



Women's Absence from Positions of Decision-making Power: Feminist Conundrums in Defining the Problem of Representation

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11.45am Monday 7th November
Lecture Theatre 1, Hedley Bull Building (130)
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This paper considers the best way to tackle the problem of women's absence from positions of power using a feminist approach. First, this paper outlines a feminist approach to power, emphasising the feminist insight that power is a relationship, not a thing, and that power is ubiquitous. It is inconsistent with this approach to power, however, to see women's absence from the top of the hierarchy as the 'absence' of women from power. Thinking about power in more complex ways gives us a better understanding of the nature of women's exclusion from positions of political leadership and influence. It directs our attention to the multiple sites of power (pointing to women in social movements and bureaucracies) and helps to moderate our feminist expectations of feminist women who occupy so-called 'positions of power'. It also suggests broader solutions to the problems of exclusion and underrepresentation that bedevil advocates for women's inclusion in contemporary democratic politics.

Laurel Weldon is Distinguished Professor of Political Science and at Purdue University in Indiana. She was recently appointed the inaugural director of the Purdue Policy Research Institute (PPRI). Professor Weldon's work focuses on: the role of social movements in influencing public policy; on violence against women; representation and public policy; women, work and poverty; and on comparative and international research.

This keynote lecture is part of the ***Gendered Innovations in the Social Sciences*** conference (7 - 9 November). One day or full conference registration is available.