

## Decoupling Values from Action

### An Event-History Analysis of the Election of Women to Parliament in the Developing World, 1945–90

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#### Abstract

World polity explanations of the isomorphism of institutions and values among nation-states have not focused sufficient attention on explaining the decoupling or gap between granting rights and actually implementing them. This article examines the decoupling phenomenon by exploring what factors influenced the gap between granting women the right to stand for election and the eventual election of the first woman to parliament in 92 countries of the developing world from 1945 to 1990. Both the influence of the world society and concepts of state-weakness are examined as determinants of this decoupling gap. This article shows that world polity influence on the nation-state extends beyond the adoption of policy scripts to bear on the actual implementation of world cultural models.

**Key words:** decoupling • developing world • policy • women in politics • world society

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#### INTRODUCTION

In 1945, only 30 countries in the world had elected a woman to parliament. By 1990, this number had risen to 136 (IPU, 1995). By 2007, more than 170 countries have followed suit (IPU, 2007). With the institutionalization of democracy in much of the developing world over this time, came the corresponding spread of women as legislators. Research has shown an increase in women's political representation globally in this period, including in the developing world (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Kunovich and Paxton, 2005; Matland, 1998; Paxton, 1997; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Paxton et al., 2006; Tripp and Kang, 2008). Indeed, as of 2007, the country with the highest level of female political representation was Rwanda, where 48.8 percent of their representatives were women (IPU, 2007). While many countries had elected women to parliament by 1990, even more countries had granted women the right to stand for election

without in fact electing a woman to parliament. Research on women's legislative representation has largely ignored this disconnect between women's parliamentary representation and their right to stand for election. Indeed, some countries have been very slow to elect a woman to parliament even after they possessed the right to stand for election. Why has this disconnect occurred, and what factors can explain the decoupling between rights and practice in this case?

This article will use two separate event-history analyses to examine this phenomenon of decoupling in the case of the election of women to parliament in the developing world from 1945 to 1990. First, I will demonstrate that the granting of the right to stand for election to women directly resulted from the international influence of world society. Then, I apply insights from the literature on world polity/society theory and research on state strength to examine the gap between a country's granting women the right to stand for election to parliament and the actual election of the first woman to parliament in that country. With this empirical case I will examine the question of what factors over time contributed to the decoupling of values from action in the case of women's legislative representation.

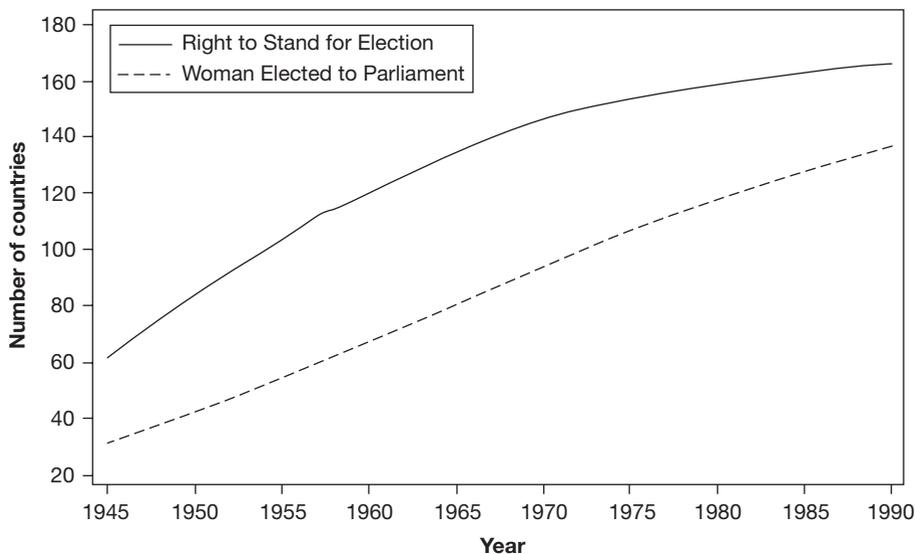
World society or world polity research has focused by and large on the similarity of institutions and values among nation-states, explaining the diffusion and spread of policies and institutions throughout the world (Barrett and Frank, 1999; Berkovitch, 1999a, 1999b; Boli and Thomas, 1999b; Frank et al., 1999; Hironaka, 2002; Meyer et al., 1997a, 1997b; Ramirez and McEneaney, 1997; Ramirez and Wotipka, 2003; Ramirez et al., 1997; Risse and Sikkink, 1999; Wotipka and Ramirez, 2003). Less attention has been paid, however, to the so-called 'decoupling' between adopting policies and actually implementing them as intended. While many nation-states have adopted similar policies and structures, the quality of practice or action that emerges in each case is often another matter altogether, especially the case of countries of the developing world (Meyer et al., 1997a).<sup>1</sup>

The emergence of similar institutions and ideas (isomorphism) in seemingly independent nation-states has prompted diverse scholarly explanations including: the rational maximizing nation-state actors of neo-realist international relations, economic explanations of dependence and exploitation provided by world systems theory, and the institutional and cultural influence of world polity theory. Due to its power at explaining the spread of common institutions and practices throughout the globe, it is this last theoretical perspective within which I will locate my analysis. World polity perspectives argue for the existence of a 'world society' of 'rationalized others' such as international organizations, professional associations, and communities of discourse that actively shape the behavior of nation-states, organizations, and individuals through the creation, promotion, and legitimation of 'world cultural models' that translate into

institutions, policies, and norms (Lechner and Boli, 2005; Meyer, 2007; Meyer et al., 1997a). From this perspective, nation-state behavior and morphology is due more to the enactment of these models than to any innate rational-actorhood of the state. Decoupling is the gap between the intentions inherent in enacting these models and the tangible execution of the same (Drori et al., 2003a).

I will argue that the gap between granting women the right to stand for parliamentary office and the election of the first woman to parliament is a concrete representation of the concept of decoupling as discussed elsewhere in the world polity literature (Drori et al., 2003a; Meyer et al., 1997a). Figure 1 shows this gap by highlighting the difference between the number of countries having granted women the right to stand for election and the number actually having elected a woman. It is clear from this illustration that in any given year during the period from 1945 to 1990 there are more than 20 nation-states which have granted women the right to stand for election but have yet to elect a woman. While some might argue that societal rather than state characteristics may play the greatest role in explaining this gap and determining women's political participation, research has shown that to a large extent it is state and political structures that have the most influence on the phenomenon of women's political participation (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Kunovich and Paxton, 2005; Matland, 1998; Paxton, 1997; Paxton et al., 2006; Shvedova, 2005). States grant this right, but may then do little to act upon it. Societal influences surely play a role in this decoupling, but without state adoption of the right of women to stand for election, the first woman cannot spontaneously be elected as a result of societal pressures.

**Figure 1** Number of countries granting women the right to stand for election and electing first woman to parliament, 1945–90



Thus, although reasons for the failure to elect a woman to parliament after having granted women the right to stand for election can rest on a number of factors including the frequency of elections, the quality of democratic institutions, and the status of women in the society, I will focus my analysis chiefly on the influence of the world polity on nation-state actors and on the characteristics of state weakness as determinants of the decoupling period between policy and practice. My chief theoretical contention will be to suggest that world society influence does not stop at simply the diffusion of world cultural models, but persists in encouraging states to adhere to models they have adopted. Though implied in the extant world society literature, this argument has not previously been explicitly argued.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Election of Women in the Developing World**

The election of women to parliament has been studied on the global level in several cross-national quantitative studies (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Kunovich and Paxton, 2005; Matland, 1998; Paxton, 1997; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Paxton et al., 2006; Tripp and Kang, 2008; Viterna et al., 2008). Focusing on explaining levels of women's representation primarily in cross-sectional snapshots of a specific point in time, research in this area has highlighted sometimes contradictory evidence which points to largely domestic factors such as economic development, ideology, electoral systems, electoral quotas, and social indicators of women's empowerment. More recently, research on women's representation has begun to look more closely at international influences on the election of women. Evidence shows that the growth and influence of the international women's movement, as well as country memberships in Women's International Non-Governmental Organizations (WINGOs) are positively related to achieving specific milestone levels of women's representation (Paxton et al., 2006). These factors point towards a direct role for world polity/world society influence on the level of women's representation in the developing world.

Two main problems with this body of research have been identified previously: 1) problems arising from treating developed and developing countries identically in the same sample; and 2) problems associated with taking only a cross-sectional perspective on women's representation, instead of examining the phenomenon over time. First, by ignoring the sometimes challenging context of democratization in the developing world, simple cross-national research that does not adequately address challenges unique to the developing world can overlook factors which influence women's political participation in the developing context, but not in the rest of the world (Viterna et al., 2008). This can be rectified by working with a sample of countries from only the developing world rather than including all countries. Second, by examining women's political representation over time, analysis can better focus on trends in growth or decline of

women's representation, test and build theories more effectively, and focus on processes which have an in-built time component as explanations (Hughes and Paxton, 2007).

My focus on the developing world and the gap between women's right to stand for parliament and the election of the first woman to parliament will account for both of these shortcomings of the previous research on this subject. Additionally, by focusing on the period of decoupling between these two events instead of the level of political representation as a percentage of seats in a country's legislature, my analysis will contribute a new perspective on the spread of women's political representation among the countries of the developing world.

### **World Polity Theory, Diffusion and Decoupling**

World polity explanations of the diffusion of world cultural models and the resulting isomorphism within the nation-state system emphasize the role of the world society in constructing social institutions and actors. This construction follows from the creation and promotion of universal norms and models for the enactment by all level of social actors in the world system. Culture in this context does not refer to styles of dress, taste, or appreciation of the arts, but instead to a series of models that outline expectations of how actors (nation-states, organizations, or individuals) ought to appear or behave (Lechner and Boli, 2005; Meyer, 2007; Meyer et al., 1997a). Within the nation-state governments and society enact these models and implement them as policy that shapes the state to meet the norms for rational and progressive actors established by the world polity. It is the enactment of these models across diverse groups of actors throughout the world that leads to the isomorphism of policy and practice despite different local contexts (Schofer and McEneaney, 2003).

This isomorphism of nation-states is explained through an institutional focus on international organizations, associations, and communities of discourse and thought. Commonly held models include institutions like citizenship, economic development, environmentalism, and the rule of law (Boli and Thomas, 1999a, 1999b; Drori, 2007; Drori et al., 2003a, 2003b; Frank et al., 2007; Hironaka, 2002; Jang, 2003; Lechner and Boli, 2005; Meyer et al., 1997a; Schofer and Hironaka, 2005). States develop and adhere to these models in myriad ways, but also face the problem of adopting institutions, policies, and values that do not correspond to local conditions. In these cases, many states experience what has been called in the literature a 'decoupling' of values/institutions from practice (Drori et al., 2003a; Meyer et al., 1997a). This gap between policy and implementation is seen anecdotally in many cases in both the developed and the developing world. The notion of decoupling is inherent in world polity theory because of the external nature of the cultural construction of the nation-state and the inherent tensions with local conditions and social structures.

Many studies within the world polity literature examine the diffusion of institutions and ideas among nation-states and around the world. These studies

attempt to answer the puzzle of why nation-states so closely resemble one another despite marked societal differences. For instance, why do the majority of nation-states develop institutions like central banks, ministries of education, or models of citizenship? Previous research has frequently applied event-history techniques to assess the diffusion of these different values and institutions across the globe, including environmentalism, woman's suffrage, science policy, and the ratification of human rights treaties (Frank et al., 2007; Hironaka, 2002; Jang, 2003; Meyer et al., 1997b; Ramirez and Wotipka, 2003; Ramirez et al., 1997). These studies have demonstrated the relationship between the cross-national diffusion of these ideas and institutions and the various components of the world polity, but have not commonly addressed the issue of decoupling.

Women's political participation and, more particularly, their representation in parliaments, can certainly be considered one of these world cultural models of world society. Previous research on different aspects of this model, whether women's suffrage or the achievement of different threshold levels of women's representation in parliaments, has clearly demonstrated how this model of women in politics was generated in the early 20th century and spread throughout most of the world by century's close (Berkovitch, 1999a, 1999b; Paxton et al., 2006; Ramirez et al., 1997). Indeed, in the case of female suffrage and more generally in the case of women's political rights, the evidence shows the strong international influence of world society on shaping a universalistic model of women's political participation in society. This influence takes the form of the actions and activities of social movements – particularly the women's movement – and of international actors on shaping the global agenda on women in politics. From early international efforts to promote women's suffrage to later focus on women in politics within the United Nations arena and in the international women's movement, a clearly identifiable model of women's political rights and citizenship took form (Paxton et al., 2006; Ramirez et al., 1997). It is this model which states begin to adopt, and the election of the first woman to parliament in any given country is a clear marker of this diffusion.

Two features of the nation-state's position within the world polity are relevant to my study of decoupling in the case of electing women to parliament: 1) the degree of embeddedness of the nation-state in the international organizations and associations of the world polity; and 2) density or frequency of world cultural model enactment throughout the world and specific regions (global and regional counts of the number of nation-state adopters). I will briefly discuss the evidence supporting both factors as important to the diffusion of world cultural models among nation-states, and then discuss how the decoupling phenomenon has been addressed in the literature.

#### *Embeddedness*

The concept of nation-state embeddedness within the world polity has been explored in a number of event-history analyses of diffusion of norms and models

in the world polity literature (Hironaka, 2002; Jang, 2003; Meyer et al., 1997b; Ramirez and Wotipka, 2003; Ramirez et al., 1997). The common finding has been that international and intergovernmental organizations play a key role in facilitating and promoting the diffusion and spread of similar models and institutions among nation-states. For instance, the increased likelihood of nation-states ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) treaty has been shown to correlate strongly to the timing of United Nations conferences on women, as well as with the degree of connectedness to international NGOs (INGOs) generally, and more specifically INGOs in the human rights field (Ramirez and Wotipka, 2003). This finding highlights the influential role of international organizations in spreading common institutions and policies across nation-states. Similarly robust positive relationships have been found in the cases of adopting women's suffrage and the influence of nation-state participation in the Women's International Suffrage Alliance (Ramirez et al., 1997), as well as the adoption of environmental impact assessment legislation and nation-state membership in intergovernmental and international environmental organizations (Hironaka, 2002). With the clear role for international institutions in promoting the diffusion of models, it stands to reason that these same rationalized others of the world polity might play a role in promoting adherence to models after they have been adopted, and thus decrease decoupling periods. I will address this question in my analysis by examining the influence of international organizations on the election of women in the developing world.

### *Density*

The density argument suggests that early-adopting nation-states help to spread and further legitimate world cultural models and facilitate the spread of the model to others. By adopting a world cultural model early on, some nation-states exert influence on others and on the rationalized others of the world polity to further refine and institutionalize the models or norms. The density or total number of nation-state already enacting a model therefore influences the adoption of the same model by other nation-states. This process has been demonstrated using event-history techniques in the cases of the spread of women's suffrage (Ramirez et al., 1997), the ratification of human rights treaties (Ramirez and Wotipka, 2003), and the proliferation of national science and technology ministries (Jang, 2003). With each additional nation-state adopting one of these policies or institutions, the likelihood of another adopting the same model increases. This demonstrates what has been described as a 'contagion' effect by which the prior proliferation of a model or institution actually exerts influence on the subsequent adoption of the same model by other nation-states. The more nation-states that adopt a model or institution, the more other states are likely to mimic this adoption to achieve legitimacy (Jang, 2003). As the number of countries adopting such models or norms increases a 'threshold' or 'tipping'

point is reached at which a norm achieves critical mass and other states begin to adopt it more rapidly regardless of the domestic context. This process following the tipping point is referred to as a 'norm cascade' (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). The norm cascade demonstrates the contagion effect by showing that the enactment of more widely accepted models can transcend even local conditions to spread among countries who seek greater legitimacy on the world stage. The election of women in some countries may therefore be expected to influence the election of the first woman to parliament in others. This contradiction between global norms and local conditions seems to be at the heart of the decoupling phenomenon, and so I will investigate its influence on decoupling within the case of women's political representation.

### *Decoupling*

The inconsistency between policy and practices among nation-states is an expected feature of the world polity theory of nation-state isomorphism and behavior (Meyer et al., 1997a). It is expressly because the policies, institutions, and models that the nation-state enacts are of external origin that there are often inconsistencies between the intentions behind policies and the observable execution of them (Drori et al., 2003a). For instance, many countries in the developing world have constitutions which implicate the state in offering any number of rights and protections to citizens and outlaw centuries-old discriminatory features; however, in many cases these states can do very little to 'live up to' the commitments set forth in these documents (Meyer et al., 1997a).

Evidence suggests that countries of the developing world have a much harder time bridging these decoupling gaps than developed countries (Drori et al., 2003a). Because these countries lack sufficient resources and capacity to fully implement these policies and models, they focus more on the actual adoption of the institution rather than their effective implementation. The implication here is that weaker states, those with less resources and ability to implement policy and manage society, are likely to experience more observable decoupling. Aside from one analysis examining 'loose coupling' of science policies, little quantitative analysis of this phenomenon has been undertaken in the world polity literature. For that reason, I will incorporate three features of so-called 'weak states' into my analysis from other research in political sociology: 1) state weakness due to developmental trajectories built on a history of colonization and peripheral world system status (Lange, 2004; Lange et al., 2006; Mamdani, 1996; Migdal, 1988); 2) the proneness of weak states to intra-state conflict (Holsti, 1996); and 3) the low levels of infrastructural power or national capabilities of weak states (Goodwin, 2001; Holsti, 1996; Migdal, 1988). By examining how these factors influence the decoupling between women being granted the right to stand for election and the election of the first woman to parliament, I will investigate the relationship between state weakness and decoupling.

### Event-History Analysis of the Decoupling of the Election of Women

Given these factors of both world polity and weak state influences, my event-history analysis of the decoupling in the case of electing women to parliament will examine several hypotheses related to each, as well as control for some endogenous factors of each nation-state.

#### *World Polity Influences*

The aspects of world polity I will include in my models include the influence of state membership in international organizations as a measure of world polity embeddedness and the influence of other state's actions in adopting policies and institutions as a measure of density. The argument that these hypotheses reflect is that world polity influences do not cease with the diffusion or adoption of a model, and that they continue to influence nation-states to actually meet the expected execution of said model. In this case, both world polity embeddedness and density of model adherence globally and regionally are expected to lead countries to grant women the right to stand for election and also to decrease the decoupling period experienced by nation-states, leading them to elect the first woman sooner.

*H1:* Countries are more likely to grant women the right to stand for election and to elect their first woman to parliament if the country has greater ties to international organizations or a greater degree of world polity embeddedness.

*H2:* Countries are more likely to grant women the right to stand for election and to elect their first woman to parliament the greater the number of countries globally that have already granted these rights or elected a woman as a reflection of greater density of adherence to the world cultural model of women in politics.

#### *Weak States*

In keeping with the world polity literature, I will test the broad hypothesis that weaker states will be more likely to have an increased period of decoupling before electing their first woman to parliament, as they are unable to implement policies and enact institutions to meet the expectations of the world polity. The characteristics of weak states that I will examine include the presence of intra-state conflict and levels of national infrastructural power and capability:

*H3:* Countries are at a decreased risk of electing their first woman parliamentarian if they have a history of colonization and/or have peripheral status within the world system.

*H4:* Countries are less likely to elect their first woman to parliament if the country experiences major intra-state conflict.

*H5:* Countries are less likely to elect their first woman to parliament if the country has a lower level of national infrastructural strength.

## METHOD AND DATA

### Method

In keeping with other event-history studies within the world polity literature (Hironaka, 2002; Ramirez and Wotipka, 2003; Ramirez et al., 1997), I undertake a two-stage analysis and use an exponential or constant rate model to illustrate world polity influence on countries granting women the right to stand for election and then to explain the decoupling between women acquiring the right to stand for election and the actual election of a country's first woman to parliament.<sup>2</sup> This model assumes that the transition from no women elected in a country to electing the first woman is independent of time, and is dependent only on a vector of covariates (Ramirez et al., 1997). This model takes the form:

$$\log[r(t)] = B'X$$

where  $r$  is the transition rate from origin to destination state,  $X$  is a vector of independent covariates, and  $B$  is a vector of coefficients for each covariate. By exponentiating both sides of the equation we yield the time to transition ( $r$ ) and the relative effect on this time by each covariate ( $\exp(B)$ ) (Ramirez et al., 1997). My analysis will thus demonstrate the influence of each covariate first on the granting to women the right to stand for election, and then on increasing or decreasing the time of the decoupling period between when a country enters the risk-set by granting women the right to stand for election and the election of the first woman to parliament.

### Data

My analyses use a country-level dataset compiled from multiple sources including the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 1995) and the Correlates of War 2 project (Pevehouse et al., 2004; Sarkees, 2000; Singer, 1987). From these sources I prepared a dataset with 192 country cases. For my two separate analyses I examine a sub-sample of these countries from the developing world.

The analysis of world society influence on countries granting the right to women to stand for election includes 116 countries from the developing world in the period from 1918 to 1990. Countries enter the risk set after 1918 and exit when they grant women the right to stand for election, or are right-censored if they fail to do so by 1990.<sup>3</sup> With 116 countries in the sub-sample, 107 experience the transition before 1990 with an overall time at risk of 3404 country-years.

The decoupling analysis examines the period from 1945 to 1990.<sup>4</sup> This sub-sample includes 92 countries which enter the risk-set at the point in time when they grant women the right to stand for election to parliament. I have set a maximum duration for time at risk of 30 years. If a country does not elect a woman and experiences a decoupling period of longer than this time they are censored from the dataset at that point. I have censored cases at this stage because for countries experiencing a decoupling period of greater than 30 years I expect

there may be other factors altogether accounting for this lengthy duration, but am limited in my ability to model those factors in this paper. Countries are also censored from the dataset when they appoint a woman to parliament prior to the election of a woman. I treat this appointment as a competing event and censor countries at that point because such an appointment essentially ends the decoupling period by having a woman parliamentarian, and thus the first woman in parliament can no longer be elected.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the risk-set has 92 countries, with 68 countries experiencing the transition in the first 30 years and a total time at risk for all countries of 1127 country-years.

## Variables

### *Dependent Variables*

In the first stage of my analysis, the dependent variable is the timing of the granting of the right to stand for election to women. The timing is measured as the duration from the first wave of countries granting women this right in 1918 and the actual year in which a country grant women the right to stand for election (IPU, 1995). Countries that experience this transition are given a value of one to indicate the timing of granting women the right to stand for election, whereas those that have not yet experienced the event receive a zero. Countries not experiencing the event before 1990 are right-censored and exit the risk set at that point.

The dependent variable in the second part of the analysis is the time of transition from a country granting women the right to stand for election and the actual election of the first woman to that country's parliament. Eighty-one countries in my sample granted women this right simultaneously with the extension of suffrage, while five countries granted the right to stand for election prior to women having the vote, and the remaining four countries granted female suffrage before women could stand for election. This information is taken from the Inter-Parliamentary Union data on women in parliaments (IPU, 1995). The time is measured by taking the duration in years between the two events, and then matching that duration with a dummy variable coded to indicate the transition or event (no women elected to women elected). Those countries that experience the election of a woman to parliament in a given year receive a value of 1 for that dummy variable, whereas those not experiencing this event receive a zero. Countries exiting the risk-set because their duration exceeds 30 years, those countries reaching 1990 without experiencing the event, and those countries which experience the competing event of appointing the first woman to parliament are censored cases and are coded with a zero as well.

### *World Polity*

Following from the world polity perspective, I include two types of 'world polity' variables in my models; one type measuring embeddedness in the world polity, and another type measuring the density of the world cultural model within the

world polity. These world polity variables will help to capture the continuing influence of the world polity on nation-state actors even after they have adopted a world cultural model such as granting the right to stand for election to women.

The variable measuring embeddedness examines the membership of countries in a sample of Women's International Non-Governmental Organizations (WINGOs) compiled by Paxton and her co-authors (2006). The membership of individuals from a given country in these WINGOs is specified as the level of embeddedness of that country within the international rationalized others of the world polity, and more specifically in the international women's movement. The variable is a time-varying count, tracking the change in the number of WINGO memberships over time.<sup>6</sup> Using a measure of WINGO membership rather than simply a measure of country membership in a broader categorization of international organizations is appropriate in this case because of the women's movement's influence on the world cultural model of women in politics. This variable will be used to assess hypothesis H1 in the subsequent analyses.

Two different measures of model density are included in my analysis: 1) the global count of the number of countries that have granted women the right to stand for election; and 2) a global count of the number of countries that have elected a woman to parliament. Both are calculated as of the year prior to the country-year observation. These world density measures are time-varying counts for each year of both women's right to stand for election and the election of the first women to parliament in all 192 countries of the original dataset, allowing for the influence of industrialized countries of Europe and North America on the developing world sample of the risk-set. These measures of density will help to measure the effect of the 'norm cascade' or 'contagion effect' discussed above, and will test hypothesis H2 in my models.

### *Weak States*

To test the theory that decoupling tends to be exaggerated in the weak states of the developing world, I include four 'weak state' variables in my second analysis of the decoupling lag period. These variables illustrate the aspects of a weak state that were outlined earlier in this article: peripheral world system status, experience of colonization, increased intra-state conflict, and low levels of infrastructural power.

I use two categorical variables indicative of weak state status which account for a country's world system status (periphery; semi-periphery),<sup>7</sup> and whether a country was colonized. Peripheral countries and those that were colonized are more likely to be weaker states, and therefore I expect each of these factors to contribute to extending the decoupling period in such countries (Lange, 2004; Lange et al., 2006; Mamdani, 1996; Migdal, 1988). Earlier research has shown that some of these factors are significantly related to issues of world cultural model diffusion in the world polity (Beckfield, 2003; Ramirez and Wotipka,

2003), and it stands to reason that these factors may be important to examine for my analysis of the decoupling phenomenon.

In addition to these categorical variables, I also include an interaction between countries' history of colonization and the WINGO memberships variable outlined above. This interaction explicitly tests the effects of world polity embeddedness in weaker states and will demonstrate how the world polity can work differently in the weak state context.

The conflict variable used in my analysis is a time-varying dummy covariate which indicates episodes of intra-state conflict or civil war. Information on episodes of intra-state conflict was adapted from the Correlates of War 2 project's intra-state conflict data, version 3.0 (Sarkees, 2000). If a country experiences intra-state civil war during the decoupling period the dummy variable is coded as a 1 for that episode. When the conflict ends, the dummy variable is coded as a 0 in the following episode. Those countries experiencing multiple episodes of intra-state conflict were split into multiple country-year episodes depending on the status of the conflict. The majority of countries in the dataset experienced no intra-state conflict during the duration under examination. Those that did experienced between one and four episodes of intra-state conflict or civil war during the decoupling period.

To account for the issue of infrastructural power within weak states, I use a variable which measures the national material capabilities of a nation-state – the Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) (Singer, 1987). The CINC accounts for six aspects of state power: total population, urban population, iron and steel production, energy consumption, military personnel, and military expenditure. I have included the available yearly CINC values for each country in the risk-set over the decoupling duration. Where values were missing, I included a mean CINC value for that country over the time period. CINC values are logged to correct for a skewed distribution. By assessing the influence of infrastructural power – the ability of a state to control its population and maintain security – this measure will be used to test the link between state weakness and decoupling.

### *Controls*

Aside from world polity and weak state variables, I also control for local features of geography and culture, as well as for political features of nation-states that have been shown to influence the election of women to parliament (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Kunovich and Paxton, 2005; Matland, 1998; Paxton, 1997; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Paxton et al., 2006; Viterna et al., 2008). My controls include categorical variables for dominant religion, region, electoral system, and for level of democracy. The electoral system control is based on Kenworthy and Malami (1999) and uses countries with a plurality/majority electoral system as the reference category. The level of democracy is calculated by recoding polity2 scores from the Polity IV dataset into a dummy variable where countries

considered democratic receive a value of one and all others a zero (Gerring et al., 2005; Marshall and Jaggers, 2006).<sup>8</sup>

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows the results of an event-history analysis of the granting to women the right to stand for election. I included this model chiefly to demonstrate that this phenomenon is reflective of a world cultural model of women's political

**Table 1** Event-history models of rate of granting of right of women to stand for election to parliament for 116 developing countries, 1918–90

Variables	Model 1
<i>Controls</i>	
<i>Religion (Protestantism)</i>	
Catholicism	-0.03 (0.32)
Islam	-0.82* (0.40)
Other	-0.36 (0.36)
<i>Region (Asia-Pacific)</i>	
Sub-Sahara Africa	-0.10 (0.35)
Middle East & Maghreb	0.63 (0.52)
Latin America	-1.72*** (0.42)
<i>Electoral system (Plurality/Majority)</i>	
Proportional Representation	-0.17 (0.25)
Mixed	-0.19 (0.33)
<i>Democracy</i>	-0.42 (0.29)
<i>World Polity</i>	
WINGO memberships <sup>a</sup>	-0.24*** (0.09)
World density count <sup>a</sup>	-0.02** (0.00)
<i>Constant</i>	6.37*** (0.53)
Chi-square	104.76
Number of events	107
Number of countries	116
Country-year spells	3404

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses.

Reference category in parentheses for categorical variables.

<sup>a</sup>denotes time-varying covariate; \* significant at  $p < .05$ ; \*\* significant at  $p < .01$ ;

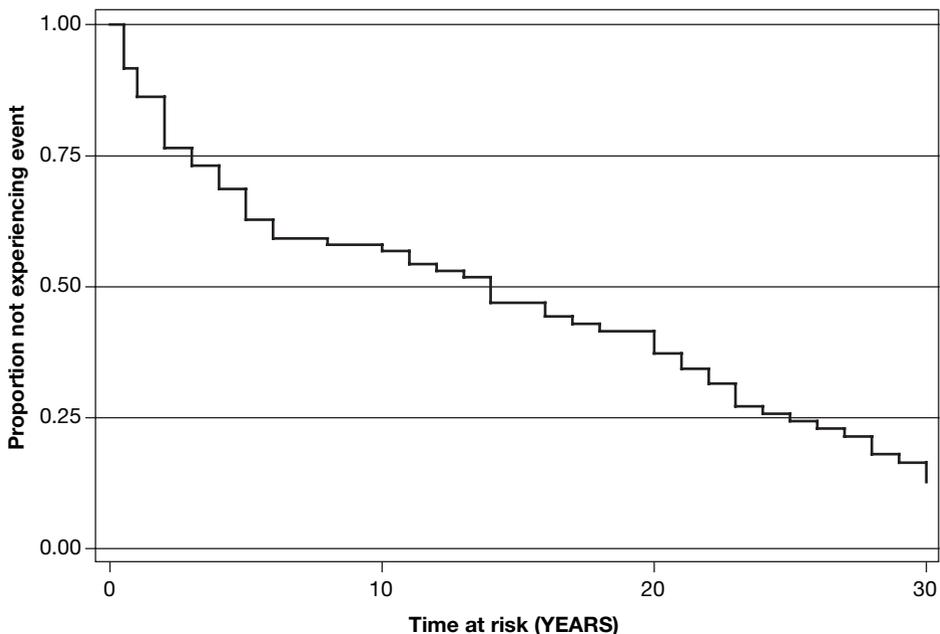
\*\*\* significant at  $p < .001$ .

participation by testing the influence of world polity embeddedness and density through Hypotheses H1 and H2. The results in Table 1 show confirm both H1 and H2, showing that both increased WINGO memberships and the increased number of countries globally having granted women the right to stand for election increases the rate at which developing countries grant women this right. This finding sets the stage for my analysis of the effects of world polity and weak state influences on the decoupling period that follows. If world polity influences are implicated in the event which enters countries into the risk-set of my second analysis, it stands to reason that they will also play a role in determining the length of the decoupling period that follows in many cases.

Figure 2 shows the results of a Kaplan Meier Survival Curve estimation of the survival function for the decoupling period between women receiving the right to stand for election and the actual election of the first woman to parliament for 92 nation-states of the developing world between 1945 and 1990. These results show that many nation-states experience a rapid election of their first woman to parliament, with slightly more than 30 percent of nation-states electing their first woman within three years of granting women the right to stand for election. By the end of the 30-year duration of my analysis over 80 percent of nation-states have elected a woman.

Table 2 shows the results of my event-history analysis of the gap between granting women the right to stand for election and the election of the first woman

**Figure 2** Kaplan Meier Survivor Curve estimates of the election of first woman to parliament for 96 developing countries, 1945–90



**Table 2** Event-history models of period between granting women the right to stand for election and the election of first woman to parliament for 92 developing countries, 1945–90

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
<i>Controls</i>							
<i>Religion (Protestantism)</i>							
Catholicism	-0.67 (0.55)	-0.74 (0.54)	-0.87 (0.58)	-0.33 (0.51)	-0.94 (0.58)	-0.65 (0.56)	-0.68 (0.56)
Islam	0.56 (0.66)	0.78 (0.66)	0.34 (0.70)	1.08 <sup>^</sup> (0.61)	0.56 (0.72)	0.85 (0.71)	0.81 (0.70)
Other	-0.11 (0.54)	-0.08 (0.52)	-0.36 (0.59)	0.41 (0.52)	-0.32 (0.58)	0.02 (0.59)	-0.06 (0.58)
<i>Region (Asia-Pacific)</i>							
Sub-Sahara Africa	-0.04 (0.44)	0.01 (0.44)	0.06 (0.47)	-0.74 (0.48)	0.12 (0.46)	-0.61 (0.53)	-0.51 (0.53)
Middle East & Maghreb	-0.10 (0.67)	0.22 (0.72)	0.19 (0.72)	-0.66 (0.60)	0.39 (0.75)	-0.27 (0.62)	-0.06 (0.64)
Latin America	0.41 (0.44)	0.65 (0.43)	0.24 (0.51)	-0.03 (0.47)	0.49 (0.49)	-0.27 (0.55)	-0.20 (0.55)
<i>Electoral System (Plurality/Majority)</i>							
Proportional representation	-0.51 <sup>^</sup> (0.29)	-0.66* (0.30)	-0.53 (0.32)	-0.69* (0.30)	-0.66* (0.33)	-0.83* (0.34)	-0.75* (0.35)
Mixed	-0.31 (0.33)	-0.32 (0.35)	-0.28 (0.37)	-0.29 (0.35)	-0.31 (0.37)	-0.30 (0.41)	-0.27 (0.40)
<i>Democracy</i>	0.26 (0.36)	0.07 (0.36)	0.38 (0.40)	-0.15 (0.42)	0.17 (0.40)	0.04 (0.51)	0.10 (0.49)
<i>World polity</i>							
<i>WINGO memberships<sup>a</sup></i>		-0.21** (0.08)			-0.18* (0.08)	-0.08 (0.09)	-0.47* (0.19)
<i>World density count<sup>a</sup></i>			-0.01* (0.01)		-0.01 <sup>^</sup> (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)
<i>Weak states</i>							
Peripheral country				1.53*** (0.45)		1.93*** (0.57)	1.91** (0.58)
Colonized (Not)				1.76** (0.66)		2.45*** (0.71)	1.44 (1.01)
Civil War <sup>a</sup>				-0.13 (0.69)		0.07 (0.70)	0.08 (0.70)
Infrastructural power <sup>a</sup>				-0.11 (0.08)		-0.06 (0.10)	-0.05 (0.10)
Colonized/WINGOs interaction							0.41* (0.20)
<i>Constant</i>	2.91*** (0.53)	3.16*** (0.53)	4.04*** (0.79)	-0.94 (0.99)	4.07*** (0.80)	0.29 (1.18)	1.24 (1.33)
Chi-square	16.89	27.87	18.19	60.17	25.98	59.44	452.97
Number of events	68	68	68	68	68	68	68
Number of countries	92	92	92	92	92	92	92
Country-year spells	1127	1127	1127	1127	1127	1127	1127

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. Reference category in parentheses for categorical variables. <sup>a</sup>denotes time-varying covariate; <sup>^</sup> significant at  $p < .1$ ; \* significant at  $p < .05$ ; \*\* significant at  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* significant at  $p < .001$ .

to parliament. The results show support for the embeddedness world polity hypothesis (H1), the density hypothesis (H2), the effects of peripheral state and former colony status (H3), but fail to confirm the weak state hypotheses related to intrastate conflict infrastructural power (H4 and H5).

The influence of embeddedness within the world polity is tested in Models 2, 5, 6, and 7. In each of these models, country memberships in WINGOs shows a negative relationship with the decoupling duration, suggesting that nation-states that are members of a greater number of WINGOs within the world polity tend to elect their first woman to parliament sooner than states with fewer memberships. WINGO memberships are significant at the  $p < .01$  level in Model 2 and at the  $p < .05$  level in Model 5, but no longer significant in the Model 6. In Model 7, this variable is interacted with a countries' colonial history to test the differential effects of embeddedness in weak states. This interaction is discussed below.

Exponentiating the coefficient for WINGO membership in Model 3 (-.21) yields a time ratio of 0.81 and suggests that for each additional membership a country holds it is likely to elect a woman 19 percent sooner. This suggests that the cumulative influence of intergovernmental organizations memberships can have a strong influence on shortening the decoupling period when a country has a high number of IGO memberships.

Density of the adherence to the model of electing women to parliament (H2) is tested in Model 3 and in Models 5 through 7. The results for this hypothesis are significant across all models and show support for my hypothesis with a decreasing decoupling time with each additional country in the world that elects a woman. Increased global counts of the election of the first women indeed appear to shorten the decoupling period.

The results of Models 4, 6, and 7 display inconsistent results for the weak state hypotheses. The relationship predicted in H3 is confirmed, as peripheral nation status and former history of colonization both appear to lengthen the decoupling time period. At the same time, the coefficients for both the civil war and infrastructural power are not significant and fail to confirm H4 or H5. In Model 7, the interaction of a state's colonial history with the count of WINGO memberships shows that additional WINGO memberships in former colonies actually increases the decoupling time and slows the rate at which countries elect a woman (coefficient of 0.41, significant at  $p < 0.05$ ), while in countries that were not colonized, WINGO memberships contribute to a shortened decoupling period and a more rapid rate of election. This result suggests that the function of world polity influence on decoupling is different in weaker states.

Control variables for religion and region are included in every model in Table 2 and show no significant influence on the decoupling period. In keeping with expectations from the literature on the election of women to parliament, the type of electoral system appears to influence the timing of the election of the first woman to parliament. In all but Model 3, those countries with a

proportional representation electoral system are likely to elect the first woman more quickly after granting the women the right to stand for election than the reference category of countries with a plurality/majority system. The democracy dummy variable is not statistically significant in any of the models, and echoes the mixed results from the previous literature on the influence of democracy on women's participation in politics (Hughes, 2007; Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Kunovich and Paxton, 2005; Paxton, 1997; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Paxton et al., 2006; Viterna et al., 2008).

## DISCUSSION

It is now commonplace for women to be represented in parliaments the world over. Indeed, some countries of the developing world have at times had the highest levels of female parliamentary representation in the world. Still, after granting women the right to stand for election – a process which my results clearly demonstrate was determined partially by world polity influence on the nation-state – many of these countries also experienced a period in which women were simply not elected to parliaments. This disconnect between policy and practice, values and action, is but one example of the decoupling phenomenon inherent in the world polity perspective's theory on the diffusion of similar institutions and policies throughout the world. In the case of women's political representation, this decoupling prevented women from taking their rightful place in elected bodies worldwide despite being granted the right to stand for election. This disconnect in effect worked to limit women's political rights and presented another obstacle in global efforts to promote gender equality in the political arena. In particular, the election of the first woman to parliament in the developing world has been shown in this article to be directly related to a country's relationship to the world polity and not simply its domestic developmental or historical context.

My findings support the contention that the influence of world society on the nation-state extends beyond simply the global diffusion and adoption of world cultural models to actually encouraging nation-states to implement and adhere to those models once adopted. Indeed, a nation-state's embeddedness in the world polity in the form of membership in Women's International Non-Governmental Organizations (WINGOs) directly influenced the rate of the election of the first woman to parliament in many country cases from the developing world between 1945 and 1990. This influence works to shorten the period of decoupling, and suggests that not only are international organizations of the world polity responsible for the diffusion of world cultural models as others have shown, but that these same organizations actively influence the enactment of these models in their expected form to counter the decoupling phenomenon. This suggests that there may indeed be a role for international organizations to police norms and standards on the global scale as well as acting as legitimating bodies which outline the accepted practices of states. Furthermore, this policing role extends

beyond the previously theorized function of spreading common policies and institutions to actually reinforcing the same after they have been adopted. In this sense, a country's international organization memberships can be seen to reflect a level of engagement with these policing and legitimating forces; the greater the memberships, the more outside influence to live up to policies and institutional frameworks. Further research may show that membership in particular organizations may have a special role to play in promoting adherence to policies or treaties. For instance, the role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and other international organizations in promoting women in politics in recent years may be shown to have a discernible effect on the levels of female representation in the future.

The spread of female political representation as a policy model of world society has been shown elsewhere to have contributed to the election of women in almost every country of the world (Paxton et al., 2006). The fact that other countries have taken this approach appears to have weighed on the outcomes within many countries of the developing world. At the global level, influence associated with the density of the female parliamentarian 'model' in world society shortened the decoupling period which prevented the attainment of women's political rights to sit in the parliament. The greater number of countries with at least one female parliamentarian, the shorter the time a country experiences before electing their own first female representative. This evidence of the contagion or 'tipping point' effect, suggests that world society influence is exerted not only as a function of international organizations, but also through the actions of other nation-states. Similarly to how density has been shown to affect the diffusion of common institutions and models globally, I have shown here that this influence persists to promote adherence to and implementation of these models; the greater the global density, the shorter the period of decoupling.

Both a nation-state's embeddedness and the density of the world cultural model seem to play a key role in promoting active implementation of the model once it has been adopted. Influence of world society, in this respect, does not cease at promoting nation-states to adopt specific policies and institutions, but continues after adoption to promote compliance and adherence. World society actively encourages nation-states to effectively 'walk the talk' once they have established an institution or implemented a policy. In this way, world polity influences on nation-state institutional isomorphism extends beyond structure to shape behavior as well.

This role for world society in battling decoupling does not, according to my results, function uniformly throughout the developing world. My analysis shows that in some cases, state strength can mediate this influence in a way that lengthens the decoupling gap by delaying the election of the first woman to parliament.

Weak state factors like a country's position in the world system or its history of colonization both contributed to extending the time before the first woman was

elected to parliament. This finding echoes earlier research highlighting the fact that the world polity does not necessarily penetrate equally into all countries, and may do so to a lesser extent in the peripheral countries of the developing world (Beckfield, 2003). In the case of electing women to parliament, these factors may possibly have contributed to a period of decoupling in two ways. First, the experience of political instability in many of these countries in the years surrounding independence from colonization, including possible coups, non-democratic rule, and internal conflict, may have lengthened the wait for the election of a woman because of general suspension of democracy. In addition, the after-effects of colonization on newly independent states' strength has been shown in some cases to yield relatively ineffective states incapable of shaping the objectives and aims of society (Mamdani, 1996). In contrast to those few countries which did not experience colonial domination, these additional obstacles may have proven difficult to surmount and therefore delayed the election of a female parliamentarian even if the right existed for women in a relatively ineffectual constitution.

Although the conflict and infrastructural power characteristics explored here do not appear to significantly influence decoupling in the case of electing women to parliament, these characteristics merit further investigation in other cases of decoupling policy from practice. It seems unlikely that the election of women to parliament would not be somehow delayed by the experience of intra-state conflict in a given year. In addition, the strength of a state and its governing apparatus to implement reforms like extending women the right to stand for election should be expected to play a role in determining women's political representation. Indeed, evidence in the world polity literature suggests that these factors should influence decoupling, and perhaps the case explored here has other complications that work to obscure these relationships. Re-specifying measures of state weakness or testing the influence of weak state characteristics on other examples of decoupling in the future may prove more fruitful in illuminating this relationship.

Decoupling of value from action, policy from practice, in the nation-state is a frequent and persistent process. Understanding the factors, both international and internal, that influence decoupling can assist policy-makers and governments throughout the world to influence the process of policy adoption and implementation. This article has shown the influence of the world society on nation-states in not only adopting policies but also in encouraging effective implementation. This finding demonstrates the complexity of factors influencing decoupling and highlights the need for future research on this topic.

This further research will need to surpass the limitations of the case I have presented here. The decoupling phenomenon may not be best represented by the gap between granting women the right to stand for election and the election of the first woman to parliament. There may be too many other factors to account for the election of women that I have not been able to include in

my models or are difficult to represent in the data. This suggests that future research using event-history analysis on the decoupling phenomenon may prove more fruitful if a more simple case of decoupling is analyzed, such as adhering to treaty obligations or certain international economic, environmental or social standards.

The election of the first woman to parliament in most countries of the developing world experienced a period of delay following the time when women first were granted the right to stand for election. In some instances, a short delay of this nature can be explained away by the timing of elections or the interference of internal conflict. In others, this period of decoupling became drawn out, and despite women having the right to be elected, none were. This article has demonstrated that to understand the factors influencing the duration of this decoupling gap, researchers need to extend theories about world society to address not only the spread and diffusion of common policies and institutions throughout the nation-states of the world, but to include for them a role in ensuring effective implementation of these same models. In this light, something as inherently domestic as the nature of national political representation becomes subject to global forces that work to ensure the application of common values and practices globally.

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### Appendix 1 Country event timing data

Country	Female suffrage	Women's right to stand for election	First woman in parliament	Elected (E); Appointed (A); or Both (B)
Algeria	1962	1962	1962	A
Angola	1975	1975	1980	E
Antigua & Barbuda	1951	1951	1984	A
Argentina	1947	1947	1951	E
Bahamas	1961	1961	1977	A
Bahrain		1973		
Bangladesh	1972	1972	1973	E
Barbados	1950	1950	1966	A
Belize	1954	1954	1984	B
Benin	1956	1956	1979	E
Bhutan	1953	1953	1975	E
Bolivia	1952	1938	1966	E
Botswana	1965	1965	1979	E
Burkina Faso	1958	1958	1978	E

(continued)

<b>Country</b>	<b>Female suffrage</b>	<b>Women's right to stand for election</b>	<b>First woman in parliament</b>	<b>Elected (E); Appointed (A); or Both (B)</b>
Burundi	1961	1961	1982	E
Cambodia	1955	1955	1958	E
Cameroon	1946	1946	1960	E
Cape Verde	1975	1975	1975	E
Central African Republic	1986	1986	1987	E
Chad	1958	1958	1962	E
Chile	1949	1931	1951	E
Colombia	1954	1954	1954	A
Comoros	1956	1956	1993	E
Congo	1963	1963	1963	E
Costa Rica	1949	1949	1953	E
Côte d'Ivoire	1952	1952	1965	E
Cyprus	1960	1960	1963	E
Djibouti	1946	1986	2003	E
Dominica	1951	1951	1980	E
Ecuador	1929	1929	1956	E
Egypt	1956	1956	1957	E
El Salvador	1939	1961	1961	E
Equatorial Guinea	1963	1963	1968	E
Ethiopia	1955	1955	1957	E
Fiji	1963	1963	1970	A
Gabon	1956	1956	1961	E
Gambia	1960	1960	1982	E
Ghana	1954	1954	1960	A
Grenada	1951	1951	1976	B
Guatemala	1946	1946	1956	E
Guinea	1958	1958	1963	E
Guyana	1953	1945	1968	E
Haiti	1950	1950	1961	E
Honduras	1955	1955	1957	
India	1950	1950	1952	E
Indonesia	1945	1945	1950	A
Iran	1963	1963	1963	B
Jordan	1974	1974	1989	A
Kenya	1963	1919	1969	B
Laos	1958	1958	1958	E
Lebanon	1952	1952	1991	A
Madagascar	1959	1959	1965	E
Malawi	1961	1961	1964	E
Malaysia	1957	1957	1959	E
Maldives	1932	1932	1979	E
Mali	1956	1956	1964	E
Mauritania	1961	1961	1975	E
Mauritius	1956	1956	1976	E
Mongolia	1924	1924	1951	E
Morocco	1963	1963	1993	E
Mozambique	1975	1975	1977	E
Nepal	1951	1951	1952	A
Nicaragua	1955	1955	1972	E

Country	Female suffrage	Women's right to stand for election	First woman in parliament	Elected (E); Appointed (A); or Both (B)
Niger	1948	1948	1989	E
Nigeria	1958	1958		
Pakistan	1947	1947	1973	E
Panama	1941	1941	1946	E
Papua New Guinea	1964	1963	1977	E
Paraguay	1961	1961	1963	E
Peru	1955	1955	1956	E
St Vincent & Grenadines	1951	1951	1979	E
Sao Tome & Principe	1975	1975	1975	E
Senegal	1945	1945	1963	E
Seychelles	1948	1948	1976	B
Sierra Leone	1961	1961		
Solomon Islands	1974	1974	1993	E
Sudan	1964	1964	1964	E
Suriname	1948	1948	1975	E
Swaziland	1968	1968	1972	B
Syria	1949	1953	1973	E
Tanzania	1959	1959		
Thailand	1932	1932	1948	A
Togo	1945	1945	1961	E
Trinidad & Tobago	1946	1946	1962	B
Tunisia	1959	1957	1959	E
Uganda	1962	1962	1962	A
Vanuatu	1975	1975	1987	E
Venezuela	1946	1946	1948	E
Vietnam	1946	1946	1976	E
Yemen	1967	1967	1990	E
Zambia	1962	1962	1964	B
Zimbabwe	1957	1978	1980	B

## NOTES

- 1 Concepts of the developing world, third world, global south, or the periphery of the world system are inherently problematic; however, for the purposes of this study I will use the shorthand 'developing world' while acknowledging the shortcomings of the concept. This focus on the developing world is also not intended to imply that industrialized Western nation-states do not frequently experience the same phenomenon of decoupling.
- 2 Specifying different hazard rate distributions will yield different model results. As has been the case with earlier application of event-history techniques to the diffusion question in the world polity literature (see Ramirez et al., 1997), the exponential distribution/constant hazard rate model is used here because the assumption is that immediately upon entering the risk-set by granting women the right to stand for election, a country would have a time-independent risk of electing a woman. This model is the most appropriate for addressing the effects of a set of covariates on this event, independent of time. The effect of change over time in these covariates is accounted for through the use of several time-varying covariates in the models.

- 3 Nine of the 116 countries are right-censored as they do not experience the event before 1990. 1918 was selected as the point at which to calculate entry into the risk-set, regardless of a country's year of independence, because many countries began to implement this right following 1918, and the influence of colonizing powers on their colonies can be considered to commence at that time rather than a country simply becoming at risk at independence.
- 4 1990 was chosen as the end year of the risk-set because I want to model similar processes at work in the period before the end of the Cold War and the transitions that occurred in Central and Eastern Europe at that time. Further research on this topic incorporating this period is worthy of exploration.
- 5 In the analysis of decoupling with the sample of 92 countries, 24 countries are right-censored: five that elect their first woman only after 1990, 13 that appointed rather than elected their first woman (treated as a competing event), two that elect a woman only after a decoupling duration exceeding 30 years, and four that still never elect a woman before the dataset end year of 2003.
- 6 Paxton et al. (2006) compiled data on country-level memberships for a sample of 30 women's international nongovernmental organizations (WINGOs) for 196 countries for the following years 1930, 1952, 1960, 1964, 1971, 1978, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1995, 2000, and 2003. I have estimated missing values where possible using interpolation and extrapolation to account for intervening years.
- 7 This variable is taken from Beckfield (2003).
- 8 I first calculate a mean score over the time period for each country using the polity2 score. Countries with a mean score of 6 or greater variable are coded as democratic. Micro-states excluded from the conventional Polity IV dataset are included using imputed values from Gerring et al. (2005). Adopting this approach enables me to include a democracy measure in the analysis without losing countries as a result of missing data from the Polity IV dataset.

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