

## Is our political identity determined in our genes?

It's been a key question of American politics since at least 1968: Why do so many poor, working-class and lower-middle-class whites — many of them dependent for survival on government programs — vote for Republicans?

The debate over the motives of conservative low-income white voters remains unresolved, but two recent research papers suggest that the hurdles facing Democrats in carrying this segment of the electorate may prove difficult to overcome.

Amanda Friesen, a political scientist at Indiana University, and Aleksander Ksiazkiewicz, a graduate student in political science at Rice University, concluded from their study comparing identical and fraternal twins that “the correlation between religious importance and conservatism” is “driven primarily, but usually not exclusively, by genetic factors.” The substantial “genetic component in these relationships suggests that there may be a common underlying predisposition that leads individuals to adopt conservative bedrock social principles and political ideologies while simultaneously feeling the need for religious experiences.”

If these predispositions are, as Friesen and Ksiazkiewicz argue, to some degree genetically rooted, they may not lend themselves to rational debate and compromise.

There are many scholars who challenge the quality of the evidence amassed to date linking genes, politics and values. The field is highly controversial, to say the least.

**Read the full, original story: [How Much Do Our Genes Influence Our Political Beliefs?](#)**