literature on representations of ethnic minorities on news broadcasts by establishing potential similarities and differences between national public broadcasters and regional public broadcasters. However, no significant statistical findings were found, which resulted into rejecting the third hypothesis (H3). Once again, a small sample size could have played a big limitation in this research.
Statistically testing the fourth hypothesis found a moderate association between ethnic minorities and news items that covered minority-related topics. This finding partially indicates that ethnic minorities are more likely to appear on the television screen if the news item covers minority-related topics. However, this was only found in ‘AT5 Nieuws’, and not in the other two public broadcasters or in the national public broadcaster. But nevertheless the moderate association between the two variables should spark some debate and inspiration for further research. There were no significant results when comparing these findings from ‘AT5 Nieuws’ to the nationwide ‘Acht Uur Journaal’.

This study positioned itself in the scientific field of entertainment communication science and minority studies. Key findings are that ethnic minorities are still underrepresented in daily Dutch televised news programmes. There should also be further research on the way certain stereotypes and identities are constructed through the media and by the media.

The external validity of this research is quite low. Firstly, this has to do with the small sample size of only 681 units of analysis from which 76 were classified as an ethnic minority. Furthermore, this study only researched four public television news programmes broadcasted on Dutch television. There are nine other regional public broadcasters in the Netherlands that broadcast their own regional news items, and there are also two other national public broadcasting channels that broadcast news and current affairs programmes. Also, this study excluded commercial broadcasters since they are not obliged to broadcast by the rules of the ‘Mediawet 2008’. Further research might be focused on comparing public broadcasters with commercial broadcasting companies. In short, the results can not be generalised for the NPO, AT5, Omroep Brabant, and RTV Oost due to the small sample size and low transferability.

Moreover, due to the low amount of ethnic minorities in this sample it was quite impossible to establish similarities and disparities. Further research should be conducted to examine if some minority groups are disadvantaged over others in terms of qualitative representation.
Whilst stereotypes and portrayals still exist in modern day society, media literacy has arisen in the world of education and public awareness. Media literacy has been defined as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms” (Aufderheide, 1993), and the goal of encouraging critical thinking regarding media content and practices has been closely associated with media literacy education (Martens, 2010; Scharrer, 2007; Silverblatt, 2008). Media literacy education holds great promise for its ability to shape media-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours and encourage an active and critical stance toward media (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). However, media literacy should not demotivate the producers of television content to create fair and equal representations for all ethnicities. It is of great importance that studies similar to this research expose underlying mechanisms of how the media generates portrayals of ethnic minorities.

References


ETHNIC MINORITIES IN DUTCH MEDIA


Scharrer, E. (2007). Closer than you think: Bridging the gap between media effects and cultural studies in media education theory and practice. In A. Nowak, S. Abel, & K. Ross (Eds.),


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**Appendices**

**Appendix A: Code book**

Codebook Ethnic Minorities and Television News
version 4, date: 8-11-2018
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This codebook will be used to analyse national and regional news content broadcasted on the Dutch public broadcasting television channels, as a part of a master’s thesis entitled ‘The Representations of Ethnic Minorities in national and regional news on the Dutch Public Broadcasting Television Channels’. The codebook should be regarded as the instruction manual before coding as well as reference guide during the coding.

**Programme**

1. **What is the name of the broadcaster/program?**
   1. NPO1 - Acht Uur Journaal
   2. AT5 - AT5 Nieuws
   3. Omroep Brabant - Brabant Nieuws
   4. RTV Oost - Overijssel Vandaag
2. Date of airing
DD.MM.YYYY

Actor

3. Is the person part of an ethnic minority? An ethnic minority can be identified based on:
cultural bound characteristics like clothing, headscarf, certain religious acts/external physical
characteristics like skin colour or facial features/the use of a non-western name/explicit
announcement on someone’s heritage by using words as: migrants, refugees, ethnic minorities,
illegals, etc./the ethnicity is being mentioned/or when the coder has foreknowledge about this
person.
1. Yes
2. No

4. What is the sex of the person?
1. Male
2. Female
3. Unknown

5. What is the profession mentioned of the person?
1. Journalist
2. Politician/Policymaker
3. Jurist/Lawyer
4. Police/Firefighter
5. Scientist
6. Caregiver
7. Teaching staff
8. Expert/Head of Organization
9. Scholar/Student
10. Artist
11. Retired
12. Jobless
13. Other
14. Children younger than twelve
15. Profession not mentioned/You don’t know

6. **Is a reference made to the origine of the person?** Origin = original or current nationality, ethnicity, or race by mentioning the country of birth, nationality, region, cultural background, race or ethnicity. Which?
   1. Dutch
   2. Western background (European, American, Canadian; and Indonesian & Japanese)
   3. Moroccan
   4. Turk
   5. Antillean
   6. Surinamese
   7. Non-Western background (Chinese, Indian, Nigerian, Brazilian, etc.)
   8. Other
   9. Unclear, belongs in various categories, e.g. North Africans.
   10. Origin is not mentioned

7. **Dutch nationality mentioned?** If the Dutch nationality has been appointed to this person. E.g. when someone has a Moroccan origin but is mentioned as a Dutch citizen. Dutch citizens with non-Dutch origins might be mentioned only by their origin and not their Dutch nationality.
   1. Yes
   2. No

8. **Religion mentioned?** E.g. muslims, hindus, catholics.
   1. Yes
   2. No

Victim

9. **Does the news item mention the person as a victim?** A whether or not still living person who suffers or has suffered (directly or indirectly) psychologically, physically or mentally under violence, disaster, war or violation of universal human rights and is mentioned as such.
   1. Yes
   2. No
NOTE1: If the person is not mentioned as a victim move on to variable 11.

10. What was the person victim of? Code the most serious crime.
1. Victim of an accident or a natural disaster.
2. Victim of sexual assault or abuse.
3. Victim of physical violence (other than sexual violence; kidnapping included).
4. Victim of psychological abuse (e.g. stalking).
5. Victim of material/property violence (e.g. property getting destroyed, damaged, or stolen).
6. Victim of war.
7. Victim of racism.
8. Other.

11. Does the news item describe the person as a perpetrator? A whether or not still living person who exercises, has exercised, or has been accused of exercising (direct or indirect) psychologically, physically, or materially violence and is mentioned as such.
1. Yes
2. No

NOTE2: If the person is not mentioned as a perpetrator move on to variable 13.

12. What was the perpetrator accused of?
1. Perpetrator of sexual assault or abuse.
2. Perpetrator of physical violence (other than sexual violence; kidnapping included).
3. Perpetrator psychological abuse (e.g. stalking).
4. Perpetrator of material/property violence (e.g. destroying, damaging, or stealing).
5. War criminal.
6. Perpetrator of racism.
7. Other.

13. Did the topic of interest revolve around a minority topic? A minority topic is a topic that’s concerned with everything related to ethnic minorities. A non-minority topic is basically any topic that doesn’t cover racial characteristics.
Appendix B: News programmes

NOS
1. 06.01.2018  https://www.npostart.nl/nos-journaal/06-01-2018/POW_03689829
3. 10.03.2018  https://www.npostart.nl/nos-journaal/10-03-2018/POW_03689502
5. 19.05.2018  https://www.npostart.nl/nos-journaal/19-05-2018/POW_03689512
8. 11.08.2018  https://www.npostart.nl/nos-journaal/11-08-2018/POW_03689524
10. 06.10.2018 https://www.npostart.nl/nos-journaal/06-10-2018/POW_03689532

AT5
13. 06.01.2018  https://www.at5.nl/gemist/tv/123/26355/-/30
14. 17.02.2018  https://www.at5.nl/gemist/tv/123/26471/-/32
15. 10.03.2018  https://www.at5.nl/gemist/tv/123/26535/-/30
17. 19.05.2018  https://www.at5.nl/gemist/tv/123/26722/-/23
18. 09.06.2018  https://www.at5.nl/gemist/tv/123/26773/-/23
19. 28.07.2018  https://www.at5.nl/gemist/tv/123/26905/-/17
20. 11.08.2018  https://www.at5.nl/gemist/tv/123/26933/-/16
21. 15.09.2018  https://www.at5.nl/gemist/tv/123/26999/-/10
22. 06.10.2018  https://www.at5.nl/gemist/tv/123/27050/-/5
23. 24.11.2018  https://www.at5.nl/gemist/tv/123/27183/-/2
RTV Oost
25. 06.01.2018  https://www.rtvoost.nl/tv/programma/63/Overijssel-Vandaag/aflevering/451499
27. 10.03.2018  https://www.rtvoost.nl/tv/programma/63/Overijssel-Vandaag/aflevering/460639
29. 18.05.2018  https://www.rtvoost.nl/tv/programma/63/Overijssel-Vandaag/aflevering/469471
30. 09.06.2018  https://www.rtvoost.nl/tv/programma/63/Overijssel-Vandaag/aflevering/471374
32. 11.08.2018  https://www.rtvoost.nl/tv/programma/63/Overijssel-Vandaag/aflevering/476281
34. 06.10.2018  https://www.rtvoost.nl/tv/programma/63/Overijssel-Vandaag/aflevering/483875

Omroep Brabant
37. 06.01.2018  https://www.omroepbrabant.nl/tv/programma/252/Brabant-Nieuws/aflevering/2601842
38. 17.02.2018  https://www.omroepbrabant.nl/tv/programma/252/Brabant-Nieuws/aflevering/2601848
39. 10.03.2018  https://www.omroepbrabant.nl/tv/programma/252/Brabant-Nieuws/aflevering/2601851
Appendix C: Tables and Figures

Table 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representation of ethnic minorities in North Holland</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Holland</strong></td>
<td><strong>‘AT5 Nieuws’</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch Only</td>
<td>1.931.825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background other than Dutch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Western</td>
<td>360.695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Non-Western</td>
<td>538.622</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.3

**Representation of ethnic minorities in Overijssel**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overijssel population</th>
<th>‘Overijssel Vandaag’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch Only</td>
<td>975,745</td>
<td>84,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background other than Dutch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Western</td>
<td>80,421</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Non-Western</td>
<td>95,335</td>
<td>15,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>1,151,501</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3

**Representation of ethnic minorities in North Brabant**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>North Brabant population</th>
<th>‘Brabant Nieuws’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch Only</td>
<td>2,054,369</td>
<td>84,7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2.

$\chi^2$-test results comparing ethnic minorities and ethnic majorities on high and low profession status for ‘Brabant Nieuws’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High status profession</th>
<th>Low status profession</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Cramer’s V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(journalist, politician, emergency service)</td>
<td>(caregiver, teaching staff, scholar, artist, jurist, scientist, expert)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic majority</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>55,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Table 3.4.

$\chi^2$-test results comparing ethnic minorities and ethnic majorities on high and low profession status for ‘Overijssel Vandaag’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High status profession</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Low status profession</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Cramer’s V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overijssel Vandaag</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,6%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4,1%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0,058</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Table 3.5.

\( \chi^2 \)-test results comparing ethnic minorities and ethnic majorities on high and low profession status for ‘AT5 Nieuws’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High status profession</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Low status profession</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Cramer’s V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AT5 Nieuws</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7,1%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0,187*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic majority</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42,5%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35,4%</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Table 4.2.

\( \chi^2 \)-test results comparing ethnic minorities and ethnic majorities on minority-topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minority topic</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Non-minority topic</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Cramer’s V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acht Uur Journaal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3,3%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6,0%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0,525</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnic majority</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,5%</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>90,1%</td>
<td>165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>183</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.
**χ²-test results comparing ethnic minorities and ethnic majorities on minority-topics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minority topic</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Non-minority topic</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Cramer’s V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Omroep Brabant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4,7%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic majority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>95,3%</td>
<td>143</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Table 5.

**χ²-test results comparing ethnic minorities and ethnic majorities on minority-topics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minority topic</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Non-minority topic</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Cramer’s V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overijssel Vandaag</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,6%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5,0%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic majority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>94,4%</td>
<td>151</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.