Race, Class, and Voter Preferences in Brazil

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Abstract: The persistent racial gap between Brazilian citizens and their elected politicians raises the possibility of important failures of descriptive as well as substantive representation. Can race-based preferences of voters help to explain this gap? How do the racial and social class backgrounds of politicians interact to shape voters' preferences over candidates? This paper presents new evidence from an experiment, in which videotaped political speeches by actors posing as candidates for the city councils of Rio de Janeiro and Salvador were shown to a probability sample of citizens in those cities. The race and stated class background of candidates giving otherwise identical speeches were varied at random, allowing comparison of the effects of candidates' race and class on subjects' evaluations. Though I find some class effects, I find no discernible effects of candidate race on evaluations of candidates. Thus, while the representational racial gap may be due to a variety of institutional and socioeconomic factors, my evidence suggests that it cannot be readily explained by voters' preferences.

The socioeconomic role of race, and its relationship to social class, are among the most enduring and controversial topics of scholarship on Brazil. On one side are authors who, drawing on the classic work of Gilberto Freyre (1933/1980), have celebrated Brazil's "racial democracy" and have favorably compared the relative racial fluidity of Brazilian society to other countries with legacies of race-based slavery, such as the United States. Such perspectives have also tended to attribute enduring socioeconomic inequalities between lighter-skinned and darker-skinned Brazilians to distinctions based on social class, rather than to race or racism per se.[1] On the other side are those who have stressed that such inequalities are based at least partially in racial prejudice and have highlighted the enduring—if complex—role of race in social, economic, and political realms. For such authors, the myth of racial democracy is a state-led project that ratifies white minority power, even as it masks deep and systematic racism.[2]

Yet, the role of race in electoral politics appears surprisingly neglected.[3] In a democracy in which black and brown citizens may comprise a substantial majority[4]—and yet political elites are largely light-skinned—the racial dissimilarity of politicians and citizens raises the possibility of important failures of representation, at least of descriptive representation. This racial disjuncture between politicians and the electorate is reproduced at the state and local as well as national levels. A particularly stark illustration

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[1] A classic work on the role of race in Brazilian thought is Skidmore (1974). Azevedo (1996) suggested that upward class mobility transforms perceptions of race, while Degler (1971) alleged a "mulatto escape hatch" that permitted upward racial mobility.
[2] See *inter alia* Hanchard (1994, 1999) and Twine (1998).
[3] Exceptions include Johnson (1998, 2006) and Mitchell (2009, 2010).
[4] How large the black and brown majority is, of course, depends on how one conceptualizes race—a recurring theme in scholarship on race in Brazil that I discuss below.

is found in the city of Salvador, Bahia, which is comprised overwhelmingly of citizens of African descent, yet in which the membership of the city council is predominantly white. While substantial attention has been paid to explaining the recent rise of the Worker's Party (PT) and more generally of the left in Brazil, the enduring whiteness of Brazilian political elites from various parties (including the PT) appears to have gone relatively unstudied.

Because failures of descriptive representation may raise important questions about the functioning of democracy, further exploration of the role of race in electoral politics seems crucial. In particular, do social class distinctions indeed explain racial disparities, as in the "racial democracy" hypothesis? Are there really no race-based political preferences in Brazil? As I discuss further below, there could well be institutional or other reasons that political elites tend to be lighter-hued than their electorates. Yet, parsing out the role of race and social class in shaping voters' preferences over candidates is nonetheless a crucial first step in addressing this research question.

The effect of race or class on political preferences is typically difficult to infer from observational survey data or election results, however, because many other attributes of candidates vary along with their race and class; these confounding characteristics could be responsible for their differential support across various racial or class groups. To address this challenge, I designed an experiment, in which videotaped political speeches, given by actors posing as candidates for city council, were shown to a probability sample of residents in the cities of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro (N=1,200). Respondents viewed speeches with identical content (though there were two different scripts), but were assigned at random to view the speech given by a white or black actor.

By using multiple actors of each race, the experimental design addresses some shortcomings of previous experimental work on race and class, which has not convincingly addressed the challenges involved in manipulating race experimentally (Almeida 2007). Finally, the candidate's perceived social class was manipulated by changing the actor's dress and/or by manipulating the speech's content (background of politician, message, etc.). The design thus allows comparison of the effects of perceived social class and race on voters' preferences for candidates.

While I find some class effects, there are no discernible effects of the candidate's race on evaluations: white and black subjects rate candidates from a different race as favorably on average as they rate candidates from their own race. Thus, while the representational racial gap may be due to a variety of institutional and socioeconomic factors, it cannot be readily explained by arguments focusing on voters' preferences. The experimental evidence also sheds light on how candidate race shapes perceptions of candidate class, and vice versa: while black candidates on average are judged to be from a more working-class background than white candidates, exposure to a "rich" or "elite" candidate shifts perceptions of the social class of black candidates by about as much as it shifts class perceptions of white candidates. I return to the interpretation of these results below, after discussing further the relationship between race and politics in Brazil, describing my research design, and presenting the experimental results.

Race, Class, and Politics in Brazil

The descriptive underrepresentation of ethnic majorities in democracies, in Latin America and elsewhere, raises important puzzles (Yashar 2005). After all, electoral

victory under democracy is at least in part "in the numbers." Thus, especially in contexts of persistent politicization or marginalization based on race or ethnicity, the numerical superiority of ethnic majorities should in principle translate into greater representation of these majority groups among elected politicians. Why elections do not always—or even usually—translate into strong descriptive (as well as substantive) representation constitutes an important general question in the study of democratic politics.

This question appears especially pertinent in Brazil, where a plurality or majority of the population, in many regions of the country, identifies as "black" or "brown"—yet politicians at all levels of government are predominantly white. According to Mitchell (2009), in the last electoral term there were 11 Afro-Brazilian federal deputies (out of 513) and 1 Afro-Brazilian senator (out of 81). This disparity is especially conspicuous in Salvador, Bahia, a city with a population that is overwhelmingly of African descent; Mitchell (2009) finds that just six of the city's 41 council members identify as Afro-Brazilian.[5] A perusal of the websites of current council members also suggests that the great majority of these politicians are light-skinned, in stark contrast to the citizens that elected them.

Yet, the relationship of race to electoral behavior in Brazil appears surprisingly understudied. Substantial scholarly attention has focused on social movements that have sought black empowerment or have simply promoted greater identification of African-Brazilians with "blackness" (Hanchard 1994, 1999). The relationship of black Brazilians to political parties has also been a topic of concern (e.g. Johnson 1998, 2006). The same cannot be said for relationship of race to voting behavior and political preferences,

[5] These websites are linked from http://www.cms.ba.gov.br/vereadores/vereadores.asp.

though valuable exceptions include the recent studies by Mitchell (2009, 2010). Recent research has more fully explored the relationship of social class to voting behavior, often in the context of the recent rise of the left in Brazil (e.g. Hunter and Power 2007; Weyland, Madrid, and Hunter, 2010). However, while the relationship of socioeconomic class to race has commanded much attention (e.g. Fontaine 1985), the way class and race may interact to shape political preferences and behavior also appears under-explored.

One reason for this omission could be the apparent complexity of the topic. Even the appropriate conceptualization of race in Brazil is the subject of enduring and controversial debate (Telles 2004; Bailey and Telles 2006). Some scholars have argued that the application of North American racial categories such as Black or White in Brazil is inappropriate, in a context in which self-identification of "color" presents a multiplicity of possible racial identifications. These are certainly crucial considerations in broaching the topic of race in Brazil.

At the same time, the Brazilian statistics agency, the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (*IBGE*), collects census data on race using a simple five-part categorization: in the IBGE surveys, citizens can self-identify as black (*preto*), brown (*pardo*), white (*branco*), yellow *(amarelo*), and indigenous (*indígena*). While in principle such categorizations might not reflect the way that many Brazilians understand their own racial identity, I report evidence below of the relevance of this schema for contemporary Brazilian racial self-understandings. For example, even in response to open-ended questions about their color, participants in my survey overwhelmingly used one of the categories favored by the IBGE. Efforts to understand how the racial relationship between voters and candidates influence voter behavior therefore need not be doomed by

impossible complexity: for instance, simply knowing whether voters who identify as white (black) using the IBGE scale prefer white (black) candidates would be useful in evaluating claims about relationship between race and politics.

However, efforts to infer the causal relationships between race, class, and electoral behavior from observational data are also hindered by methodological challenges: many factors besides race and class may distinguish candidates for local, state, or national office, so inferring race- or class-based preferences from surveys or election results can be misleading. The research presented here overcomes some of these limitations, through its experimental design, and thus allows us more reliably to estimate the causal effect of racial and class relationships between voters and politicians.

The research presented in this paper thus seeks to use experimental evidence to address one aspect of the puzzle of the descriptive gap between voters and politicians—how candidate race and class shape the preferences of various voters over politicians. This is an important, if not on its own sufficient, part of exploring the puzzle posed by the descriptive gap between politicians and the electorate. After all, if voters have strong preferences for candidates who share their race and class, the whiteness of the political class—as well as the fact that politicians from poor backgrounds, such as Lula, have only recently ascended to the heights of politics—becomes all the more puzzling, given the existence of democratic elections. On the other hand, if candidate race and class do not strongly affect voter preferences, then the apparent descriptive gap between voters and elites may provide a less pressing puzzle—and institutional or socioeconomic rather than preference-based explanations may contribute more to elucidating it.

Before discussing my research design, it is useful to emphasize the reasons why voter preferences over individual candidates are politically-relevant in this context. While the list-based voting system used in elections for state assemblies and the national Chamber of Deputies may seem to reduce the importance of individual candidacies, the fact that the lists are open—together with other features of the electoral rule—generates intra-party competition and heightens incentives for candidates to cultivate a personal vote (Carey and Shugart 1995). Indeed, the candidate-centered focus of campaigns in Brazil's nominally list-based proportional representation system is often noted: many candidates scarcely mention their parties in their campaigns, while the party vote (rather than individual vote) has historically been very small.[6] In local elections such as the ones studied here, citizens may also vote for individual candidates as well as for party slates. Finally, preferences over individual candidates are also clearly relevant in elections for executive offices—such as mayor, governor or president. In sum, exploring the influence of race and class on voters' preferences over individual candidates is clearly important to understanding the gap in descriptive representation.

Research Design

To assess the effects of a candidate's perceived race and social class on voter preferences, I implemented an experiment in metropolitan Salvador (the capital of the state of Bahia) and Rio de Janeiro (the capital of the state of the same name). These two cities were chosen in part because of the representational gap in local politics mentioned above, which is particularly stark in Salvador. While fully explaining this

[6] In 1994, for instance, the party vote comprised only 8 percent of the overall vote in the Chamber of Deputies. More recently, the Workers' Party (PT) has garnered more of its support through the party vote (up to 30 or 40 percent).

representational gap may demand replication across other cities, allowing for greater variance on the dependent variable, the results of my experiment will shed light on at least some of the potential explanations for the gap. The class and racial composition of these cities is also quite varied, which may allow for some insights to be drawn from comparison of results across these two contexts. Issues of external validity and the extent to which results might or might not generalize to other settings in Brazil are discussed below.

Subjects were recruited for the experiment via a stratified probability sample of the population of these two cities, using techniques that are standard in door-to-door surveys to select houses and individuals. The universe consisted of the urban populations of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, from all social classes (A/B/C/D/E, using the income categories of the IBGE, where A are the richest and E are the poorest). However, I excluded from the population subjects who self-identified as "yellow" (*amarelo*) and "indigenous" (*indígena*) using the racial categories of the IBGE. These latter groups constitute only a small fraction of the populations of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, however, and the experimental design described below suggested a focus on white, brown, and black subjects (the other IBGE categories). Table 1 shows the distribution of whites and blacks in Salvador and Rio, by race and social class, using data from the census. Here, for ease of presentation, "whites" include those who self-identified as *branco* (white) using the IBGE categories, while "blacks" include those who self-identified as *preto* (black) or *pardo* (brown); elsewhere, I disaggregate the latter group.[7] I measure social class using the categories of the Brazilian statistics agency (IBGE); here,

[7] See the discussion above about the conceptual validity—as well as the threats to validity—of grouping browns and blacks together.

citizens in category A or B are grouped as "rich," while categories C, D, and E are grouped as "poor."

[TABLE 1 HERE]

As the table shows, poor blacks comprise the majority of the population in Salvador (55.5%)—a fact that further underscores the puzzle that this majority fails to elect blacks to the city council. Yet, poor whites (11.5%) are relatively rare, as are both rich whites (13.9%) and rich blacks (19.2%). Similar issues arise in Rio de Janeiro, which has proportionately more rich whites (36.7%) as well as poor whites (22.4%) yet has relatively few rich blacks (15.1%). This population distribution raised important considerations for the sampling design, because the experimental study group should contain sufficient numbers of sub-groups with low frequencies in the population, such as rich blacks and poor whites; otherwise, estimators of treatment effects for these sub-groups would be very imprecise. Yet, as Table 1 suggests, a simple random sample from the populations of these cities would produce relatively few rich blacks and poor whites.[8]

To design a sampling strategy that would produce an oversample of low-frequency types, I therefore worked with a survey firm to identify the predominant class characteristics of the neighborhoods in each city, using data from previous probability samples. We then partitioned these neighborhoods into three types (predominantly from income categories A and B, predominantly B and C, and predominantly C, D, and E), and allocated an equal proportion of the total number of interviews (n=700 in Salvador, n=500 in Rio de Janeiro) to each type of neighborhood. For instance, in Salvador, we

[8] For instance, we used probabilities proportionate to neighborhood size to calculate the number of individuals who should be sampled at random from each neighborhood; this produced a projected sample in which only a small proportion of respondents (around 10%) would be drawn from neighborhoods which are predominantly A or B.

sampled N=233 individuals at random from the first set of AB neighborhoods, N=233 from BC neighborhoods, and N=233 from CDE neighborhoods. A random sample of individuals from these neighborhoods would thus produce a study group in which (roughly) one-half of the group is from categories A and B and one-half is from categories C, D, and E.[9] I use sampling weights in my analysis, where appropriate, to compensate for the oversampling of the AB and BC neighborhoods (which have fewer residents than CDE neighborhoods) to recover estimates that are valid for the population as a whole. To sample individuals within neighborhoods, houses were selected at random using interval sampling; within households, individuals were selected using the method of birthdays.[10]

After agreeing to participate in the survey, participants were administered a screening questionnaire and shown a videotaped political speech by a candidate for the local city council (actually, an actor). Participants used headphones to listen to the speech on a portable DVD player; the speeches are described in more detail below. Subjects were then asked a series of questions about their propensity to vote for this candidate; their impressions of his[11] likeability, competence, intelligence; the extent to

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[9] In point of fact, each interviewer sampled at random the same number of rich whites, rich blacks, poor whites, and poor blacks, using interval sampling until the allotted target was reached. Representativeness of the sample for each sub-group was not compromised by this sampling scheme; moreover, the design allowed for a balanced experimental study group, with the same number of subjects assigned to each of the cells of Table 2 below.

[10] Unfortunately, it is difficult to calculate the real response rate, because data on the number of doors knocked on was inadvertently not systematically retained. Any resulting limitations on the representativeness of the sample should be born in mind. However, potential subjects were only told that they would be shown a political speech and asked questions about it but were not told that the focus was on race or social class. While the decision to participate may be related to interest in politics, it seems unlikely to be directly connected to racial or class attitudes.

[11] All of the candidates were male; for purposes of estimating the effects of race and class more precisely, it was desirable to restrict the additional variability in evaluations that might be induced by variation in the candidate's gender. However, this is a limitation of the study, and future

which they anticipated receiving greater jobs or government benefits if the candidate were elected; and other questions.[12] The survey also contained a range of questions about past voting behavior and other variables unrelated to the experiment.

The candidate's race and stated social class were varied at random. First, the candidate was either white or black, a distinction that raises conceptual issues I discuss below. Second, the actor either wore a suit—indicating, we hoped, a more privileged background—or dungarees (*macacão*) or other working-class clothes. Finally, in some versions, the content of the speech was altered to emphasize the intended racial and class background of the actor—that is, rich white, poor white, rich black, and poor black. This added up to eight distinct "treatments"—four in which participants were exposed to precisely the same speech given by a rich white, poor white, rich black, or poor black candidate, and four in which participants were exposed to different speeches by each type of candidate that underscored the class and race backgrounds of these candidates. The manipulation of perceived race and class, and the reasons for adding a set of treatments in which the content of the speeches was varied, are discussed below.

One way to look at the experimental design is that white and black subjects were exposed to candidates from the same race and social class; different race but same social class; different social class but same race; and different race and social class. This design is depicted in the cross-tabulation in Table 2. In principle, then, the design allows me to compare the effects of candidate race and candidate class on voting preferences, at least for subjects who are white or black.

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research should explore how gender may interact with racial or class preferences (or simply how baseline evaluations of male and female candidates may differ).

[12] The questionnaire and other materials relating to the research design are posted at www.thaddunning.com/research.

[TABLE 2 HERE]

Stimulating perceptions of race and class

Efforts to stimulate perceptions of candidates' social class and race raise important conceptual as well as research design issues. My experimental design relies both on variations in candidates' appearance and variations in their message to stimulate perceptions of race and class. However, these attributes were manipulated independently, so that we can (for instance) look at the effects of variation in appearance, holding constant the message of the speech. Here, I discuss the variation in candidates' appearance, before describing the independent variation in their message.

First of all, I filmed each actor (white or black) giving the same political speech twice—once wearing a business suit and once wearing dungarees, a t-shirt, or other working-class clothing. By assigning subjects to view one of these two speeches at random, I thereby generated a series of experiments (one for each actor) in which subjects were exposed to speeches with precisely the same text but in which the social class of the candidate—as proxied by the dress of the actor—was varied at random. I refer below to candidates who wore a business suit as "rich" or "elite" candidates and those who wore dungarees or a t-shirt as "poor" or "popular" candidates. Of course, merely manipulating the dress of the actor may generate a fairly "thin" version of a social class treatment. Yet, it also has some advantages over the more complicated manipulation described further below, in which various aspects of the candidate's background and message were manipulated—and thus it may be more difficult to assess what aspect of the manipulation was doing any causal work.

Another issue here is that different actors may convey different class backgrounds through their speech patterns. This is not something over which I could exert experimental control, though I recruited amateur actors of various educational and professional backgrounds (including such diverse professionals as lawyers, physical trainers, corporate consultants, and hotel bellmen). I also took care to include both highly-educated and poorly-educated actors of both races, in the hope that any interaction of the treatment with the actual class background of the actor would average out over the various experiments. One central risk is that the influence of speech patterns would be strong enough that I would not successfully manipulate perceptions of social class, simply by manipulating candidates' clothing (and, sometimes, the content of their speeches). Yet as I show below, the experimental treatments were quite successful in manipulating perceptions of candidates' social class.

Manipulating perceptions of race on the basis of the actor's appearance is also a somewhat delicate enterprise. In both Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, I recruited both white and black actors—who all self-identified as either "*branco*" and "*preto*," respectively—of various ages and professional backgrounds.[13] As discussed below, subjects identified the race of the candidate substantially as I intended, though there were some issues that arose. A difficulty, however, is that it is in fact not feasible to experimentally manipulate an individual actor's race. That is, unlike perceptions of social class—which I hoped to manipulate by varying the dress (and sometimes the message) of the *same* actor—it is impossible to use the same actor to expose subjects to either a "white candidate" or a

[13] Because of regional variations in accents in spoken Portuguese, subjects in Salvador and Rio de Janeiro only saw actors from their respective cities.

"black candidate condition."[14] This difficulty raises non-trivial issues of interpretation. Imagine an "experiment" in which subjects are exposed at random to a single white or black actor and asked to evaluate the candidate's likeability, competence, and so on. Evidence that subjects on average judge the white actor to be more likeable or competent is not *ipso facto* evidence for a preference for white candidates—after all, that particular white candidate might indeed have appeared more likeable or competent, for reasons independent of race.

This difficulty has bedeviled some previous attempts to study the effects of race experimentally, in Brazil and elsewhere. For instance, Almeida (2007) showed subjects photographs of nine actors who varied in skin color, more or less along a continuum from extremely dark to extremely light and asked them questions such as whether subjects would want their child to marry this person. Almeida finds that lighter-shaded candidates seem to be preferred but that one of the three lightest candidates is largely rejected by subjects—an anomaly that he explains by virtue of the fact that this actor looks like a "northeastern white" (i.e. a white from the North-East region of Brazil), who are not deemed "trustworthy." Whatever the veracity of this claim, it leaves much to be desired from an experimental design perspective: the probability that any three white actors drawn at random could be deemed more attractive for marriage than any three black actors, simply due to chance, is substantial, yet the statistical tests used in this study are not designed to account for such actor "fixed effects." To further explain away the

[14] I briefly considered using digital imaging technology to "transform" the face of an individual actor into "white" or "black," yet this raises intractable conceptual problems in my view. Which individual features of an individual physiognomy should be given precedence in this transformation? And to what point can we say that subjects are exposed to the "same" actor, with only the "race" manipulated? These considerations raise issues similar to those considered by Holland (1986), though I do not subscribe to the view that perceptions of race cannot be a "cause" in the sense that Holland advocates.

anomaly posed by one of these three white actors on the basis of a prejudice against "northeastern whites" seems unpersuasive from a statistical and research-design perspective.

My partial solution to this problem was to recruit more white and black actors than have been used by previous studies, in the hopes that possible race-independent attributes of the actors, such as likeability or competence, would average out over the two racial groups. However, this approach also introduces problems of its own. Consider the class experiment described above, in which subjects are exposed at random to a candidate wearing either a business suit or some kind of working-class clothing. Strictly speaking, this is only a true experiment given the identity of each individual actor—because only when the identity of the actor is held constant can we manipulate the class background (i.e. style of dress) of the actor *without* manipulating other attributes that might independently affect evaluations of the candidate. For a fixed subject sample size, expanding the number of actors decreases the number of subjects that can be included in any one of these single experiments, thus diminishing the precision with which we can estimate these true experimental effects.

I therefore sought to reconcile the competing objectives of increasing the numbers of white and black actors, so as to be able to separate the average effects of race from the effects of the candidate "fixed effects," while also not decreasing the per-actor subject pool so greatly as to reduce precision beyond acceptable levels. In the end, I picked a total of twelve actors--six black and six white—for use in the experiment. Below, I discuss the results for each actor and evaluate the success of this strategy of "averaging across" any candidate fixed effects.

Beyond these "appearance"-based ways of stimulating perceptions of race and class, manipulation of the candidate's message provided an alternate way of doing this, one that may improve on some of the defects of the "appearance"-based manipulations. Thus, we also filmed each actor giving a speech, the content of which reinforced the class and race message conveyed by the appearance of the actor. This second manipulation implied "rich white," "poor white," "rich black," and "poor black" treatments, respectively. In the respective speeches, candidates emphasized both their class and racial backgrounds. To be clear, subjects assigned to view a candidate who was, e.g., "rich white" *either* viewed an identical speech by a white candidate wearing a suit, *or* viewed this candidate dressed in a suit giving a speech that emphasized his class and racial background.

For instance, in the "rich black" and "rich white" conditions, the candidate emphasized his privileged background in the following terms:

> I am José Paulo de Oliveiras. I am a Bahian lawyer and have also been a professor in a private middle school. I graduated from the Federal University of Bahia [UFBA] here in Salvador and did my post-graduate education there as well. As many of you know, throughout my life I have worked with many non-governmental organizations to improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods and especially to improve the quality of schools in our city.

In the "poor black" condition, on the other hand, the speech reflected a popular, working-class background:

> I am José Paulo de Oliveiras, though many of you will know me as *Negão* [big black man].[15] I have been a working person all of my life. I grew up in the popular neighborhoods of Salvador and completed my education here, up to middle school. I first worked as a taxi driver and a mechanic, and later, I was a political organizer and leader in the mechanics' union for over 15 years. I know

[15] It is common in Brazil for people to use appearance- or race-based nicknames such as *Negão*. For instance, Olívia Santana, a city councilwoman in Salvador, ran for office using the campaign slogan "Olívia Santana, the big black woman (*Negona*) of the City" (Mitchell 2010).

> the struggles that ordinary people face in their daily lives, because I am part and parcel of the people [*o povão*].

The speech by the "poor white" candidate was similar, though the second part of the first sentence was not read.

Moreover, the speeches emphasized the need to solve problems commonly encountered by richer and poorer citizens, respectively. For instance, the speech by the "rich" politicians emphasized the "lack of employment opportunities for university graduates; a middle-class that is still too small; inadequate numbers of specialized hospitals and too little in the way of modern medicine; the high costs of private middle schools, which are the best alternative for parents who want their children to gain admittance to prestigious universities; and crime that too often threatens our property and way of life." It also emphasized the importance of merit and achievement in creating economic opportunity. On the other hand, the speech by the "poor" politicians stressed the importance of generating greater employment opportunities, expanded access to public education, public housing projects, better care for sick mothers and children, and the need to reduce violence, poverty, and inequality. This poor politician said that if elected he would "struggle to defend opportunities for needy people and communities [*comunidades carentes*]."

These speeches also underscored the racial identity of the candidates. For instance, in the "rich Black" speech condition, the candidate says

> I have also been involved in many activities that specifically benefit our Black brothers and sisters. For example, I have always struggled against racism and discrimination in our universities; as a student leader, I organized a Front in Defense of Racial Equality. I have always fought to help my brothers and sisters accept and be proud of their African cultural heritage, which too often we do not valorize.

In the "poor Black" speech

> Throughout my life, I have also been involved in many activities that benefit my Black brothers and sisters. For example, I have always struggled against racism and discrimination, and I have fought to make my brothers and sisters proud of their African heritage, which too often we do not valorize. In my chapter of the mechanics' union, I organized a Front in Defense of Racial Equality. I have also received an award from the City of Salvador as a "friend of capoeira."[16]

One advantage of varying the message of the speeches in this fashion is that they may allow a more powerful as well as realistic stimulation of perceptions of race and class. After all, simply changing the dress of the candidate may fail to capture the subtle ways in which political discourses invoke class and racial themes. However, as already mentioned, a disadvantage is that the speeches may combine various "treatments," in the sense that they mention various aspects of the candidate's backgrounds and political platforms. Given this combination of distinct aspects of the speeches, it may therefore be difficult to know what part of the treatment is "doing the work."

For this reason, simply varying the dress of the actor may provide the cleanest experimental manipulation. Yet, because this treatment may be insufficiently powerful for priming perceptions of class (as well as race), I felt it would also be useful to include a second set of treatments in which the text of the speech itself was varied to emphasize class and race, respectively.

Manipulation checks

How successfully did the experiment in fact stimulate perceptions of class and race? To allow us to evaluate the first question, once all the post-treatment questions about the candidate's attributes (likeability, competence, etc.) had been asked, participants were asked to rank the candidate's socioeconomic status, using the 5-point

[16] This was the version of the speech given in Salvador; in Rio, "City of Salvador" was replaced with "City of Rio de Janeiro."

scale of the Brazilian statistics agency (IBGE) in which "A" is the richest and "E" is the poorest. I recode "A" as 1 and "E" as 5 to create a 5-point numeric scale.

Overall, the experimental treatments were fairly successful in manipulating perceptions of the candidate's social class. On average, politicians wearing a suit were rated at 2.5 on the descending IBGE scale, while politicians without a suit were rated at 3.0. This difference of 0.5 points is highly statistically-significant (the standard error for the difference is 0.06) and is about one-half of one standard deviation in size; it corresponds to moving from the midpoint between the B and C categories to the C category on the IBGE scale. The estimates move only slightly when we consider just politicians whose speech contained class-based messages: politicians who wore a suit and gave a "rich" speech were ranked at 2.4, while those who did not and gave a "poor" speech were again ranked at 3.0; again the difference of 0.6 is highly significant, with a t-statistic over 7. Interestingly, these results seem to suggest that simply varying the candidate's dress was enough to influence perceptions of class, as the difference in class evaluations does not increase substantially when the text is altered.

While there is some evidence from my experiment that race itself influences perceptions of social class, this evidence is weaker than some previous research might lead us to expect (e.g. Azevedo 1996). On average, black politicians were ranked at 2.9 (se=0.04) on the 5-point descending socioeconomic scale, while white politicians were ranked at 2.6 (se=0.04), for a statistically-significant difference of about one-third of one standard deviation. However, the effect of wearing a suit is about the same for blacks as for whites and thus appears race-independent: black candidates wearing a suit were ranked at 2.6 (se=0.06) and those not wearing a suit were ranked at 3.1 (se=0.06), while

whites wearing a suit were ranked at 2.4 (se=0.05) and those not wearing a suite were ranked at 2.9 (se=0.06). Thus, the effect of wearing the suit on perceptions of socioeconomic class is about 0.5 points for both whites and blacks. I also find roughly similar results looking only at candidates' whose speeches had a class content.[17]

Next, how successful were the experimental treatments in manipulating subjects' perceptions of candidate race? Subjects were asked both open-ended and closed-ended questions about race (in that order). First, they were asked "in your opinion, what is the color of this politician?" Of the 601 subjects exposed to a black candidate, 426 said black (N=168 said "*negro*" and N=258 said "*preto*") while 101 said brown ("*pardo*").[18] Of the 599 subjects exposed to a white candidate, 317 said a variant of white ("*branco,*" N=316, or "*loiro*," N=1), while 216 respondents said brown ("*pardo*") and 22 said black (13 said "*preto*" and 9 said "*negro*").[19]

Results were similar with closed-ended questions. Subjects were asked the following question: "The IBGE classifies the color of Brazilians as black (*preto*), brown (*pardo*), white (*branco*), yellow (*amarelo*), and indigenous (*indígena*). To which of these groups does the candidate belong?" Among subjects exposed to black candidates, 445 (74 percent) said black, while 139 (23 percent) said brown; among those exposed to

[17] Evaluations of black politicians who gave a "rich" speech were 2.5 (se=0.07), compared to evaluations of 3.1 (se=0.08) for those who gave a poor speech; evaluations of white politicians who gave a "rich" speech were 2.4 (se=0.07) and of those who gave a "poor" speech were 2.8 (se=0.08).

[18] The remaining answers were distributed among "dark" (*moreno*, N=47), "mulatto" (*mulato*, N=10), "white" (*branco*, N=12), "indigenous" (*indígena*, N=1), "yellow" (*amarelo*, N=1) and "didn't know/didn't reply" (N=3).

[19] The remaining answers were "dark" (*moreno*, N=36), "light dark" (*moreno claro*, N=1) and don't know/didn't reply (N=5).

white candidates, 322 (54 percent) said white, while 253 (42 percent) said brown.[20] Thus, very few subjects assigned to black candidates said the candidate was white, and very few subjects assigned to white candidates said the candidate was black. However, a substantial portion of subjects in both conditions said the candidate was brown; this occurred for a much bigger proportion (by a factor of nearly two) of subjects assigned to white candidates than black. In sum, the experimental treatment had substantial success in stimulating perceptions of the candidate's intended race, though the manipulation was perhaps more fully successful for black candidates than white candidates.

I also find little evidence that perceived social class "whitens" candidates, as Azevedo (1996) and others have suggested. In response to the closed-ended race question among subjects exposed to black candidates, 73 percent said the candidate was black when he wore a suit and 75 percent said so when he did not; the difference of -2 percentage points is not statistically significant. Among subjects exposed to a white candidate, 3.3 percent said he was black when he wore a suit, and 3.7 percent said he was black when he did not; again, the difference is not significant. The proportion of subjects who perceived the politician as brown ("*pardo*") was also statistically identical, whether a black candidate wore a suit (24 percent) or did not (22 percent) and whether a white candidate wore a suit (41 percent) or did not (43 percent). The evidence is not much stronger when we focus on variation in the content of the speeches. The strongest contrast is between black candidates who wore a suit and gave a "rich candidate" speech—72 percent of subjects perceived these candidates as black—and black candidates who wore

[20] The similarity of answers to the open-ended question (asked first) and the closed-ended question asked using the IBGE categories bears notice. Earlier research has found a much more prolific set of color terms (see Telles 2004 and Bailey and Telles 2006 for summaries). This may well reflect a growing hegemony of the categories used by the national statistics office, though that conjecture goes beyond the scope of my evidence.

working-class clothes and gave a "poor candidates" speech—80 percent of subjects perceived these candidates as black. Yet, this difference is not quite statistically-significant at standard levels (p=0.07). Moreover, there is no discernible effect of a class-based speech content on the percentage of subjects who identify white candidates as black (the difference is 1.3 percentage points) or the percentage of subjects who identify white or black candidates as brown (the differences are 5 and 6 percentage points, respectively, with standard errors of 4 and 4 percentage points).

Analysis and Results

How, then, do social class and race shape voters' evaluations of candidates? Table 3 presents mean evaluations of candidates for each of the treatment conditions depicted in Table 2, both for all subjects (top number in each cell) and then excluding subjects who identified as "brown" (*pardo*) using the IBGE scale (bottom number in each cell). The cells report average answers to the question, "[On a scale from 1 to 7], would this speech make you vote for this candidate?"[21]

Comparisons across the cells do suggest an effect of social class relationships on preferences over candidates. For instance, candidates who share subjects' class and race are significantly preferred to candidates who share subjects' race but not class—by more than 0.4 points when including all subjects and more than 0.6 points when excluding brown subjects, differences that are highly statistical-significant.[22] This effect only

[21] Subjects were shown a ladder, the rungs of which were numbered from 1 to 7, and were told that 1 means "Absolutely not" and 7 means "Certainly yes."
[22] In general, it makes sense that effects would be weakened by the inclusion of brown subjects, since these subjects are not as clearly exposed to a "same race" or "different race" condition.

persists when candidates share the same race, however, a point I discuss further below. Thus, when we pool across races, the effect of shared social class is not quite significant.

On the other hand, there is little evidence for a race effect in evaluations. For example, among subjects who share the politician's class, candidates from the same race are evaluated at 3.35 on the 7-point scale, while candidates from a different race are evaluated at 3.12; the difference is not statistically significant. Among subjects shown a speech by a politician from a different class, candidates who share the subject's race are rated at 2.92, on average; those from a different race are actually evaluated more favorably, at 3.21, though again the difference is not significant. Pooling across social class conditions, I also find no effect of race on candidate evaluations that is statistically distinguishable from zero. Finally, on average the point estimates suggest that experimental subjects (half of whom identify as white and the other half as black or brown) actually prefer black candidates, by about 0.18 points, but this difference in the global evaluations of white and black candidates is statistically indistinguishable from zero.

[TABLE 3 HERE]

In principle, this absence of a race effect could be due to the weakness or possible artificiality of the experimental stimulus: these videotaped speeches certainly may not capture all the nuances and context of a real political speech. Yet, as noted above, the stimulus had substantial success in stimulating perceptions of race. I have also used similar experimental designs in other contexts and have found substantial and statistically significant in-group preferences (Dunning and Harrison 2010; Dunning 2010a; Dunning 2010b). This absence of an effect thus does not only appear to reflect the nature of the

experimental treatment but plausibly suggests something about the relative absence of race-based preferences in the Brazilian context.

The post-treatment questions also included a battery of questions about candidate attributes such as competence, likeability, intelligence, and so on.[23] However, for 12 out of 16 attributes, there was no significant difference in the evaluations of white or black candidates on average, pooling across all subjects; as a group, the black candidates were judged significantly more competent, likeable, and trustworthy and to be more likely to defend others. Even for these four variables, the significant differences arise only when a Bonferroni correction for multiple statistical comparisons is not used; thus, even these differences could reasonably have arisen by chance. Moreover, subjects did not evaluate these attributes of the candidates who shared their own race more or less favorably, on average. Excluding brown subjects, there is not a single significant difference across these attributes in evaluations of same-race and different-race candidates; the same result holds including brown subjects, with only one attribute being "significant." (Subjects deem themselves better able to hold candidates of their own race accountable if the candidates break their promises. However, the estimated difference of 0.23 points on a 7-point scale is substantively small, and the contrast is not statistically distinguishable from zero if we adjust for the multiple statistical comparisons).

[23] The attributes of the candidate about which subjects were asked are: likeability, intelligence, trustworthiness, impressiveness, competence, capacity to confront challenges, capacity to do a good job in office, and capacity to defend others. Subjects were also asked whether the candidate has good ideas and good motives; the extent to which he concerns himself with people like the respondent and the extent to which he is concerned with the same topics as the respondent; whether the candidate would keep his promises; whether people like the respondent could hold him accountable if he broke his promises; whether the respondent would have a better chance of obtaining government benefits if the candidate were elected; and whether the respondent would be more likely to obtain a government job if the candidate were elected.

How do the overall effects of race break down by racial sub-group? Table 4 shows results for white and black subjects separately. (Again, I use self-identification on the IBGE scale to classify subjects racially). We see similar patterns for both groups. Among whites, politicians from the same social class and racial group are preferred by a large and statistically-significant margin to politicians from a different class but the same racial group. Other differences are not significant, with the exception that candidates from a different racial group and class are actually preferred to candidates from the same race but different class. Among blacks, we also see a within-race effect of social class, and some evidence for a within-class effect of race: candidates who share the subjects' race and class are significantly preferred to those from a different class but the same race (top-left and top-right cells of Table 4) and are also preferred to those from the same class but a different race, though the latter effect is not quite significant at standard levels (p-value 0.09).

[TABLE 4 HERE]

Perhaps these results reflect the thinness of the self-identification with IBGE categories. Mitchell (2010), for instance, has suggested that "the common adage that *negros não votam em negros* (blacks do not vote for blacks) is completely wrong. Afro-Brazilians who embrace blackness do vote for black candidates."[24] We can test this proposition here because at the end of the interview, we asked subjects whether they consider themselves Afro-Brazilians.[25] However, when I look at the experimental effects in Table 3 only for black subjects who identify as Afro-Brazilians (and thus, presumably,

[24] The quotation is from the introduction to Bernd Reiter and Gladys L. Mitchell, eds., *Brazil's New Racial Politics*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
[25] We also asked them what is their color (an open-ended question); asked again if they consider themselves black (*negro*); and aksed whether they consider themselves of African descent.

embrace blackness), I find little difference from the effects reported before: though the effect of social class is significant (for own-race candidates), there is no discernible effect of candidate race on evaluations of the politicians. Thus, while the adage that blacks do not vote for blacks may not be right—after all, there is no evidence that blacks vote preferentially for whites—neither does the claim follow that blacks who embrace blackness preferentially vote for blacks.

The class effects may be especially pronounced for poor subjects. Table 5 disaggregates treatment effects for rich and poor subjects, now pooling across subjects' racial groups; here, "rich" is operationalized as subjects whose reported income puts them in the IBGE's "A" or "B" categories, while the "poor" are those in the "C," "D," or "E" categories. While distinctions between rich and poor politicians are not statistically significant, among rich subjects, poor subjects rate poor politicians of their own race significantly higher (by more than 0.5 points on the 7 point scale) than rich politicians of their own race. The class effects are also much stronger in Rio de Janeiro than in Salvador: in Rio, which has a smaller overall sample size (N=500) than Salvador (N=700), the effects of class (pooling across race) are statistically significant, while they are not significant in Salvador alone.

[TABLE 5 HERE]

The fact that I find statistically-significant class effects within racial groups, but not across them, bears special discussion. There are at least two possible conclusions to draw here: first, there is indeed a causal effect of class on evaluations, but only within racial groups; second, something unusual happened. Some of the evidence might suggest the latter conclusion that these statistically-significant differences arose by chance. For

example, neither white nor black subjects prefer candidates from their own race and class group (that is, the top-left cells of Tables 3, 4, and 5) to candidates from different race and class groups (the bottom-right cells of the tables). Since it is somewhat hard to believe that racial *dissimilarity* across class groups gives candidates a boost, this evidence might weigh in favor of the conclusion that there are only small class effects here, if any. Still, the possibility of class effects should be evaluated through replication and further research.

What this evidence does strongly suggest is the absence of strong race-based preferences in the electorate, at least in the population of the two cities from which the experimental study group was drawn. Of course, this is not to say that in some settings, voters in these populations might not prefer to elect candidates from their own racial groups. Yet, the evidence from my experiment is not consistent with this being a general or important force, on average. Simply put, while voters may prefer messages and candidates consistent with their socioeconomic group, there does not appear to a basis for alleging strong race-based preferences in the electorate.

Conclusion

The racial disparity between Brazilian voters and their elected politicians seems to pose a striking puzzle about descriptive representation. One might reasonably think that some systematic racial bias—on the part of white voters—or some inability to translate preferences into political outcomes—on the part of black or brown voters—is responsible for this outcome. In a context in which the legacy of race-based slavery has clearly left enduring socioeconomic inequalities and appears to have engendered racial prejudices in

many areas of life—such as the labor and marriage markets (Almeida 2007)—it is plausible to think that such prejudices are in part responsible for the racial gap between politicians and the electorate as well.

Yet, the evidence presented in this paper is not consistent with that conjecture. To be sure, there are reasons why the stimuli used in my experimental design might not capture all of the subtle and important ways that racial ideologies or priming are deployed in campaigns.[26] Still, the racial cues seem strong: subjects clearly perceive the racial differences between white and black candidates, and in some experimental treatments race-based messages prime this identification of the candidates further. It is reasonable to suspect that if strong race-based preferences existed in the electorate, this experiment would pick them up. However, I find almost no evidence of such preferences here.

Still, this leaves the puzzle of explaining the descriptive gap between voters and politicians to future research. There may well be strong socioeconomic reasons why whites dominate the Brazilian political class: precisely because of the legacy of race-based slavery, whites possess greater socioeconomic resources on average, and Brazilian politics is a realm in which economic power matters much. The perceptions of experimental subjects seem to reflect this reality: white candidates were judged to be significantly richer on average than black candidates. However, the fact that white candidates were not globally preferred by voters to black candidates—or judged more attractive on a range of different attributes, including competence and intelligence—suggests perhaps that the advantage of such candidates reflects not perceptions of their

[26] For description of the use of such priming in North American campaigns, see Mendelberg (2002).

attributes but the socioeconomic attributes that may come from greater access to money and power.

In a sense, these findings may bode well for diminishing the descriptive gap between political elites and citizens over time. If the advantage of white candidates really stems from greater access to power or economic resources—but if the preferences of voters do not otherwise give them an edge—social programs that diminish the economic disparity between blacks and whites might lead over time to a narrowing of the political difference as well. Such programs (such as affirmative action in universities) have received heightened attention in recent years, and future research should consider their political as well as economic effects.

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Table 1: Population Distribution by Race and Social Class

(Blacks and Whites in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo)

Salvador:

	Rich (A/B)	Poor (C/D/E)
Whites (*brancos*)	13.9%	11.5%
Blacks (*pretos/pardos*)	19.2%	55.5%

Rio de Janeiro:

	Rich (A/B)	Poor (C/D/E)
Whites (*brancos*)	36.7%	22.4%
Blacks (*pretos/pardos*)	15.1%	24.9%

The tables show the distribution by race and class of all Whites and Blacks in Salvador (top table) and Rio de Janeiro (bottom tables). Data are from the census. Class is measured by self-reported income and race is measured using self-identification with the classifications of the Brazilian statistics agency IBGE (A/B/C/D/E). Percentages may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Table 2: Experimental Design

	Subject and Politician Have Same Class	**Subject and Politician Have Different Class**
Subject and Politician Have Same Race	N=285 (all subjects) N=205 (no brown subjects)	N=298 (all subjects) N=205 (no brown subjects)
Subject and Politician Have Different Race	N=315 (all subjects) N=214 (no brown subjects)	N=302 (all subjects) N=207 (no brown subjects)

The table provides one way of depicting the experimental design. The cells show the number of subjects assigned at random to each of the treatment conditions. The first entry in each cell includes all subjects, including self-identified "browns" (*pardos*); the latter subjects are assigned to one of the "same race" conditions if they viewed a speech by a black politician. The second row of each cell includes only self-identified whites (*brancos*) and blacks (*pretos*); browns are excluded. Subjects from the A or B income categories are in the "same class" condition if they are assigned to view a speech by a "rich" politician, where the class of the politician is manipulated by his dress (and for a subset of the subjects chosen at random, the message of his speech). N=1,200 when all subjects are included; N=831 when browns are excluded.

Table 3: Effects of Shared Race and Class on Candidate Evaluations

(Mean Evaluations of Propensity to Vote for the Candidate)

	Subject and Politician Have Same Class	**Subject and Politician Have Different Class**
Subject and Politician Have Same Race	All subjects: 3.35 (0.13) No browns: 3.41 (0.15)	All subjects: 2.92 (0.12) No browns: 2.76 (0.14)
Subject and Politician Have Different Race	All subjects: 3.12 (0.12) No browns: 3.17 (0.14)	All subjects: 3.21 (0.12) No browns: 3.27 (0.15)

The table presents mean answers, by treatment assignment, to the question: "[On a scale of 1 to 7], would this speech make you vote for the this candidate?" Standard errors are in parentheses. See the text and Table 2 for notes regarding the treatment conditions.

Table 4: Effects of Shared Race and Class, White and Black Subjects

(Mean Evaluations of Propensity to Vote for the Candidate)

	Subject and Politician Have Same Class	**Subject and Politician Have Different Class**
Subject and Politician Have Same Race	White subjects: 3.16 (0.17) Black subjects: 4.00 (0.30)	White subjects: 2.66 (0.17) Black subjects: 3.00 (0.25)
Subject and Politician Have Different Race	White subjects: 3.14 (0.16) Black subjects: 3.27 (0.30)	White subjects: 3.15 (0.17) Black subjects: 3.56 (0.30)

The table presents mean answers, by treatment assignment, to the question: "[On a scale of 1 to 7], would this speech make you vote for this candidate?" Standard errors are in parentheses. Answers are presented separately for subjects who self-identified as "white" and "black," using the IBGE scale. See the text and Table 2 for notes regarding the treatment conditions.

Table 5: Effects of Shared Race and Class, Rich and Poor Subjects

(Mean Evaluations of Propensity to Vote for the Candidate)

	Subject and Politician Have Same Class	**Subject and Politician Have Different Class**
Subject and Politician Have Same Race	Rich subjects: 2.99 (0.18) Poor subjects: 3.70 (0.18)	Rich subjects: 2.70 (0.15) Poor subjects: 3.18 (0.19)
Subject and Politician Have Different Race	Rich subjects: 2.64 (0.15) Poor subjects: 3.62 (0.18)	Rich subjects: 2.83 (0.17) Poor subjects: 3.52 (0.17)

The table presents mean answers, by treatment assignment, to the question: "[On a scale of 1 to 7], would this speech make you vote for this candidate?" Standard errors are in parentheses. Answers are presented separately for rich and poor subjects, where the former report income in the IBGE's "A" and "B" categories and the latter report income in the IBGE's "C," "D," or "E" categories. See the text and Table 2 for notes regarding the treatment conditions.