



# The Symbolic Representation of Gender: A Discursive Approach

*Emanuela Lombardo, Petra Meier*

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What is symbolic representation? Since Hanna Pitkin's seminal *The Concept of Representation*, the symbolic has been the least studied dimension of political representation. Innovatively adopting a discursive approach, this book - the first full-length treatment of symbolic representation - focuses on gender issues to tackle important questions such as: What are women and men symbols of, and how is gender constructed in policy discourse? It studies what functions symbolic representation fulfils in the construction of gender, what social roles get legitimized in policy discourse, and how this affects power constellations, ultimately revealing much about the relation between symbolic, descriptive, and substantive representation. Emanuela Lombardo and Petra Meier draw on theories of symbolic representation and gender, as well as rich primary material about political debates on labour and care issues, partnership and reproductive rights, gender violence, and quotas. Using this original data, the authors show that reconsidering symbolic representation from a discursive perspective makes explicit issues of (in)equality embedded within particular constructions, as well as their consequences for political representation and gender equality. This important exploration raises relevant new questions regarding the representation of gender that form valuable contributions to the fields of political science, political theory, sociology, and gender studies.

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