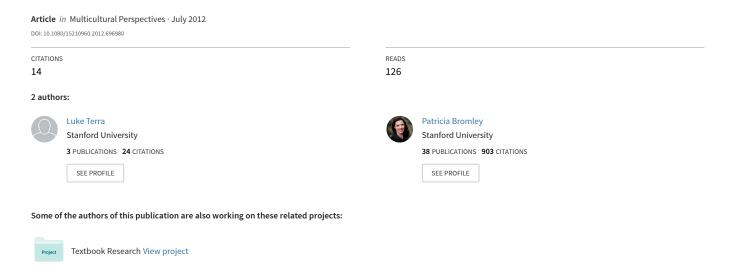# The Globalization of Multicultural Education in Social Science Textbooks: Cross-national Analyses, 1950–2010

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PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

The Globalization of Multicultural Education in Social Science Textbooks: Cross-national Analyses, 1950–2010

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In this study the authors analyze 548 secondary social science textbooks to examine the extent to which multiculturalism-related content appears over time and around the world. Findings suggest significant global increases in textbook depictions of minority rights and groups experiencing discrimination over time and in many regions.

As a result of globalization, education systems around the world increasingly espouse commitments to human rights, gender equality, and equal opportunity for all. To be sure, many states do not achieve these commitments, but virtually all affirm them. Efforts to translate these normative commitments into classroom practices are at the heart of Multicultural Education (ME). Though ME first developed in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Banks 2010a), recent publications suggest that it is now part of national education discourses in Latin America (Gvirtz, 2002), Africa (Alidou, 2010; Soudien, 2010), Asia and the Pacific (Chakravarty, 2001; Hirasawa, 2010), and Europe (Aguado & Malik, 2011; Lasonen, 2010). As the goals of ME have spread around the world (Sutton, 2005), what has been their effect on classroom curricula? This study explores the influence of multicultural education in classrooms around the world, as reflected in the most common resource available to teachers and students—the textbook.

Textbooks reflect the "values and beliefs of the culture and historical period of which they are a part" (Provenzo, Shaver, & Bello, 2011, p. 2). As longitudinal sources of data, textbooks allow us to observe changes over time in the intended curricula across different

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societies (Foster & Crawford, 2006). In this study we analyze the extent to which multicultural education-related content appears in classroom textbooks over time and around the world. We examine specifically whether seven groups—women, children, immigrants and refugees, indigenous peoples, other minorities (ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic), workers/labor, and gays/lesbians—are depicted as bearing rights and whether they are described as victims of oppression or discrimination in society. Further, we consider which world regions place more emphasis on discussions of multiculturalism over time. We draw on a unique source of 548 secondary social science textbooks—history, civics, social studies, and geography—from 93 countries published from 1950–2010. Our goal is to help education researchers and practitioners situate ME within a global social and cultural framework.

Before proceeding, we should briefly clarify our use of the phrase multicultural education. Banks (2010b) notes that ME programs begin from the premise that "all students—regardless of their gender, social class, racial, ethnic, or cultural characteristics—should have an equal opportunity to learn in school" (Banks, 2010b, p. 3). This goal is based on philosophical commitments to "freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity" (NAME, 2003). Developing more inclusive and respectful schools requires efforts on a number of fronts, including curriculum development, teacher training and classroom pedagogy, and school culture. Thus, the term ME encompasses a wide range of efforts in education reform. Like numerous other scholars (Grant & Sleeter 2005; Morey & Kitano 1997), we subscribe to a broad definition that includes a wide range of groups, philosophical traditions, and practices, and envisions ME as a multifaceted process that spans both content knowledge and the empowerment of individuals to work against social injustice. For the empirical purposes of our

study, however, we focus more narrowly on how these philosophical commitments for greater inclusivity come to be reflected in textbooks.

Theories of Multicultural Education

Conceptually, our work is aligned with research in the sociology of education that argues globalization, particularly its social and cultural forms, is a powerful force shaping the structure and content of national education systems. A large body of empirical research using this theoretical lens, often referred to as neo-institutional theory, documents increasing convergence among education systems worldwide in areas such as the expansion of mass schooling (Meyer, Ramirez, & Soysal, 1992), the expansion of higher education (Schofer & Meyer, 2005), and amount of time allocated to various curricular subjects (Benavot, Cha, Kamens, Meyer, & Wong, 1991; Wong, 1991). More recently, these studies have also documented international increases in a number of areas related to ME including human rights education (Meyer, Bromley, & Rameriz, 2010; Suárez, Ramirez, & Koo, 2009), student-centered pedagogy in textbooks (Bromley, Meyer, & Ramirez, 2011a), environmental awareness (Bromley, Meyer, & Ramirez, 2011b), and diversity (Bromley, 2011; Soysal & Wong, 2010).

These studies show that education policies and practices are not solely constructed out of the economic needs of a nation-state (for skilled workers, for example) or the power and interests of national elites. Instead, national educational trends follow blueprints developed at the global level and disseminated by international organizations (such as UNESCO) and professionals (including scholars, consultants, international education specialists, and teachers). These global models provide a normative, ideological prescription for reform work: They exert powerful influence in defining what education systems should look like.

Our approach leads to two main propositions regarding the trends related to ME that we expect to observe in textbooks. First, we predict that textbook content worldwide will increasingly emphasize the rights and history of discrimination for a wide range of minority groups, following the institutionalization of ideas of social justice in international treaties and organizations. This shift should occur in a variety of countries, regardless of specific levels of political or economic development. Second, given the roots of ME in the American civil rights movement with its focus on individual equality, we expect greater increases in groups and regions aligned with individual emphases (Sutton, 2005), rather than more collective or economic ideas of rights or discrimination.

Data, Measures, and Method

The textbooks included in our sample are limited to those produced for secondary classrooms. Preliminary discussions with relevant experts suggested the indicators of interest in this study would be more fully addressed at the secondary level, but it would also be valuable to examine primary textbooks in future research. Each textbook was coded on parameters designed to measure emphases on diversity and rights (coding protocol available from authors). The method used to analyze data is descriptive. We consider whether the mean scores on the measures of rights and accounts of discrimination change significantly over time around the world. The books are divided by publication date into three periods: 1950–1974 ($n = 144$), 1975–1994 ($n = 200$), and 1995–2008 ($n = 204$). This periodization reflects both substantive reasons (to capture the emergence of multiculturalism in the 1970s, as well as the fall of communist regimes in the 1990s) and a methodological rationale (the textbook sample is divided nearly evenly at these time points). Looking at trends in 5 or 10 year increments results in similar findings to those reported here. Means are presented for the whole sample and sub-samples representing six world regions: Western Europe and North America (plus Australia), Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).[1] The use of these regions follows previous research on global curriculum shifts over time (Benavot et al., 1991).

Findings

We examine depictions of seven minority groups: women, children, immigrants and refugees, indigenous peoples, other minorities (ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic), workers/labor, and gays/lesbians. First, we asked whether textbooks depicted these groups as experiencing discrimination, marginalization, oppression, or exclusion in society. Second, we asked whether these groups were depicted as having specific rights. Table 1 reports the means for each group.[2]

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[1]Previous research on curriculum changes around the world identified MENA as following a different trajectory from elsewhere in Africa (Benavot et al., 1991), and so is considered separately here. Another notable outlier is the case of Israel, where books exhibited higher levels of universalism and diversity than other countries of the Middle East. Given the unique position of Israel in the Middle East, it is included in the worldwide trends but excluded from regional analyses. We also exclude Asia and MENA for the first time period as we have fewer than 10 books from these regions published before 1975.

[2]The sample size for each period is given in Table 1; a full listing of country-specific totals is included as Appendix A. Stars indicate

Table 1. Textbook Depictions of Discrimination and Group Rights Over Time.

A. Groups experiencing discrimination	1950–1974 (n = 144)	1975–1994[a] (n = 200)	1995–2010[b] (n = 204)
Women	0.12	0.15	0.34****
Other minorities	0.13	0.25***	0.33*
Immigrants and refugees	0.06	0.19****	0.28**
Workers	0.21	0.27	0.24
Indigenous	0.10	0.22***	0.21
Children	0.06	0.06	0.20****
Gays/lesbians	0.01	0.02	0.04*
B. Groups bearing rights			
Women	0.14	0.16	0.32****
Other minorities	0.08	0.15*	0.23**
Immigrants and refugees	0.05	0.06	0.13*
Workers	0.19	0.24	0.22
Indigenous	0.03	0.07	0.09
Children	0.09	0.09	0.19***
Gays/Lesbians	0.01	0.01	0.03*
Human rights	0.26	0.32	0.45***

Note. **** $p < .001$, *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$, two-tailed tests
[a] Significance indicates t-test comparing difference between periods 1 and 2.
[b] Significance indicates t-test comparing difference between periods 2 and 3.

Discrimination

Panel A reports the means of textbook depictions of discrimination for each of the three periods (1950–1974, 1975–1994, 1995–2010). With the exception of workers, all groups show statistically significant increases over time. Depictions of discrimination against three groups—other minorities, immigrants and refugees, and indigenous populations—increased significantly from the first to second period. This increase corresponds historically to the emergence of global movements for self-determination, colonial independence, and civil rights for racial and other minorities (Banks, 2010a). Depictions of discrimination against women, other minorities, immigrants, children, and gays/lesbians increased significantly from the second to third period. In real terms, this means that over a third of textbooks from our sample published since 1995 discussed discrimination against women and other minorities, and more than a quarter of textbooks described discrimination against immigrants and refugees. Depictions of children

the statistical significance of a change from one time period to the next. For example, in the first period (1950–1974), the mean of rights for children is 0.09, meaning that children's rights are discussed in 9% of all textbooks published during that period. By the third time period (1995–2010), children's rights are discussed in 19% of textbooks. The change between the second and third periods is highly significant ($p < 0.01$).

as victims of mistreatment more than tripled from the second to third period, and descriptions of discrimination against women more than doubled. Depictions of discrimination against gays/lesbians also doubled, but the rate is dramatically lower than all other groups. We discuss these patterns in more detail the following section.

Rights

As shown in Panel B, rights discussions increase for all groups. Changes from the first to second period are generally small, with the only significant increase observed among other minorities. Increases from the second to third period are more substantial. This follows Banks' (2010a) description of ME initially focusing on racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities and broadening over time to include additional groups. As with discrimination, the increase is not statistically significant for workers, and here indigenous rights also do not increase significantly. These two exceptions provide some evidence in support of our contention that ME promotes a particular view of discrimination aligned with ideas of individual rights. Rights that are often defined collectively, such as workers and indigenous groups, do not increase at the same rate as other groups in our sample.

Depictions of group rights among women and children are highly significant, followed by a moderate increase for other minorities, and marginal increases for both immigrants and gays/lesbians. In terms of practical significance, this means that within social science textbooks in our sample published since 1995, 32% discuss the rights of women, 23% discuss the rights of other minorities, and 19% include the rights of children. These compare with much lower numbers recorded in the first period (14%, 8%, and 9% respectively). Yet not all groups enjoy these increasing levels of coverage. The rights of indigenous populations are mentioned in only 9% of textbooks in the most recent period, and gays/lesbians appear in only 4%. The lack of coverage of gay/lesbian issues we observe in textbooks echoes Banks' (2010a) conclusion that there are "few visible signs either within or across nations that schools are incorporating issues related to sexual orientation into the curriculum in meaningful ways" (p. 15). We believe these differences in coverage reflect an implicit hierarchy in the status of minority groups.

This multicultural movement in education is part of a broader trend that applies the principles of human rights in defense of cultural, religious, linguistic, gendered, and other marginalized minorities. In the decades since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), the international community ratified a

number of other international declarations that elaborate the rights of groups.[3] The depictions of group rights we observe in textbooks appear to rise in response to these more recent movements to apply human rights principles to minority populations. Discussions of human rights itself also increase directly, as shown in the last row of Panel B.

Regional Differences

Table 2 reports on regional variations in textbook depictions of discrimination and rights of groups. To best capture the variation of each textbook, we created an index to score the references to rights or discrimination. For each textbook, we took the sum of scores for the seven groups. This gave every textbook a score between 0 and 7. A textbook that included no references to group rights would be coded 0, while a textbook that referenced rights for all seven groups would be coded 7. For example, textbook references to discrimination in Latin American and the Caribbean textbooks increase from an average of 0.71 in the first period to 2.50 in the third period—a highly significant increase. This means that in the most recent period textbooks from Latin America and the Caribbean mentioned discrimination against an average of 2.5 different groups.

As in Table 1, the regional results are significant mainly from the second to the third time period. North America and Western Europe are the exception, where depictions of discrimination and rights increase significantly from the first to second period. These changes parallel the development of multicultural education. Following the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the first wave of ME began in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Banks, 2010a). This movement broadened over time to include additional minority groups and spread geographically to influence other education systems.

Depictions of rights and discrimination increase in a number of other regions in the third period, rising significantly in all regions of the world except Asia. We posit that in Asian countries a more collective and cohesive view of society may take precedence over the American-inspired emphases on diversity. In MENA,

[3]A sample of United Nations declarations passed since the ratification of the UNDHR: Declaration on the Rights of the Child (1959), Declaration on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination (1963), Declaration of the rights of the elderly (1971), Declaration of the rights of disabled persons (1975), Declaration on the elimination of all intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief (1981), Declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic or religious or linguistic minorities (1992), and the Declaration of the elimination of violence against women (1993).

Table 2. Textbook Depictions of Group Rights and Discrimination Over Time by Region[a]

	1950–1974	1975–1994[b]	1995–2010[c]
A. Groups experiencing discrimination (0–7)			
Latin America & the Caribbean	0.71	1.23	2.50***
Asia		1.08	0.94
North America & Western Europe	0.75	1.58***	2.17*
Central & Eastern Europe	0.91	1.03	1.19
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.28	0.77	2.12***
Middle East and North Africa		0.41	0.87
B. Groups bearing rights (0–7)			
Latin America & the Caribbean	0.38	0.79	1.78**
Asia		0.77	0.69
North America & Western Europe	0.65	1.19**	1.57
Central & East Europe	0.83	0.72	1.30*
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.33	0.46	1.29**
Middle East and North Africa		0.09	0.43*

Note. ***$p < .01$, **$p < .05$, *$p < .1$, two-tailed tests
[a] The numbers of books for each region by time period are: Latin America & the Caribbean (21, 39, 18), Asia (6, 13, 32), North America & Western Europe (65, 59, 63), Central & Eastern Europe (23, 33, 49), Sub-Saharan Africa (18, 26, 17), Middle East and North Africa (9, 22, 23).
[b] Significance indicates t-test comparing difference between periods 1 and 2.
[c] Significance indicates t-test comparing difference between periods 2 and 3.

textbook depictions of group rights increase significantly, though in relative terms the rate is still very low. Central and Eastern Europe boasts the highest average in the first period but shows no increase over time in depictions of group discrimination, and only modest increases in group rights. Perhaps, the higher average in the first time period reflects the class emphasis of communist/socialist political ideology and historiography.

Discussion

In this article we explore textbook depictions of group rights and experiences of discrimination over time and around the world. ME movements originated in the West and initially focused on ethnic, racial, and linguistic minorities, and these patterns are reflected in our data. Textbooks increasingly discuss women, children, immigrants and refugees, indigenous peoples, gays and lesbians, and other minorities as experiencing discrimination, marginalization or exclusion in society. In addition to portraying social inequalities, textbooks also increasingly depict groups as bearing rights.

These changes suggest a shift from an earlier period in which sub-national groups received little attention, discrimination against them was infrequently discussed, and rights focused on the individual member of a nation-state. Now, in many textbooks from a broad range of countries, society is also made up of groups who have suffered discrimination and enjoy rights protected in national and international law. Qualitatively, we also observed that textbooks in the current period also often frame national experiences in terms of broader principles of social justice, equality, and human rights. For example, a senior secondary textbook from Malawi—*Social and Development Studies* (2002)—includes chapters on multiculturalism, discrimination, and gender balance, as well as human rights and social justice.

Textbooks increasingly discuss women, children, immigrants and refugees, indigenous peoples, gays and lesbians, and other minorities as experiencing discrimination, marginalization or exclusion in society. In addition to portraying social inequalities, textbooks also increasingly depict groups as bearing rights.

This is not to say that ME principles have influenced all—or even a majority—of textbooks in all states. Many textbooks continue to neglect discussions of social inequality and the oppression of marginalized groups, and avoid recognizing the rights of sub-national groups. Some educators may look at even the significant increases reported here with dismay, noting that the highest rates of inclusion (for women) appear in only one-third of textbooks. What about the other two-thirds? There is no doubt that textbooks do not fully reflect the diverse realities of modern nation-states. But many more textbooks now recognize the historical experiences of marginalized groups and the rights they possess than they did mere decades ago, and in countries far away from the centers of multicultural discourse.

This inclusivity, however, does not apply to all groups equally. Our findings also suggest that the liberal orientation of rights discourse privileges certain minority groups and types of rights over others. Specifically, cultural, ethnic, and gendered groups are increasingly preferred over economic or class-based groups. This distinction parallels the tensions in global human rights

discourse over first-generation individual civil and political freedoms and subsequent extensions of rights to include second and third generation concerns of social, economic, and cultural claims. Further, the inclusion of gays and lesbians remains very low compared to other groups we examined. Scholars in ME have also noted the lack of coverage of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) issues in multicultural curricula (Banks, 2010a; Mayo, 2010). Coverage of discrimination against indigenous peoples increases, but discussions of indigenous rights remains relatively low. More strikingly, discussions of workers—our proxy for a class/economic group—do not follow the same increasing trend as other groups. Discussions of workers' rights and discrimination start relatively high, but by the third time period they are eclipsed by these other marginalized groups. These patterns suggest a hierarchy of minority groups eligible for inclusion in textbook accounts that depends on domestic relevance, international attention, and the nature of rights as rooted in individual versus collective claims.

We can observe this shift clearly in individual textbook accounts. In earlier periods, textbooks commonly organized society along labor sectors. A typical account from a 1968 textbook of U.S. history—*The Adventure of the American People*—spends a significant portion of the book describing major sectors of the economy, including chapters on farmers, industrial workers, and scientists among others. In this text, workers are central characters in the national story. Labor unions in particular are highly emphasized. The authors spend over 24 pages detailing the rise of industrial unions, in generally effusive language, concluding: "Despite labor's difficulties and sorrows between 1865 and 1914, its leaders never lost hope that tomorrow would be better" (Krout & Graff, 1968, p. 424).

Contrast this with a more recent textbook included in our sample. *The American Journey* (2003) covers the rise of industrial labor in just four pages. The text includes brief descriptions of major strikes in U.S. history, but also includes sections such as "Women Workers," "Child Labor," and "Women and the Unions." Both these textbooks cover workers, and even depict discrimination against them and their right to organize for better conditions. Yet the quality of this treatment differs: in the older textbook labor unions (and classes of workers more generally) are portrayed as major actors in history that deserve extended attention, while in the more recent text the world of work serves as a context where the rights and experiences of other groups such as women, children, ethnic, and other minorities are explored.

Increases in discussions of rights and discrimination also vary geographically. As expected, depictions of both group rights and discrimination increase first in textbooks from North America and Western Europe. In the third

period, we observe significant increases in Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Central and Eastern Europe. Textbooks from Latin American and the Caribbean exceed all other regions in depictions of group rights and discrimination. This replicates an earlier finding related to student empowerment in Latin American textbooks (Bromley et al., 2011a). The region's strong history connecting education and causes of social justice may partially explain this trend (Freire, 1970), and recent studies detail policy efforts in Latin America in the 1990s and 2000s to increase curricular coverage of marginalized minorities (Gvirtz, 2002).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, depictions of groups experiencing discrimination triple from the second to third period. One might expect that these changes coincide with anti-colonial, national independence movements; that the rights of individuals and groups are asserted as part of a broader decolonization project. Yet discussions of colonization and decolonization in Sub-Saharan African textbooks actually decreased over the three time periods, from a high of 72% of textbooks published from 1950–1975, to 53% of textbooks published since 1995.[4] The attention given to marginalized groups develops not from a push to "decolonize the social studies" (Merryfield, 2008), but as part of broader global shifts that emphasize the rights of individuals and minority groups.

Conclusion

Through this study we explore the responsiveness of textbook content around the world to the objectives of ME. While globalization can certainly contribute to a narrowing of educational practices that crowd out local innovations, our analyses show that globalization also appears to diffuse norms that support the aims of multicultural educators. Textbooks from Nepal to the Netherlands, from Macedonia to Madagascar, increasingly address discrimination, marginalization, oppression, and exclusion of minority groups, and depict them—not simply as victims—but as groups endowed with rights under law. This trend is not without exception, geographically and by the type of minority group. Yet overall we find the trajectory of textbook content points toward the globalization and expansion of multicultural education over time.

For scholars and practitioners of ME, our findings suggest two broad conclusions: that the list of groups deemed eligible for inclusion is historically and culturally

contingent, and that there remain groups excluded from textbook accounts. While a growing number of textbooks depict the world as made up of groups bearing rights protected under law, many still do not. Even the highest rate of inclusion for a group appeared in only one third of textbooks. Further, though efforts to represent the rights of marginalized groups on the pages of textbooks have born fruit, some groups fare much better than others. Textbooks remain one of the most widely used and influential classroom resources around the world. At a minimum, their content provides both students and their teachers with an organizing framework through which to engage history, civics, and social studies content. Teachers and scholars should continue to "articulate the silences" (Levstik, 2000) in textbook accounts to give voice to perspectives still underrepresented, and challenge social science textbooks to more fully reflect the diversity of peoples and historical experiences in contemporary society.

While a growing number of textbooks depict the world as made up of groups bearing rights protected under law, many still do not. Even the highest rate of inclusion for a group appeared in only one third of textbooks.

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[4]Discussions of colonialization/decolonization in our overall sample also decreased from 55% in 1950–1975 to 50% of textbooks published since 1995.

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Appendix A. Total Textbooks by Country and Time Period

Country	1950–1974	1975–1994	1995–2010	Total
Algeria		3	6	9
Argentina	3	1	1	5
Armenia		4	3	7
Austria	3	4	4	11
Bahamas		1		1
Belgium	7	9	5	21
Bolivia	4	4		8
Bosnia and Herzegovina		4	4	
Brazil	6	2	4	12
Brunei		2		2
Bulgaria	3	3	6	12
Burundi		1		1
Cameroon	2	2		4
Canada	3	4	3	10
Chile	2	6	4	12
China		4	4	8
Colombia	4	8	1	13
Croatia			4	4
Czech Republic			4	4
Czechoslovakia	3	4		7
Denmark	3	4	4	11
Djibouti		1		1
Egypt	1	2		3
El Salvador		1		1
Ethiopia	1	1		2
Finland	5	4	2	11
France	1			1
Gabon		2		2
Germany	11	2	2	15
Ghana	2	4	1	7
Greece	1	2	3	6
Guatemala		2	1	3
Ireland	3	2	4	9
Indonesia			5	5
India	1		10	11
Iraq	1			1
Israel	2	8	2	12
Italy	3	1	5	9

(Continued on next page)

Country	1950–1974	1975–1994	1995–2010	Total
Ivory Coast	2	1		3
Jamaica			1	1
Japan	5	2		7
Jordan			1	1
Kenya			3	3
Kuwait	2		3	5
Lebanon		2	6	8
Macedonia			5	5
Madagascar	4			4
Malawi	1	1	2	4
Mauritania		3		3
Mauritius		1		1
Mexico			4	4
Montenegro		1		1
Morocco	2	1	1	4
Namibia		2		2
Nepal		1	6	7
Netherlands	4	3	5	12
Nicaragua		1		1
Niger	1	2		3
Nigeria		2		2
Norway	3	5	4	12
Palestine		1	1	2
Panama		3		3
Peru	2	9	1	12
Philippines		4	2	6
Poland	4	5	3	12
Portugal	1	7	3	11

Country	1950–1974	1975–1994	1995–2010	Total
Puerto Rico		1		1
Qatar		3		3
Romania	3	4	4	11
Russian Federation	1	5	6	
Rwanda	1			1
Senegal	1	1		2
Serbia			3	3
Sierra Leone	2			2
Slovakia		1	4	5
South Africa	1	4	6	11
Spain	3	4	3	10
Sudan		4	2	6
Sweden	5	4	3	12
Switzerland	4	2	2	8
Syria			2	2
Taiwan			5	5
Tanzania			3	3
Togo		1		1
Trinidad and Tobago		1	1	
Tunisia	2	2	1	5
Turkey	6	2	1	9
United Kingdom	1	3	8	12
United States	5	1	6	12
Uganda			1	1
Upper Volta	1	1		2
Yugoslavia	3	6		9
Totals	**144**	**200**	**203**	**547**