Desk review of literature  

on the representation of minorities and indigenous peoples in parliament  

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Institutional Research  
1. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) project - Ethnic Structure, Inequality and Governance of the Public Sector – touches, to some degree, on issues of minority representation. It focuses on the ways in which ethnic minorities are incorporated into governance and public sector institutions in 15 nations (Fiji, Trinidad, Latvia, Belgium, Bosnia, Switzerland, Malaysia, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, Tanzania, Botswana, Lithuania, and India). For most cases data is provided for minorities in parliament and cabinet (see Ethnic Structure, Inequality and Governance of the Public Sector – A Comparative Study, Yusuf Bangura, Geneva, UNRISD, 2005).

2. To date the most extensive survey of minority parliamentarian presence is Electoral Systems and the Protection and Participation of Minorities, Andrew Reynolds (London, Minority Rights Group International, 2006) which covered 33 nation states. The data was broadened to cover 50 states in the MRG State of the World’s Minorities annual report 2007.

3. The FEMCIT project is to survey political parties in Europe on their provisions for quotas for women and minorities. (http://www.femcit.org/).


4. Other groups working in the elections and democracy field have not collected systematic data on minority representation (e.g., International IDEA, the Carter Center, International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), the World Bank, Westminster Foundation, and Open Society).

Academic Research  
To date the body of academic research which focuses on minority representation has been characterized by: being country specific rather than globally comparative, deals with national legislative presence rather than executive or local government structures, and is empirically and theoretically undeveloped when compared to the related literature on women’s representation.

In essence there are three core questions:

1. How many minority parliamentarians are actually present in national legislatures?
2. What factors determine the levels of minority inclusion?

3. What are the consequences of minority representation? That is, what is the relationship between presence and influence, between minorities being included in institutions of governance and the protection and status of such minority groups?

**Current state of research on minority representation**

The bulk of the research that has been published on the topic revolves around discussions of voting rights and minority representation in the United States, the effect of electoral systems on the election of minority parliamentarians, how minority representation fits into power sharing constructs, and surveys of special mechanisms for including minority parliamentarians in parliament.

The two most relevant multi-country comparative surveys are Anna Jarstad’s *Changing the Game: Consociational Theory and Ethnic Quotas in Cyprus and New Zealand* (Uppsala University Press, 2001) which includes details of 17 countries with ‘ethnic quotas. This information was expanded to 33 cases in Reynolds “Reserved Seats in National Legislatures” (2005). The Jarstad thesis offered analysis of the effect of these ethnic quotas on politics in New Zealand and Cyprus while the Reynolds piece focused on the variety of mechanisms used without engaging fully the question of the utility of such ‘reserved seats.’ Jarstad wrote about minority representation as component parts of peace settlements in her chapter on power sharing in power sharing in *From War to Democracy*, (eds. Jarstad and Sisk, Cambridge University Press, 2008).

**Other related research**

1. **Comparative surveys**

   Alongside the broadly comparative works mentioned above there are a number of works which compare two or more countries. To varying degrees each work entertains one or more of the three core questions.


   Verstichel, Annelies. “Special measures to promote minority representation in elected bodies: the experience of the OSCE HCNM.” Council of Europe, 2008.

2. **Women and minority representation**

   There are a few works which specifically look at the links between the representation of women and marginalized minorities. These articles focus mostly on the impact of minority legislators on public policy. Research that focuses on female minority parliamentarians, a double layer of marginalization, are rare.


Case Studies

1. United States/Canada
There are a number of studies of ethnic/racial minority representation in the United States Congress and US State Legislatures. A selection of the most recent includes:

Articles dealing with the variables which determine minority electoral success


Articles dealing with the consequences of minority representation in US/Canada


2. Asia-Pacific
A number of case studies of legislatures in the Asia-Pacific region consider degrees of minority inclusion, while others look at ethnic electoral inclusion as a component art of conflict management in the divided society of Sri Lanka.


3. Minority representation as a component part of power sharing theory

The following works address minority representation as an element of power sharing or consociational structures.


Schwartz, Andrew. “Affirmative action and electoral engineering.” Philosophy in the Contemporary World, vol. 9 no. 2, pp. 93-100, 2002


4. Eastern Central European Case Studies


Promoting inclusive parliaments
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5. Western European Case Studies


Related data sets


Extensive review (text and tables) of electoral systems, constituencies, and provisions for minority guarantees in COE countries.

Further bibliographic references on related issues


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