THE STRUGGLE FOR A PLACE: GENDER, RACE, AND CLASS IN POLITICAL ELECTIONS IN BRASIL

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Introduction Since the 1940s, a major theme in the sociological literature has been the influence of gender and race on the participation of individuals in Brasilian society. Studies have mainly analyzed gender and/or race in regard to women and Afro-Brazilians and their participation in the labor market, their pattern of educational attainment, and their social mobility (Andrews 1991; Bairros 1987; Castro 1991; Castro 1993; SaBarreto 1991; Hasenbalg 1979; Lovell 1992). These works reveal that Brasil has a strong pattern of gender and racial inequality, operating either alone or together with other ascribed or achieved characteristics, has historically restricted competition and participation by women and Afro-Brazilians (Barrios et al. 1993; Lovell 1992). Only a few studies, however, have attempted to analyze how gender and race influence the participation of women and Afro-Brazilians in politics and even fewer have examined how these groups perform both as voters and as politicians runninig for office in Brazil (Tabak 1987; Castro 1993; Souza 1971; Valente 1982; Oliveira1991). This body of literature chooses to focus on the participation of either womem or Afro-Brazilians, but fails to compare these groups. Definitely, a comparative approach would illuminate the similarities and differences that mark the participation of women and Afro-Brazilians in an arena traditionally dominated by white male politicians.

Women and black politicians occupy fewer than 10 percent of the seats in the Brazilian legislatures (Castro 1993; Tabak 1987; Oliveira 1991; Valente 1982). Whether studying gender and politics, authors identify four problems to explain the failure of women and Afro-Brazilians candidacies. First, both women and blacks are stereotyped as passive, irrational, dependent, lacking leadership and entrepreneurial ability. These characteristics are not associated with the exercise of power, so women and blacks tend not to consider themselves as potential candidates, and when they do run, the electorate tends to refuse to vote for them. The old saying in Brazilian political culture that women do not vote for womwn, and blackes do not vote for blacks seems to be a synthesis of this culturalist argument.

Second, the restricted supply of women and blacks competing for political office contributes to their electoral failure (Castro 1993; Randall 1982). According to Bourdieu (1989), politics is a place where the symbolic can legitimize the group because, like art or religion, politics requires that the participant have such capital (Randall 1982). The presence or absence of symbolic capital can predetermine a persons willingness to participate in the political system. The predominance of sexist and racial prejudice is seen in the tendency to exclude women and blacks from political power. However, as some authors point out (Barreira 1993; Tabak 1987; Boges Pereira 1982; Oliveira 1991), both women and Afro-Brazilians in politics have been characterized by their common position as victims of symbolic violence, but also for their attempts to redefine their identities, using identity to force their grievances onto the agendas of political parties and to gain access to the political apparatus. It is not always a disadvantage to be a woman or a minority in politics this identity can be a basis for political alliances.

Third, neither group has competed successfully for political office, and thus they tend to lack political experience, which means they often adopt amateurish political styles. Educational background and occupation also strongly influence political recruitment (Randall 1982) Traditionally professionals and business owners have been in the majority among candidates (Cardoso 1978; Sampaio 1975). Incribed in the clientelist culture that marks Brazilian politics, professionals politicians cast themselves or are recognized as the lawyers, physicians, dentists (that is, the doctors) of the people (Cardoso 1982).

Fourt, the very logic of political recruitment influences the participation of women and Afro-Brazilians (Barreira 1993). By logic we refer to the institutions governing recruitment, the roles assingned to political elites, and their power to regulare entrance into parties. Pointing out the prevalence of subjective criteria used in political recruitment, Randall (1982:99) admits that it is difficult to knom whether women who may experience discrimination might, in addition, lack qualifications for political office.

This paper sketches a profile of the 1992 city-council candidates in Salvador, Bahia. The choice of Salvador to study the influence of gender and race in politics lies mainly in demographic, socioeconomic, cultural and political factors. First, Salvador the capital of the State of Bahia, is the third largest city in the country, with a 1992 population of about 2.2 million inhabitants, 52 percent women and 80 percent Afro-Brazilians. As has occurred elsewhere in rapidly industrializing and urbanizing areas of Brazil, Afro-Brazilians are concentrated in the lower economic strata (Castro and Guimaraes 1993). However, Salvador differs from other regions of Brasil, as it embodies a significant Afro-Brazilian cultural tradition. In the late 1970s, Salvador was a center for a black cultural and political movement that has framed the national discoruse of racial pride and Afro-Brazilians in society (Agier 1991). All the same, whites hegemonically dominate the major economic and political position in Salvador, as in the rest of Brazil. This chapter examines the actors who emerged to struggle for a place in the political-institutional arena of Salvador in 1992.

Data and Method

Data were gathered from the files of candidates registered for the 1992 elections with the Tribunal Regional Eleitoral da Bahia (Regional Electoral Tribunal of Bahia, TRE)(1). Twenty-two parties, registering 1,149 candidates contested 35 seats. Significantly, this represents a 27 percent increse in the number of candidates compared to 1988 elections. The TRE uses a standard registration form and requires a specific set of personal documents from each candidate(2). This information provided a record of a candidates socioeconomic background, and in certain case, political background(3).

Traditionally, studies on race relations in Brazil, especially those dealing with demographic data, encounter obstacles in identifying individuals by race or color. The major problem is that most Brazilian institutions tend to be color-blind in their bureaucratic procedures. The TRE is no exception. This study identified color from others documents in the candidates files. For men, a major source was the Army Force Certificate of Registration, which includes a photograph and a written statement of color. Because 88.5 percent of the candidates were men, this document proved very valuable. The main source for women was the declaration of property, which contains a short self-description.

The color classification applied to our data followed the sociological method used in many studies on race relations in Brasil that categorizes people in two groups, white and nowhite (including both pardo and black) (Andrews 1991; Bairros 1987; Hasenbalg and Silva 1993; Lovell 1992). A third category for moreno, whose phenotype is closer to whites and very different form pardos e blacks, has been added because approximately 10 percent of the sample easily fit under this rubric. An objective of the study was to determine how patterns of candidates political participation varied among morenos, whites and Afro-Brazilians.

Parties and electoral laws

The advent of an election presents a strategic moment for party recruitment. Of the candidates running in the 1992 city council race in Salvador, 75 percent joined their parties only on the eve of the elections. It is impossible to know whether a candidate had run for office previously, but the data definitively suggest that many newcomers broke into the professional political arena in 1992.
Most of the twenty-two parties competing in the city council race were national-leval parties, the oldest ones having been founded after the 1979 electoral reforms, which ended the bipartisan structure installed by the military regime in 1966 (Lamounier 1986). There were there main divisions: left, rigth, and partidos de ocasiao or opportunistic parties, as political analysts like to call them (Valle 1987).

The ideological profile of a party, its prestige, and its electoral strategy influenced the number of candidates it registered(4). In most parties, approximately half of the candidates recruited were Afro-Brazilian. Color did not appear to be associated with party affiliation, and blacks are found in parties across the spectrum from left to right.

The left-wing parties, running 313 candidates, created a coalition marked by its ideological overtones and its recruitment of the fewest candidates. Most parties espoused a right-wing ideology and recruited large numbers of candidates based on their political capital (that is, the capacity to gather votes) reather than on their ideological identification. The opportunist parties recruited fewer candidates than the right-wing parties. According to some political experts, these parties organized to provide an outlet for personal political aspirations of individuals who have shown leadership ability or who were involved in the defense of a specific, aphemeral issue. Most opportunistic-party candidates leaned to the center or right ideologically, but recruitment in those parties was much less the result of a candidates ideological commitment than his or her potential to win votes. Additonally, party leadership recognizes that recruitment of a charismatic candidate helps to legitimize the party. Im sum, both right-wing and oportunistic parties were characterized by political-inconsistency, personalismo, clientelism, and a weak sense of loyalty to the party on the part of members and voters (Cardoso 1978; Cardoso and Lamounier 1978; Moisés 1993)(5)

Brazil has adopted a proportional representation system in which the parties are the focus of the election. Proportional representation establishes that the number of votes that a party achieves in the elections grants it a proportion of seats in the assembly. Within the party, seats are distributed according to a ranking of candidates based on the number of votes each has received in the election. For example, if a party wins five seats, the highest polling candidates will be seated. Proportional-representation systms are characterized by instances of the seating of candidates who received fewer votes than the other candidates running in the elections. It is the partys overall performance -- not the candidates individual performance -- that determines who will win a seat in the representative body (Brazil Elections Notebook 1996; Dias 1991). This weakens party solidarity because party members compete to rank first in the organization, and it allows candidates with less real support among the electorate to become representatives.

Gender and Race in the 1992 election

What kind of women and men were most lkely to participate in the 1992 Salvador elections? Only 1 out of 10 candidates were women (11.5 percent women versus 88.5 percent men) , and this gap apparent across all three racial groups. The disparity in the rates of participation of men and women directly touches on a central issue womens relationship to institutional politics: the restrict supply of women who aspire to political careers (Randall 1982; Tabak and Toscano 1982). Women candidates in the Salvador election were more likely than their male counterparts to be better educated, single or divorced, and employed as public servants (28.6 percent), teachers (26.7 percent), business owners (17.0 percent), or professinals (16.1 percent)(6). Significantly, 67 percent of all Afro-Brazilian women candidates were teachers or public servants compared to 55 percent of all women candidates and 43 percent of all whites candidates, regardless of gender. As in the general population, white women politicians were significantl;y more likely to be professional or business owners (45 percent) than were black women politicians (22 percent).

Male candidates had a wider range of occupations, which may indicate that they are more exposed, directly or indirectly, to politics as result of their professinals activities. Even in political recruitment, a sexual division of labor seems to operate. Women candidates were as likely as their male counterparts to join their parties only on the eve of the elections. Women were much more likely to be better educated than the men (56 percent had some college education compared to 42 percent for the men). Fewer than 5 percent of the women had received only primary shooling compared to 17 percent of the men. Thus political recruitment differed for women and men, especially in regard to education and occupation. Women were more likely to be better educated and to work in occupations usually characterized as female.

Class, in contrast, influence recruitment of women and men about equally. When measured by neighborhood of residence, men and women had nearly the same class background, with the majority of the candidates, independent of gender, being working class, followed by a significant segment from the middle class and only a small proportion coming from the upper or upper-middle class.

While women were underrepresented among the candidates, 575 Afro-Brazilians (54.1 percent) competed against 377 whites (35.6 percent), and 100 morenos (10.3 percent) for 35 city-council seats in the 1992 election. Given the rate of participation of women and morenos, it appears that this electoral race was disputed by white and Afro-Brazilian men. In general, white candidates were better off in term of education, employment, living conditions, and class position than the Afro-Brazilians. In socioeconomic terms, most morenos fell somewhere between white and Afro-Brazilian politicians.

Afro-Brazilian candidates composed more than two-thirds of those candidates who had only a primary education. Of all the black candidates, almost 20 percent had only a primary education, almost double the rates for whites and morenos. The rates for those who completed high school but went no further was 48 percent for Afro-Brazilians and 38 percent for whites. What is striking is that almost 50 percent of the white candidates were college educated, while only 42 percent of morenos, and 32 percent of Afro-Brazilians were. However, its is important to point out that among those who attained a college education, both whites and blacks had similar populations of candidates at that level: 190 whites and 171 blacks. If the traditional pattern of political recruitment in Brazil tends to privilege college-educated candidates, the 1992 Salvador city-council election was unusual for its high proportion of candidates with only a low or intermediate level of education.

Overall, Afro-Brazilian candidates were drafted from the working class, whereas whites came from the upper-middle and middle class and morenos from the middle class. The occupational profile of candidates tended to match the general trend of racial segmentation that exists in the local labor market, where, according to Castro (1993) and Sá Barreto (1993) , whites and Afro-Brazilians works in exclusive niches. Castro (1993) notes that whites are concentrated in high-ranking positions in both the public and private sectors, and many are business owners. Blacks, on the other hand, are found in blue-collar jobs and the service sectors. Racial segmentation in the labor market result in whites commanding the positions of power and ownership of the means of production, while Afro-Brazilians are more likely to be manual laborers, service workers, or first-line supervisors.

Not surprisingly, Afro-Brazilians composed approximately two-trird s of all the candidates working in the armed forces (73 percent), as public servants (66 percent), as teachers (64 percent), as blue-collar workers (76 percent), and as transport workers (82.5 percent). White candidates were concentrated (55.5 percent) in the professional occupations, traditionally associated with the image of the prestigious professional politicians. Only 38 percent of the Afro-Brazilian candidates accounted and 7 percent of the morenos candidates held professional occupations. Among business onwers, who ran gamut from corner grocery story to newstand operator to magnates of large companies, whites and blacks shows ralatively equal presence: 43.2 percent and 44.3 percent, respectively, with morenos lagging far behind.

Class affiliation is especially apparent when one considers the neighborhoods in which the candidates lived. Whereas 65.5 percent of the candidates living in the upper- and middle-class neighborhoods (16.8 percent of the total candidate pool) were white, almost 64 percent of the black candidates, versus about one-third of the whites, were drafted from the working-class neighborhoods or the outskirts of Salvador. Put differently, two out of three whites candidates came from either upper- or upper-middle class neighborhoods, compared to only one out of three Afro-Brazilians candidates. Among the black candidates only 8.1 percent lived in upper-class or upper-middle-class neighborhoods.

The higher socioeconomic status of whites candidates is also confirmed by the number of properties a candidates owns. Thirty-one percent of the candidates claimed they owned no properties; most of that group (61.2 percent) was Afro-Brazilian. Inversely, more than half of those who claimed they owned seven or more pieces of real estate were white, but only one-third were black (35.9 percent) and about one-tenth moreno. Thus, among the richest candidates, blacks were the least represented, whereas among the poorest, they were significantly in majority.

In conclusion, white, black, and moreno politicians are characterized by strikingly different backgrounds. In this sense, it is possible to say that white and Afro-Brazilian candidates have distinct profiles. One out every 2 white candidates was a professional or business owner, college educated, from upper-middle and middle-class neighborhoods. The other half were more likely to have completed only elementary or high school (9.9 percent and 37.6 percent, respectively). In terms of occupation, small numbers were represented in blue-collar work, services, and the public sector. Two-thirds of the Afro-Brazilian candidates were public employees.

For their part, 60 percent of the Afro-Brazilian candidates were employed as public servants, blue-collar workers, teachers, transport workers, and sales people (with additioanl percentage as artist, self-employed, retired, or students). Afro-Brazilian professionals (9.2 percent) and business owners (17.2 percent) also had significant presence, but their numbers were still small when compared to their white peers. The working-class background of black candidates is reaffirmed by the observation that two-thirds lived in working-class neighborhoods or the outskirts of town.

The small population of moreno candidates does not present a sharply difined set of features; however, it appears that they were professionals and business owners (39.1 percent), as well as servants and sales people, and approximately half came from middle-class or upper-middle-class neighborhoods.
The most interesting finding comes from the analysis of the pattern of voting distribution. At first glance, the electoral race appeared highly competitive, since 1,149 candidates were fighting to get one of the seatss on the city council (an average of 33 candidates fought for each seat). Considering that the lowest polling successful candidate received 1306 votes, and using that figure as a sort of baseline for measuring serious competitors, it is striking to see that only about 10 percent of the candidates polled more than 1,200 votes, whereas more than 40 percent received between 2 and 200 votes. Of that 40 percent, 60 percent were Afro-Brazilian candidates.

Clearly the race was marked by candidates who possessed very unequal distributions of political capital. What social, ideological, and political factors mobilized those who polled fewer than 200 votes to enter this electoral contest in the first place? One hypothesis suggests that this type of candidate would represent the leadership of a small group of friends or coworkers, a professional community, or a neighborhood associations. As Piven and Cloward (1979) suggest, changes in the political structure, such as in the representation of politics and politicians within Brazilian society and macro socioeconomic crises in Brazil, may have reshaped the political arena.

Who won the race for City Council?

The 1992 Bahiana election appears to be marked by a highly democratic political recruitment; nevertheless, the race was contested by candidates with very unequal political capital (socioeconomic capital and prestige). Two candidate profiles predominated. One comprised well-educated, married, middle- or upper-middle-class men, a profile exemplifying the traditional Brazilain politician (Cardoso 1978). The second profile also comprises married, middle-aged men, but in this case men drafted from an urban, working-class background. Notably, these candidates came from occupational groups that have been actively involved in strikes and labor struggles in Bahia. Unlike the candidate pool, winner presented a more homogenous appearance. They were overwhelmingly college-educated, married men between 35 and 60 years of age, who were professionals or businessmen living in affluent neghborhoods.

The 1992 election reflected two major changes in the process of political recruitment in the City of Salvador. The number of Afro-Brazilian politicians elected jumped from 4 candidates in the 1988 election to 12 in 1992, and a significant proportion of working-class candidates (17.1 percent) also won seats. In this election, blacks and workers seem to have been less intimidated by discrimination and prejudice, which usually regulated their aspirations and relagates them to their appropriate place. Further research is needed to understand the mechanisms for the emergence of workers as political actors in a arena where class

boundaries (education, cultural capital, socioeconomic capital) have traditionally discourage their participation.

Despite these developments, old pattern of political recruitment are deeply rooted in society. One aspect of that Brazilian tradition is the tendency to re-elect incumbents (Brazil Election Factbook 1996; Tabak, 1978). About half of the winners in 1992 had served as council members during the 1988-1992 term. Although this race was marked by strinking diversity of candidates backgrounds, the overwhelming victory of men in the election marks politics as remaining a male realm(7).

The description of the profile of male and female candidates showed that both groups tend to emerge from across all segments of society. But women candidates were better educated than their male counterparts. They also were more likely to come from a narrow set of occupations that includes social workers, teachers, public servants, and professionals. Clearly, women from traditionally female occupations were favored in political recruitment.
The most striking difference in candidate profile was color. White and Afro-Brazilians candidates emerged from different social environments. The white candidates, regardless of gender, were more likely to be college-educated professionals or business owner from affluent neighborhood. Afro-Brazilians were more likely to hold working-class occupations and lives on working-class neighborhoods. Nevertheless, candidates from all color groups emerged from all class segments.

Thus, this profile indicates the emergence of a wave of new actors in the professional political arena in Salvador. The increase in the participation of Afro-Brazilian politicians from 11.4 percent in the 1988 to 34.3 percent in the 1992 along with the emergence of working-class candidates (17.1 percent) definitely reshaped the political battleground. Nevertheless, the Salvador city council continues to be dominated by whites (57.1 percent) rather than blacks (34.3 percent) or morenos (98.6 percent) and by college-educated, affluent individuals who are overwhelming men.

NOTAS

1 I would like to thank Dr. Wanderlin Barbosa, Judge of the Second Electoral Zone in Salvador, who kindly allowed me to consult TRE archives.
2 All Brazilian elections are regulated by a federal electoral code administered by a national system of electoral courts. In order to become a candidate, an individual must be nominated by a legal political party or an alliance of political parties and be registered with the electoral court. The Brazilian electoral code establishes that all candidates must be literate, Portuguese-speaker, in full possession of their political rights. The age depends on the political office for which a person is running. Candidates for city council must be 18 years old , and council members are elected by proportional representation. The city council is the lowest ranking political office in Brazil but is invested with power of impeachment, appeals, and budget auditing as a means of control over mayor (Brazil Election Factbook 1966) .

3 The TRE administered one form to about 80 percent of the candidates, and another form to the remainder. The first asked the candidates profession; the second did not. Fortunately, overall the data still permitted us to determine the profession of almost all the candidates
4 The Brazilian electoral system rules that each party can register a number of candidates up to twice the number of seats available on the city council, which, in the case of Salvador, would be 70 candidates. Coalitions, however, can register three times the number of seats avaliable. The electoral legislation also leaves some room for the parties to decide how many candidates they want to register for the municipal election.

5   However, with the emergence of the PT, PDT, and the legalization of the communist parties in the 1980s, some authors (Moises 1993) have observed a crystallization of ideology, at least among left-wing parties, the emergence in the electorate of a sense of political rights and duties.

6   Some studies (Tabak 1982; Randall 1982) claim that certain occupations provide a strategic base to launch a womans career as a poltitian, including social work, education, and charity. These are female-dominated professions in which women may gain experience in leadership role. According to Castro (1993:49), only 5 percent of Afro-Brazilians are business owners in Salvador.

7   The Municipal council is a male domain in Salvador. Only one women, the highest polling candidate in the entire election, succeeded in winning a set on the council. However, this victory means little in regard to womens struggle to enter the political arena, because this candidate owed her success to the prestigy of her husband who was already an established politician in Bahia. Compared to the 1988 election, when two women were elected -- both of whom had political capital as a result of their militancy -- women lost heavily in 1992.

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