

For my research project, I would like to explore and discuss the theory of false consciousness, specifically as it applies to politics in the United States. For years I have been fascinated with the idea that people seem to routinely vote against their own best interests. Specifically, I have always wondered why so many poor people vote for conservative candidates. On the surface, the liberal candidate who supports social programs and issues of equality would seem to be a better choice, one who would help them access education and healthcare, and ensure fair wages. Yet many seem to repeatedly vote for the “big business” Republican who favors tax cuts for the wealthy and privatization of public services. Is this phenomenon an accurate one? If so, to what extent, and more importantly, to what purpose?

In my exploration I will look at various theories and opinions on the subject. I will examine posited psychological, religious and economic reasons for this trend. I will analyze demographics of recent elections and attempt to form a connection between those living in poverty and the candidates and practices they support. For example - if a person lives in a low-income household, are they more likely to support or oppose capital punishment? Do they favor restrictive immigration laws? Where do they stand on LGBTQ issues? I theorize these issues may be strongly tied to religious and moral views that may be intricately linked to economic and/or class status and feel it could make an interesting sociological experiment.

My initial research has led me to believe my theory may be correct, as there are numerous books and articles on similar subjects. I plan to utilize many different types of media in order to get a thorough view on the subject. If possible, I plan to interview voters I know, staunch republicans despite the fact they make minimum wage who seem to cause more harm than good with the choices they make at the polls. In the interest of objectivity, I will also interview voters from the other end of the spectrum in order to gather a variety of points-of-view on the subject.