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The Symbolic Representation of Gender

A Discursive Approach

Emanuela Lombardo, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain and
Petra Meier, University of Antwerp, Belgium

'Politics is packed with symbols, yet symbolic representation is little-explored. With surgical precision the book dissects the symbolic representation of gender through the discursive construction of women and men as political symbols. Empirically well illustrated, it builds a theory on symbolic representation and the functions it fulfils related to the construction of identity, legitimacy, and political control. A must read!'

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'Integrating comparative European policy studies into a sophisticated account of symbolic representation, Lombardo and Meier demonstrate how states preserve male privilege even while adopting the language of gender balance and gender equality. This ground-breaking work illuminates the impressive explanatory potential of feminist political studies.'

Mary Hawkesworth, Rutgers University, USA

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.

Contents: The symbolic representation of gender: an introduction; Theorising symbolic representation; A discursive approach to symbolic representation; Symbolic representation and the construction of identity; Symbolic representation and legitimacy; Symbolic representation and political control; The relation between descriptive and symbolic representation; The relation between substantive and symbolic representation; Power at work in the symbolic representation of gender; Conclusions; Bibliography; Index.

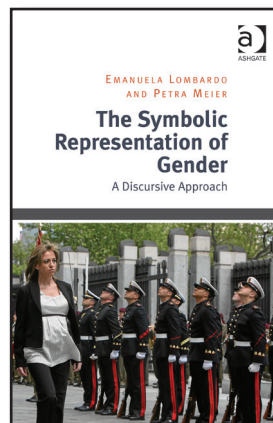
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