

*Special Issue: Rethinking the Ambition Gap: Gender and Candidate  
Emergence in Comparative Perspective*

RESEARCH

**Taking bread off the table: race, gender, resources  
and political ambition in Brazil**

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Traditional gender roles, gendered political institutions and resource inequities disincentivise women's participation in formal politics. This article analyses the Brazilian case – where women comprise 9.2 per cent of federal legislators elected since 1994 – to illustrate the centrality of resources in shaping candidate emergence. I examine how entrepreneurial elections, which incentivise intra-party competition and expensive campaigns, have sustained white men's dominance in Brazilian political institutions and deterred white and Afro-Brazilian women's political ambition. Using the latest data on campaign finance in Brazilian legislative elections, I explain how recent campaign finance reforms and a series of injustices provoking women's emotive power yielded important resources catalysing the candidacies of women, especially Black women. The findings suggest that defraying campaign costs offers a potent mechanism for levelling the playing field, and remind us that women's political ambition is shaped by their 'relationally embedded' risk assessment, constrained in no small part by the masculinised ethos of party politics.

**Key words** political ambition • intersectionality • campaign finance • emotions • women's representation • Brazil

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**Introduction**

Traditional gender roles, gendered political institutions and resource inequities produce and sustain robust disincentives for women to participate in formal politics, fuelling a gender gap in political ambition (Fulton et al, 2006; Lawless and Fox, 2010; Hinojosa, 2012; Piscopo, 2018). This article analyses the Brazilian case, where recent campaign finance reforms are poised to disrupt women's under-representation (in 2018, women jumped from 10.4 per cent to 14.8 per cent of elected federal legislators). Advancing new data on racial and gender differences in campaign finance, the analysis illustrates the centrality of resources in shaping candidate emergence. It focuses on how the

masculinised political arena and 2018 electoral context have conditioned the resources available to women and the implications for women's political ambition, applying an intersectional lens to explain how those factors influence white and Afro-Brazilian women differently.

The supply of women aspirants in Brazil is increasing; women have made educational and occupational gains, and 44.3 per cent of the country's party members are women.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, public opinion data indicate support for increasing women's political presence: eight in ten respondents agree that women's presence in decision-making spaces improves politics, and 77 per cent agree (including a majority that strongly agrees) that gender-parity legislatures (50 per cent women) should be obligatory (IBOPE and UN Women, 2018). Yet, despite the significant boost in women legislators in the 2018 congressional elections, the over-representation of white men persists. Of the 567 federal legislators elected in 2018 to represent the Brazilian population – which is majority Afro-descendant and has a women-majority electorate – 62.6 per cent are white men. In stark contrast, only 20 of the recently elected federal legislators identify as Afro-descendant women (3.5 per cent).<sup>2</sup>

This article investigates the societal and political factors that constrain women's decision to run and, in turn, reproduce white men's over-representation. In offering a comparative contribution from an under-studied electoral context, it illuminates the role of resources in shaping candidate emergence. Brazil's entrepreneurial elections, which discourage collectivist approaches to campaigns and instead amplify the importance of individual political capital (Shugart et al, 2005; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson, 2008), reveal the weight of resources in conditioning both the supply of and demand for women candidates. As discussed later, white men earn on average twice what women do (IPEA, 2015; IBGE and PNAD, 2016). With raced-gendered discrepancies in wages and access to campaign finance and informal networks, women's decision to run is fundamentally shaped by the exclusionary tendencies of the political elite who control access to the requisite resources for candidate viability. I focus on the resources of time and money, and then consider the role of emotive resources in candidate emergence.

The article centres the campaign finance reforms implemented in the run-up to the 2018 elections that banned corporate contributions and instituted a new electoral fund with mandated contributions to women candidacies. It offers evidence suggesting that, especially for Afro-Brazilian women – whose average income and campaign contributions pale in comparison to those of white men – the campaign finance reforms worked towards levelling the playing field, thus mitigating a significant deterrent to women's political ambition. The article also discusses the proliferation of raced-gendered threats, which at once increased the costs of *not* running while provoking women's outrage. Together, those developments enhanced the financial and emotive resources available to women and thereby decreased the relative costs of their candidacies, with important implications for their decision-making calculus.

The intersectional approach of the analysis, enabled by the 2014 release of data on candidates' self-declared racial identity, rectifies the conventional treatment of gender in studies of political ambition, which has tended to universalise the experiences of white women. Studies that have disaggregated the effect of gender across racial identities have largely come from the US case (Moore, 2005; Greer, 2016; Shames, 2017; Holman and Schneider, 2018; Silva and Skulley, 2019). This article contributes to that literature with an explicit consideration of how racial identity and gender

intersect in Brazil, offering insights into how race compounds the exclusionary realities confronted by women in an electoral and socio-political context distinct from the US case.<sup>3</sup>

Next, I engage the literatures on recruitment and political ambition to theoretically ground my central claims about how resources affect both the supply of and demand for women candidates in Brazil and beyond. I explain how the country's experience with a gender quota, long resisted by party elites, has tempered the decision for women, who are reluctant to serve as window dressing for parties seeking to minimally comply with quotas. Yet, when parties (willingly or by dictate) commit resources to women's candidacies, the decision-making calculus for women aspirants is altered. I then document raced-gendered disparities in wages and campaign spending, which render financial support an essential component of efforts to diversify representation. Indeed, the analysis shows that the 2018 elections saw a reduction in campaign finance inequities and increased diversity among candidates and elected deputies. I conclude that the hurdle of party resistance to extending resources to women – which constitutes a key demand-side blockage in the recruitment process – can be cleared by interventions such as campaign finance reform with distributional mandates that affect both the supply of and demand for women candidates.

## **The (re)production of white men's over-representation**

### *Recruitment*

Supply and demand factors interact throughout the recruitment process (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Murray, 2010; Lovenduski, 2016). Party elites are the ultimate gatekeepers behind demand-side obstacles, controlling not only candidacy itself, but also many of the antecedent resources that facilitate candidate emergence. Although resource inequities manifest as supply problems, they are often sustained by demand dynamics.

Feminist institutionalist accounts of recruitment speak to rules, practices and norms that affect the 'secret garden of candidate selection' and thus constrain women's access to candidacies (Krook, 2010; Bjarnegård, 2013; Kenny, 2013; Bjarnegård and Kenny, 2015, 2016). While gender quotas have generally incentivised parties to nominate women candidates, entrenched informal practices and norms undermine such formal rules by elevating the salience of 'homosocial capital' (less accessible to women) – a key resource – and conferring an otherising 'outsider' status to women (Bjarnegård, 2013; Kenny, 2013). With entrenched practices and norms that masculinise political power, men's political dominance often proves impervious to formal institutional change (Mackay, 2014). Women's recruitment is thus driven not only by the widespread use of gender quotas, but also by how things work on the ground. Recruitment is constrained by: socialisation processes that connote politics as a white masculine space while confining women to the private sphere; raced-gendered understandings of leadership and candidate viability; and informal practices such as recruitment approaches and local influence over candidate selection and support (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Norris, 1997; Lovenduski, 2005; Kittilson, 2006; Hinojosa, 2012; Bjarnegård and Kenny, 2015, 2016; Wylie, 2018).

### *Gender and political ambition*

Thwarted gender-equity rules and persistent exclusionary informal practices and norms are not lost on would-be women aspirants, who perceive their consequentially diminished access to resources and thus poor prospects for disrupting men's over-representation, with deleterious consequences for their political ambition. A large literature on gender and political ambition – heretofore dominated by the US case – has documented the explanatory power of gendered discrepancies in familial obligations (Fulton et al, 2006), self-perceived qualifications and confidence (Lawless and Fox, 2010), aversion to risk, conflict and power seeking (Schneider et al, 2016), and recruitment and party support (Fox and Lawless, 2010). That literature has also noted the limitations of the ambition framework for understanding women's decision to run (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu, 2013; Dittmar, 2015). Fulton et al (2006) posit that women are more 'strategic' than men in their decision to run because women more carefully weigh their expected resources, with the costs and prospects of candidacy and expected benefits of office being paramount for their decision. Women's political ambition and decision to run are contextually embedded. Women are generally neither socialised nor incentivised to be politically ambitious; as such, their decision to run tends to emerge not independently, but rather relationally. Carroll and Sanbonmatsu's (2013) relationally embedded model of candidate emergence illuminates interacting supply and demand explanations of ambition, emphasising how external encouragement and support (from parties, organisations and family) drive women's decision to run. That model is especially salient for understanding the political ambition of 'ordinary women', who are more resource-strapped than elite women and therefore more dependent on the support of their personal and political network (Crowder-Meyer, 2018).

The idea of relationally embedded candidate emergence yields several insights for comparative contexts. First, gendered socialisation processes and a resultant 'triple shift' implied by women's participation in politics means that their ambition (and decision to run) tends not to emerge independently. Candidate selection procedures and practices influence women's political ambition: women are more likely to contest office when the decision to run is externalised than in entrepreneurial climates where self-starters are the norm (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson, 2008; Hinojosa, 2012; Wylie, 2018). Second, women's political ambition and decision to run are shaped by their expected resources – conditioned not only by the electoral context, but also by the recruitment and support of their parties, organisations and families. As argued by Piscopo (2018: 2), 'women do not innately have less confidence and less ambition; instead, they respond rationally to actual and perceived constraints'. Women may be deterred by electoral contexts that have more intra-party competition and are thus more personalist, less collaborative and more expensive (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson, 2008; Wylie, 2018). Exclusionary informal norms and party practices, especially when persistent despite gender quotas, exacerbate those disincentives. For non-elite women in particular, the decision to run is fraught with risks and therefore not made without the encouragement and support of their family and political networks.

### *Intersectionality*

Pioneering literature on the gender gap in political ambition focused on the role of traditional gender socialisation, with minimal consideration of the ways in which

race interacts with gender to affect ambition (Lawless and Fox, 2010). Yet, insights from intersectional theorists generate expectations that women of colour will confront exclusionary societal and party tendencies that are compounded by their race/ethnicity (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000; hooks, 2000; Smooth, 2006; Greer, 2016; Mügge et al, 2018). When we fail to consider how gender intersects with race and other dimensions of identity, our analyses of the effects of gender on access to and the exercise of power often universalise the experiences of white women (Carneiro, 1999; Beckwith, 2015).

Race-based inequities exacerbate the obstacles faced by women, which may undermine the supply of non-white women candidates. Particularly in the candidate-centred context, where candidates are individually responsible for generating funds, raced-gendered disparities in wages and access to donors and informal networks can deter women of colour from running, potentially precluding their ambition. Moreover, expectations of demand-side bias from gatekeepers and/or the electorate can thwart the ambition and supply of women and minority candidates (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Holman and Schneider, 2018). US-based intersectional research on ‘candidate deterrence’ and emergence reveals a distinct incentive structure for women of colour (Greer, 2016; Shames, 2017; Holman and Schneider, 2018; Silva and Skulley, 2019). For women of colour, the costs of candidacy are higher and the rewards of office are lower; as a consequence, otherwise ambitious women of colour therefore decide to avoid electoral quests (Shames, 2017). As discussed by Greer (2016: 264): ‘Black women occupy a political space in a context still largely dominated by wealthy white males and, therefore, Black female candidate ambition is often trumped by a white candidate’s abilities to raise more significant amounts of capital and thereby eliminating competition before it even has time to germinate.’

Extant intersectional research suggests that women political aspirants of colour will not necessarily be doubly disadvantaged, with the gender gap in political ambition potentially diminished for African-American women due to their heightened sense of linked fate and leadership experience in the Black church (Moore, 2005; Brown and Gershon, 2016; Silva and Skulley, 2019). Moreover, parties may prefer minority women, who they might perceive as less threatening than minority men (Bejarano, 2013; Celis et al, 2014; Hughes, 2016). Given the dampening effects of anticipated demand-side obstacles on Black women’s ambition (Holman and Schneider, 2018), the inverse may be true, with such preferences potentially boosting minority women’s ambition due to the expected increase in resources concomitant with the expectation of party support.

### *The political power of women’s rage*

Even in the absence of party support, women’s outrage can constitute a critical emotive resource with profound political power (Lorde, 1981; Cooper, 2018; Traister, 2018). As articulated by Audre Lorde (1981, quoted in Cooper, 2018: 5), ‘Focused with precision, it [anger] can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change.’ Brittney Cooper (2018) centres the power of Black women’s rage – an explicitly political response to systemic injustices – in *Eloquent rage: A Black feminist discovers her superpower*. Black women, she writes, ‘know what it means to snatch dignity from the jaws of power and come out standing’ (Cooper, 2018: 4). The emergence of *outrage candidacies* at moments of political discontent conforms with the

literature on corruption and scandals (Barnes and Beaulieu, 2014; O'Brien, 2015; Funk et al, 2019; Valdin, 2019). Crises of representation can open opportunities for women, who, being more credible outsiders, represent a novelty of sorts. Guided by stereotypes about women as less corrupt and more honest, parties in such scenarios have strategically deployed women candidates to improve party image (Funk et al, 2019). Those circumstances often prove precarious, constituting a 'glass cliff' for women (Ryan et al, 2010). Yet, they represent an exogenous shock to the system that may enable women to leverage their outsider status to secure party support, with important implications for the political ambition of women.

Next, I explain how Brazil's institutional and socio-political realities construct and sustain raced-gendered inequities and fuel a gender gap in political ambition. I then chronicle the 2018 electoral context, which included both campaign finance reforms affording financial support to women and a series of raced-gendered injustices provoking women's emotive power, together yielding critical resources catalysing the candidacies of women, especially Black women.

## **The Brazilian electoral context**

### *Gendered implications of entrepreneurial elections*

Brazil's open-list proportional representation (OLPR) electoral rules are paired with large district magnitudes (ranging from eight to 70 in elections to the Chamber of Deputies). The result of that combination is a hyper-competitive and expensive candidate-centred electoral arena fraught by intra-party competition and personalist parties (Samuels, 2001; Shugart et al, 2005; Nicolau, 2006). In 2018, over 8,000 candidates ran for 513 seats in the Chamber of Deputies; São Paulo, the country's largest district (with 70 seats), had 1,502 candidates, including 97 from a single party. With the elector casting just one vote for that office, inter-party and intra-party competition are both fierce, and personalist politics is the norm.

When personalist politics dominates, recruitment networks tend to be weak or dominated by political entrepreneurs and their allies, with typically detrimental implications for women and marginalised groups (Wylie, 2018). In lieu of formal recruitment processes, wherein the decision to run is externalised, candidates in 'entrepreneurial' electoral settings such as Brazil's are expected to self-select (Samuels, 2008). The entrepreneurial context illuminates the salience of the gender gap in political ambition. While theoretically leaving the door open for women, traditional gender roles, gendered political institutions and resource inequities deter women from self-selecting. The anticipated boost to political ambition and the supply of women's candidacies from women's gains on the supply side – increased educational attainment and mobilisation by women's and other social movements – have been thwarted by structural barriers such as time constraints driven by the inequitable division of household labour and raced-gendered discrepancies in wages and access to employment and clientelist networks (Wylie, 2018). While public opinion data suggest that voters would support women candidates ((IBOPE and UN Women, 2018), other traditional demand-side explanations such as electoral institutions and parties compound the structural barriers outlined earlier.

Women are keenly aware that most Brazilian parties lack the capacity and/or will to support their candidacy, and often cite the lack of party support as a key factor behind

women's under-representation (DataSenado, 2014; Wylie, 2018). Brazilian electoral institutions have yielded a party system replete with weak and men-dominated party organisations, which tend not to offer capacity-building opportunities that could help to enhance candidate preparedness and viability (Wylie, 2018). Instead, parties support candidacies and campaigns through informal practices such as the *dobradinha*, where lower-race candidates informally partner with up-ballot candidates, appearing together in campaign materials and events. Such resources tend to be monopolised by insiders (Wylie, 2018). In practice, Brazil's entrepreneurial approach to candidate selection reinforces extant political and economic capital. Amid raced-gendered disparities in the requisite resources and skills, and party organisations that are generally both poorly equipped to support women and resistant to change, party elites remain disproportionately white men (Wylie, 2018).

Moreover, for two decades, most parties have failed to comply with either the letter or the spirit of Brazil's gender quota law (Araújo, 2013; Wylie and dos Santos, 2016; Sacchet, 2018). Rather than truly investing in women's candidacies, parties have failed to meet the quota target and/or advanced a kind of sacrificial lamb known in Brazil as *laranjas* – candidates in name only, with typically no campaign activity or party support, which are often used to meet the quota targets without disturbing the status quo (Wylie et al, 2019). If women perceive their candidacy to be in the name of quota compliance only, without party commitment to helping them attain the commensurate resources for a chance to win, then they will be unlikely to invest their limited time and money in a campaign. The sentiments of one veteran party staffer who rejected party requests to put her name on the ballot are illustrative; she refused to 'take bread off the [family] table' to be the party's *laranja* (Wylie, 2018). Together, those factors fabricate an interrelated web of barriers that convey to women that 'politics is a man's thing', to the detriment of women's political ambition. For Afro-Brazilian women, those barriers are compounded by the country's racial inequities.

### *Legacies of the myth of racial democracy*

The stark over-representation of white men in Brazil persists alongside the myth of racial democracy. Although more than 5 million enslaved Africans were trafficked to Brazil and racial inequities are robust, a pervasive myth of racial democracy has perpetuated the claim that the Brazilian variant of slavery was milder than its regional counterparts, and that any discrimination today is not racially motivated, but rather rooted in class (Eltis and Richardson, 2010; Hébrard, 2013). Proponents of the myth of racial democracy conspired to keep racial inequities in Brazil off the record, with socio-economic indicators only recently being disaggregated by race, and data disaggregated by both race and gender proving exceedingly rare (Carneiro, 1999; Caldwell, 2007; Reiter and Mitchell, 2010).

The implications are that women Afro-descendants and their experiences are 'profoundly invisible and neglected' in both state and academic accounts, which in seeing *either* women *or* Afro-descendants, in practice tend to see only white women and men Afro-descendants (Crenshaw, 1989; Romio, 2013: 155). It was not until 2014 – after concerted efforts by then Minister of the former Special Office for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPPIR) Luiza Bairros – that candidates for electoral office were asked to indicate their racial identity (Portal Brasil, 2014). Earlier studies

**Table 1:** Afro-descendants descriptive representation (1998–2018)

	1998	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018
Afro-descendant deputies (N total)	41	53	70	108	103	125
% Afro-descendants among deputies	8.0%	10.3%	13.6%	21.1%	20.1%	24.4%
Afro-descendant deputies (N women)	2	7	10	15	10	13
% women among Afro-descendant deputies	4.9%	13.2%	14.3%	13.9%	9.7%	10.4%
Women deputies (N total)	29	42	45	45	51	77
% Afro-descendants among women deputies	6.9%	16.7%	22.2%	33.3%	19.6%	16.9%

Note: Count of Afro-descendant deputies 1998–2010 includes substitutes (Johnson, 2015).

Sources: TSE (2019), Johnson (2015) and CFEMEA (2018).

examining candidates' racial backgrounds used candidate photos, which is problematic given the social construction of race and particularly unreliable in the Brazilian case (Johnson, 1998, 2015; Mitchell, 2010; SEPPIR, 2010).

Racial justice movements in Brazil have made headway in challenging the myth of racial democracy, securing racial quotas in state-subsidised higher education and in public service and a 2005 Racial Equality Law (Theodoro et al, 2008; Heringer and Johnson, 2015). While progress has been made, available data demonstrate that resources and political power remain profoundly raced and gendered in Brazil (Rios et al, 2017). Nearly half of Afro-descendant women earn the minimum wage or less each month, and the median monthly incomes for white and Afro-descendant women are just 57 and 41 per cent, respectively, of what white men earn. Educational attainment is lower for Afro-descendants relative to whites. Among both whites and Afro-descendants, data suggest that women are slightly more educated, though their educational attainment has not yielded proportionate economic or political gains (IPEA, 2015; IBGE and PNAD, 2016).

Politically, while white men remain over-represented, the descriptive representation of Afro-descendants has increased, jumping from 8 per cent to 24 per cent of elected federal deputies over the last decade (see Table 1). The rate of men's over-representation among Afro-descendant federal deputies has more or less paralleled the overall rate of men's over-representation; from 1998–2018, 10 per cent and 12 per cent of overall and Afro-descendant elected federal deputies, respectively, were women. Until 2014, there had been a greater share of Afro-descendants among women deputies relative to the overall rate of Afro-descendant representation. From 1998–2018, 21 per cent of women deputies were Afro-descendants, compared to just 16 per cent of deputies overall.

The fact that Afro-descendant women have achieved even limited space in formal politics despite the odds stacked against them is at once illustrative of their resilience<sup>4</sup> and the importance of applying an intersectional approach to understanding women's political ambition. Next, I investigate how raced-gendered resource inequities condition the emergence of political ambition. Although the data summarised here suggest that most non-white women face significant resource constraints, I argue that this precarity has combined with the historical leadership roles of Black women within Afro-descendant religions and communities (Capone, 2010) to thrust Afro-descendant women into politics. Deprived of the luxury of disassociating with formal politics and armed with demonstrated leadership prowess and alternative support networks, Black women have been stepping up.

## **Race, gender, resources and political ambition**

### *The triple shift*

The raced-gendered resource disparities discussed earlier generate expectations of a supply problem, with Afro-descendant women typically lacking many of the resources associated with political ambition and electoral success. Available indicators of education, health, income and occupation reveal some of the myriad advantages possessed by white people in Brazil, and the exacerbated precarities experienced by women of colour (IPEA, 2015; IBGE and PNAD, 2016). Such inequities have important implications for the constraints on women's time, which is a central

explanatory factor for women's under-representation. Women devote a median of 23.7 weekly hours to their unpaid 'second shift' of housekeeping and childcare (Hochschild and Machung, 1989; Barbosa, 2018). Nearly all (93 per cent) of women earning the minimum wage or less (which includes 49.7 per cent of Afro-descendant women) spend at least 25 weekly hours on their second shift (IPEA, 2015). Even though men work more paid weekly hours on average, in the end, the time that women spend on both unpaid household and paid labour exceeds the time spent by men (Fontoura and Araújo, 2016: 52). Such time constraints make party politics a 'triple shift' for women, and constitute a disincentive for their participation. Women politicians and aspirants speak explicitly of the *tripla jornada* (triple shift) and their difficulties reconciling their political involvement and work and household obligations (Wylie, 2018).

An observable implication of the salience of household responsibilities for women's political ambition is the gender gap in the marital status of candidates and elected deputies, as illustrated in Table 2. In 2018, 37 per cent and 43 per cent of Afro-descendant and white women candidates, respectively, were married, compared to 60 per cent and 63 per cent of Afro-descendant and white men candidates. Among elected deputies, 58 per cent of white women were married, but the rate for Afro-descendant women was just 36 per cent. For men, the rate of marriage jumps to 76 per cent and 73 per cent of Afro-descendant and white men, respectively. While not conclusive, these figures suggest that marriage may be associated with general benefits to candidate viability that do not extend to Afro-descendant women.<sup>5</sup> These patterns lend tentative support to the literature citing the influence of household responsibilities on women's political ambition and the relationally embedded decision model discussed earlier, together illustrating that time is a key resource constraint for women.

### *Campaign finance reform and the 2018 elections*

Money constitutes another resource constraint faced by women. The entrepreneurial character of Brazilian legislative elections amplifies the salience of individual resources as candidates must spend to differentiate themselves from the mass of candidates from their own and other parties. Until the 2015 banning of corporate contributions, the campaign funds effectively required for victory had been steadily increasing, reaching an average US\$600,000<sup>6</sup> among successful candidates in the 2014 election to the Chamber of Deputies. The 2018 elections offer the opportunity to evaluate the effects of campaign finance reforms, which entailed not only the absence of (declared) corporate contributions, but also a new US\$400 million Special Fund for Campaign Finance (FEFC), providing significant public funding to parties for financing candidates' campaigns and including a judicially mandated 30 per cent distribution to women's campaigns.

Table 3 displays the averages in campaign finance by race and gender in the 2014–18 elections to the Chamber of Deputies. In 2014, the average campaign finance for all elected federal deputies was over US\$615,000; that figure is 3.5 times the average for black women (those identifying as *preta*) winning election that year. Among all candidates, the average was just over US\$106,000, with the average for black women being less than US\$20,000 (for white men, the average was US\$171,000). Notably, gendered finance inequities found among candidates lose statistical significance for

**Table 2:** The role of race and gender in contesting and winning federal deputy elections, difference in means tests (2014–18)

	Women		Men	
	White	Afro-descendant	Afro-descendant	White
<b>ALL CANDIDATES</b>				
Vote share	0.3%	0.1%*	0.4%*	0.6%*
Elected	4.6%	1.2%*	5.5%*	12.3%*
College	64.9%	51.5%*	55.3%*	71.7%*
Feeder occupation	49.9%	41.2%*	53.3%*	64.4%*
Incumbent (2014 only)	2.4%	1.2%*	5.2%*	11.0%*
Married	42.9%	37.0%*	59.8%*	63.4%*
Campaign funds	US\$46,888	US\$19,381*	US\$45,246*	US\$115,361*
Left	27.4%	32.2%*	29.8%*	28.4%
Ideology	-0.002	-0.117*	-0.126	0.006*
N	2258	1769	3628	5490
<b>ELECTED</b>				
Vote share	3.5%	3.3%	3.6%	2.8%*
College	92.2%	95.5%	77.5%*	89.6%*
Feeder occupation	85.2%	81.8%	83.7%	85.3%
Incumbent (2014 only)	36.6%	60.0%	57.0%	55.3%
Married	58.3%	36.4%*	76.0%*	72.6%
Campaign funds	US\$443,329	US\$284,284	US\$318,153	US\$486,619*
Left	34.0%	63.6%*	33.0%*	25.8%*
Ideology	0.051	-0.342*	0.059*	0.163*
N	103	22	200	674

Note: \* One-tailed difference in means tests (between white and Afro-descendant women and men; and Afro-descendant women and white men) are statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

Source: Author elaboration of TSE (2019) data.

**Table 3:** Race, gender and campaign finance in federal deputy elections (2014–18)

Candidates	2014		2018	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>White</b>	US\$52,630	US\$171,455	US\$43,218	US\$71,418
As percentage of white men	31%	100%	61%	100%
<i>N</i>	733	2,105	1,147	2,687
<b>Pardo/a</b>	US\$14,984	US\$67,776	US\$22,940	US\$34,192
As percentage of white men	9%	40%	32%	48%
<i>N</i>	371	925	592	1,347
<b>Preto/a</b>	US\$19,238	US\$57,776	US\$17,805	US\$21,286
As percentage of white men	11%	34%	25%	30%
<i>N</i>	155	265	288	387
		<b>2014</b>		<b>2018</b>
<b>Elected</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
<b>White</b>	US\$614,352	US\$667,302	US\$332,029	US\$279,563
As percentage of white men	92%	100%	119%	100%
<i>N</i>	41	369	63	322
<b>Pardo/a</b>	US\$366,318	US\$417,822	US\$301,018	US\$220,226
As percentage of white men	55%	63%	108%	79%
<i>N</i>	7	74	9	95
<b>Preto/a</b>	US\$171,964	US\$548,818	US\$187,313	US\$173,739
As percentage of white men	26%	82%	67%	62%
<i>N</i>	3	19	4	17

Note: \* One-tailed difference in means tests (between men and women, by racial category, among all candidates and among elected deputies) are statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

Source: Author elaboration of TSE (2019) data.

elected officials. In 2018, raced-gendered disparities were somewhat diminished. The overall average for winning federal deputies dropped substantially for the first time on record – thanks largely to the 2015 banning of corporate contributions – to US\$270,000, 1.5 times the average for black women who won election. Among all candidates, the average was US\$48,000, with the average for black women being less than US\$18,000 (for white men, the average was US\$71,000). Among candidates and elected deputies, respectively, black women raised on average 11 per cent and 26 per cent of what white men did in 2014; in 2018, those disparities reduced, with black women candidates and deputies raising on average 25 per cent and 67 per cent of what white men raised.

These figures suggest that the 2018 elections were distinct, with a more (but still not) level playing field in terms of campaign financing. From 1994 to 2014, women candidates were significantly less likely than men to draw their funding from corporate donors, and were more reliant on party funding (Wylie, 2018). With corporate financing removed from the table and the prospect of party financing enhanced, raced-gendered inequities were partially alleviated.<sup>7</sup> I argue that campaign funding prospects are central to women's decision-making process when considering a run for office, and that the potential of more party funding may have lured women into the ring.

### *Provoking women candidacies in 2018*

The backdrop of the 2018 elections is significant. In 2016, then President Dilma Rousseff was impeached in a controversial process deemed by some as a 'parliamentary coup' fraught by a sexist process (Santos and Guarnieri, 2016). Vice-President Michel Temer then assumed office and appointed a cabinet of all white men. Throughout the impeachment process and aftermath, women played a leading role in mobilisations around the country (Albuquerque, 2016).

In March 2018, Marielle Franco, a Black, lesbian municipal councillor for the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL) from a Rio de Janeiro *favela*, advocate for marginalised populations, and vocal critic of police brutality, was assassinated, sparking widespread protests. The assassination of Marielle also compelled Black women into the electoral arena. Celebrated as the 'seeds of Marielle', several Black women candidates centred Marielle's image and name on their campaign materials, promising to carry on her agenda. Three Black women from Marielle's cabinet were elected with the PSOL to Rio's state assembly, and two Black women won a seat with the PSOL in the Chamber of Deputies in Rio and Minas Gerais (Antunes, 2018).

I contend that the injustices perpetrated on women, the broad mobilisation of women and the increased prospects of a less unlevel playing field due to campaign finance reforms changed the resources available to potential women aspirants in 2018. Those changes fundamentally altered women's decision-making calculus, deconstructing the socialised gender gap in political ambition. Particularly for Black women, who arguably most intimately experienced Marielle's assassination, the expected resources afforded by the opportunity structure of 2018 catalysed their candidacies. By threatening and provoking outrage among women, especially Black women, the series of raced-gendered injustices at once increased the cost of *not* running for office and yielded a potent form of emotive power that fuelled women's political ambition:

**Table 4:** Women's candidacies in federal Chamber of Deputies elections (2014–18), by race

	Election year	Women candidates	Women elected	Women success rate	Women–men success rate ratio
White	2014	1,244	41	3.3%	0.26
	2018	1,397	63	4.5%	0.45
Pardo/a	2014	741	7	0.9%	0.19
	2018	734	8	1.1%	0.19
Preto/a	2014	264	3	1.1%	0.26
	2018	358	5	1.4%	0.42

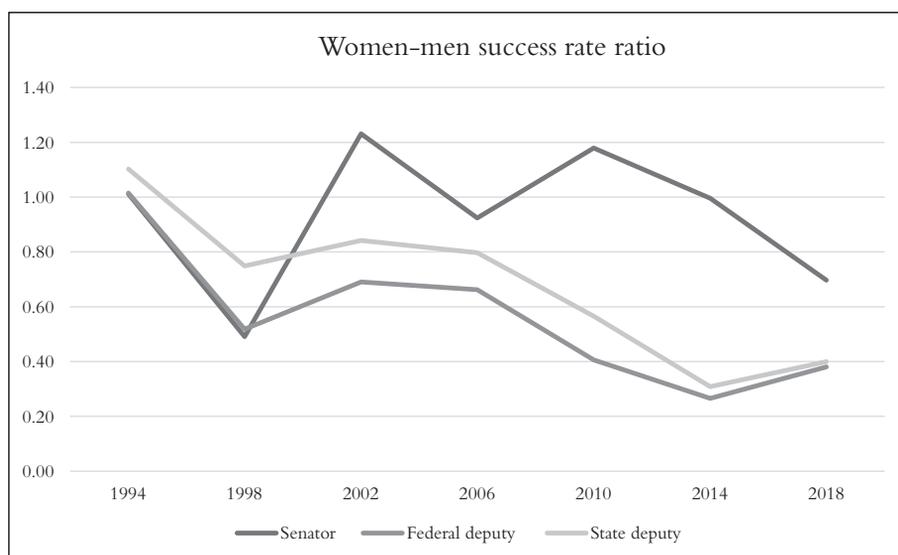
Sources: CFEMEA (2018).

Throughout history, Black women have not passively accepted their oppression. From the period of slavery to current times, they fight to guarantee their survival, social and political rights, and the quality of life of themselves, their families, and their community.... With this, they have achieved new positions, such as greater access to education, professional training, and public participation. (Oliveira et al, 1995: 15–16, quoted in Pereira, 2013: 4–5)

Women declaring their candidacies in the wake of a series of widely contested raced-gendered injustices illustrate the political power of women's rage (Lorde, 1981; Cooper, 2018; Traister, 2018).

The share of women (both overall and black women) among candidates and elected deputies did increase in 2018, yet it is difficult to disentangle the causal effects of raced-gendered threats from the FEFC and related factors shaping the 2018 elections. With public financing on the line, electoral officials showed heightened interest in regulating the party practice of running *laranja* candidates. That reduced impunity combined with the FEFC quota to incentivise parties to invest resources in women's candidacies. As demonstrated in Wylie et al (2019), 48.2 per cent of the women candidates in 2014 election to the Chamber of Deputies – when the gender quota was first enforced in earnest – were likely *laranjas* (winning less than 1 per cent of the minimum vote total won by an elected deputy in their state). In 2018, there were significantly fewer women candidates classifying as *laranjas* (34.6 per cent), and party contributions to women's candidacies increased. Indeed, as shown in Table 4 and Figure 1, the success rates for women – overall and disaggregated by racial identity – increased in the 2018 elections. The ratio of women's success rates relative to men's success rates also became more favourable in 2018. Therefore, while the overall rate of women candidacies remained the same from 2014 to 2018 (at 30 per

**Figure 1:** Women–men success rate ratios in legislative elections (1994–2018)



Sources: CFEMEA (2018) and TSE (2019).

cent), differences in campaign finance, *laranjas* and success rates suggest that women candidates in 2018 were distinct.

The analysis suggests that the 2018 context improved the supply of women candidates by availing financial and emotive resources to women, while also increasing the demand for women candidates. Aside from the wave of popular discontent generally conducive to candidates representing change, the mandated distribution of party funds to women incentivised parties to support women, creating a positive feedback loop between the supply of and demand for women candidates.

## Conclusions

Resources affect both the supply of and demand for women's candidacies. This is particularly the case in Brazil's entrepreneurial electoral climate wherein high-magnitude OLPR elections and inchoate parties incentivise expansive campaign budgets, and societal expectations construct party politics as a triple shift for women. This article's analysis of campaign contributions and success rates in the wake of the 2018 elections suggests that defraying campaign costs offers a potent mechanism for levelling the playing field, and reminds us that women's political ambition is shaped not only by their (self-)perceived capacities, but also by their 'relationally embedded' risk assessment, constrained in no small part by the masculinised ethos of party politics. Future studies should survey candidates and party leaders to permit a more direct measure of the motivations for candidate emergence and to assess the effects of the changing electoral landscape on party strategy.

The article illustrates the importance and analytical utility of an intersectional approach to studying political ambition. While applied specifically to the Brazilian case, the scope conditions of an explicitly intersectional consideration of how resources shape diverse women's political ambition are broad. Finally, the analysis points to the possibilities for circumnavigating intransigent party elites. The weakly institutionalised and men-dominated character of most Brazilian parties results in limited opportunities to exercise internal party leadership roles and participate in capacity-building programmes, while also reifying the self-selecting candidate, leaving intact a socialised gender gap in political ambition (Wylie, 2018). Although stronger, inclusive parties could help to rectify that gap by recruiting, training and supporting women candidates, 'incentivizing women requires more than asking them to run' (Dittmar, 2015: 761). Rather, recruitment efforts must be paired with financial support for women's candidacies if they are to benefit all women. When parties neglect to extend resources to women, campaign finance reforms with distributional mandates can help to incentivise more equity in the party allocation of funds and thus clear a key demand-side blockage: 'Those looking to boost women's representation must first account for the profoundly uneven playing fields created by political and electoral institutions, party organizations, and social structures' (Piscopo, 2018: 2). Afro-Brazilian women continue to confront an especially unlevel playing field, and financial inequities must be addressed to facilitate their political ascendance.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This varies by party, though most parties have between 43 per cent and 45 per cent women in their membership (TSE, 2019; Gregorio, 2018).
- <sup>2</sup> Following Brazilian academics, government sources and activists, I use the terms ‘Afro-descendant’ and ‘Afro-Brazilian’ as aggregated terms referring to people identifying as ‘preta/o’ (black) or ‘parda/o’ (mixed race). I use ‘Black’ to refer to people or organisations explicitly identifying as ‘preta/o’ or ‘negra’. The category ‘non-white’ includes Afro-descendants as well as indigenous people and those of Asian descent. As of the 2010 census, 47.7 per cent of the population identifies as ‘white’, 43.1 per cent as ‘parda’, 7.6 per cent as ‘preta’, 1.1 per cent as ‘amarela’ (of Asian descent) and 0.4 per cent as indigenous (IBGE, 2018).
- <sup>3</sup> However, there are important parallels between the two cases, namely, candidate-centred elections and high levels of racial inequality.
- <sup>4</sup> It is critical to remember that ‘resilience’ can be a ‘dangerous word’, with its celebration being ‘a perverse way of acknowledging the unreasonable demands placed upon people who already are struggling to make it’ (Cooper, 2018: 266–7).
- <sup>5</sup> Supplemental multivariate analyses of the probability of election show that marriage positively affects the electoral prospects of Afro-descendant men and white women but exercises a negative effect on Afro-descendant women’s chance of election.
- <sup>6</sup> Following Samuels (2001), all financial data are converted into US dollars, based on the exchange rate in the run-up to the election in question. The September 2014 exchange rate was 0.43 *reais* per US dollar; in September 2018, the rate was 0.24 *reais* per US dollar.
- <sup>7</sup> Even prior to the FEFC, parties received a sizable Party Fund allocation from the state, and as of the 2009 mini-reform (12.034/2009), they were required to spend 5 per cent of those funds promoting women’s participation. However, those spending targets have been inconsistently enforced, with minimal oversight over content, and were also applied to non-election years (Sá Pessoa and Merlo, 2018; Wylie, 2018).

## Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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