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Emotional Responsiveness in an Age of Insecurity A *Conceptual Proposal and a Research Agenda*

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ABSTRACT

Policy responsiveness to the preferences of the citizen's has been a major topos of academic discussions in political science in recent years. Much ink has been spilled on questions like whether responsiveness should be considered a major part of democratic representation, to what extent governments actually are responsive to citizens and to which groups. What these accounts have in common is that they usually focus on material policies to study representation. In this article, I argue that while this perspective is of great importance, it leaves out an important part of politics – emotions. According to my argument, this is problematic especially in an age of insecurity when threats and anxiety increasingly dominate politics. Therefore, bringing together theories of representation, insights from political psychology, political communication research and policy studies I develop a conceptual approach to studying emotional responsiveness and set out a research agenda for empirical studying this additional linkage between citizens and politics.

KEYWORDS

Emotions; responsiveness;
democratic representation;
emotional responsiveness

1. Introduction¹

When the French President Emmanuel Macron pushed the pension reform package through the French Parliament in Spring 2023, a big movement of contestation was populating the streets of French city centres. The more the government reiterated not to cede and even activated the special procedure of the article 49.3 in the French constitution to adopt the reform package without a vote in the *Assemblée Nationale*, the broader the movement became including not only the 'usual suspects' of trade unionists, but also members of the civil society, students or employers (Hayes et al., 2023). Indeed, the protest movement developed into a contestation about the way how politics are made. It was no longer about the material aspects of the reform such as increasing the pension age, but about the fact that the President (and its majority) seemed deaf towards the feelings of the French citizens. In his essay, French political scientist Alain Faure observes: 'In all the testimonials [*of the protesters, the author*], the perception of

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what is at stake seems to be related to personal feelings, as if the context of the reform was liberating, enabled them to express their buried feelings' (Faure, 2023).

This example illustrates that representation seems to be more than what is usually seen as being the core of democracy, namely substantive representation – i.e. to advance the policy interests of the represented (Pitkin, 1967).² In fact, from a perspective of 'promissory representation' (Mansbridge, 2003), namely that governments should fulfil electoral pledges, the French example is paradoxical – as President Macron had indeed announced to increase pension age before the election campaign and then simply enacted this pledge. Hence, standard models of representation such as the responsible party model, which considers political parties as transmission belts between citizens' preferences and public policies and party manifestos (Klingemann et al., 1994) or electoral pledges (Naurin et al., 2019) as crucial elements in a 'chain of responsiveness' (Dalton et al., 2011; Powell, 2004), fall short in explaining events like the French pension protests, which were, at some point, no longer about material policies but about feelings. In other words, the main question is how we can re-think Dahl's (1971, p. 1) famous concept of democracy as 'the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens' reaching beyond material preferences which usually dominate the empirical study of responsiveness (Page & Shapiro, 1983; Soroka & Wlezien, 2010) and congruence (Arnold & Franklin, 2012; Golder & Stramski, 2010).

In this paper, I argue that the contestation of the reform by French citizens illustrates how citizen's feelings of being represented may be increasingly detached from policy preferences and policy content (Bonansinga, 2022). In the pension reform example, citizens did, at some point, not mainly care about policy content, but they were angry, felt left aside and their emotions ignored by the government – as numerous testimonials of protesters in French TV reports have illustrated and most recently studied by Kuhlmann and Starke (2024). Bringing together theories of political representation, political psychology literature about insecurity, emotions and protection (Albertson & Gadarian, 2015; Bonansinga, 2022) and insights from comparative policy analysis (Maor, 2016, 2024), I argue that in addition to policy responsiveness, which has dominated the empirical analysis of substantive representation (Beyer & Hänni, 2018; Dahl, 1971), emotional responsiveness could be conceptualised as a fruitful concept that grasps dynamics of representation which have been flying under the radar of political scientists until now. I show that complementing the traditional 'linkage model' with an emotional channel of representation allows us to conceptualise different possible types of responsiveness – besides the well-known substantive responsiveness, I introduce rhetorical responsiveness, entrepreneurial responsiveness, and emotional responsiveness – depending on whether politicians respond with emotions or with policies to citizen's preferences or emotional states.

To substantiate this claim, this paper aims at theory and concept building. It builds on current theories of representation to more fully acknowledge the importance of the emotional linkage between politics and citizens. I develop this argument in three steps: First, I will discuss why it is important to think about representation beyond policy responsiveness and to bring emotions into the picture. Second, building on a brief recap of the theories of political representation, I will discuss how including emotions more plainly into models of responsiveness along policy preferences may give us a fuller picture of representation. Finally, I will discuss some suggestions for an empirical

research agenda that can help us analyse this largely uncharted territory of representation linked to emotional responsiveness.

2 Political Representation Beyond Material Responsiveness

In recent years, multiple crises like the pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, migration, crime, terrorism or financial crises have dominated the political agendas in Western Democracies and made insecurity one of the defining characteristics of politics (Hellwig, 2020, p. 66; Kinnvall et al., 2018). As insecurity has a strong subjective component (Béland, 2007; Chung & Mau, 2014; Starke et al., 2024) and relates to feelings such as anxiety or anger rather than objective indicators, governments have sought to respond with various messages (and policies) of protection (Albertson & Gadarian, 2015). However, although political communication scholars and political psychologists have collected much evidence about the importance of emotions in politics, most studies have focused on rhetoric, political communication or individual-level attitudes such as populism (Bakker et al., 2021; Bonansinga, 2020; Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Gabehart et al., 2023; Jenkins, 2018; Kinnvall & Svensson, 2022; Marcus, 2002). Instead, the more general consequences for politics and democracy following from these changes have not been discussed sufficiently, yet. A possible reason for the lack of engagement with emotions in the study of representation as policy responsiveness, may lie in the fact that emotions and rationality have often been seen as mutually exclusive, opposing each other (Freeden, 2013). And as the empirical study of policy responsiveness as backbone of representation is rooted in public policy research – see for instance the work by Baumgartner and Jones (1993), which has been a landmark contribution of thinking about representation as a linkage between (material) preferences and policy output (Jones & Baumgartner, 2004) – the neglect of emotions in this strand of research can probably be explained by the development of the field.³ Indeed, the approach to decision-making in policy analysis is mostly knowledge-centric (Paul & Haddad, 2019, p. 310) while, on the contrary, the concept of emotion remains understudied. As a result, with policy responsiveness been mainly seen as the translation of citizens' preferences into policy outputs, the rationalist view of representation has dominated the picture. Emotions were only rarely taken into account.⁴

One of the rare contributions directly engaging in a discussion about what the changing environment with emotions becoming more and more central in politics means for the big macro-level questions of democratic representation is the article by Flinders and Hinterleitner (2022). The authors argue that

'a new form of 'grievance politics' has emerged that constitutes a distinct and novel species of representative democracy. Grievance politics is defined by the fuelling and funneling of negative emotions and various blame-based political strategies which explicitly challenge and confound many of the core principles and values that have traditionally underpinned conventional conceptions of party politics.'

Yet, while their concept of grievance politics emphasises that a new style of representation has emerged, which is no longer based on policies but on performative actions as well as 'blame-based and emotion-related strategies' (Flinders & Hinterleitner, 2022, p. 678), a more systematic engagement with the question of how these changes in politics

affect our models of democratic representation reaching beyond the focus on populism and grievances is missing from the literature. An obvious starting point for such an endeavour is to review how existing landmark studies on representation have dealt with non-material elements of representation such as feelings and emotions.

2.1 Emotions and Representation in the Classic Literature

Theories of political representation have been a vibrant field of political science since decades. As it would go beyond the scope of this article to review the entire field of research (for an overview, see Rohrschneider & Thomassen, 2020), I will focus on the classic works on political representation by Pitkin (1967) and Mansbridge (2003, 2011) and ask to what extent emotions are actually part of these accounts.⁵ Both models revolve around the more narrow understanding of political representation, that Urbinati and Warren call the ‘standard model’: namely a principal-agent relationship between constituencies (principals) that elect ‘agents to stand for and act on their interests and opinions, thus separating the sources of legitimate power from those who exercise that power’ (Urbinati & Warren, 2008, p. 289).

This definition of the ‘standard model’ is important in two respects. First, it emphasises that the question of what exactly is represented – here opinions or interests – is not trivial. And second, it differentiates between different modes of representation – ‘standing for’ and ‘acting for’ – highlighting the distinction between a more static (standing for) and a more dynamic (acting for) mode of representation. Both aspects have been prominently discussed in the ‘Concept of Representation’ (Pitkin, 1967), which distinguishes different types of representation⁶: In the realm of the static ‘standing for’-representation, the book identifies two modes – ‘descriptive’ and ‘symbolic’ representation. Whereas the first concept rests on the resemblance of crucial characteristics between individuals and their representative (age, gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, etc.) (Pitkin, 1967, p. 87), ‘symbolic representation’ describes a connection of people who believe that a political leader represents them – a ‘symbolic connection’ which is not based on ‘rational justification’ but on symbols, myths or habits (Pitkin, 1967, p. 100). ‘Acting-for’ representation, instead, occurs when a representative takes decisions (‘acts’) in a way that furthers the interests of the constituents. It therefore describes a linkage based on the substance of policies, which is why Pitkin calls this type ‘substantive acting for others’ (Pitkin, 1967, p. 115) or ‘substantive representation’ (Pitkin, 1967, p. 212). This corresponds to the understanding of policy responsiveness discussed above.

In terms of what exactly is the starting point of representation, opinions or interests, Pitkin’s book is rather unspecific using many examples – and emotions are only mentioned in the discussion of symbolic representation. Indeed, when people think that they are represented by a political actor, this belief ‘seems to rest on emotional, affective, irrational psychological responses rather than on rationally justifiable criteria’ (Pitkin, 1967, p. 100). An example are heads of a state, who may be seen as symbolically representing a country based on emotions: ‘[S]ince there is no rational justification for the symbolic connection [...], symbol-making is not a process of rational persuasion, but of *manipulating affective responses* [emphasis, the author] and forming habits’. Hence, if emotions play a role, it is in relation to political leaders, whereas emotions do not matter for substantive representation.

Another influential and more fine-grained concept of representation has been put forward by Mansbridge (2003). It differentiates between four types: (1) promissory representation, which is based on the fulfilment of (policy) pledges by the representatives that they have made before their election; (2) anticipatory representation, where representatives act on behalf of what they anticipate as being the preferences of their constituents at the next election; (3) gyroscopic representation, which describes a situation when representatives are elected by constituents based on their personality, but remain relatively self-reliant and adhering to their own principles when taking decisions (which is why they are relatively unresponsive to sanctions⁷); and (4) surrogate representation, which occurs when an agent represents the interests of a principal to which she is not electorally bound. While the framework describes the possible relationships between constituents and representatives straightforwardly, the reference point for representatives that links their actions to the constituents – interest or opinions to recall the definition from above –, is not very broadly discussed.⁸ In most instances, Mansbridge uses the term of ‘preferences’ (e.g. p. 517), which also forms the backbone of other models of political representation such as the ‘chain of responsiveness’ (Powell, 2004) that links citizens’ preferences to public policies via political parties, parliaments and government formation.⁹

However, at least at two points, Mansbridge’s model seems to allow for feelings and emotions to play a role. *First*, in her discussion of anticipatory representation, Mansbridge states that her model includes the possibility of voters to think about their preferences and introduces the concept of ‘enlightened preferences’ with enlightenment being defined as ‘product of experience and *emotional understanding* [emphasis by the author] as well as of simple cognition’ (Mansbridge, 2003, p. 517). Hence, when politicians adopt a policy that they perceive of being in line with the ‘enlightened preferences’ of their constituents, emotions are part of the considerations on which the politicians base their decisions. *Second*, surrogate representation also includes an emotional dimension as the bond between surrogate constituents and surrogate representatives can also build on feelings that tie together these social groups: ‘Legislators deeply allied with a particular ideological perspective often *feel* [emphasis by the author] a responsibility to nondistrict constituents from that perspective or group’ (Mansbridge, 2003, p. 523). This argument bears some resemblance with Pitkin’s concept of symbolic representation and the affect-based linkage between citizens and representatives (see above).

In sum, although empirical scholars have mostly interpreted representation as policy responsiveness referring to the translation of measurable policy preferences into policies by governments (Esaïasson et al., 2017; Soroka & Wlezien, 2010), the idea of representation in Pitkin’s and Mansbridge’s work seems not to be directed solely towards pure policy preferences, but can also be read as including feelings and emotions of citizens towards a person or a policy – at least partially. Admittedly, this part of the theory is not conceptualised very systematically and more of a side-thought than the main story – but Pitkin does allow for emotions in ‘symbolic representation’, and Mansbridge comprises them as part of ‘enlightened preferences’ which allows to relate them to substantive representation.¹⁰ These insights can be used as entry points for a more elaborate discussion about how an emotional dimension could be included more systematically into the analysis of political representation. To do so, the following sections will follow Pitkin’s differentiation between ‘standing-for’ – and ‘acting-for’-representation and discuss

possible additions to these models based on the insights about the role of emotions in the current political context.

2.2 Emotions in ‘Standing-for’ Representation

A first perspective on emotions and representation is to consider how ‘standing-for’-representation may allow for an emotional component. For Pitkin, it is possible that substantive representation may be unreachable due to major disagreements – and it is in these situations when ‘standing-for’-representation gains relevance and emotions come into play:

‘But what becomes of terms like ‘interest’ and ‘justifiable’ if there can be lifelong, profound disagreement among men as to what their interest is – disagreement that remains despite deliberation and justification and argument? To the extent that this is so, the possibility of a substantive acting for others breaks down, and that view of the concept becomes irrelevant to politics. To the extent that this happens in practical political life, we seem then to fall back on descriptive representation; we choose a representative who shares our values and commitments and prevent the irresolvable conflict. Failing that, we can retreat to symbolic representation; we can let ourselves be influenced by *emotional ties* in spite of our doubts about whether our interests are being served [emphasis by the author]’. (Pitkin, 1967, p. 213)

Hence, following this view, emotions can form ties between representatives and voters as an alternative to interest-based ‘substantive’ and descriptive representation. But how exactly would such an emotional link between a citizen and her representative look like?

Ethnographic research can give us a hint as to how such emotional ties are constructed. Building on examples from Australia, Jakimow (2022, p. 1) has for instance studied ‘affective correspondence’ defined as ‘correspondence between a representative and represented (that is, the ways the former *feel like or for* the latter) [original emphasis]’. By analysing communication and behaviour of politicians as well as ethnographic traces collected through interviews and observation, she shows that affective alignment¹¹ can happen when representatives share emotional experiences with their constituents. Jakimow describes a Senator outraged by the proposal to cut funding for students for underprivileged groups in society because her lived experience had taught her that this was deeply unjust (Jakimow, 2022, pp. 3–4). In a speech, the Senator formed an emotional tie to this group that was built by her anger and bitterness. As Jakimow, who herself followed a nonconventional pathway to university, states: ‘I cannot help but get choked up by her speech every time I see it’ (Jakimow, 2022, p. 4). This affective alignment seems to be tied to persons – a representative and a represented ‘being moved in similar ways’ (Jakimow, 2022, p. 4). It therefore illustrates nicely how symbolic representation through emotional ties may look like.¹² Moreover, if such alignment results in concrete consequences in terms of ‘acting for’ the respective group – e.g. when the representative makes policy decisions based on the felt emotional ties to the constituents – the emotional ties of affective correspondence would even result in ‘acting for’ representation. In this case, we would observe emotions as being part of ‘surrogate representation’ to a group with whom the representative is emotionally aligned – as already discussed by Mansbridge (see above).

Research on ‘appearance effects’ from political psychology also indicates that representation may be influenced by emotions – although the main concern of these studies is on the process of selection (and less concerned with the accountability-part of representation). Nevertheless, most of the studies from this strand of research find not only a general effect of a candidate’s beauty on being elected (e.g. Lawson et al., 2010; Praino et al., 2014; Rosenberg et al., 1986), but also some evidence of an effect of emotions. In fact, several scholars have found that feelings of sympathy (‘likeability’ or ‘warmth’) towards a candidate (usually elicited by face photographs) can – under certain circumstances, such as the question of who is the opposing candidate – influence ratings of candidates and relate to vote intentions (Jäckle et al., 2019, p. 434; but: Rule et al., 2010). In terms of models of representation, this research can be linked to a certain subtype of ‘gyroscopic’ representation, namely when citizens select representatives not only based on their ideology, but because they seem to be a ‘good type of political leader’ (Fearon, 1999, p. 56). Indeed, having ‘warm feelings’ towards a candidate has been shown to influence voters’ evaluations – particularly for ‘out partisans’ (Bor & Laustsen, 2022). Research into the role of personality traits also indicates that when people perceive a leader as empathic, they evaluate him better – a finding that is especially clear-cut in presidential elections after 1992 in the US (Funk, 1999, p. 712). Hence, research on appearance effects and personality traits also points to the relevance of emotion-related dimensions such as empathy, likeability and warmth for representation as representatives that appear in such a way have a higher probability of succeeding in selection process.

Figure 1 summarises the arguments put forward in this section by showing how emotions come into play when thinking about a linkage between citizens and representatives that is not mainly based on ‘substantive representation’, i.e. on preferences and policies, but based on personal affective ties. It shows, first, that emotional correspondence between citizens and representatives can be seen as an additional linkage that makes people feel represented – either symbolically or even based on actions for the group to which a representative is emotionally linked to (surrogate representation). Second, the graph also indicates the possibility that an evaluation criterion for ‘good representatives’ in the concept of gyroscopic representation can be seen in emotion-related factors such as likeability and empathy. At any rate, given the personalisation of politics (Adam & Maier, 2010), the emotional dimension of ‘standing-for’ representation is an important addition to existing perspectives.

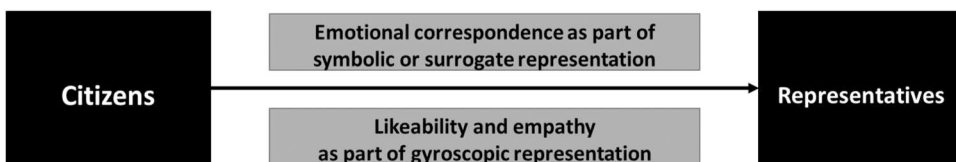


Figure 1. Emotions in ‘standing-for’ symbolic representation.

2.3 Emotions in 'Acting For'-representation

A second way of thinking about representation and emotions is to zoom in on representation in substantive terms, modelled as a linkage between citizen's interests and the content of public policies. This is the idea behind 'substantive representation' and the standard 'linkage model' in political representation where citizens preferences are related to public policy outcomes, often via political parties and governments as transmission belt (Dalton et al., 2011; Powell, 2004). The backbone of this model rests on issue-specific linkages about material policies, where citizens' preferences for a certain policy (e.g. lower taxes) will be translated into policy decisions (Soroka & Wlezien, 2010), which is why it falls into the category of 'acting-for'-representation. However, if we take the changed nature of policy-making in an age of insecurity into account where 'emotion-related strategies' (Flinders & Hinterleitner, 2022, p. 678) become a crucial part of politics (see 2.1), two questions arise: First, we can ask to what extent preferences about material policies are actually still as relevant when citizens' feelings and emotions are seen as starting point of policy-making. And, second, we can discuss whether citizens' preferences can actually be assumed as an exogenous starting point of such an issue-specific responsiveness model when we know that framing and emotions play increasingly important role, upstream, that is when problems are defined and set on the agenda (Maor, 2016, 2024; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019).

On the first point, that is the question of whether policy-making is mainly a reaction to material preferences and/or emotions, several studies indicate that the emotional component is, at least, non-negligible. Research on law-and-order policies has shown, for instance, that fear of crime and feelings of insecurity are crucial drivers of policy-making in this area in addition to or moderating the impact of changes in actual crime rates (Enns, 2016; Jennings et al., 2020; Wenzelburger, 2015). This essential role of emotions is also tangible in what former US President Obama stated in a German TV interview about how politics work: 'I came to realise that people don't vote based on policy, not even on facts. They vote on stories. And I became president, frankly, because I told a pretty-good story about what America could be and should be' (cited in Kuhlmann & Blum, 2021, p. 278). With emotions being a key ingredient in such stories, especially by Obama (Landau & Keeley-Jonker, 2018), and vote-seeking being a crucial consideration in policy-making (Müller & Strøm, 1999), the assumption that policy decisions ought to be heavily influenced by what policy-makers perceive as emotions of citizens is not far-fetched. Moreover, as social media is increasingly important for political debate and information of citizen, the fact that emotions that create high arousal are more likely to get viral (Berger & Milkman, 2012), points in favour of an increased importance of emotions as ingredient of policy-making.

A second entry-point of emotions in the dynamics of 'acting-for'-representation concerns the question of whether citizens' political preferences can actually be considered exogenous to politics and the role that emotions may play if we endogenise preference formation. On this matter, political communication researchers have criticised the standard responsiveness model for ignoring evidence that citizens' preferences can be affected by framing and political communication (most outspoken: Druckman, 2014). The consequences for theorising representation without 'bedrock preferences' (Disch, 2011, p. 100) are straightforward: If preferences are malleable and strongly influenced

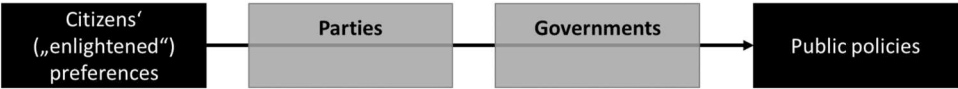
by politicians' communication about policies, the linkage model could be turned upside down, i.e. start with policies and end with preferences. Empirically, much does indeed speak in favour of endogenising preferences. Several authors have found that political communication does affect policy preferences (Beckett, 1997; Chong & Druckman, 2007) and may also stimulate citizens' emotional responses – such as fear of crime (Wenzelburger & Schröder, 2025). This has led to some adaptations of models of representation, such as in the thermostatic model (Soroka & Wlezien, 2010) or in more deliberative theoretical perspectives such as 'recursive representation' (Mansbridge, 2018).

Emotions, however, have not been systematically discussed in this connection. This is surprising because we know that emotions are intimately linked to political communication and framing. In one of the first studies that systematically looks at the interplay between emotions and framing, Druckman and McDermott (2008) indicate, for instance, that the extent to which individuals are ready to take risky choices after reading a positive or negative framing in an experiment depends on the emotional state in which people find themselves. The study shows that individuals are more likely to be framed (and change attitudes) when they feel negative emotions, whereas the results for enthusiasm are more mixed.¹³ Beyond political psychology studies on the individual level, public policy research has also demonstrated the relevance of emotions for the policy process in general, and problem definition as well as agenda setting (where framing occurs) in particular (Pierce, 2021). In this regard, the concept of 'emotional policy entrepreneurs' (Maor, 2024) who strategically stimulate emotions to further their political goals indicates that emotions are part and parcel of policy processes.¹⁴

In terms of outcomes, such a process can result in 'policy bubbles' and overreactions (Jones et al., 2014; Maor, 2016; Wenzelburger, 2020), when emotional entrepreneurs succeed in stimulating emotions to frame an issue as problematic, politicians respond with policies and communicate about the policy, which, in turn, stimulates emotions and increases demand for even more policy measures. Major theoretical accounts of the policy process, such as the Multiple Streams, the Advocacy Coalition or the Narrative Policy Framework therefore start to include emotions more plainly into their models (Crow & Jones, 2018; Fullerton & Weible, 2024; Gabehart et al., 2023; Maor, 2024; Pierce et al., 2024). In contrast, representation theory has yet to incorporate this strategic element in their concepts, according to which the citizen's preoccupation with a certain issue can be seen as the outcome of politicians purposely emphasising a certain policy using emotionally charged communication in order to gain support for this policy.

Figure 2 summarises how an 'enhanced linkage model' that includes the two arguments put forward in this section could look like. The stylised model includes, firstly, citizens' emotional states (e.g. being fearful, anxious or enthusiastic) *besides* policy preferences as starting point of the chain of representation (see our first argument in this section). Secondly, it also emphasises the need to account for 'emotional framing' by parties, governments, or other political actors such as interest groups that may be directed at policy preferences as well as emotions. Thirdly, it includes the possibility that public policies themselves exert an influence on both policy preferences and emotions. While feedback on policy preferences has been acknowledged in the literature (Busemeyer, 2022; Pierson, 1993), the emotional component needs to be taken up in order to grasp situations in which public policy decisions lead to emotional reactions by citizens – such as in the example of the French pension reform. And, finally, it also

The „standard“ linkage model



The enhanced linkage model, including emotional responsiveness

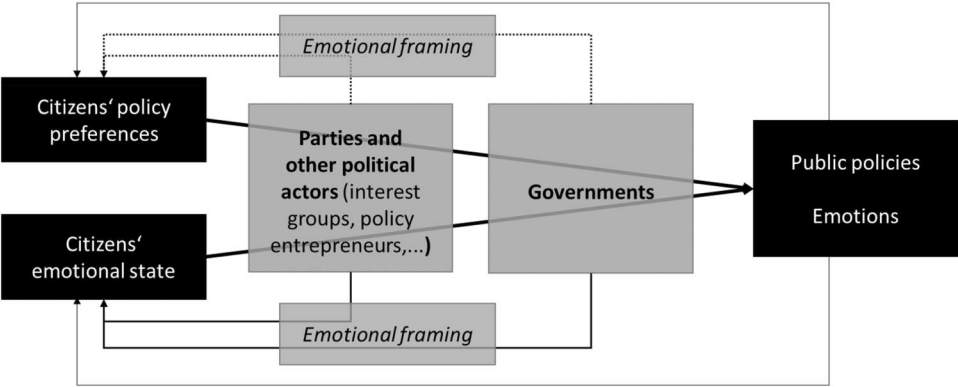


Figure 2. Substantive representation in an enhanced linkage model.

indicates that a response through emotions by politicians to both policy preferences and emotional states is possible.

2.4 Emotions and Substantive Policy Preferences: Theorising Types of Responsiveness in Acting-for Representation

In the last sections, I have presented where emotions have already been (partially) included in existing theories of democratic representation and how they could be brought more plainly into the picture. While I have already given some indications about how analyses of standing-for-representation have started to take up emotions and affect, I want to take the theoretical reasoning one step further when it comes to acting-for representation, as this model has been the workhorse of most of the empirical research on policy responsiveness. Starting from the observation that the linkage between (policy) preferences of citizens and policy outputs is only one channel of representation besides a second linkage – emotional responsiveness – a key question concerns the relationship between those two.

Taking the ‘enhanced linkage model’ (Figure 2) as a starting point and disregarding the different steps between citizens’ policy preferences and emotions on the one and the policy output or and the emotions of politicians on the other hand, we can think

Table 1. Types of responsiveness including emotions.

	Policy response Instruments: Legislation, spending	Emotional response Instruments: Political communication, visuals
Citizens’ policy preferences	Substantive responsiveness	Rhetorical responsiveness
Citizens’ feelings, affective states and emotions	Entrepreneurial responsiveness	Emotional responsiveness

of four different relationships between emotions, policies and preferences (see Table 1). The rows indicate that citizens can hold preferences regarding certain policy issues as well as exhibit feelings, affective states and emotions. The columns take up the possible responses by the political sphere – which can, again, be policy-related (e.g. a new law) or mainly emotional (e.g. in political communication, rhetorics or visuals). From the setup of the table result four possible boxes. Two of them are congruent in nature and have already been described above. In these cases, policy preferences are responded to with policy measures ('substantive responsiveness') or citizens' emotions are responded to by emotions in political communication ('emotional responsiveness'). However, two remaining combinations are thinkable. These relate to situations in which policy preferences are responded to by emotional communication ('rhetorical responsiveness') or the case of a policy response given to a mainly affective need on the side of the citizens ('entrepreneurial responsiveness'). I will discuss each of the boxes in turn.

Substantive responsiveness. Policy-making taking into account the issue-specific preferences of the citizens describes the standard model of responsiveness which has been described in representation theory 'substantive representation' (see above).

Rhetorical responsiveness. In some cases, politicians respond to citizens' material concerns by rhetoric. This linkage has been described by Esaiasson and Wlezien (2017, p. 702) as 'explaining' and could mean actual justifications. In Parliaments, for instance, political parties may use debates to show their 'rhetorical responsiveness' to constituencies by bringing up issues dear to them (Brettschneider, 1996). However, rhetorical responsiveness could also be mainly a strategy of 'cheap talk' and resemble 'symbolic politics' based on 'slogans, badges, banners and pictures, gestures, ritual acts, and political staging' (Sarcinelli, 2008). At any rate, however, research has shown that emotions are a key component of such 'rhetorical responsiveness', for instance in parliamentary speeches (Osnabrügge et al., 2021; Pierce et al., 2024)

Emotional responsiveness. When politicians sense the affective state of citizens and respond to it in their communication, this would be a combination that can be described as a situation of 'emotional responsiveness' and has been discussed in depth above. There are many empirical examples of when such communication occurs: In the midst of the financial crisis of 2008, for instance, several governments (as well as central bankers) went out to announce blanket guarantees for savings reassuring anxious citizens who feared that their saving would be at risks (as well as markets) (Grossman & Woll, 2013). Similarly, politicians sometimes use positive affective states and react with emotional communication or visuals to also emotionally represent that they are in phase with citizens. In France, the re-opening of the Notre Dame cathedral strongly connected to a 'patrimonial emotion' (Heinich, 2024) was clearly used by President Macron to show his emotional attachment with what the people of France felt in this moment talking about pride and nation (Gombault, 2020). In sum, such responsiveness could lead to 'affective correspondence' (Jakimow, 2022), where politicians take up the affective state of citizens and represent these through political communications or visuals – reaching clearly beyond material aspects of policy-making.

Entrepreneurial responsiveness. The last of the four boxes describes a situation when politicians respond to citizens' affective states with policy change. I have described such a case before in the context of law-and-order policies, when penal law is harshened as a reaction to fear of crime. Indeed, an emotion-policy-link has often been described in

relation to protective policies, which are geared towards anxious citizens. In their book about ‘anxious politics’, Albertson and Gadarian (2015) present several empirical cases of such relationships linked to the state offering protection to citizens. I term this type of responsiveness with policies to emotions as ‘entrepreneurial responsiveness’ as it involves the sensing of emotions among citizens to further policy goals. Maor (2024) has recently identified ‘emotional policy entrepreneurs’ who aim at ‘manipulating emotions and emotional bonds – altering the emotional experiences, expressions, and behaviour of others – in pursuit of their policy goals’. From this perspective, entrepreneurial responsiveness often has a strategic element and involves actors who take advantage of a certain emotional state to push through their favourite policies.

3 Discussion and Ways Forward

In this contribution, I have argued that the current changes in the political context with questions about (in)security having developed into a dominating feature of politics which necessitate to re-think political representation beyond the linkage between citizen’s preferences and policy decisions, which has been the dominating perspective in empirical research on representation and responsiveness. Going back to the landmark studies of Pitkin and Mansbridge, this article has shown that we can draw on some initial ideas included in these classic works to develop an emotional perspective on political representation. *First, symbolic representation* has been related to emotions as a possible mechanism linking representatives and individuals. Hence, empirical research on symbolic representation could fully acknowledge these ties in future work. Studies on personalisation of politics have already provided some hints as to how research designs could zoom in on emotional linkages. Scholars looking into political communication have found, for instance, that politicians use self-personalisation in social media with a more emotional and private style (Metz et al., 2020) and an increasing use of emotional statements has also been found in a study on the European election campaigns of 2014 and 2019 (Rusmann et al., 2024). Although these studies are not necessarily interested in the consequences for representation, the upshot of increased emotional communication in the context of personalisation in social media is clear (on individual strategies, see Geise et al., 2024): If politicians use personal and emotional communication as an instrument to create an affective linkage between themselves and citizens, this can be seen as an attempt to enhance the ‘standing-for’-dimension of representation. Thus, a promising way forward would be to link these studies on emotional communication with individual-level data on political representation. Experiments using emotional stimuli could for instance study how perceptions of representations by individuals change when they are confronted with an emotional message as compared to a non-emotional statement. In that way, the emotional dimension of symbolic representation could be studied more deeply.

Second, research on substantive representation could also include emotions more plainly in future analyses. In fact, although the emotional dimension of what Mansbridge calls ‘enlightened preferences’ has been mostly neglected in empirical studies, this does not mean that it cannot be researched. Instead of focussing on material policy preferences (e.g. more or less social benefits), researchers could for instance also ask about the emotions that are attached to certain policies. Similarly, on the side of representatives,

future work could tap into the question of how certain policies are communicated and whether the emotionality of framing is related to citizens' policy preferences and/or their emotions. Complementing the traditional 'linkage model' with such an emotional channel of representation allows us to conceptualise different possible types of responsiveness depending on whether politicians respond with emotions or with policies to citizens' preferences or emotional states. Based on this framework, future studies could therefore empirically explore emotional states of citizens as well as the reactions of politicians, e.g. through emotional communication. Importantly, such studies could also to take into account whether political actors use emotional communication strategically to elicit emotions of citizens that would then yield support for their pet policies. Disentangling this complex process would necessitate both experimental studies of individual's reaction to emotional framing as well as qualitative analyses of how politicians actually (mis)perceive emotions of citizens and whether they deem them important enough for taking into account when they take policy decisions.

Finally, a *third aspect* needs to be kept in mind. Although I argue in this paper that we need to systematically integrate emotional responsiveness in our models of democratic representation, this does not mean that responsiveness to citizens' preferences about material policies does not play a role. Quite on the contrary, material policies continue to matter in many respects aside emotions – and the intriguing question is under which conditions emotional and/or material responsiveness is more central to representation and how both aspects could be combined. One important condition directly follows from the discussion of the literature – the policy domain which is analysed clearly seems to matter. Not only does the impact of emotions on framing depend on the policy domain (with stronger effects for health-related than investment decisions (Druckman & McDermott, 2008)), but the empirical examples from policy research also indicate that emotions matter more strongly in domains related to protection, such as crime, health or terrorism (Albertson & Gadarian, 2015). It could therefore well be that certain types of responses (as discussed in Table 1) vary systematically depending on policy domains. It is up to future studies in order to see under which circumstances and to what extent emotional responsiveness actually matters along material responsiveness.

At any rate, what transpires from this article is that taking emotions seriously when studying democratic representation seems a worthwhile and important task for future research. Going beyond material preference-policy linkages promises to see an additional face of representation that scholars have only started to discover. If this emotional face of representation proves to be important, empirically, this has implications for studying the quality of democracy and related questions. It could indeed help us explain some remaining puzzles such as why trust or satisfaction with democracy decreases in spite of the fact that electoral pledges are largely fulfilled (Naurin et al., 2019) or why the material situation of the median citizen (e.g. unemployment) seems unrelated to satisfaction with democracy (Bauer, 2018).

Notes

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2. Admittedly, I leave out the literature about procedural justice here which also argues that it is not policy outcomes that matter most for individual's satisfaction with the political system, but their evaluation of the political process (e.g., Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2001). Indeed, the process of the reform – the enforcement through the article 49(3) without a vote in the French Assemblée Nationale – is certainly also one explanation of why the protest movement gained traction. However, emotions, which are not a core concern of the procedural justice strand of research mainly interested 'process preferences', were key in the French case (already in the 2020 reform protests, see Kuhlmann and Starke (2024)).
3. The availability of high-quality survey data on issue preferences and data on policy outputs such as public spending may have contributed to this development, too.
4. I focus here on the important and influential strand of the (mostly empirical-quantitative) literature that translates Dahl's idea of 'responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens' into a straightforward opinion-policy linkage measured through issue preferences and policy output. I acknowledge that emotions have not been absent in classic representation theories and discuss these below.
5. I also do not go deal with the more recent work on the constructivist turn of representation theory, which has been reviewed in depth in Castiglione and Pollak (2018) or Disch et al. (2020), as it directly questions the idea of having a principal-agent relationship based on a link via democratic elections, but argues for a constructivist view where representation occurs when it is claimed (Saward, 2010). This does not mean that such an approach has significant value as it allows to take a much broader view. Indeed, as has been discussed recently by Knops (2023), discursive approaches to representation offer 'an entry point for affect' as their understanding of representation based on claims of representation are more amenable to emotions (Knops, 2023, p. 2767). Yet, for the purpose of this article, narrowing down on the standard model allows to more clearly see where 'emotional responsiveness' as a concept can contribute to our understanding of political representation.
6. Besides 'descriptive', 'symbolic' and 'substantive', Pitkin also identifies 'formalistic representation' as a fourth type. It will not be covered here, as it mainly describes the institutional rules that allow representation – namely authorization and accountability.
7. There has been some discussion whether both elements are needed to define gyroscopic representation (Mansbridge, 2011; Rehfeld, 2009).
8. There is a wide literature on the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation, the discussion of which reaches beyond the scope of this paper (Mansbridge, 1999; Phillips, 1998).
9. See also the 'chain of representation' (Rohrschneider & Thomassen, 2020a, 2).
10. In her more recent work on 'recursive representation', which is linked to the constructivist literature on representation, Mansbridge also acknowledges the role of emotions in persuasion and deliberative processes between citizens and representatives (Mansbridge, 2018).
11. Defined as 'the affective responses [a person] shares with her constituents' (Jakimow, 2022, p. 4).
12. A similar idea but from a citizen's perspective was recently proposed by Schumacher (2024) who looks what emotions citizens want to hear from their politicians ('affective representation').
13. In addition, the moderating effect of emotions on framing effects depends on the policy at stake.
14. A large number of empirical studies on party competition has found that political actors and political parties have strong incentives to push certain issues on the public agenda (e.g., the issues they own) because they may deliver electoral advantages (Davidsson & Marx, 2013; Petrocik, 1996; Seeberg, 2016)

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