

AFRO-DESCENDANT WOMEN SOCIAL WELFARE BENEFICIARIES AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF CONSERVATIVE POLITICIANS IN BRAZIL AND THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract: This article examines Afro-descendant women social welfare beneficiaries' political perceptions of conservative-leaning politicians. Low-income Afro-descendant women are often not the focus in political opinion studies. This study focuses on this subset of the population. These women shed light on the political climate in both Brazil and the USA in 2018. In-depth interviews were conducted in the Brazilian city, Salvador and the American city, Milwaukee. These interviews reveal that low-income Afro-descendant women overwhelmingly shared negative opinions of Michel Temer and Donald Trump and these women tended to vote for the left-leaning candidate in presidential elections.

Keywords: Afro-Brazilian Women, African American Women, Social Welfare, Political Opinions, Extreme Right.

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MULHERES AFRODESCENDENTES BENEFICIÁRIAS DA PREVIDÊNCIA SOCIAL E SUAS PERCEPÇÕES ACERCA DOS POLÍTICOS CONSERVADORES NO BRASIL E NOS ESTADOS UNIDOS

Resumo: Este artigo examina as percepções políticas de mulheres afrodescendentes beneficiárias do bem-estar social sobre políticos de tendência conservadora. Mulheres afrodescendentes de baixa renda geralmente não são o foco nos estudos de opinião política. Este estudo enfoca esse subconjunto da população. Essas mulheres lançaram luz sobre o clima político no Brasil e nos EUA em 2018. Entrevistas em profundidade foram realizadas na cidade brasileira de Salvador e na cidade americana de Milwaukee. Essas entrevistas revelam que as mulheres afrodescendentes de baixa renda compartilhavam esmagadoramente opiniões negativas sobre Michel Temer e Donald Trump e essas mulheres tendiam a votar no candidato de esquerda nas eleições presidenciais.

Palavras-Chave: Mulheres afro-brasileiras, mulheres afro-americanas, opiniões políticas, extrema direita, previdência social

MUJERES AFRODESCENDIENTES BENEFICIARIAS DE BIENESTAR SOCIAL Y SUS PERCEPCIONES SOBRE LOS POLÍTICOS CONSERVADORES EN BRASIL Y ESTADOS UNIDOS

Resumen: Este artículo examina las percepciones políticas de las mujeres afrodescendientes beneficiarias del bienestar social sobre los políticos de tendencia conservadora. Las mujeres afrodescendientes de bajos ingresos a menudo no son el foco de los estudios de opinión política. Este estudio se centra en este subconjunto de la población. Estas mujeres arrojaron luz sobre el clima político tanto en Brasil como en Estados Unidos en 2018. Se realizaron entrevistas en profundidad en la ciudad brasileña de Salvador y en la ciudad estadounidense de Milwaukee. Estas entrevistas revelan que las mujeres afrodescendientes de bajos ingresos compartían abrumadoramente opiniones negativas de Michel Temer y Donald Trump y estas mujeres tendían a votar por el candidato de izquierda en las elecciones presidenciales.

Palabras Clave: mujeres afrobrasileñas, mujeres afroamericanas, beneficiarias del bienestar social, opiniones políticas, extrema derecha

“Look At my African-American over Here!”

(Presidential candidate Donald Trump at a campaign rally June 2016 in Redding, California).

“I went to a quilombo. The lightest African descendant there weighed seven arrobas. They do nothing. I don't think they are even suitable to procreate. More than 1 billion reais a year is spent on them... If I make it (to the presidency) there will be no money for NGOs. These bums will have to work. ...there will not be a centimeter demarcated for Indigenous and quilombola land”

(Congresso em Foco, Presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro at a speech in Rio de Janeiro in April 2017).

Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro are conservative presidents from right-leaning political parties. Both leaders have made racist and sexist public remarks. While Bolsonaro has made more outlandish and homophobic comments than Trump, there is no shortage of their offensive comments. Their incendiary discourse has empowered extreme right

citizens. On January 6, 2021, Trump supporters and white supremacists led an insurrection at the Capitol in Washington, DC. This insurrection is an example of the impact of their discourse. Trump encouraged white supremacists and conservatives to take back “their country.” Anti-black statements are disturbing but it is also important to remember the policies they have implemented and the harm these policies have on African-descended people. Both leaders denied the deadly effect of Covid-19. Bolsonaro said it was a little flu and Trump said it would go away with warm weather. Currently, in the United States over 600,000 people have died due to Covid-related complications and over 470,000 people in Brazil have died. In both countries, Afro-descendants are more likely to die of Covid-19 than whites. Trump generally does not receive a lot of support from Black Americans. Trump made overtures to Black Americans in 2020 such as his “Platinum Plan” to attract their support and votes despite his inflammatory rhetoric. Some of the funding the program touted as funding for Blacks, is funding that is directed to businesses in general and are not earmarked as funding for Blacks. In addition, the plan also claimed that Historically Black Colleges and Universities could have access to funding for religiously based universities, but these schools have always received this funding, so this is not a new proposal. Although 13% of African American men voted for Trump in 2016 and 12% voted for him in 2020, Black Americans overwhelmingly supported the Democratic party. Although over a majority of Afro-Brazilians voted for Bolsonaro likely due to his “tough on crime” stance and Evangelical support, in late January 2021, Black activists such as the more than 180 Black movement groups who are members of the Black Coalition for Rights are calling for his impeachment due to his negligence of the Covid-19 crisis. They also called for his impeachment in 2020 and 2021.

This article examines some of the most vulnerable voters in Brazil and the USA countries; Afro-descendant women social welfare beneficiaries. This article is interested in what we can learn about the political opinions of poor Black women during the Michel Temer and Trump era, when this research took place. Are these women critical of conservative leaders due to their intersectional identities as low-income Afro-descendant women? What role does education play when critiquing political leaders and understanding their support of social policies? My expectation is that due to the intersection of race, class, and gender, respondents will be more likely to support leftist political parties and political candidates. This article relies on 80 in-depth interviews conducted in Salvador, Bahia (Brazil) which is 80% Afro-Brazilian and Milwaukee, WI (USA) which is 40% Afro-descendant.

History of political context

Trump has a long history of anti-blackness dating to his business dealings and public accusations of racism. He was known for his discriminatory practices against Black Americans preventing them from being able to rent from some of his properties. He was also infamously known for taking out an advertisement in four New York newspapers including the New York Times, The Daily News, The New York Post and New York Newsday advocating for the punishment of the Central Park Five, a group of Black and Latino boys who were accused of raping a white woman in New York. They were later found innocent and won their lawsuit. Trump continued his racist behavior during his campaign and while in office. During his campaign he used racial cues that drew upon stereotypes to prime his

conservative base. Racial priming allows people to use words that draw on ideas that prime racial attitudes such as stereotypes (TESLER 2017; VALENTINO, HUTCHINGS, WHITE 2002). In a speech, he told police officers they should not not be nice and hold a person's head when they are putting them into a police car. During his campaign and while in office, he often referred to Chicago, a city that is 30% black and 29% Latino, as a high crime city. He advocated that national troops come into the city to control crime. When asked during the 2020 presidential debate if he would condemn whites supremacist groups, he told them to "Stand Back and Stand By," rather than condemn these hate groups".

Nearly 50% of Afro-Brazilians supported Bolsonaro in his 2018 presidential campaign. He is sometimes referred to as the "Trump of the Tropics" and has made racist, misogynist, and homophobic comments. During his campaign, he had a very tough on crime stance and often posed for pictures pretending his hand was a gun. He advocated that citizen purchase guns and he repeated the Brazilian aphorism that "a good thief is a dead thief". His tough on crime stance likely appealed to low-income people who are concerned with crime in their communities. In addition, Evangelicals supported Bolsonaro. However, as Jaime Alves has shown, in some low-income communities there is more trust in those engaging in crime such as drug dealers and gang members than trust in military police (ALVES 2018). For this reason, not all low-income people supported a tough on crime stance. Low-income people are a vulnerable population and within that vulnerable population, are women and women receiving social assistance. Like Cathy Cohen's (1999) idea of secondary marginalization in which a group is marginalized within a marginalized group, African-descended women receiving social welfare benefits, can be viewed as experiencing secondary marginalization as they are sometimes marginalized within their communities as some people believe they are undeserving of *Bolsa Família*. In both Brazil and the USA, low-income Afro-descended women are often blamed by those in the general population, for their circumstances and are stereotyped as undeserving and lazy. This article considers this group as a possible site of resistance to political ideology and discourse by focusing on their political evaluations of politicians.

Afro-Descendant Women Voters as "Saviors" of Nations

In both the USA and Brazil, the media disseminates the idea that Black women voters have the potential to influence elections (OLIVEIRA 2018, SOLIS 2017). An example is the headline, "*Nós, Mulheres Negras, Vamos Decidir essa Eleição, Vocês Precisam Nos Convencer*" or "*We, Black Women Will Decide this Election, You All Need to Convince Us*," published in the Intercept in 2018. Another example is Newswwek's 2017 headline In 2017, "Doug Jones Won Because of Black Women Trying to 'Save America' ". Doug Jones ran for Alabama state senate and won, in large part due to Black women, as 98% of them voted for him. In both countries, Afro-descendant women are viewed as a powerful voting bloc that can influence elections. In the 2014 presidential election, Workers Party president Dilma Rousseff won a second term, although she was removed from office in 2016. Rousseff received remarkable support from Afro-Brazilians as she was affiliated with the Worker's Party (PT). Brazil was making a turn to the right with the bogus corruption charge against Dilma Rousseff who was not found guilty of being involved in *Operation Car Wash*, a corruption scheme both left-leaning and right-leaning politicians were involved in as they

received kickbacks in exchange for financial favors. Michel Temer, the right-leaning Vice-President took over as president after Rousseff's removal. Activists and scholars who spoke out against her removal from office calling it a coup, were threatened and there was a tightening of academic freedom.

In the USA, there was also a turn to the right with the 2016 election of Donald Trump. Birtherism, the idea that President Barack Obama was not American and the creation of the Tea Party, a conservative and racist organization sprang up when he ran for and held office. He was in office for two terms from 2008-2016. The backlash of eight years of America having its first Black president, was the rise of Trump and a radical right politics. Based on intended votes, the Brazilian Intelligence of IBOPE reported that 47% of Afro-Brazilians intended to vote for Bolsonaro compared to 40% for Haddad (COSTA, 2018). The Workers Party candidate Fernando Haddad, at the time, was popular among the poor, those with less education, and those living in the northeast (COSTA, 2018). Identities such as northeastern, women, the poor are sometimes analyzed as separate identities. However, the reality is that identities are intersectional as race, class, gender, and religion intersect. It is critical that researchers examine sub-groups to better understand how these intersections have an impact on political opinions of candidates.

Literature on Social Welfare Beneficiaries, Vote Choice, and Afro-descendant Voters

Literature on the political opinions and the vote choice of Afro-descendant social welfare beneficiaries is limited, as much of the work focuses on health and education outcomes. Scholarship on social welfare beneficiaries find that there is income inequality among *Bolsa Família* beneficiaries based on race, whereas white Brazilian beneficiaries have higher incomes than Afro-Brazilian beneficiaries (DE MICHELI, 2018). Mariano and Carlotto (2013) find that Black women who receive *Bolsa Família* are empowered as some of them become more involved in their communities and take training classes. Mitchell-Walthour finds that in 2012, Black women in *Bolsa Família* households had the highest percentage of dissatisfaction of Dilma Rousseff than any other racial or gender grouping. However, in 2014, they were the least critical of her. In the USA, Ange-Marie Hancock found that media discourse, including racist and sexist stereotypes of women receiving social welfare had an impact on support for social welfare policy. Beyond these findings, the scholarship on Afrodescendant women social welfare beneficiaries as voters, in Brazil and the USA is extremely limited. In this overview, there is a discussion of two key topics to give background on Afro-descendant social welfare beneficiaries' political opinions. First, there is a discussion of social welfare beneficiaries and voting and second there is a discussion of findings of Afrodescendant political support for leftist political parties and candidates.

a) *Social Welfare Beneficiaries and Voting*

In scholarly literature, there is a contentious debate about whether politicians receive voter support based on their support of the *Bolsa Família* program and whether *Bolsa Família* empowers or disempowers recipients. Layton (2020) finds that people who

stigmatize CCT beneficiaries through negative stereotypes are less supportive of the program. Scholars such as Sugiyami and Hunter (2013) have shown that beneficiaries are empowered in that they take on the responsibility of ensuring their children have regular medical checkups and attend school. Scholars such as Cesar Zucco Jr. and Timothy Power (2013) find a relationship between the program and voter support for Lula. On the other hand, scholars argue there is little evidence that *Bolsa Família* is a form of clientelism. Clientelism is the idea that politicians will provide goods or services including food stuffs or neighborhood improvements to their voter base, their clients, in promise for their support. Historically, clientelism characterized politics throughout Latin America including Brazil. However, scholars of Brazilian politics have argued that these traditional forms of clientelism play less of a role in contemporary politics. Simone Bohn (2013) argues against the idea of viewing Lula's *Bolsa Família* beneficiary base as clients. Natasha Sugiyama and Wendy Hunter (2013) do not find evidence of clientelism and argue there is less clientelism in Brazil today than in the past. Brian Fried also finds evidence that clientelism is in decline (FRIED 2012). Diego Corrêa (2015) finds that in Lula's 2006 presidential election, wealthy voters were critical of the use of public resources to support social policies, so they left the PT party for the opposition party. This migration, he argues, changed the socioeconomic composition of Lula's voter base. This change in his base led to a different voter base than his 2002 presidential election, which explains why it appears that more *Bolsa Família* recipients supported him.

In the American case, some scholars believe that some social welfare programs such as programs for Veterans, increase civic participation (Mettler 2005) while other social welfare programs simply create dependence (Mead 1986) and political disengagement (BRADY, VERBA, SCHOLZMAN 1995). Swartz *et al.* (2009) find that young social welfare beneficiaries, those that receive more stigmatized social welfare benefits such as Aid For Dependent Children (AFDC) or SNAP, are less likely to vote and have lower political efficacy scores than non-recipients. They also found that those receiving AFDC and SNAP compared to those receiving less stigmatized types of government assistance, are less likely to vote. Although they controlled for race, they do not discuss race in their findings even when it is statistically significant in some of their models. In both the Brazilian and American cases, there is debate over whether social welfare programs empower or disempower beneficiaries. In Brazil, voting is mandatory, so voter participation has been studied in terms of voting for left-leaning candidates that support the program. Some argue that left-leaning politicians receive more votes with larger populations of *Bolsa Família* beneficiaries while others find little evidence of clientelist forms of voting. Further, there is evidence that Black Brazilian women beneficiaries were more critical of Rousseff until Rousseff was publicly criticized by the media and citizens. In the USA, scholars find that stigmatization of social welfare leads to disempowerment of beneficiaries and a lesser likelihood to vote than non-beneficiaries.

b) Afro-descendants and Voting

Contemporary research on voting demonstrates that *pretos* politically behave differently than *pardos*. Mitchell (2010) finds that Afro-Brazilians who identify as black (*negro* or *preto*) are more likely to vote for black (*negro*) politicians than those identifying

in non-*preto/negro* categories. Negro is a racial term that includes black and brown Brazilians. Relying on an experimental design, Aguilar *et al.* (2015) conclude there is racial voting in Brazil when considering the number of candidates on a ballot. When ballots are short, whites and *pardos* show no preference for candidates of the same color. However, when there is a long ballot, whites and *pardos* show a preference for candidates of the same color. Self-identifying *pretos* (blacks) show a preference for black candidates regardless of the number of candidates on the ballot. In the 2006, 2010, and 2014, Brazilian presidential elections, Afro-Brazilians tended to vote for the Worker's Party (PT) presidential candidate. Yet, as mentioned earlier, in 2018, Afro-Brazilians also strongly supported Bolsonaro, an extreme right president. However, in predominantly Afro-Brazilian regions such as the Northeast, Afro-Brazilians overwhelmingly voted for the PT candidate, Fernando Haddad.

In the United States, Black Americans overwhelmingly support the left-leaning Democratic party. They supported the Republican party until the 1930s when many switched to the Democratic party because the Republican party no longer responded to their needs. Since the realignment of political parties, Blacks overwhelmingly support Democratic candidates. In current presidential elections, Black Americans overwhelmingly vote for the Democratic president. CNN's (2020) exit poll, found that 87% of Black Americans voted for President Joe Biden. In 2016, 91% of Black Americans voted for Hillary Clinton (Pew Research Center 2018). In the 2004 election, 88% of Blacks voted for John Kerry. In 2008, 95% of Black Americans voted for Barack Obama and Black women had the highest level of turnout than all groups as 68.8% of Black women voted (PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2009). Democratic candidates tend to support social programs and even when Blacks do not benefit from such programs, they support these programs believing these programs can benefit blacks as a whole (DAWSON 1994). In general, Afro-descendants in the USA support left-leaning politicians while more than a majority of Afro-descendants in Brazil supported left-leaning presidential candidates during the PT era from 2002-2016. However, Brazil has a younger democracy and Afro-Brazilians' political affiliations are more diverse than Black Americans because there are more than 30 political parties in Brazil.

Given the overwhelming support of Black women to the democratic party, the expectation is that Black women social welfare beneficiaries in the USA will support left-leaning candidates. In the Brazil case, the expectation is that Afro-descendant women social welfare beneficiaries will be supportive of left-leaning candidates because of the intersection of race, class, and gender. They may find it more beneficial to vote out of personal economic interests and may be turned off by political rhetoric directed at the interests of wealthy rather than low-income people.

Methodology

This research is based on 80 in-depth interviews with Afro-descendant women from the cities Salvador and Milwaukee who receive social welfare benefits. Some interviews were nearly 30 minutes while others were nearly one hour. Both SNAP and WIC are social welfare programs that aid low-income people to buy food. SNAP is available as a debit card recipients can use for approved food items. *Bolsa Família* benefits reach beneficiaries as a debit card they can use to purchase household goods. In large part, *Bolsa Família* is used

to buy food. These are convenience samples as the author works in Milwaukee and has conducted research in Salvador. Milwaukee is a Midwestern city with a population of over 590,000 people; 40% of whom are Black. Salvador has 2.9 million people and is nearly 80% Afro-Brazilian. Brazilian research assistants were trained in interview methods and the author accompanied them to some interviews. Interviewers in the United States were also trained, and the author also conducted some of these interviews. In Milwaukee, interviewers recruited participants at the YMCA, which offers several services from job training to allowing women to use phones. In Salvador, participants were recruited at a union office which offers services to women. In Milwaukee, potential participants were told the study was with African American women receiving SNAP or WIC. In Brazil, participants were told the study was with Afro-descendant women and an open-ended question on race or color was asked at the end of the interview so the interviewer did not choose the participants race or color. Rather, those that identified as Afro descendant determined their participation.

Demographics of Sample

In this section we report on age, racial identification, education, income, and religious affiliation. In the interview, participants were asked their race in the USA and their race/color in Brazil in an open-ended question. Given that conservative politicians reach out to conservative religious people, we consider the religious affiliations of participants.

a) Age

The average age of *Bolsa Família* participants in Salvador is 38.5. In Milwaukee, the average age was 28.3. In Salvador, the youngest participant was 20 and the oldest 63. The age range in Milwaukee was from 20 to 46 years old.

b) Racial Identification

In Milwaukee, 34% of the sample identified as African American, 37% identified as Black, African American, and 5% identified as Black. The other 19% identified as bi-racial, multiracial, Cuban, Black-Creole, and other categories (Table 1). In Salvador, 55% of the sample identified as *Negra* which is an inclusive category much like the term African American in the United States. Twenty-six percent of the sample identified as *Parda* or brown which denotes racial mixture, and 10% identified as *Preta* (Black). The remaining identified as *Morena* and *Branca*. In Milwaukee, the most popular racial identification among social welfare beneficiaries was Black followed by African American. In Salvador the most popular identification was *Negra*. However, the Brown or racially mixed category was the second most popular category. Most Afro-descendants in Salvador identify as *Negra* and *Parda*. Interestingly, in Milwaukee, nearly 1/5th identified in multiracial and biracial categories.

Table 1 Open-ended racial identification (%) and City

	Salvador (%)		Milwaukee (%)
Negra	55	African American	34
Preta	26	Black	5
Parda	5	Black, African American	37
Morena	3	African American (multiracial ancestry)	3
Branca	11	Biracial (African American & white)	3
Total	100	Black, white, German, Puerto Rican	3
		Cuban	3
		Black, Creole	3
		African American & Cuban	3
		African American, Native American, Hindu	3
		Other	3
		Total	100

Source: Author's In-depth Interviews in Salvador and Milwaukee (2018)

When considering racial identity in Brazil and the USA, the surprising finding is that more identities were elicited from Afro-descendant women in the USA than in Brazil. According to the responses in Milwaukee, identity is related to parentage, heritage, race, religion, nationality, and ethnicity. In Milwaukee, some women claimed identities as African American and Cuban, Cuban, and one mentioned, having a Dominican parent. Some of the other categories mentioned were Afro-American, Indigenous Black, and heritages such as white and Native American were categorized as multiracial or biracial. Some respondents viewed Black and African American as interchangeable calling themselves both. This practice was prevalent in Milwaukee.

In Salvador, Afro-descendant women identify as *morena*, *morena clara*, *branca*, *pardo*, *Negra* and *preta*. Fifty-five percent of participants identified as *negra* which is an inclusive term for Afro-descendants (Table 1). It is also a politicized term as it combines *pretos* and *pardos*. The second most popular category was *preta* which is the census category for Black. Twenty-six percent of the sample categorized themselves as *preta*. A total of eight percent identified in racially ambiguous categories such as *parda* and *morena*. Among these Afro-descendant *Bolsa Família* participants, 81% identify as *negra* or *preta*.

c) Education

The Salvador sample has lower levels of education than the Milwaukee sample. Seventy-seven percent of the *Bolsa Família* beneficiary participants have less than a high school level of education compared to 14% of the Milwaukee sample (Table 2). Only 23

percent of the *Bolsa Família* participants have a high school level of education which is the highest education level of those in the sample. Some low-income families need family members to contribute to the household income, so these family members do not have the opportunity to attend school. The fact that such a high percentage of Afro-descendant women receiving *Bolsa Família*, have lower levels of education, demonstrates how low-income Afro-Brazilian social welfare beneficiaries' lives are shaped by the intersection of race, class, and gender. The Milwaukee sample points to the fact that in the United States, Blacks receive less return on their investment in education (DARITY Jr., APAD 2018). For example, Blacks with a college degree are more likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts. The fact that 32% of the Milwaukee sample has a college degree or are in college, demonstrates the harsh American reality, that Black women receive even less return on their investment in college so that they still need state assistance for basic needs such as food. It is not simply racial identity that determines life chances but the intersection of race, class, gender, and color. Mitchell-Walthour and Barros (2021) find that in their study social welfare beneficiaries tended to have darker skin tones.

Table 2: Education of Afro-descendant women social welfare beneficiaries

	Salvador	Milwaukee
Less than High School	77	14
High School	23	54
College	0	32
Total	100%	100%

Source: Author's In-depth Interviews in Salvador and Milwaukee (2018)

d) Total Monthly Family Income Excluding Bolsa Família or SNAP

In the Brazilian sample one-quarter of participants have no family income which would be considered extremely low income, while 18% of participants have no monthly family income in Milwaukee (Table 3). In Wisconsin, a family of 3 lives in poverty if they have a monthly salary of \$1,810 and a family of 4 lives in poverty if they have a monthly salary of \$2,183.33. In the Milwaukee sample, most of the women in the sample have multiple children, thus sample participants overwhelmingly live-in poverty. Thirty-nine percent of participants in Salvador live in a household with a family income less than one minimum salary. Like the American sample, most of the Brazilian sample lives in poverty.

Table 3: Monthly Income of Afro-descendant women social welfare beneficiaries

	Salvador		Milwaukee
\$0	25	\$0	18
Less than 1 minimum salary (\$261.37 USD)	39	Up to \$1000USD	33
1 minimum salary (\$261.37 USD)	28	\$1000+ to \$2000 USD	36
Up to 2 minimum salaries (\$522.74)	8	\$2000 USD+	13
Total	100%	Total	100%

Source: Author's In-depth Interviews in Salvador and Milwaukee (2018)

e) Religion of Afro-descendant women social welfare beneficiaries

In both countries, most Afro-descendant women social welfare beneficiaries claim a religious affiliation. Eighty-two percent of women in Salvador and 77% of women in Milwaukee claim a religious affiliation (Table 4). According to a 2013, Pew Research Center survey, 79% of African Americans identified as Christian (PEW RESEARCH CENTER RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE). Of the religious affiliations they claimed, in both countries, most women are Baptist. John Burdick (1999) finds that in some Pentecostal churches in Brazil, Afro-Brazilian women were empowered, and religion did not hinder them from embracing a black identity. In this case, religion was not counter to Black identity.

Table 4: Religious Affiliation of Afro-descendant women social welfare beneficiaries

	Salvador (%) N=34*	Milwaukee (%) N=35*
Baptist	23	37
Catholic	29	
Evangelical	12	
Universal	6	
International Church of Grace	3	

Baptist, Catholic	3	
Pentecostal	3	
Christian	3	23
Lutheran		6
Muslim		6
Spiritual		2.5
Church of God in Christ		2.5
No religion	18	23
Total	100%	100%

*Excluded: Not sure, no response, question not asked

Source: Author's in-depth Interviews in Salvador and Milwaukee (2018)

Political Knowledge of Social Welfare Beneficiaries in Salvador and Milwaukee

Before examining beneficiaries' opinions, it was examined the political knowledge as measured by the ability to cite at least one political party. While voting is mandatory in Brazil, it is not in the United States. In general, in the United States, Americans with higher levels of education compared to those with lower levels of education, are more likely to vote (BRADY, VERBA, SCHOLZMAN, 1995) and to be politically engaged (GALSTON 2001 and NIE, JUNN, AND STEHLIK-BARRY, 1996).

Table 5: Afro-descendant women beneficiaries' ability to name a political party

Name a Political Party	Milwaukee (N=37)	Salvador (N=37)
Named at least one political party	46	54
Could not name a political party	35	22
Named a politician	19	24
Total	100%	100%

Source: Author's in-depth Interviews in Salvador and Milwaukee (2018)

In Salvador, 54% of Afro-descendant women social welfare beneficiaries could name at least one political party, while 46% of Afro-descendant women in Milwaukee could name at least one political party. In Milwaukee, 35% of beneficiaries could not name a political party, while only 22% of women in Salvador could not. The lower percentage in Brazil is no surprise given that given that voting is mandatory. Nearly 20% of women in Milwaukee named a politician rather than a political party. Even more surprising, is that over 1/3rd of Afro-descendant women in the USA, could not name a political party compared to a little more than 1/5th of Afro-descendant low-income women in Salvador. While personalism characterized politics in Brazil, especially conservative politicians (MAINWARING, 1988), given that nearly 20% of women recalled politicians over their political parties, highlights that for the women in the USA sample, personalism is an important factor in politics. Considering those who could not name a political party and those who named a politician rather than a political party, 54% or more than a majority of Black social welfare beneficiaries in Milwaukee have a low level of political knowledge in terms of the ability to name a political party. This sum is 46% which is less than a majority of participants in Salvador. These findings highlight that social welfare beneficiaries in Milwaukee have less political knowledge than similarly situated women in Salvador.

Were Poor Black Women Saviors of the Nation? Vote Choice in the 2014 and 2016 Presidential Elections?

Although political knowledge may be low, most women in these samples said they voted in presidential elections. The expectation is that Afro-descendant women social welfare beneficiaries will support the left-leaning candidate, not simply due to receiving social welfare benefits. Rather, they will make evaluations of candidates based on their personal experiences, which are based on the intersection of race, class, and gender. The intersectional identity of Afro-descendant women social welfare beneficiaries may shape their life experiences and political opinions.

In the USA sample, 29% of low-income Afro-descendant women did not vote, whereas only 3% of women did not vote in Brazil where voting is mandatory. In Salvador, 91% of the sample voted for Dilma Rousseff and in the United States, 68% of the sample voted for Hillary Clinton. Women in Milwaukee overwhelmingly supported the left-leaning candidate. The 2016 American presidential election was contentious as Trump publicly displayed misogynistic and sexist rhetoric about women and openly intimidated Clinton in one of their debates on live television. In the Brazilian case, the financial crisis made the Brazilian presidential election contentious as there were rising costs as Brazil prepared to host the 2016 Olympics and hosted the World Cup in 2014. Yet, results show that one of the most economically vulnerable subsets of the population overwhelmingly supported President Dilma Rousseff. In fact, in this sample, 91% of Afro-descendant social welfare beneficiaries voted for Rousseff (Table 6).

Table 6: Afro-descendant social welfare beneficiaries Voting Patterns in presidential elections

Voted in the 2016 (USA) or 2014 (Brazil) Presidential Election		
	Milwaukee (N=36)*	Salvador (N=33)*
Hillary Clinton	67	
Did not vote	31	3
Dilma Rousseff		91
Aecio Neves		3
Other	2	3
Total	100%	100%

*Excluded Do not know, No answer

Poor Black Women’s Dissatisfaction with Conservative Politicians

Given that we have seen that social welfare beneficiaries in Milwaukee have lower levels of political education but still supported left-leaning presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, and that beneficiaries in Salvador had more political knowledge than those in Milwaukee and overwhelmingly supported leftist president Dilma Rousseff, we expect these women to not support conservative politicians. Participants were asked what they thought of Michel Temer. He was still the president in 2018 when interviews were conducted. We asked the participants in the United States what they thought of Trump who was also in office in 2018.

Attitudes about both conservative presidents tended to be negative. In Milwaukee, 89% of participants made negative opinions about Trump while 91% of the Brazilian sample made negative comments about Temer (Table 7). Some of the Brazilian women social welfare beneficiaries discussed their dislike of Temer in terms of his non-support of *Bolsa Família* or non-support of low income and working people. Like Afro-descendant Brazilian social welfare beneficiaries, most of the American sample discussed their dislike of Trump based on class issues as they mentioned that Trump was only interested in helping rich people. They also mentioned his aggressive personality. Temer was not elected to office as he replaced Rousseff after she was removed from office. For this reason, participants often drew on their perceptions of him as he made policy changes while in office. The American sample is different from the Brazilian sample in that nearly 20% of those responding, characterized Trump as racist. None of the Brazilian participants mentioned racism. An example is a 46-year-old dark skinned woman in Milwaukee who describes herself as “Black, African American” who is a college graduate. She stated, “To be honest, I think he’s racist. He’s a liar, and I just think he’s unfair not just to our people, to all people.” A 25-year-old light skinned bi-racial woman who describes herself as African American and white with some college education, stated “I hate him... I just feel like he’s a racist. He already had

money, so I feel like he's trying to take from the poor to make the rich richer. That's one of the reason[s] I didn't vote."

Brazilian women participants often used strong language to describe their opinion that Temer was bad for the country. They said he was destroying the country and described him as a thief, corrupt, and horrible. A 43-year-old medium complexion self-identified Negra woman stated, "I think he is horrible. The truth is that he has to leave [office]. I prefer Lula. Everyone prefers Lula. [Temer] is destroying Brazil. He is not doing the things he should do." A 40-year-old dark skinned woman who describes herself as *preta* and a *negona*, stated "Out Temer! Thief! [He is] corrupt... He wants the poor to stay poor and the rich to stay rich". These negative feelings are likely due to the political climate in which the PT was being attacked but many PT supporters still had strong feelings of support for former president Lula. In addition, although Temer was Rousseff's VP, this was only due to a political alliance necessary to get needed voter support. For this reason, along with his economically conservative policy actions, although 91% of these women voted for Rousseff, 89% have negative opinions of Temer (Table 7).

Table 7: Opinion of Donald Trump (USA) or 2014 Michel Temer (Brazil)

	Milwaukee (N=35)*	Salvador (N=35)*
Negative	89	91
Positive	2	3
Neutral	9	6
Total	100%	100%

*Excluded Don't know, No answer

Religious affiliation did not lead to support of conservative politicians. In the Milwaukee sample, 61% of those with negative opinions claimed a religious affiliation, while 83% of those in the Brazilian sample claimed a religious affiliation. In the USA, although Black Americans can have socially conservative attitudes, they tend to be politically progressive. Historically Black churches have promoted progressive agendas. On the other hand, for white Evangelicals, especially white Christian nationalists in the USA, religion can lead to support of conservative political agendas (WHITEHEAD, PERRY, BAKER, 2018). For these women, who are at the margins of society and who are responsible for feeding and caring for their children, religion did not lead to an embrace of more politically conservative presidents.

Conclusion

The results of this research serve as an interesting precursor to the election of Bolsonaro in 2018 and to the 2020 presidential election in the USA, where Joe Biden won

the presidency in a contentious race against Trump. In the predominantly Afro-Brazilian Northeast, where the city Salvador is located, the PT candidate Fernando Haddad overwhelmingly received support. This research demonstrates that Afro-Brazilian social welfare beneficiaries were not only interested in a candidate that supported social welfare programs, but they were critical of Temer, a leader they characterized, as someone who wanted to destroy the country. It is possible, these same voters believed Bolsonaro was not interested in improving the life chances of low-income Brazilians and perhaps they believed he was not interested in bettering the country. In the American case, like Black Americans in general, Black American social welfare beneficiaries did not vote for Trump and while most discussed their dislike in terms of his investment in wealthy people rather than everyday people, they also mentioned his aggressive nature and characterized him as racist. The contribution of this comparative study is that it highlights how the intersectional position of Afro-descendant women with low or no incomes may impact their evaluations of conservative politicians. In both countries they are highly religious but religious affiliation does not work in favor of conservative politicians. In the American context, this mirrors the general population of Black Americans who have high levels of religious affiliation but are progressive. Furthermore, in the Brazilian context, class is more readily mentioned when discussing their attitudes of the president and racism is never mentioned. Although class also trumps race when mentioning opinions of the president in the USA, nearly 20% of those with negative opinions mention racism or racist acts. Additional research is needed to expand this research to include more cities to provide more comparative research as well as to study an under researched group of women in two of the world's largest democracies.

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