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## Fad Effects: Patterns in International Policy

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Fad Effects: Patterns in  
International Policy

By:

Rebecca Funke

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

of requirements for the degree

of

Master of Arts

In

Political Science

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2011

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## Abstract

This paper explores the way in which international policies move from country to country. I propose that the spread of policy adoption, internationally, mirrors how a fad in the fashion industry is diffused. The primary point of this paper is to evaluate four case studies (policies) and study how they transitioned from one country to another. Also addressed will be the question of how these policies start, whether there are particular countries prone to starting the diffusion process or if there is some other explanation for their origins. This study specifically looks at the dissemination of women's suffrage, the adoption of the United Nations Convention 138 on child labor, and the Kyoto Protocol. The statistics provided will show whether or not the adoption of each of these policies, follow a similar pattern.

## Introduction

Throughout the ages, the development of civilizations has followed a pattern of information diffusion. Nomads and traders through their peripatetic lifestyle allowed for and promoted the sharing of ideas, the spread of culture and knowledge from one region to another. Today, the same process is occurring in a different, accelerated way. Popularized, new technology is setting the pace for current lifestyle practices. These trends are not only occurring at a local and state level, but are also affecting the international community. Spurred by the increase in globalization, the world is a growing web of interconnectedness; ideas jump rapidly from one region to another. Not only does this apply to the social culture of today's designers and movies, but to the political culture of policies that countries adopt. This study seeks to identify patterns that exist in the diffusion process of policies and proposes that the pattern that will emerge is similar in nature to the adoption process widely describe as a fad.

This study, while looking particularly at policies in which human rights are involved, carries the potential to expand to a variety of different laws. If these patterns of diffusion can be identified and understood, it may be possible to predict which policies will become popular and widespread. Understanding the natural order of distribution will allow us to place ideas in a way that enables fast, widespread acceptance. Studying fads will also allow us to understand how norms, both international and individual, form, thereby unlocking the potential to develop or fight against them.

As I will show, the data from all three case studies (Women's Suffrage, U.N. Convention 138 and the Kyoto Protocol) have striking resemblances to one another. Each policy, though in content and time frame are quite different, all form what has come to be known as a fad curve or in economic terms, an S-curve.

While the main purpose of this paper addresses the question of whether or not patterns occur in the adoption of international policies, I would be remiss if I did not mention some theories as to why and how they occur. All of these theories would be impossible to discuss in-depth during this paper, so I will just mention a few. The one that immediately comes to mind might help explain how these fads begin. Some countries hold greater power than others; they hold more ability to persuade and threaten other countries. Power, while hard to define, does undoubtedly play some role in the adoption process. For future research it would be interesting to view the roles of soft versus hard power and where those countries lie in the adoption process. Other ideas include looking at the positioning of developed and undeveloped nations or economic ties. The initial research of this paper provides a starting point to continue studying how exactly these fads start.

## **Terms and Concepts**

Most countries hang at a tipping point when it comes to policy adoption. A tipping point is a point at which they are culturally and physically able to adopt change, but are unwilling to take the final leap. They do not want to initiate cultural change<sup>1</sup> first, so once another country goes ahead (or enough countries adopt the policy that the critical mass point is reached for that particular unwilling country), they then follow.

For the purposes of this paper I will take the idea of a fad from both Thomas Schelling's and Malcolm Gladwell's works. However, I define a fad as a description of the process of diffusion through which an idea or policy becomes adopted. When the adoptions are plotted on a chart there should be an increase in the number of adoptions and a decrease in the amount of intervening time. Provided is a graph [Figure 1] that shows what a fad will look like as an

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<sup>1</sup> Cultural change- meaning a change in values of the society- often contradicting centuries of established norms.



exponential curve once it has been graphed according to the intervals in time (X-axis) and number (Y-axis). An S- curve will manifest itself if the fad is nearing the end of its run. S-curves are frequently used in economics to show market saturation of a product. If we view a policy as a product we can see that the same analytical processes may be used.

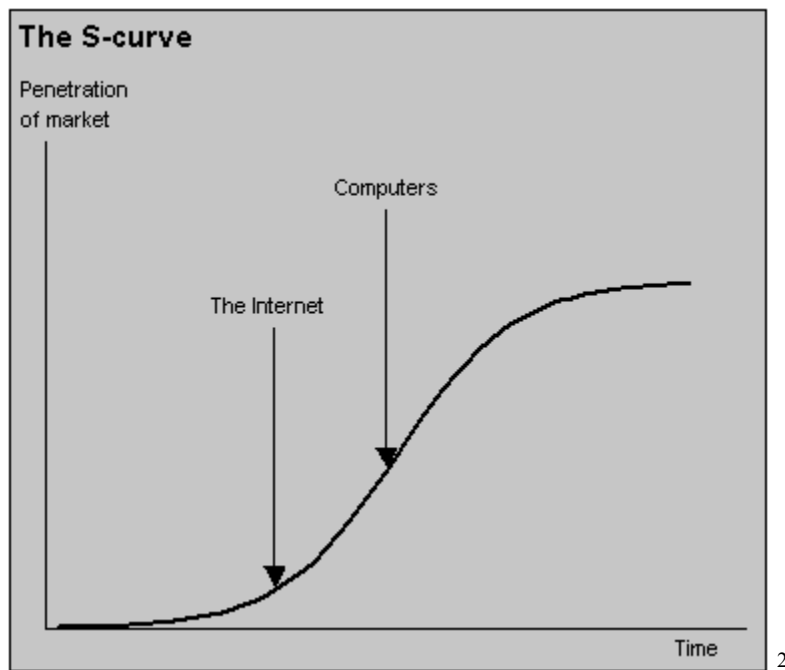


Figure 1

Also included in Gladwell's research are terms that identify a country's position relative to others in the adoption process. There are five categories in which a country will fall: Innovator, Early Adopter, Early Majority, Late Majority and Laggards. The innovators are described as adventurous. They are willing to take the lead and try something new when all others disapprove or are skeptical. Group two, the Early Adopters, are often opinion leaders in the community. They carefully watch and analyze the innovators and weigh the risks of following in their footsteps before doing so. The next two groups are often lumped together both

<sup>2</sup> "The S-Curve" *Where Are You on the Curve*. Accessed February 1, 2011. [http://www.growth-dynamics.com/news/May21\\_01.htm](http://www.growth-dynamics.com/news/May21_01.htm).

early and late from the majority. They are skeptical, unwilling to try anything new unless proven to be successful by others first, especially by those whom they respect. Lastly, we have the Laggards. This group is the most traditional of all; they refuse change until the last possible moment.<sup>3</sup>

As previously stated, this study will look specifically at human rights policies that have gained world-wide adoption. Once I began my research I realized there are two different categories these policies could be broken into: grass-roots movements and third-party initiators. This distinction is very important when it comes to breaking down the processes of adoption and understanding how and why policies were adopted by countries in the order that they were.

Grass-roots movements can be classified as policies that first gained popularity in local settings. Word spread from one small area to another and individuals or small groups were responsible for creating the policy. This paper will look specifically at the Women's Suffrage movement.

Third-party initiators have only recently begun to play a role in the diffusion of policies, but are consistently gaining influence. These actors have access to a large percentage, if not all, of the countries in the world. Non-governmental organizations and International Organizations would have the most influence because they have immediate access to a large percentage of the world's countries. The two cases, U.N. Convention 138 on Child Labour and the Kyoto Protocol, were both sponsored by the United Nations, which played a pivotal role in promoting the policies.

For each case study, I will record the date on which each country ratified and/or enacted the policy in question. Using the data collected, graphs will be created showing the pattern in

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<sup>3</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Back Bay Books/ Little, Brown, and Company, 2000): 197.

which world-wide adoption occurred, i.e. the saturation process<sup>4</sup> of each policy. These charts will show quantitatively whether or not there are trends in the acceptance of human rights policies.

This research adopts the notion that countries are in many ways a lot like individuals. They are autonomous in their decisions, like an individual, and those decisions can influence not only themselves, but those around them. Each country has an entity that speaks for and represents the entire state. Sometimes this entity is comprised of many people with differing opinions, but still they must act as one and put forth only *one* policy. I do acknowledge, however, that countries have many internal divisions that make coming up with one policy difficult and that it might in fact alter the adoption process. For example, the United States though comprised of many governing bodies, individuals and agencies, still has *a* policy that is considered the official stance of the United States.

One question that might be raised is what happens if a country divides and becomes two separate distinct entities (i.e. Balkanization)? For this study, such instances will be observed as such: the date a country ratifies or passes the observed policy will be the date listed in the study. If a new country adopts the same policy as its predecessor, the new country will have its own separate entry. If two new countries are formed and the old state is dissolved, then both new countries will be counted and the old one will remain in the data set as well. This is because the study focuses on the adoption of each policy as it enters into a state for the first time. It is not necessary to take into account the repealing of a law or dissolution of a country because those things do not impact what has already occurred.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Similar to the saturation process of a market, saturation means the level at which the policy has permeated the world.

<sup>5</sup> It is acknowledged, however, that the disbanding of a government into fractions and eventually new states, does then impact the adoptions of the newly formed countries.

I have also included in this paper a brief synopsis of each case study's history and founding movements. While this study does not specifically seek to understand the origin of the Fads, I do hope to lay the groundwork for future exploration into that area and will lay out some theories as to why they occur.

## Literature Review

Thomas Schelling's *MicroMotives and MacroBehavior* was one of the earliest works studying the effect of small decisions impacting larger ones. His research is foundational to the study. Schelling began by observing that a couple of individuals' behaviors or decisions could (intentionally or not) direct the behavior of their group as a whole. The first example<sup>6</sup> given in his book was the way an auditorium filled for a lecture he was giving. Peeking out of the curtain he noticed that most of the seats were filled, but only from the 13<sup>th</sup> row and back. No one was sitting up front. This phenomenon captured his attention. My study applies his basic observations and then transcends those to the international arena.

One point on which I disagree with Mr. Schelling's analysis is his statement that "the behavior [of tipping]...involves place of residence or work or recreation or, in general, *being* someplace rather than *doing* something."<sup>7</sup> I believe that the behavior of fads is capable of transcending *being* into *doing* and that is in part what this study seeks to show.

The theory of fads has been around for a few years. Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* has reset the stage for more research to be done in this area of social science. However, the majority of case studies involve either economic

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Schelling. *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978. Pg.11.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Schelling. *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978. Pg.102.

or cultural fads.<sup>8</sup> The studies have yet to transcend to the stage of international political behavior. This is what I am doing, applying the theory of fads at an inter-state level. I will be using Gladwell's definitions as a foundation for my research in the actual development of fads.

Stemming from the work of Thomas Schelling and Malcolm Gladwell, it is necessary to discuss the related applications of the work, particularly the economic idea of market saturation. In fact, the S-curve used in this study to describe the process of fad adoptions is also used to evaluate the saturation of a product in a market. This study assumes that the whole world is the market and individual countries are the consumers. As the policy spreads (adopted by more states) the market becomes more saturated. The reason fads level off and lose momentum is because they exhaust the market. This means that even though the policy has stopped spreading it will not necessarily be repealed.

Before Gladwell's book, much study was done on the transfer of ideas at a personal level. Some of these studies discussed topics like how technology moves throughout society<sup>9</sup> and how ideas move from one region to another<sup>10</sup>. *System Effects: In Political And Social Life* by Robert Jervis, illustrates the interconnectedness of people and places.<sup>11</sup> By further grasping the details of how people and countries are related to one another, a more complete map of the spread of fads will emerge. This previous work will increase our ability to analyze the conditions and relationships under which fads are formed. All of these studies focused on the personal communication that moves from one person to another or from one small group to another within

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<sup>8</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Back Bay Books/ Little, Brown, and Company, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Everett Rogers, *Diffusion Of Innovations*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Free Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Aaron Lynch, *Thought Contagion: How Belief Spreads Through Society* (New York: Basics Books, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity In Political And Social Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

a certain geographical boundary. This paper will explore the transfer of policies from one country and government to another.

Stephen Walt's article "Fads, Fevers, and Firestorms" looks briefly at the idea of policies that spread from country to country. He, however, concludes that international borders provide thick barriers when it comes to the movement of political ideas.<sup>12</sup> I argue that these borders are no more immune to penetration than each individual mind. The world is a community just like a neighborhood. With its leaders and followers the ingredients exist for fads to take hold and flourish. This does not necessarily mean that change and ideas will easily flow; it can be a difficult lengthy process, but it is still possible. For example: in Saudi Arabia women were not traditionally allowed to vote. For centuries this was the standard, the social norm, a result of religious and cultural pressures. However, in 2005 women were not only allowed to vote in their local elections, but were able to run for seats on the local council in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.<sup>13</sup> Decades ago, this would have still been just a dream. This example shows that even in areas where a predominant social attitude has occurred for centuries, it is possible for change.

An in-depth study of the acquisition of women's suffrage was done in an article published in the *American Sociological Review*. The article, "The Changing Logic of Political Citizenship: Cross-National Acquisition of Women's Suffrage Rights, 1890-1990<sup>14</sup>," looks at and finds the same patterns that this paper will explore. The article concluded that "regional cumulative percentage may be analogous to 'peer pressure' among countries: countries within a

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "Fads, Fevers, and Firestorms," *Foreign Policy*, no. 121 (November-December 2000): 34.

<sup>13</sup> Faiza Saleh Ambah, "In minor election, a major step for Saudi women," November 30, 2005 edition - <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/1130/p04s01-wome.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Francisco O Ramirez, Yasemin Soysal, and Suzanne Shanahan. "The Changing Logic of Political Citizenship: Cross-National Acquisition of Women's Suffrage Rights, 1890 to 1990," *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 5 (October 1997): 735-745.

single region might tend to imitate one another,”<sup>15</sup> and that “the more that countries extend suffrage to women, the more likely it is that other countries will do so.”<sup>16</sup> These findings coincide with my theory of fads and the paths they take.

While there are currently no arguments specifically against fad theory, there are some problems that could arise as the theory develops or from related topics. It might be argued that since not all policies adopted by states become a fad, fads do not exist at all and are merely aberrations within a complex system of choices. Another issue could arise if there is no measureable uniformity between nations; no two countries are ever in exactly the same position, so it is hard to measure what one country does against another. The same goes for the policies; no two policies are alike and therefore they cannot be measured against one another.

Another dispute may lie with the inability to accurately define a fad. An S-curve can vary in its shape and definition, as well as the length of time it covers. It could be argued that the definition of a fad is too varied and too prone to personal opinion. Also, difficulties could arise in future studies when trying to pinpoint countries prone to starting fads. Different countries have different amounts of power at varied times in history, as well as the states over which they have influence.

Perhaps the largest caveat is using the term ‘fad’. The current perception of a fad includes the terms fleeting, unimportant, and ephemeral. And while current cultural trends may indeed be lacking in revolutionary quality that does not necessarily mean that all fads must be the same. This paper describes the process of adoption and if it follows the same process as a fashion trend

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<sup>15</sup> Francisco O Ramirez, Yasemin Soysal, and Suzanne Shanahan. “The Changing Logic of Political Citizenship: Cross-National Acquisition of Women’s Suffrage Rights, 1890 to 1990,” *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 5 (October 1997): 740.

<sup>16</sup> IBID: 740.

or rock group, then so be it. A fad merely describes the way in which something diffuses to the world's population as it becomes popular.

This study is not interested in the adoption of policies at a local level or at units within a country, such as a province or state. For comparison purposes, we will strictly observe one country against another. The argument is made that policy transfusion occurs in much the same way regardless of the level of analysis.

## **Case Studies**

### **Grass-Roots Movements:**

As previously stated, this research will delve into two known areas of policy initiation, the first of which are policies that gained momentum at a grass-roots level. I define this as a policy that comes into law through the efforts of an individual or group of individuals at a state level. Grass-root campaigns face challenges that Third-party policies do not. Since they are starting at such a local level more effort will be needed to reach ears and minds beyond their borders.

#### Women's Suffrage

The first study looks at the progress of the woman's right to vote. Throughout the last couple of centuries this issue gained political and social awareness and resulted in a world-wide movement. The first act in the nineteenth century that granted suffrage to some degree was the English Poor Law of 1834.<sup>17</sup> From this point forward, local suffrage was gained and repealed

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<sup>17</sup> P. Orman Ray, "The World-Wide Women Suffrage Movement," *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser. 1, no. 3 (1919): 220.



often. It is not until after the first nation granted full suffrage to women that we see a stable environment for suffrage to begin to take hold.

The women's suffrage movement occurred as a result of petitioning for equal rights. Women wanted a voice in how things were run and in policies that ultimately affected them, sometimes even more than the men that were voting. However, centuries of cultural beliefs were working against these individual movements. Women were, traditionally, not as well-educated and their tasks were often confined to the home. With the onset of the industrial revolution, it became more acceptable for women to work outside the home. The final push came with the early beginning of what we now recognize as globalization. With the world getting smaller, women realized that they were not alone in this fight for a voice.

With each new country that granted suffrage, the movement gained momentum in other countries. A steady rate of adoption began around 1913, continuing through the 1920s. With the 1930s, there was a dramatic increase in the number of countries allowing women's suffrage. This pattern of increasing levels of adoption holds through the next couple of decades. By the 1970s, the majority of countries allowed women the right to vote. Today, only a few countries have not granted suffrage to women.

In 1983, New Zealand was the first country to allow women the right to vote.<sup>18</sup> This act was ahead of its time. It was nearly a decade before any other state passed identical legislation. The next two countries to grant suffrage were Australia and Finland. These three countries grouped together represent what Malcolm Gladwell defined as Innovators.<sup>19</sup> Innovators come

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<sup>18</sup> Human Development Report 2006, "Women's political participation." Human Development Report, <http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/indicators/256.html> (accessed October 26, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Back Bay Books/ Little, Brown, and Company, 2000): 197.

before the actual trendsetters. They adopt the policy because they want change. They see potential for improvement and they act on it.

The next phase in the adoption of a fad lies with the Early Adopters. These countries are watchful of the Innovators. They observe and respect those in the innovator category.<sup>20</sup> In the case of women's suffrage the first of the early adopters are countries that have some degree of prominence in the world but do not wield their authority blatantly.

The next group consists of countries joining because it is the thing to do. This is where the fad hits the tipping point and really begins to gain wide acceptance. In the case of women's suffrage, this take-off occurred in the 1930s.<sup>21</sup> *The Tipping Point* would identify these types of adopters as the early and late Majority.<sup>22</sup>

The final category in the adopters of fads, are those who do not adopt until much later than everyone else. These countries often are those with very tough cultural boundaries that extend through the entire state. Those boundaries only have a huge effect when dealing with issues that go against the current way of life. Still, in the end, they have given in to the rest of the world and adopted. Appendix 1<sup>23</sup> presents these categories in relevance to the women's suffrage fad. This table shows that the classifications of adopters that help identify fads can be applied in the case of women's suffrage. Thus, supporting the idea that fads do exist in the adoption of policies.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Back Bay Books/ Little, Brown, and Company, 2000): 197.

<sup>21</sup> Human Development Report 2006, "Women's political participation." Human Development Report, <http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/indicators/256.html> (accessed October 26, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Back Bay Books/ Little, Brown, and Company, 2000): 197.

<sup>23</sup> Human Development Report 2006, "Women's political participation." Human Development Report, <http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/indicators/256.html> (accessed October 26, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Back Bay Books/ Little, Brown, and Company, 2000): 197.

Another way to mathematically prove that fads exist is to graph them according to number of adoptions and time. Graphed, these data sets present themselves in either exponential curves or ‘S’ curves (depending on the point in which you are observing the fad). Exponential curves form when the fad is still in progress because at that point in time exponential growth is still possible. ‘S’ curves form after the fad has started to plateau and it is in the last stages. Figure 2 graphs the data from Appendix 1.

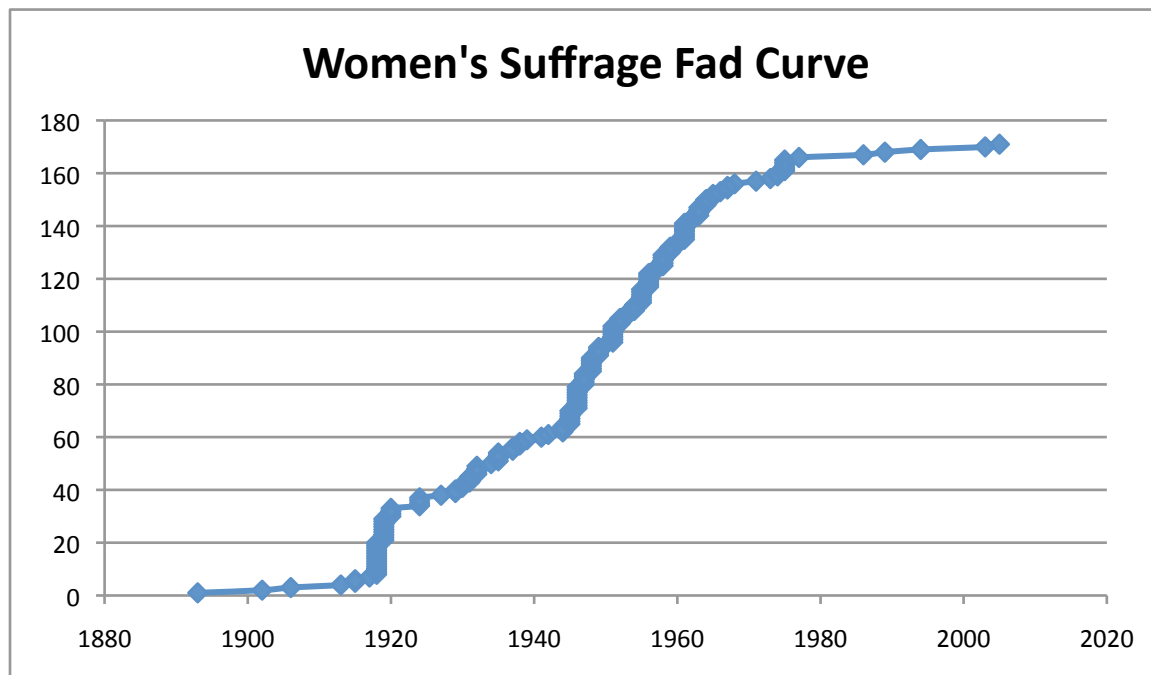


Figure 2

This chart shows a well- defined ‘S’ curve with a prominent tipping point in the 1930s, where the fad really begins to increase dramatically in adoptions. The graph supports the notion that the adoptions of women’s suffrage policies are in fact a fad.

Women’s suffrage adoption is nearing the end of its path. Few countries are left that do not currently allow women the right to vote. However, this does not decrease the value of legislation or in any way diminish what it did. Just because a policy can be classified as a fad

does not mean that it did not bring about important social and political change. Fads do not have to be classified as silly trends; they can have positive, permanent influences in the world.

## **Third-Party Innovators**

### United Nations Convention 138 on Child Labor Laws

The third case study is focused on child labor laws. Originally, this study was designed to measure domestic labor laws. However, in my research I have had difficulty locating these statistics. Therefore, I will be using the ratification of the United Nations Convention 138, which specified a minimum legal age for workers.<sup>25</sup> Because of this change, the new section of case studies was created. Now we can examine the difference, if any, a third-party innovator has on the policy adoption process.

The use of child labor has been practiced throughout history. It is the overworking of children that provoked inquiries into the principle of child labor. “In different parts of the world, at different stages of history, the laboring child has been a part of economic life.”<sup>26</sup> The point of origin for the massive wave of ethical studies begins with the industrial revolution. During this time, safety standards were virtually non-existent and children were being forced to work in conditions that were detrimental to their health.

Before the industrial revolution children worked on family farms and were often apprentices to community tradesmen. At this point, in time child labor was not a prominent concern. As the need to grow economically increased, pressure was placed for more to be

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<sup>25</sup> Kaushik Basu. “Child Labor: Cause, Consequence, and Cure, with Remarks on International Labor Standards,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 37, no. 3 (September 1999): 1805.

<sup>26</sup> IBID: 1803.

produced. In order to close the economic gap, children were forced to work. It was during this period that the rhetoric on anti-child labor began.<sup>27</sup>

As economies in developed countries became stable, the need for child labor also decreased. Awareness began to spread through globalization and the fight to protect children's rights began to intensify. Now, two centuries after the initial inquiries, children are starting to be freed from the economic labor that has been forced upon them for so long.

The fact is child labor has existed for centuries. The awareness of this practice has been around for the last couple of centuries. Why then is it only within the last couple of decades that the world has started taking serious notice and action? The answer is, simply, a tipping point. Many states have some piece of legislation regarding child labor<sup>28</sup>, the earliest reaching back as far as the 1830's.<sup>29</sup> Yet it took until 1975 for the first countries to ratify the U.N. Convention 138.<sup>30</sup>

The convention provides this study a standard policy by which to measure all countries and the rate of ratification. While not all members of the International Labour Organization have adopted this policy it is "...internationally recognized and used as a blueprint for national policy and practice with respect to child labor."<sup>31</sup> This will allow a clear picture of who leads and follows in the adoption process in both types of policies. Also demonstrated is the idea that when

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<sup>27</sup> Kaushik Basu. "Child Labor: Cause, Consequence, and Cure, with Remarks on International Labor Standards," *Journal of Economic Literature* 37, no. 3 (September 1999).

<sup>28</sup> Drusilla K. Brown. "Labor Standards: Where Do They Belong on the International Trade Agenda?" *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 15, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 91.

<sup>29</sup> Kaushik Basu. "Child Labor: Cause, Consequence, and Cure, with Remarks on International Labor Standards," *Journal of Economic Literature* 37, no. 3 (September 1999): 1087.

<sup>30</sup> ILOLEX, Ratifications of the Fundamental human rights Conventions by the country in Asia & Pacific." International Labour Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/docs/declAS.htm> (accessed November 14, 2007). ; ILOLEX, "Ratifications of the Fundamental human rights Conventions by the country in Europe." International Labour Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/docs/declEU.htm> (accessed November 14, 2007). ; ILOLEX, "Ratifications of the Fundamental human rights Conventions by the country in The Americas." International Labour Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/docs/declAM.htm> (accessed November 14, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> Kaushik Basu. "Child Labor: Cause, Consequence, and Cure, with Remarks on International Labor Standards," *Journal of Economic Literature* 37, no. 3 (September 1999): 1805.

the United Nations is the innovator, the first countries to sign may not matter as much as in grass-roots movements which I will discuss in the conclusion.

The ratifications, when tabled and charted, show the same characteristics as women's suffrage. At first only a few countries accept the policy. Then as time passes more and more begin to ratify. Just as in the previous study, there are innovators, early adopters and early and late majority. Appendix 2<sup>32</sup> lists the countries that have ratified Convention 138 and groups them by categories of fad adopters.

This table indicates that while the divisions between the different sets of adopters are small, there is in fact a dramatic increase in the number of adoptions beginning in 1999. Since this majority has only occurred within the last ten years we cannot yet see how this graph will finish and where the Laggards will lie when charted.

When plotted on a simple x-y graph, a curve appears similar to the one in the previous study. Figure 3 demonstrates this curve using the data from Appendix 2. It is obvious that around 1995 there is a dramatic increase in the number of ratifications. The table and graph support the idea that the ratifications of the U.N. Convention 138 were in fact part of a fad.

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<sup>32</sup> ILOLEX, Ratifications of the Fundamental human rights Conventions by the country in Africa." International Labour Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/docs/declAF.htm> (accessed November 14, 2007). ; ILOLEX, Ratifications of the Fundamental human rights Conventions by the country in Asia & Pacific." International Labour Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/docs/declAS.htm> (accessed November 14, 2007). ; ILOLEX, "Ratifications of the Fundamental human rights Conventions by the country in Europe." International Labour Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/docs/declEU.htm> (accessed November 14, 2007). ; ILOLEX, "Ratifications of the Fundamental human rights Conventions by the country in The Americas." International Labour Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/docs/declAM.htm> (accessed November 14, 2007).

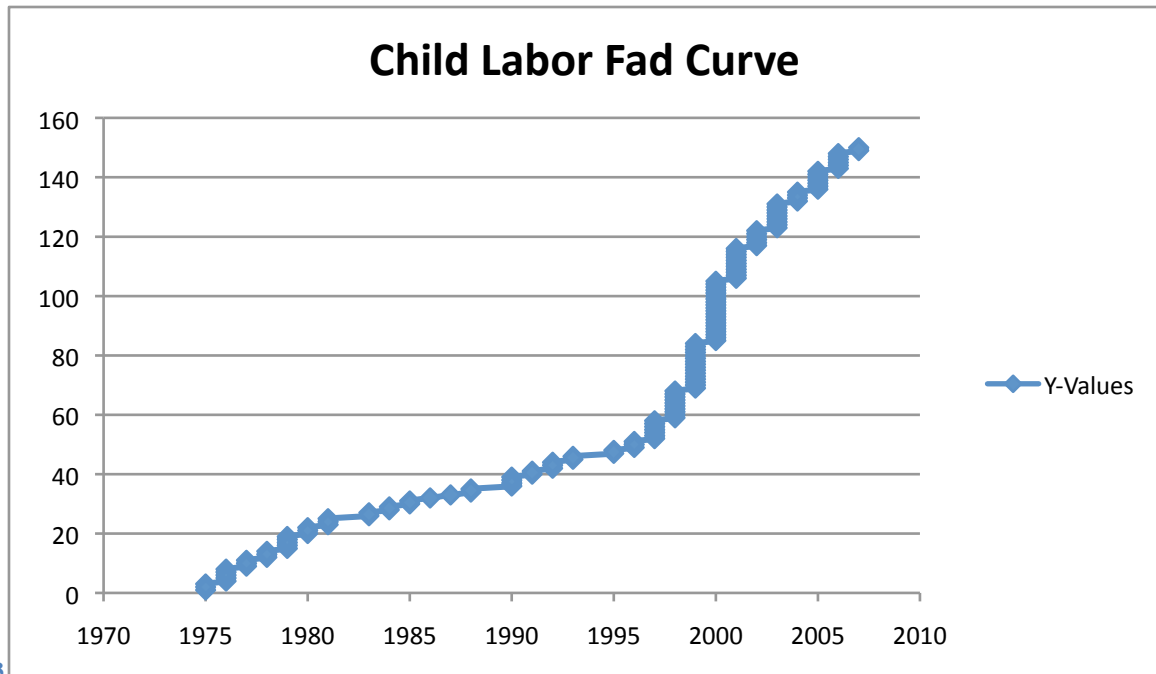


Figure 3

### Kyoto Protocol

The final case study examines the United Nation’s Kyoto Protocol agreement. The Protocol was established in 1997, with countries ratifying throughout the next decade. The Kyoto Protocol developed out of several meetings that took place during the decade previous to its creation. The earliest of these meetings discussed among other things the concept of environmental sustainability. This early groundwork led to the 1992 meeting appropriately titled “The Earth Summit.” During this session of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development negotiations took place that “catalyzed the institutionalization of these norms [of environmental responsibility] in a wide range of international environmental treaties.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Steven Bernstein. “International Institutions and the Framing of Domestic Policies: The Kyoto Protocol and Canada’s Response to Climate Change.” *Policy Sciences* 35, no. 2 (June 2002): 206.

From this point on, the social norms of environmental responsibility began to change. It became more acceptable to discuss and even become proactive to make sure countries were being conscientious about how they treated their land. Canada is a prime example; by the beginning of the early 1990's Canada had established several environmental policies such as the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. These policies promoted sustainable development, emphasizing pollution prevention.<sup>34</sup> All of this was done prior to the creation of the Kyoto Protocol.

The ratifying of the Kyoto Protocol began in 1998. The goal was to reduce GHG emissions to a quantified target range in each country. This was only legally binding on developed nations that ratified the treaty. This presents some interesting questions that are unique to this study, when we begin to look at the motives for why states would agree to this new treaty. Why would developed states sign it? And why wouldn't developing states agree? Listed in Appendix 3 are the 76 countries that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol.<sup>35</sup>

Looking at these dates graphed like the other two case studies, we see that it too forms an S-curve. This graph, Figure 4, shows a clear early adoption phase leading into the steep majority adoption, followed by a few more laggard countries signing as the curve plateaus.

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<sup>34</sup> Steven Bernstein. "International Institutions and the Framing of Domestic Policies: The Kyoto Protocol and Canada's Response to Climate Change." *Policy Sciences* 35, no. 2 (June 2002): 214.

<sup>35</sup> "Kyoto Protocol: Status of Ratification." United Nations. 28 Sept 2006.



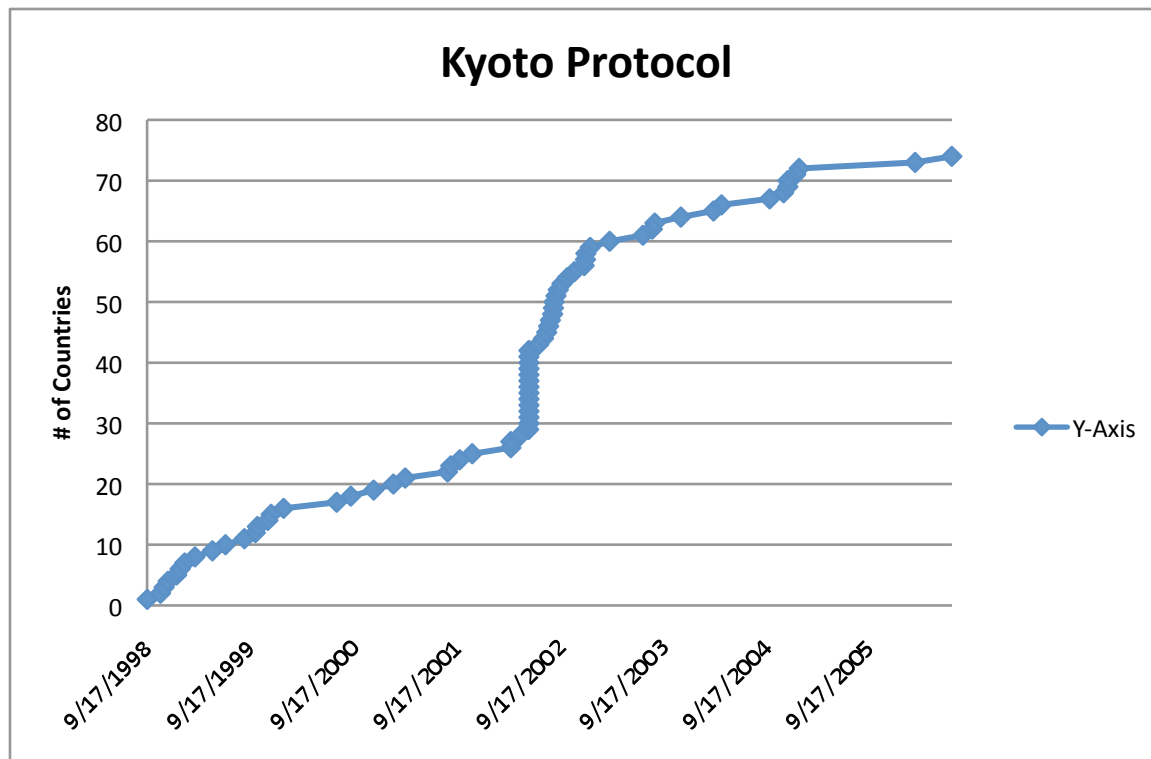


Figure 4

## Conclusion

Taking into account all of the information gathered about these three policies, it is now time to draw some conclusions. First, looking at the analysis of the policies when graphed by time and number of adoptions, we observe that all three adoption curves look strikingly similar. They each have distinguishable early, middle and plateauing phase. These S-curves while specifically unique, like a fingerprint, belonging to a specific policy; each bear the same characteristics of the curves defined by Schelling and Gladwell in their books.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Schelling, Thomas C. *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978.; Gladwell, Malcolm. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. New York: Back Bay Books/ Little, Brown, and Company, 2000.

There are however, important distinctions that need to be made about the difference between the grass-roots policy and the third-party policies. On average, the policies created by the United Nations took less time to become popular and form the S-curve. I propose that this is because the information was accessible to the world immediately. Because the policies were created by members of the United Nations, it replaced or became part of the typical initiator phase that we see in grass-roots policies. The policy did not have to work its way up from the local regions of one country to another. This indicates that third-party policy creators have the ability to instigate a trend quicker than policies initiated through other means.

We also observe that the order of countries that adopt these policies changes every time. Originally, I thought that there would be some distinguishable pattern to what countries started fads and which countries lagged behind, which is what Gladwell argues.<sup>37</sup> Beginning to understand the complicated process of policy adoption changed that. Cross-referencing the lists of countries we see that while New Zealand was the first country to adopt women's suffrage, it was 59<sup>th</sup> out of 75 to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and they did not ratify Convention 138. Figure 5 shows how some of the countries varied in their adoption position. This shows six countries and their position from each case study. As we can see, the countries held the same general position, with just a few drastically changing. But none were in exactly the same spot each time.

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<sup>37</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Back Bay Books/ Little, Brown, and Company, 2000): 197.

COUNTRY	WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE	U.N. CONVENTION 138	KYOTO PROTOCOL
Ukraine	28/175 "Early Adopter"	19/153 "Innovator"	66/74 "Laggard"
Indonesia	69/175 "Early Majority"	72/153 "Early Majority"	69/74 "Laggard"
United States	31/175 "Early Adopter"	Not Adopted	Not Adopted
Argentina	84/175 "Early Majority"	52/153 "Early Majority"	24/74 "Early Adopter"
Mozambique	169/175 "Laggard"	131/153 "Laggard"	Not Adopted
France	64/175 "Early Majority"	37/153 "Early Adopter"	Not Adopted

Figure 5

What this shows us is that while the actual order of countries changes, they tend to stay in the same area of adoption. The one category that actually changes significantly is the Innovators. The states in that category change in every case. This means that Innovators, those that initially adopt a policy, constantly change. But after that, states predominantly adopt within the same category. I propose that this happens because the general 'personalities' or, in other words, the category of a state in the international arena is fairly constant.

Another reason for a country's position on the adopt curve may have to do with the social norms that already exist. These norms or even perceived norms strongly influence whether or not a country will adopt and how quickly. A country that consistently tries new things and is willing to listen to ideas that vary from their norms are more likely to fall within the Innovator and Early Adopter category. This also includes countries that feel they need to be a leader to the rest of the world. On the other hand, those who consistently adopt late on the curve have a tendency to hold strongly to their current norms. They face cultural and policy change conservatively. And therefore, take longer to adopt change. For example, many Middle Eastern countries, due to the long standing Islamic values, were late to adopt change in the case of Women's Suffrage.

Each policy is quite different and the circumstances under which a state might agree to a change vary greatly. After studying the data at length I have come to some conclusions which I put forth as possible explanations on the circumstances surrounding policy adoption. I believe the order of the countries varies for several reasons. First, it depends on the origin of a policy, whether or not it was a grass-roots or Third-party innovator. Second, it would change based on the policy itself, and third, the era in which it was created.

When the policies are created by grass-roots movements I believe that more developed countries are more likely to be the initiators and early adopters. Looking to the case study in this research we see that New Zealand, Australia, Finland, countries which are quite developed, rank as the innovators of Women's Suffrage. They are in a position to pass effective legislation and enforce it. Once it has been implemented in these countries they become examples to others and thus the policy spreads.

The creation of policies by a third party follows a widely different pattern. In the case studies observed here, the United Nations, a global governing force, was the initiator. Because of this the order of countries almost reversed from the grass-roots study. I believe that it is because these policies appeal to a different group. Less-developed countries often seek to appease other nations so that funding and trade will increase or at the very least maintain status quo. They have far more motivation to tie themselves down to these policies: appearance. Even if they have no intention to strictly following the policy, they need to look as if they will. For example, if a poor country is desperately in need of food, they might sign a treaty limiting the amount of coca production in exchange for their needed supplies. At that moment food is essential and they will do anything to keep their people from starving, but knowing that coca is their largest source of income has no intention of actually eradicating production.

The pattern of adopters could also change based on the policy itself. Some countries have a reputation for certain types of research and innovations. When others observe their new policies they might be more willing to adopt them as well. For example, if a country has completed a lot of research into a new healthcare policy and has tested several models before adopting other states might be more willing to jump on the bandwagon.

The last possible reason for the variance in adoption position is the era in which the policy was created. Countries have more respect or influence at different times throughout history. Powers rise and fall frequently as evidenced by the fates of the Roman, Ottoman and British empires. Whoever is most influential at the time may hold more sway over what policies are created and implemented. It is interesting to note, however, that in the observed case studies, many of the innovators lacked power, regardless of how it is defined.

This study lays the ground work for further research into the area of international policy diffusion. Being able to identify the ways in which these policies with initially few adherents gain world-wide acceptance means we are one step closer to understanding how and why such small acts, such as one country signing a policy into law, can lead to monumental results like the majority of the world then passing that law too. As we continue to study policy initiators and how their ideas catch on, we will be able to use this information to comprehend the influence that individuals have on their environment, regardless of the level of analysis.

Future studies may also include advanced research into the countries themselves. Delving into the dynamics of each country and finding out whether countries that are more democratic are more likely to adopt new policies quicker would be an interesting pursuit. Or, as I propose, looking into the idea that more developed countries are likely to adopt grass-roots policies quicker whereas third- party policies attract those lesser-developed.

With the increase of worldwide communication, the world is becoming more of a close-knit community. It no longer takes great lengths of time to get a message across the world. What we used to consider a city has been reduced to a neighborhood. The world community is now who we look to for ideas and lifestyles. This progression allows not only fashion fads to transcend borders, but political policies as well.

The path of policies, in these three cases, acts in the same way as the next big electronic gadget. It is a fad. In this paper I have presented three studies that have demonstrated the same mathematical characteristics of a fad that other well-known types of fads have shown. In addition, I have provided evidence of the groups that form the fads. This all goes to support the idea that fads do exist in the adoption of these international policies.

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## Appendix

1.

Countries	Year Policy was adopted
<u>INNOVATORS</u>	
New Zealand	1893
Australia	1902
Finland	1906
<u>EARLY ADOPTERS</u>	
Norway	1913
Iceland	1915
Denmark	1915
Canada	1917
Ireland	1918
Austria	1918
United Kingdom	1918
Germany	1918
Hungary	1918
Poland	1918
Estonia	1918
Latvia	1918
Russian Federation	1918
Armenia	1918
Georgia	1918
Azerbaijan	1918
Kyrgyzstan	1918
Sweden	1919
Netherlands	1919
Luxembourg	1919
Belgium	1919
Lithuania	1919
Belarus	1919
Ukraine	1919
Zimbabwe	1919
Kenya	1919
United States	1920
Czech Republic	1920
Slovakia	1920

Albania	1920
Kazakhstan	1924
Moldova	1924
Mongolia	1924
Tajikistan	1924
Turkmenistan	1927
Romania	1929
Ecuador	1929
<u>EARLY MAJORITY</u>	
Turkey	1930
South Africa	1930
Spain	1931
Portugal	1931
Sri Lanka	1931
Uruguay	1932
Brazil	1932
Thailand	1932
Maldives	1932
Cuba	1934
India	1935
Myanmar	1935
Pakistan	1935
Bangladesh	1935
Bulgaria	1937
Philippines	1937
Uzbekistan	1938
Bolivia	1938
El Salvador	1939
Panama	1941
Dominican Republic	1942
France	1944
Algeria	1944
Jamaica	1944
Italy	1945
Croatia	1945
Indonesia	1945
Togo	1945
Japan	1945
Senegal	1945
Slovenia	1946
Trinidad and Tobago	1946
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1946
Macedonia	1946

Venezuela	1946
Vietnam	1946
Guatemala	1946
Cameroon	1946
Djibouti	1946
Singapore	1947
Malta	1947
Argentina	1947
Mexico	1947
Congo	1947
Israel	1948
Korea Rep.	1948
Seychelles	1948
Samoa	1948
Suriname	1948
Niger	1948
Chile	1949
Costa Rica	1949
China	1949
Syrian Arab Republic	1949
<u>LATE MAJORITY</u>	
Barbados	1950
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1951
Antigua and Barbuda	1951
Dominica	1951
Saint Lucia	1951
Grenada	1951
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1951
Nepal	1951
Greece	1952
Lebanon	1952
Cote D'Ivoire	1952
Guyana	1953
Bhutan	1953
Colombia	1954
Belize	1954
Ghana	1954
Peru	1955
Nicaragua	1955
Honduras	1955
Cambodia	1955
Eritrea	1955

Ethiopia	1955
Comoros	1956
Mauritius	1956
Egypt	1956
Gabon	1956
Benin	1956
Mali	1956
Malaysia	1957
Haiti	1957
Lao Peoples Dem. Rep.	1958
Nigeria	1958
Guinea	1958
Chad	1958
Burkina Faso	1958
Tunisia	1959
Madagascar	1959
Tanzania	1959
Cyprus	1960
Tonga	1960
Bahamas	1961
Paraguay	1961
Mauritania	1961
Rwanda	1961
Malawi	1961
Burundi	1961
Sierra Leone	1961
Uganda	1962
Zambia	1962
Fiji	1963
Iran	1963
Equatorial Guinea	1963
Morocco	1963
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1964
Papua New Guinea	1964
Sudan	1964
Botswana	1965
Lesotho	1965
Gambia	1966
Yemen	1967
Congo Dem. Rep.	1967
Swaziland	1968
<u>LAGGARDS</u>	
Switzerland	1971

Bahrain	1973
Jordan	1974
Solomon Islands	1974
Cape Verde	1975
Vanuatu	1975
Sao Tome and Principe	1975
Angola	1975
Mozambique	1975
Guinea Bissau	1977
Central African Rep.	1986
Namibia	1989
Oman	1994
Qatar	2003
Kuwait	2005

2.

Countries	Year Policy was adopted
<u>INNOVATORS</u>	
Cuba	1975
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1975
Romania	1975
Germany	1976
Costa Rica	1976
Zambia	1976
Netherlands	1976
Finland	1976
Luxembourg	1977
Uruguay	1977
Spain	1977
Poland	1978
Niger	1978
Ireland	1978
Kenya	1979
Russian Federation	1979
Belarus	1979
Israel	1979
Ukraine	1979
Bulgaria	1980
Honduras	1980

Norway	1980
Nicaragua	1981
Rwanda	1981
Italy	1981
<u>EARLY ADOPTERS</u>	
Antigua and Barbuda	1983
Dominica	1983
Algeria	1984
Togo	1984
Equatorial Guinea	1985
Iraq	1985
Greece	1986
Venezuela	1987
Belgium	1988
Malta	1988
France	1990
Mauritius	1990
Guatemala	1990
Sweden	1990
Macedonia	1991
Croatia	1991
Azerbaijan	1992
Slovenia	1992
Kyrgyzstan	1992
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1993
Tajikistan	1993
<u>EARLY MAJORITY</u>	
Tunisia	1995
San Marino	1995
El Salvador	1996
Argentina	1996
Georgia	1996
Cyprus	1997
Malaysia	1997
Nepal	1997
Bolivia	1997
Botswana	1997
Denmark	1997
Slovakia	1997
Albania	1998
United Arab Emirates	1998
Turkey	1998
Tanzania	1998

Hungary	1998
Guyana	1998
Philippines	1998
Lithuania	1998
Jordan	1998
Portugal	1998
Iceland	1999
Indonesia	1999
Egypt	1999
Dominican Republic	1999
Kuwait	1999
Republic of Korea	1999
Switzerland	1999
Chile	1999
China	1999
Burkina Faso	1999
Malawi	1999
Congo	1999
Ethiopia	1999
Senegal	1999
Cambodia	1999
Republic of Moldova	1999
United Kingdom	2000
Eritrea	2000
Papua New Guinea	2000
Ecuador	2000
Namibia	2000
Zimbabwe	2000
Belize	2000
Barbados	2000
Madagascar	2000
Japan	2000
Central African Republic	2000
Panama	2000
Yemen	2000
South Africa	2000
Seychelles	2000
Gambia	2000
Burundi	2000
Austria	2000
Morocco	2000
Sri Lanka	2000
Serbia	2000

<u>LATE MAJORITY</u>	
Colombia	2001
Syrian Arab Republic	2001
Lesotho	2001
Mauritania	2001
Benin	2001
Angola	2001
Cameroon	2001
Democratic Rep. of the Congo	2001
Bahamas	2001
Brazil	2001
Kazakhstan	2001
Peru	2002
Swaziland	2002
Nigeria	2002
Sudan	2002
Mali	2002
Mongolia	2002
Lebanon	2003
Jamaica	2003
Guinea	2003
Cote d'Ivoire	2003
Grenada	2003
Mozambique	2003
Uganda	2003
Fiji	2003
Viet Nam	2003
Trinidad and Tobago	2004
Comoros	2004
Paraguay	2004
Thailand	2004
Singapore	2005
Lao People's Democratic Rep.	2005
Chad	2005
Sao Tome and Principe	2005
Djibouti	2005
Saint Kitts and Nevis	2005
Oman	2005
Armenia	2006
Pakistan	2006
Qatar	2006
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	2006



Montenegro	2006
Latvia	2006
Estonia	2007
Czech Republic	2007

3.

Countries	Date Policy was Ratified
<b><u>Innovators</u></b>	
Fiji	9/17/1998
Antigua and Barbuda	11/3/1998
Tuvalu	11/16/1998
El Salvador	11/30/1998
Maldives	12/30/1998
Turkmenistan	1/11/1999
Trinidad and Tobago	1/28/1999
Panama	3/5/1999
Niue	5/6/1999
States of Micronesia	6/21/1999
Paraguay	8/27/1999
Guatemala	10/5/1999
Uzbekistan	10/12/1999
Nicaragua	11/18/1999
Bolivia	11/30/1999
Ecuador	1/13/2000
<b><u>Early Adopters</u></b>	
Honduras	7/19/2000
Mexico	9/7/2000
Samoa	11/27/2000
Uruguay	2/5/2001
Romania	3/19/2001
Nauru	8/16/2001
Cook Islands	8/27/2001
Argentina	9/28/2001
Malta	11/11/2001
<b><u>Early Majority</u></b>	
Mali	3/28/2002
Papua New Guinea	3/28/2002
Cuba	4/30/2002

Norway	5/30/2002
Austria	5/31/2002
Belgium	5/31/2002
Denmark	5/31/2002
Finland	5/31/2002
Germany	5/31/2002
Greece	5/31/2002
Ireland	5/31/2002
Italy	5/31/2002
Luxembourg	5/31/2002
Slovakia	5/31/2002
Spain	5/31/2002
Sweden	5/31/2002
The United Kingdom	5/31/2002
<b><u>Late Majority</u></b>	
Latvia	7/5/2002
Seychelles	7/22/2002
Slovenia	8/2/2002
Costa Rica	8/9/2002
Bulgaria	8/15/2002
Brasil	8/23/2002
Chile	8/26/2002
Thailand	8/28/2002
Malaysia	9/4/2002
Peru	9/12/2002
Vietnam	9/25/2002
Estonia	10/14/2002
Republic of Korea	11/8/2002
Poland	12/13/2002
Canada	12/17/2002
New Zealand	12/19/2002
Lithuania	1/3/2003
Solomon Islands	3/13/2003
<b><u>Laggards</u></b>	
Switzerland	7/9/2003
Marshall Islands	8/11/2003
Saint Lucia	8/20/2003
Philippines	11/20/2003
Israel	3/15/2004
Ukraine	4/12/2004
Niger	9/30/2004

Russian Federation	11/18/2004
Indonesia	12/3/2004
Liechtenstein	12/3/2004
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	12/31/2004
Egypt	1/12/2005
Monaco	2/27/2006
Zambia	7/7/2006