

**Frank C. Thamés and Margaret S. Williams.** *Contagious Representation: Women's Political Representation in Democracies around the World.* New York: New York University Press, 2013. x, 208 pp. (\$40.00 cloth).

*Contagious Representation* makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of women's numeric representation in political institutions across the globe. Frank Thamés and Margaret Williams address the question: Is representation *contagious*? In other words, do increases in women's numeric representation in one political institution lead to increases in women's numeric representation in other political institutions? In doing so, the authors advance a new conceptual approach to explaining women's numeric representation and offer a systematic treatment of women's representation across a large number of democracies over a number of institutions. As such, this book represents an important advancement for the research agenda of women's numeric representation.

This book moves beyond existing literature by developing an argument to explain how women's representation in one institution can lead to increases in other institutions—i.e., *contagious representation*. Thamés and Williams explain that for three reasons contagion affects women's representation. First, as the electorate becomes more diverse, the institution should also become more diverse. Since the members of many political institutions are chosen at least in part by members of the other institutions (e.g., political parties select parliamentary candidates; parliament selects the PM; and high courts are typically appointed by the executive, the parliament, or both), they posit a positive relationship between women's numeric representation across different political institutions. Second, as one political institution becomes more diverse, the public and other political institutions can observe the consequences. Assuming that there are not strong negative consequences associated with diversity in political institutions, the perceived risk of diversifying should diminish, thus making other institutions more willing to diversify. Third, institutions in a given country compete among themselves for a finite amount of power. Thus, if we assume that diverse institutions garner more public support, then logically, diverse institutions will have a competitive edge when competing for the policy space to achieve policy objectives. Taken together the authors conclude that increases in women's representation in one political institution should promote increases in women's representation in other branches of government.

Thamés and Williams provide empirical support for contagious representation across an array of political institutions. Indeed, the other impressive contribution of this book is the novel dataset that spans 159 democracies over 50 years and multiple political institutions: the legislature, the executive, the judiciary, political parties, and national quota laws. This large-N analysis is accompanied by a number of case studies that illustrate the authors' central findings and demonstrate the importance of contagion for women's representation.

They first examine women's legislative representation. While this is a well-studied area, the authors make several contributions. First, they explicitly distinguish between the factors that influence women's representation in the short term and those that have long term effects. Although extant research has generated notable discussion regarding the incremental track versus the fast track methods of increasing women's representation, empirical research has not given serious consideration to how different factors contribute to women's representation over time. Second, the authors amass an original dataset, which allows them to model time explicitly in their analysis to distinguish between short and long term effects. With respect to contagion, they find that in the short run contagion matters. Specifically, the adoption of national and voluntary

quotas bolsters women's representation offering a fast track solution. Once quotas are in place, however, on average, countries do not continue to benefit from an increase in women's representation. Rather, quotas result in a short-term growth in women's representation that plateaus after implementation.

Turning to women's participation in the chief executive, the authors investigate the probability of electing a female executive in 114 countries from 1945 to 2006. During this period 279 women have held an executive post, though a majority of them were interim posts. Perhaps the most significant finding to emerge from this analysis is that both the adoption of gender quotas and women's representation in parliament increase the likelihood of a female executive and decreases the time until a country has its first female executive. While Thames and Williams are not the first to report this relationship, their extensive analysis serves to corroborate extant research and to demonstrate that women's representation in the legislatures and the adoption of quotas may lay a foundation for women to enter into the executive.

Next, the authors apply their contagion argument to the high courts. Drawing on the largest dataset to date of women's appointments to the high courts (47 countries), the authors find that as the percentage of women in parliament increases, so do the number of women in the high court. Additionally, presidential appointments, life appointments, more seats on the bench, and more women in other areas of public life, all serve to increase women's appointments in high courts. This analysis is one of the major contributions of the book because women's appointments to high courts have received little attention, particularly those courts in developing democracies.

In the final two empirical chapters the authors examine how contagion influences the adoption of party quotas (voluntary quotas) and national quotas (compulsory party quotas and reserved seats). By examining the two types separately, they distinguish between the factors that promote the adoption of each. There is strong evidence that contagion matters for party quota adoption; having more women in office decreases the time until adoption and increases the probability of adoption. This is likely because there are more politically powerful women in office to advocate for the adoption of quotas. Additionally, the adoption of a national quota and the number of other political parties with a party quota increase the likelihood of adoption. Once a national quota is in place, a party quota does not impose additional costs on a political party but it can still reap any potential benefits of the quota by appealing to female voters. Similarly, as more political parties implement quotas, the adoption of a voluntary quota may become increasingly important for competition. As for the adoption of national quotas, the authors conclude that empirical evidence for contagion is less clear.

*Contagious Representation* provides the first comprehensive treatment of women's numeric representation across political institutions. The authors articulate the case for contagion and provide substantial support for contagious representation. Additionally, their book highlights areas for future research. In particular, it stimulates thinking about contagion more broadly. For example, does women's presence in other political organizations such as NGOs and advocacy groups create opportunities for women to enter into political institutions? Moreover, how does contagion between different levels of government (i.e., national and subnational) influence women's numeric representation? Thames and Williams' book provides an innovative theoretical framework along with a comprehensive empirical foundation to facilitate future research on the factors that pave women's paths to office.

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