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Ethnicity and Ethnopopulism in Latin America

It is almost an axiom of politics that ethnicity shapes political participation. In most countries, individuals join political parties, evaluate policies, and vote based in part on their ethnic identification. Political parties, meanwhile, choose candidates, forge alliances, design platforms, and employ certain types of rhetoric and symbols in efforts to attract voters of particular ethnicities.

Latin American countries were traditionally the exception to this rule. Not only were there no important ethnic parties in Latin America, but the dominant non-ethnic parties largely avoided ethnic themes in their campaigns and platforms. Latin American citizens, meanwhile, generally did not vote along ethnic lines. Indigenous people, for example, often split their votes among various parties or voted in ways that were indistinguishable from the rest of the population (Birnir and Van Cott 2007; Madrid 2005a, 2005c; Van Cott 2005).[1]

In the last couple of decades, however, the region has begun to change. Indigenous people have taken to the streets to protest government policy, topple presidents, and demand economic, political, and social reforms. Non-ethnic parties, especially populist parties, have increasingly embraced indigenous peoples' demands, recruited indigenous candidates, and employed indigenous symbols. Perhaps most important, in a number of countries, the indigenous movement has formed parties aimed specifically at representing indigenous interests.

Some of these indigenous parties have been quite successful. In this study, I define success as winning at least ten percent of the vote in presidential or legislative elections. Obtaining ten percent or more of the vote is a significant achievement in Latin America's often fragmented party systems, and it frequently leads to appreciable policy influence. Parties that gain ten percent or more of the vote typically have considerable legislative representation and at

[1] There were exceptions. In the 1950s and early 1960s, for example, the indigenous population in Bolivia voted overwhelmingly for the ruling Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR). Similarly, in Mexico, indigenous voters traditionally voted en masse for the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional. Neither of these parties were indigenous parties, however, and their leadership was almost exclusively white or mestizo.

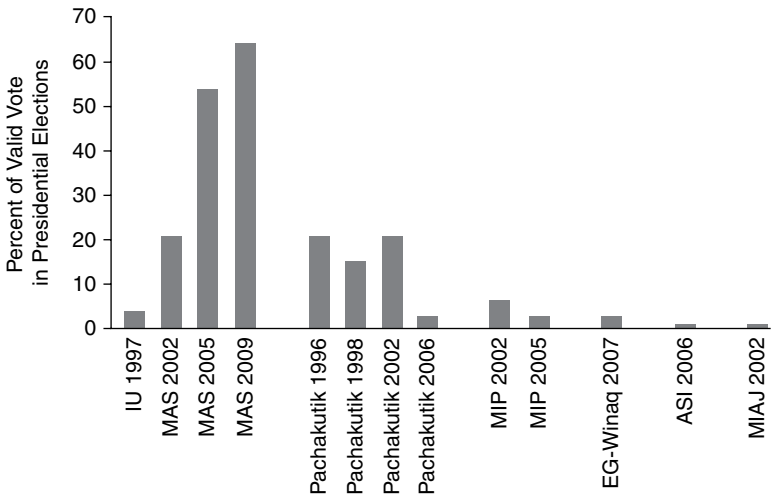

FIGURE 1.1. The performance of indigenous parties, 1996–2009.

times are asked to join the government and granted control of certain ministries. They also are usually guaranteed state funding and a place on the ballot in subsequent legislative elections.

As Figure 1.1 indicates, the most successful indigenous party in Latin America to date has been the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), which won a majority of the vote and captured the presidency in Bolivia in 2005 and again in 2009. The Movimiento Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik – Nuevo País (MUPP-NP), which I will refer to as Pachakutik, was also initially successful: In alliance with other parties and movements it won fifteen to twenty percent of the presidential vote and approximately ten percent of the legislative vote in the 1996, 1998, and 2002 elections in Ecuador. Other indigenous parties have fared poorly, however. Only one of the numerous Indianista and Katarista parties that emerged in Bolivia won more than three percent of the vote, and that party, the Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti (MIP), did so only once, obtaining six percent of the vote in 2002. Nobel Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú and her party, Winaq, won a mere three percent of the vote in Guatemala in 2007 and 2011, and the Alianza Social Indígena (ASI) in Colombia fared even worse.

What explains the recent emergence of indigenous parties in Latin America? Why have some of these parties been successful while others have failed?

This study examines indigenous parties in seven countries – Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Venezuela – focusing mostly on the first three countries. It discusses how these parties arose and explains why some indigenous parties, such as the MAS and Pachakutik, have been successful, while others, like the MIP, Winaq, and the ASI, have fared poorly. It also shows how some mestizo-led parties and politicians, especially in the case of Peru, have employed ethnic appeals to win the support of indigenous voters.

Finally, the book explores what impact indigenous parties, particularly in Bolivia and Ecuador, have had on democracy in the region. These analyses are carried out using a variety of quantitative and qualitative data, including surveys, elite interviews, newspapers and other archival sources, and municipal and provincial electoral and census data.

Understanding the rise of indigenous parties in Latin America is important because these parties have had an important impact on policy, especially in Bolivia, where an indigenous party has governed at the national level since 2006. Indigenous parties have pushed for the revision of their countries' constitutions to recognize indigenous peoples' cultures and rights, and they have helped enact a variety of laws that have benefited the indigenous population, from affirmative action programs to bilingual education. As Chapter 6 discusses, however, some indigenous parties also have taken steps that have undermined democracy. The MAS, in particular, has weakened democracy in Bolivia by concentrating power, undermining horizontal accountability, and harassing the opposition.

The rise of indigenous parties in Latin America is also interesting from a theoretical perspective. We still know relatively little about why some ethnic parties flourish while others do not. Nor is there much consensus about why ethnic parties vary significantly in terms of the types of appeals that they employ and the impact they have on democracy. This study seeks to contribute to theories of ethnic parties by shedding light on these important questions.

THE ARGUMENT IN BRIEF

Existing studies have provided several different explanations for the rise of indigenous parties in Latin America (Beck and Mijeski 2001, 2006; Collins 2006; Durand Guevara 2006; Huber 2008; Laurent 2009; Madrid 2008; Marenghi and Alcántara Sáez 2007; Muñoz-Pogossian 2008; Rice 2006; Van Cott 2005, 2003c). Some studies have attributed the emergence of indigenous parties to institutional reforms that Latin American countries carried out during the 1990s, which made it easier to create new parties. Other studies have attributed their rise to the decline of the traditional parties, particularly left-of-center parties, which opened space in the political system for new parties. Finally, some scholars have suggested that powerful indigenous social movements have played a key role in fostering indigenous parties.

Although these arguments are quite helpful in explaining why and how indigenous parties were formed, they are less useful in explaining their electoral performance. In particular, they cannot easily explain why, within the same countries, some indigenous parties were successful while others were not. Nor can they readily explain why some of these parties have managed to win the support of many white and mestizo as well as indigenous voters.

This study argues that the type of appeals used by indigenous parties explains to a large degree their electoral performance. Indigenous parties – and some mestizo-led parties – have succeeded where they have used a combination of

inclusive ethnic and populist appeals. The astounding rise of Evo Morales and the MAS in Bolivia, for example, was due in large part to the party's decision to embrace populist strategies and reach out to non-indigenous organizations and leaders, while still maintaining its close ties to the indigenous movement. Similarly, Pachakutik in Ecuador enjoyed success in the late 1990s and early 2000s by maintaining cross-ethnic alliances and balancing ethnic and traditional populist appeals.

Indigenous parties have used a variety of ethnic appeals to woo indigenous voters. They have nominated numerous indigenous candidates, maintained close links with indigenous organizations, invoked traditional indigenous symbols, and embraced many of the longstanding demands of the indigenous movement. In contrast to traditional ethnic parties, however, the successful indigenous parties in Latin America have also sought to attract non-indigenous voters. Thus, they have eschewed exclusionary rhetoric; developed a broad and inclusive platform; and recruited many white and mestizo candidates, leaders, and organizations to their side.

Populist strategies have been a key component of the efforts of the successful indigenous parties to attract voters of all ethnic backgrounds. Both the MAS and Pachakutik have focused their campaigns on the poorer sectors of the population, relentlessly attacked the political establishment, and used a variety of personalistic appeals. Like traditional populist parties, they also have denounced foreign intervention in their countries and called for income redistribution and a greater role for the state in the economy.

Indigenous parties are not the only parties that have successfully employed ethnopopulist appeals. Some mestizo-led parties, such as Conciencia de Patria (CONDEPA) in Bolivia, and Perú Posible and the Partido Nacionalista Peruano (PNP) in Peru, have also used a combination of inclusive ethnic and populist appeals to assemble broad multi-ethnic coalitions. These mestizo-led parties have focused mostly on populist appeals, but they have recruited indigenous candidates and organizations and embraced ethnic demands and symbols in order to reach out to voters in indigenous areas.

These inclusive ethnic appeals have been successful in large part because of the long history of *mestizaje* (ethnic or racial mixing) in the region. *Mestizaje* has not eliminated ethnic attachments or ethnic discrimination, but it has blurred ethnic boundaries and reduced ethnic polarization. The fluidity of ethnic boundaries and the low level of ethnic polarization in the region have enabled indigenous parties to win the support of many whites and mestizos. Nevertheless, ethnic proximity has shaped voting patterns in the region. People who self-identify as indigenous or who come from an indigenous background have supported the indigenous parties in the greatest numbers because they have sympathized with their ethnic demands and proposals to combat ethnic discrimination and marginalization.

This study has important implications for the literature on ethnic parties. The literature on ethnic parties would not expect such parties to be inclusive or to win support across ethnic lines (Horowitz 1985; Rabushka and Shepsle

1972; Reilly 2001; Sisk 1996). Much of the existing literature on ethnic parties has argued that such parties will use exclusionary appeals to mobilize co-ethnics, which will promote ethnic conflict and undermine democracy. This study, however, shows that where ethnic identities are fluid and ethnic polarization is low, as in ethnically mixed societies, ethnic parties are much more likely to employ inclusive appeals and to woo support across ethnic lines. Inclusive ethnic appeals, moreover, are unlikely to promote ethnic conflict in the way that exclusionary ethnic appeals often do. These findings suggest that the literature on ethnic parties needs to take into account the nature of ethnic identification and inter-ethnic relations in order to predict what sorts of appeals ethnic parties are likely to use and what their impact will be.

This study also has important implications for the literature on populism. The Latin American literature on populism would hardly expect populist parties to embrace ethnic appeals or to emerge from rural indigenous movements (Conniff 1982; Kaufman and Stallings 1991; Weyland 1999). This book, however, demonstrates that ethnic and populist appeals can be effectively combined to win the support of members of marginalized ethnic groups.

This study focuses on Latin America, but the arguments made in it should apply more broadly. Specifically, I would expect inclusive ethnic appeals to be effective anywhere ethnic identities are relatively fluid and ethnic polarization is low, but especially in those societies that have undergone considerable ethnic mixing. Populist appeals, meanwhile, should attract voters in those countries where parties are weak, political disenchantment is high, and large sectors of the population suffer from marginality and exclusion.

This chapter begins by defining the key terms that are employed in this book. It then evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of some existing explanations for the rise of indigenous parties in the region. It also examines the literature on ethnic parties in other regions and shows how, contrary to the expectations of this literature, indigenous parties in Latin America have won votes across ethnic lines by using inclusive appeals. Ethnic mixing in Latin America, it argues, has encouraged this inclusive approach. The chapter subsequently examines the literature on populism. It demonstrates that contrary to the expectations of the Latin America literature, ethnic and populist appeals may be effectively combined to win support from the marginalized sectors of the population. It shows how those parties that have combined ethnic and populist appeals have fared much better than those parties that have focused mostly on ethnic appeals or that have ignored ethnic demands altogether. The concluding sections of this chapter lay out the research design, methods, and organization of the book.

DEFINITIONS

Following Chandra and Wilkinson (2008, 517), this book defines *ethnicity* and *ethnic groups* as categories "in which descent-based attributes are necessary for membership." Ethnic groups are typically organized around characteristics that

are identifiable and difficult to change, such as race, phenotypes, and language (Birnir 2007, 3–4; Chandra 2006). Nevertheless, this book employs constructivist assumptions about ethnicity and ethnic identification. It assumes that people often belong to multiple ethnic categories, and that the category they choose to identify with may vary over time depending on the circumstances.

Following Van Cott (2005, 2), I employ the definition of *indigenous peoples* developed by the United Nations Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities:

> Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, considered themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them (United Nations 1986, para. 379).

As discussed later in this chapter, I define the *indigenous population* to include not just those people who self-identify as indigenous (or with some indigenous category such as Aymara or Quechua), but all people who grew up speaking an indigenous language, regardless of how they self-identify. I employ the term *Indian* as a synonym for indigenous.

I use the term *mestizo* to refer to people of mixed European and indigenous ancestry. An *indigenous mestizo* is someone who self-identifies as mestizo, but who comes from an indigenous background and typically maintains some indigenous customs (de la Cadena 2000; Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2004). In the Andean nations, people of mostly indigenous descent and appearance who have adopted mestizo identities are often popularly referred to as *cholos*, but relatively few people self-identify as cholo in part because the term sometimes has pejorative connotations.

Throughout this book I use the term *party* to refer to any movements or organizations that participate in elections, regardless of how they describe themselves or their degree of organization and institutionalization. I define an *ethnic party* as an organization that prioritizes the interests of a particular ethnic group or set of ethnic groups and seeks to appeal to them as members of that ethnic group. A non-ethnic party, by contrast, does not prioritize the interests of any single ethnic group. Ethnic parties may be inclusive or exclusionary and in this sense my definition differs from those of other scholars such as Horowitz (1985, 291–3) and Chandra (2004, 2011).[2] Inclusive ethnic parties prioritize the interests of a particular ethnic group or cluster of ethnic groups, but they seek to appeal across ethnic lines and do not exclude any groups. Exclusionary ethnic parties, by contrast, do not seek to appeal across ethnic lines.

[2] Horowitz (1985, 291) defines *ethnic parties* as organizations that receive their support exclusively from a single ethnic group (or cluster of ethnic groups) and serve the interests of that group, and Chandra (2011, 155) defines ethnic parties as organizations that champion the interests of certain ethnic groups while seeking to exclude others. Their definitions of an ethnic party thus resemble what I refer to as an *exclusionary ethnic party*, and their definitions of a *multiethnic party* correspond more closely to what I refer to as an *inclusive ethnic party*.

I use the term *indigenous party* to refer to those electoral organizations that prioritize the interests of the indigenous population regardless of whether they are inclusive or exclusionary. Indigenous parties are therefore a particular type of ethnic party.

I define *mestizo-led parties* as parties whose leadership is mostly mestizo.[3] This includes the vast majority of parties in Latin America. Mestizo-led parties in Latin America do not explicitly prioritize the interests of the mestizo population, the indigenous population, or any other ethnic group and they are therefore not ethnic parties. As noted, however, some mestizo-led parties such as CONDEPA, Perú Posible, and the PNP, have made ethnic appeals to indigenous people in order to try to win their support.

Populism is a notoriously slippery concept and its meaning has been the subject of a great deal of debate. Some scholars have identified it as a set of economic policies, specifically deficit spending, income redistribution, and widespread state intervention in the economy (Dornbusch and Edwards 1991; Sachs 1989). Other scholars have focused on the social base of populism, identifying it as a multi-class movement rooted in the urban popular sectors (Conniff 1982; Ianni 1975). Still other scholars have focused on populism as a discourse that presents politics as a Manichean struggle between the masses and the corrupt elites (de la Torre 2000; Hawkins 2010; Laclau 2005; Panizza 2005). Finally, some scholars have characterized populism as a form of personalistic rule involving mass mobilization. Weyland (2001, 14), for example, defines it as "a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers."

In this study, I opt for a multidimensional definition that combines several of the attributes of populism stressed by different scholars. I define *populism* as a campaign and governing strategy in which a personalistic leader seeks to mobilize the masses in opposition to the elites. This implies three core attributes. First, populist movements are personalistic. They revolve around a dominant personality or *caudillo*, and these leaders tend to concentrate power in themselves rather than in a party bureaucracy. Second, populist leaders campaign and govern in the name of the masses and they seek to mobilize them to achieve their electoral and policy aims. The leaders of populist movements may come from the middle classes or elites and they may enjoy broad multi-class support, but they nevertheless focus their appeals on the common people and they typically employ popular language, style, and dress in their efforts to mobilize them. Third and finally, populist movements are anti-establishment. Populist leaders frequently criticize the political and economic elites and employ often incendiary language in doing so.

[3] It is often difficult to distinguish between whites and mestizos in Latin America and I make no effort to do so with respect to the leadership of parties.

TABLE 1.1. *Key Distinguishing Characteristics of Different Types of Populism*

	Ethnopopulism	Traditional populism	Neoliberal populism
Employs personalistic appeals?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Focuses appeals on lower classes?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Makes anti-establishment appeals?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Makes extensive ethnic appeals?	Yes	No	No
Adopts nationalist and state interventionist rhetoric and policies?	Sometimes	Yes	No
Advocates neoliberal policies?	Sometimes	No	Yes

I also identify several secondary or subordinate categories of populism, namely traditional populism, neoliberal populism, and ethnopopulism.[4] As Table 1.1 indicates, these secondary categories have the core properties of populism, plus one or more additional characteristics. *Traditional populism* I define as a campaign and governing strategy that includes nationalist, state interventionist, and redistributive policies and appeals in addition to the aforementioned characteristics. *Neoliberal populism*, by contrast, is a strategy that eschews statist and nationalist appeals and policies in favor of market-oriented measures.

Ethnopopulism refers to a campaign and governing strategy in which politicians or parties combine ethnic and populist appeals or policies. Ethnopopulism can be exclusionary as well as inclusive. In Latin America, the parties that have employed widespread ethnopopulist appeals have been inclusive, but in Europe the most prominent parties that have employed ethnopopulist appeals have been exclusionary, right-wing, anti-immigrant parties (Betz 2001, 1994; Mudde 2007; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2010). Ethnopopulism can also involve different types of economic policies and appeals. In Latin America, indigenous parties have typically employed the nationalist and state interventionist appeals that are characteristic of traditional populism, but some populist politicians, such as Alberto Fujimori and Alejandro Toledo, have combined ethnic and neoliberal populist appeals.

As mentioned previously, a variety of politicians and parties has successfully employed ethnopopulist appeals in Latin America in recent decades, including indigenous parties such as the MAS and Pachakutik and mestizo-led movements such as CONDEPA, Perú Posible, and the PNP. This study classifies both of these types of parties as ethnopopulist. Nevertheless, as we shall see, there are important differences between these two types of parties. The indigenous parties, unlike the mestizo-led parties, have prioritized the demands of the indigenous population and they have had a much greater percentage of

[4] On categories and concepts, see Sartori (1970), Collier and Mahon (1993), and Weyland (2001).

indigenous people in leadership positions. The indigenous parties also have focused to a greater extent on ethnic appeals than have the mestizo-led parties, whereas the mestizo-led parties have focused on populist appeals to a larger degree than have the indigenous parties. Finally, the two types of parties also differ in terms of their organization. Whereas the mestizo-led parties that I focus on are top-down, personalistic organizations, most of the indigenous parties have important social movement bases.[5]

EXISTING EXPLANATIONS

To date, most of the literature on indigenous politics in Latin America has focused on indigenous movements rather than indigenous parties per se (Albó 1991; Andolina 1999; Becker 2008; Brysk 2000; Dary 1998; Lucero 2008; Maybury-Lewis 2002; Pajuelo Teves 2007; Postero and Zamosc 2004; Selverston-Scher 2001; Van Cott 2000; Yashar 2005). Nevertheless, a growing number of studies has examined indigenous parties in the region (Beck and Mijeski 2001, 2006; Collins 2006; Durand Guevara 2006; Huber 2008; Laurent 2009; Madrid 2008; Marenghi and Alcántara Sáez 2007; Mijeski and Beck 2011; Muñoz-Pogossian 2008; Rice 2006; Rice and Van Cott 2006; Van Cott 2005, 2003c). The literature on indigenous parties has typically sought to explain how these parties were formed as well as why some of them have enjoyed a great deal of success. In this study, however, I focus mostly on performance, rather than formation, because the indigenous parties have only had an important impact to the extent that they have been successful. Moreover, it is the success of some of these parties that is truly surprising. In most Latin American countries, it is relatively easy to create a new party, but it is quite difficult to build a successful one. Indeed in the last couple of decades, numerous indigenous groups have formed parties, but the vast majority of these parties have fared poorly.

The emerging literature on indigenous parties has concentrated on three types of explanatory variables: institutional factors; social movement variables; and party system factors. Some studies have ascribed explanatory weight to all three types of variables. Indeed, the most prominent study of indigenous parties to date, Van Cott's (2005, 48) book, argues that: "[I]nstitutional changes, party system changes, and social movement factors were important in encouraging or discouraging the formation of ethnic parties, and in influencing their relative success, in all six countries [that the book examines]."

[5] Some scholars would not characterize either the MAS or Pachakutik as populist parties on the grounds that they have important social movement bases and are not purely personalistic movements (Levitsky and Roberts 2011; Roberts 2007). My definition of populism, however, focuses on the types of appeals that the parties make rather than on their organizational structure. Both the MAS (beginning in 2002) and Pachakutik (between 1996 and 2002) made extensive populist appeals, including personalistic appeals, in their presidential campaigns.

Perhaps the most common approach attributes the rise of indigenous parties to various institutional reforms that Latin American countries carried out in the 1990s (Birnir 2004; Collins 2006; Marenghi and Alcántara Sáez 2007; Muñoz-Pogossian 2008; Rice 2006; Van Cott 2003c, 2005). These arguments build on a large literature that has found that the formation of new parties is favored by certain institutional factors (Grofman and Lijphart 1986; Harmel and Robertson 1985; Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994; Shugart and Carey 1992). This literature suggests that new parties are more likely to form and succeed where there are few barriers to having them on the ballot, where electoral rules grant legislative representation to small parties, and where such parties may gain access to important local-level offices before seeking power at the national level. Other scholars have argued that certain types of electoral rules, such as proportional representation and high district magnitude, encourage the formation of ethnic parties, in particular, by allowing ethnic groups to gain representation without reaching across ethnic lines (Horowitz 1991; Lijphart 1977; Norris 2004; Reilly 2001; Sisk 1996).[6]

The literature on indigenous parties maintains that institutional reforms not only facilitated the formation of these parties, but also helped lead to their success in some countries. According to this literature, a number of different types of reforms have played a role in the rise of these parties. In the case of Bolivia, scholars have focused on two main reforms: the 1994 law that created municipalities throughout the country and called for the direct election of their mayors and councilors, and the 1994 constitutional reform that established single-member districts for electing more than half of the members of the Bolivian Chamber of Deputies (Collins 2006; Muñoz-Pogossian 2008; Stefanoni 2004; Urioste 2004; Van Cott 2005). In the case of Ecuador, scholars have focused on changes in ballot access requirements, specifically a 1995 law that allowed independent movements to participate in national elections (Birnir 2004; Macdonald Jr. 2002; Van Cott 2005). Some analysts have also argued that the creation of national legislative seats reserved for indigenous people spurred the rise of indigenous parties in Colombia and Venezuela (Rice 2006; Van Cott 2005). Conversely, the case has been made that other institutional factors, namely strict ballot access requirements and the centralization of political power, have impeded the emergence of indigenous parties in Peru (Rice 2006; Van Cott 2005, 163–6).

Institutional explanations are not without merit. Registration requirements clearly have impeded the formation of indigenous parties in some instances, and the loosening of those requirements may have played a role in the creation of Pachakutik in Ecuador. The 1994 decentralization law in Bolivia, meanwhile, stimulated the formation of the predecessor of the MAS, the Asamblea Soberanía de los Pueblos, which was created in part to compete in the 1995

[6] Conversely, some studies have argued that single-member districts can favor ethnic parties where these parties draw their support from geographically concentrated minority groups (Meguid 2008; Rae 1971; Sartori 1976).