



## Res Publica - Journal of Undergraduate Research

---

Volume 17 | Issue 1

Article 11

---

2012

# The Personality of Policy Preferences: Analyzing the Relationship between Myers-Briggs Personality Types and Political Views

Tracy Lytwyn

*Illinois Wesleyan University*

---

### Recommended Citation

Lytwyn, Tracy (2012) "The Personality of Policy Preferences: Analyzing the Relationship between Myers-Briggs Personality Types and Political Views," *Res Publica - Journal of Undergraduate Research*: Vol. 17

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/respublica/vol17/iss1/11>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Ames Library, the Andrew W. Mellon Center for Curricular and Faculty Development, the Office of the Provost and the Office of the President. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digital Commons @ IWU by the editorial board of Res Publica and the Political Science Department at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@iwu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@iwu.edu).

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

---

# The Personality of Policy Preferences: Analyzing the Relationship between Myers-Briggs Personality Types and Political Views

## **Abstract**

For political scientists and politicians alike, much research has been devoted to understanding the American citizen. Comprehension is the key to capturing votes, pushing forward new ideas, and retaining support in the years to come. This project centers on the theory that people structure their political opinions around problem-solving tendencies that they apply to everyday situations and are particular to their personalities. To evaluate this idea, this study uses the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (1962) in addition to several questions regarding personal policy preferences to determine whether there is a significant correlation between certain elements of one's personality type and political ideas. Controlling for Intolerance of Ambiguity (Budner 1962), sociodemographic variables, and religiosity, it was found that an individual exhibits clear political preferences based on certain parts of personal characteristics. The results of this study imply a further fusion of psychology and politics for policymakers and voters.

---

## THE PERSONALITY OF POLICY PREFERENCES: ANALYZING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MYERS-BRIGGS PERSONALITY TYPES AND POLITICAL VIEWS

Tracy Lytwyn

***Abstract:** For political scientists and politicians alike, much research has been devoted to understanding the American citizen. Comprehension is the key to capturing votes, pushing forward new ideas, and retaining support in the years to come. This project centers on the theory that people structure their political opinions around problem-solving tendencies that they apply to everyday situations and are particular to their personalities. To evaluate this idea, this study uses the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (1962) in addition to several questions regarding personal policy preferences to determine whether there is a significant correlation between certain elements of one's personality type and political ideas. Controlling for Intolerance of Ambiguity (Budner 1962), sociodemographic variables, and religiosity, it was found that an individual exhibits clear political preferences based on certain parts of personal characteristics. The results of this study imply a further fusion of psychology and politics for policymakers and voters.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the discussion of what influences political beliefs, many factors are believed to cause variances. Oftentimes, this conversation points to personal aspects such as socioeconomic status, education level, and religious beliefs. But what often is neglected in this debate is the role of personality in determining how one observes certain ideas as desirable or displeasing. If personality is believed to be a significant cause of differences in how a person acts, what hobbies or interests he or she has, or how an individual responds to a situation, would it be reasonable to believe that personality also plays a role in forming political beliefs? Could it be said that people with specific types of personalities display inclinations toward certain political ideas? This study seeks to capture whether an individual's character traits and personality serve integral roles in the political realm.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has already laid groundwork on the discussion of personality and political opinions. Not only has it been emphasized that personality is a worthwhile part of the political discussion,<sup>1</sup> but there have been recorded differences between liberals and

---

<sup>1</sup> Greenstein 1992.

conservatives in various parts of their lives<sup>2</sup> and in personality assessments, such as the “Big Five” personality study<sup>3</sup>. On the other side of the debate, scholars have pointed to sociodemographic variables<sup>4</sup>, family influence<sup>5</sup>, and religious values<sup>6</sup> as reasons for variation in political ideas.

Fred Cutler (2003) examined how a candidate’s sociodemographic characteristics (gender, language, region of residency) are transferred into voters’ political decision-making. This centered on the idea that voters employ certain heuristics revolving around their individual traits to the political arena. Cutler argued that those who feel a certain “social distance” from a particular candidate or party will be less likely to vote for that candidate, meaning that candidates who share a similar sociodemographic background with the voter are more likely to win his or her support. To test this, he used survey data from the 1993 and 1997 Canadian general elections, controlling for voters’ opinions on particular issues that lined up with each of the four major parties. Cutler found that shared gender, region, and language were decisive factors in these two elections, while shared religion was not as important to voters in choosing a candidate. However, the voters’ need to choose candidates who are similar to them was clearly important across the board, illustrating that one’s sociodemographic status served a fundamental role in making political decisions.<sup>7</sup>

Beck and Jennings (1991) studied how family influences contribute to one’s political affiliation. To analyze this, they drew from a panel study of young Americans between 1965 and 1982 involving interviews with high school seniors and their parents to see whether or not parents’ political influence stays with a child as he or she matures. Up until this study, the family had been identified as a social identity and location in a social structure for a child, which, in turn, affected political affiliation. Beck and Jennings departed from traditional views by recognizing that parents’ political influence is a broad concept, rather than a one-on-one interaction. Additionally, they recognized that instead of directly passing down political beliefs, family traditions typically generate predispositions toward ideas, which affect views. The study chose to assess family political structure by analyzing parents’ political involvement and their

---

<sup>2</sup> Jost, Nosek, and Gosling 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Hirsh et al. 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Cutler 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Beck and Jennings 1991.

<sup>6</sup> Layman 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Cutler 2003.

party affiliation. This research found that for the post-1965 generation, parents' political involvement (i.e. protests, marches, rallies, etc.) did not transmit directly to their children. Overall, it was noted that as the subjects in this study matured, the authority of their parents' party alignment became less important, although it still created predispositions for their own personal beliefs.<sup>8</sup>

This study will seek to fuse these two ideas together to see if the sociodemographic environment an individual is brought up in will affect his or her political predispositions. If Cutler recognized that voters connect their gender, region, and language with a candidate's, it may be the case that other personal characteristics will serve as a heuristic for political decisions.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, if parents' political influence creates predispositions to their child's beliefs, a family's sociodemographic background may generate its own predispositions.<sup>10</sup> To test this theory, this study includes family income level and parents' education level as independent variables.

Geoffrey Layman (1997) studied how one's commitment to a religion influences party affiliation, presidential vote choice, and other political decisions. He discovered that the relationship between party identification and religiosity was statistically significant. Those who considered themselves to be highly committed to a religion were more likely than less religious respondents to vote Republican. While most of Layman's study focused on the political tensions within a religion, in regards to doctrinal orthodoxy and political choices, he noted that there was an equally considerable tension between religious and nonreligious populations' voting decisions at the time. Even in controlling for attitudes toward specific policy opinions and sociodemographic characteristics, this significance remained.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it is clear that one's self-identified commitment to a religion influences political beliefs. This study will control for religion in order to assess whether or not it is driving policy preferences more strongly than personality. Jost, Nosek, and Gosling (2008) examined the relationship between political ideology, personal lifestyles, and implicit preferences. To determine any connection between implicit preferences and political beliefs, they constructed a study to observe participants'

---

<sup>8</sup> Beck and Jennings 1991.

<sup>9</sup> Cutler 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Beck and Jennings, 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Layman 1997.

partiality for the values of “tradition versus progress, conformity versus rebelliousness, order versus chaos, stability versus flexibility, and traditional values versus feminism” in comparison to their self-reported conservatism or liberalism.<sup>12</sup> The study found that “respondents’ cognitive systems are more ideologically structured than previous generations of sociologists and political scientists have assumed.”<sup>13</sup> In all five values, preferences clearly predicted political orientation. Those who identified as conservative exhibited strong preferences for order over chaos and conforming over rebellion, while those who said they were liberal displayed inclination toward flexibility over stability and progress over tradition. In other words, this exemplified that while liberals possess the system-justification motive, conservatives are much more likely to enthusiastically support system-justifying attitudes. The study continued by analyzing college students’ lifestyles in correlation to their political orientation. Items that the authors connected with openness (atheism, tattoos, studying abroad, etc.) were pitted against those that reflect traditionalism and resistance to change (Christianity, marriage, fraternities/sororities, etc.). The results signified that political ideology strongly constrained attitudes toward other variables. Liberalism was tied to an appreciation of “novel and different experiences” while conservative preferences were more “conventional” and “mainstream.”<sup>14</sup> In addition to expanding upon political psychology’s understanding of personality, the study provided a clear example of how personality can be systematically and structurally examined to yield significant, useful results.

Hirsh, DeYoung, Xu, and Peterson (2010) took a different approach to the idea of personality and political affiliation. Through their studies, they discovered a strong correlation between one’s ideological leaning and moral values. In the first example, a measure of the Big Five personality traits (openness-intellect, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) was utilized to record any particular connections between the two divisions of agreeableness (compassion and politeness) and political values.<sup>15</sup> The results illustrated that those who tended toward liberalism displayed a strong inclination toward compassion while those who appeared to be conservative exhibited strong politeness. The researchers explained this by connecting compassion to a liberal’s desire for egalitarianism and politeness to a

---

<sup>12</sup> Jost, Nosek, and Gosling 2008, 126.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Hirsh et al. 2010.

conservative's want to maintain the status quo.<sup>16</sup> By discovering another way to prove this theory, they further acknowledged the usefulness of personality studies in political science and political psychology.

With these studies in mind, it becomes clear that personality is a segment of political psychology that has yet to be fully explored and understood. Indeed, even the basic framework of this field incites a need to look at this subject in order to fully comprehend what goes into a person's ideological preferences, particular actions, and overall perceptions of politics as a whole. This study steps away from previous research by focusing on the relationship between an individual's personality, as determined by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and his or her political opinions. It asks the question of if the problem-solving tactics people use in daily situations, which the MBTI assessment draws from, are also applied to the political realm. If this is the case, are certain types of people predisposed to specific policy opinions over other individuals?

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

To test the relationship between personality and political opinions, I constructed a survey that was administered at Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington, Illinois. Respondents were asked to participate in this voluntary, completely anonymous study. The test was divided into four parts, which are detailed below:

##### *Independent Variable: The Myers-Briggs Typology Indicator*

Published in 1962, the MBTI sought to test the idea that personality can be easily classified into defined, predictable measures. This was done by evaluating how a person views the world and comes to decisions about it.<sup>17</sup> To categorize these characteristics, the MBTI sorts personality into four variables. These variables are mutually exclusive so that subjects will only score on one side of the spectrum or the other. In all, there are sixteen possible personality types assigned to individuals, expressed in sets of letters (e.g. ENFJ, ISTP, etc.) The letters are explained as follows:

**Extraversion (E) vs. Introversion (I):** Those who show a preference for Extraversion tend to feel comfortable around large groups of people, becoming engaged in social situations and moving

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Myers & Briggs Foundation 2003.

to decisions quickly. On the other hand, individuals with an inclination toward Introversion enjoy spending time alone and usually think about what they will say or do before they actually do it. This is easily summarized as one's approach to the world.<sup>18</sup>

**Sensing (S) vs. Intuition (N):** This dichotomy analyzes the way information is absorbed. Sensing reflects a type of personality in which an individual notices details that are physically present and relevant to the "bottom line." People who display features of Intuition tend to enjoy thinking about theories and broad concepts, remembering big events instead of details, and focusing on the "big idea."<sup>19</sup>

**Feeling (F) vs. Thinking (T):** This is the primary decision-making aspect, evaluating what types of principles an individual relies on when making choices. "Feelers" usually weigh what other people think and how a decision may affect other people. They aim for the choice that will keep or establish harmony and want the best for everyone involved. "Thinkers," however, look at situations along more rational, logic-based lines. They prefer to be objective and believe that what is good for the whole is the most ideal outcome.<sup>20</sup>

**Judging (J) vs. Perceiving (P):** The fourth section assesses how one structures his or her outer world and how vital of a factor time is in decision-making. For those who express a Judging personality, time is a strict, inflexible concept, making them highly resistant to change and desiring careful planning over spontaneous choices. "Perceivers" are much more open to change and flexibility, and in most cases, they prefer it over scheduled activities, waiting to make a decision until the last minute so all new information can come to them first.<sup>21</sup>

**The Test:** The MBTI is a forced-choice instrument, meaning that individuals must answer every question on the assessment and choose between the options of "yes" or "no." In this variation of the test, 72 personality traits are presented in the form of statements, featuring ones such as "You are almost never late for appointments" and "You tend to sympathize with other people."<sup>22</sup> After the results have been scored, participants receive their personality type. Each variable is given a "strength of preference," signified by a numerical value on a scale of 1 to 100

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid..

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Humanmetrics 2011.

and a nominal value of either a slight, moderate, distinct, or very expressed preference. (See Appendix I)

*Dependent Variable: Policy Preferences*

To determine political preferences, respondents were given a series of perspectives they may have about certain political issues. The assessment, developed by Illinois Wesleyan University's Dr. Greg Shaw, included ten viewpoints, six liberal and four conservative. In the assessment, participants were asked to rank their agreement with each on a scale of 1 to 7, 1 being "strongly agree" and 7 being "strongly disagree." A "neither agree nor disagree" option was available for every position. Although unpublished, the analysis yielded a Cronbach's Alpha score of .886, meaning it is a reliable test of political views.<sup>23</sup> (Appendix I)

*Control Variable: Intolerance of Ambiguity*

In 1962, Stanley Budner theorized that individuals typically look at ambiguous situations in one of two ways: either as a threat or as desirable. These included situations where cues are absent or vague, where there are too many cues, or where cues are not consistent with each other.<sup>24</sup> In these instances, those with a high tolerance of ambiguity will exhibit risk-taking behaviors, facing these occasions with resiliency and approaching them in an adaptive manner. Conversely, those with a low tolerance for ambiguity will show discomfort and anxiety in these situations, assessing them along stereotypes and in "black and white" manners.<sup>25</sup> Because intolerance of ambiguity is a different personality variable about decision-making and has been tied to influencing political beliefs, it has been included in this survey as a control variable.<sup>26</sup>

**The Test:** To assess this phenomena, Budner developed a 16-point test, structured with a series of statements that one may encounter in their daily lives, such as "An expert who cannot come up with a definitive answer probably doesn't know much," "What we know is always preferable to what we are not sure of," etc. Participants were asked to rank their agreement with each one on a scale of 1 to 7, 1 being "strongly agree" and 7 being "strongly disagree." A "neither agree nor disagree" option was available. (Appendix I)

---

<sup>23</sup> Shaw, unpublished.

<sup>24</sup> Owen and Sweeney 2002.

<sup>25</sup> Kajs and McCollum 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Jost et al. 2003.

*Control Variable: Demographic Questions*

To ensure that respondents were representing the demographics of the university properly, as well as to test for several other hypotheses, the survey asked participants to respond to several additional questions about themselves.

**Gender:** To guarantee that the correct proportion of men and women were surveyed in this study, respondents were asked to identify their gender.

**Sociodemographics:** Some scholars have suggested that one's sociodemographic background is a reference point for political beliefs.<sup>27</sup> For the purposes of testing this claim, respondents were asked to record their family's income level and their parents' education level.

**Religiosity:** In addition, religiosity is generally believed to have a significant impact on one's political beliefs.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, participants were asked to answer the question "Do you consider yourself to be a religious person?" with "yes," "no," or "not sure."

#### HYPOTHESES

*H1: "Thinkers" will have more conservative policy preferences while "Feelers" will have more liberal ones.*

Because of Thinkers' tendency to process issues through a series of practical, cause-and-effect patterns, they typically make decisions that, in their opinion, "make sense" for every individual involved. They do not feel a need to address one's particular, personal concerns. This leads to the idea that they may be less interested in humanitarian, service-oriented causes that focus on caring for an individual than would a Feeler. Feelers are profoundly impacted by others' situations and keep them in mind when making choices that could potentially affect another person. Oftentimes, the sentiments of "the whole versus the individual" are connected with liberalism and conservatism, respectively. However, conservatives emphasize individual rights, and their policies reflect the notion that every person is responsible for himself or herself, illustrating a Thinker's objective, rational mindset. On the other hand, liberals are typically focused on policies that benefit everyone, and this stems from the desire to help each individual's personal situation. That concept is connected to Feelers' thought processes.

---

<sup>27</sup> Cutler 2003.

<sup>28</sup> Layman 1997.

*H2: Sensing/Intuition will interact with Thinking/Feeling and influence policy preferences. Sensing-Thinkers and Sensing-Feelers will have more conservative policy preferences, while Intuitive-Thinkers and Intuitive-Feelers will have more liberal beliefs.*

Since the Sensing/Intuition component of the MBTI affects how individuals take in information from the world around them, it is likely that this will play a pivotal role in policy opinions. In each MBTI type, the Feeling/Thinking and Sensing/Intuition factors together serve as “functions,” meaning that they are responsible for directly processing information and coming to conclusions about it.<sup>29</sup> As they interact, they tend to elicit certain responses over others when merged in one of four ways. While Sensing-Thinkers approach their world in an objective, black-and-white style, Intuitive-Thinkers, although still objective and logical, are more open to possibilities and undiscovered applications. Sensing-Feelers operate in a warm, people-oriented manner that cultivates deep sympathy and care for those around them. While Intuitive-Feelers interact similarly, they are more communicative, open, and adaptive than their counterpart.<sup>30</sup> Because of that, it appears as though Sensing-Thinkers represent one end of the spectrum with Intuitive-Feelers on the other. I predict that Sensing-Thinkers will be more strongly conservative than Intuitive-Thinkers, while Intuitive-Feelers will be more strongly liberal than Sensing-Feelers. The inflexible, unyielding nature of Sensing-Thinkers reflects the resistance to change that is often typical of conservatives while the flexible, open nature of Intuitive-Feelers connects to liberals’ adaptability to change.

*H3: Judgers will be more conservative while Perceivers will be more liberal.*

Perceivers tend to be more open to general change than Judgers.<sup>31</sup> Because of that, it is likely that Perceivers will apply that flexibility to their political views, being more receptive to ideas that encourage an embracing of change and modifications. On the other hand, Judgers will be resistant to these types of policies, turning instead to ones that verify their preconceived notions about how the world around them ought to be. Therefore, I predict that the Judging/Perceiving function will be the most influential in political opinions. Again, this relates to the general resistance to change that many believe to be connected with conservative ideals as opposed to liberal ones.

---

<sup>29</sup> McCauley 1990.

<sup>30</sup> Myers & Briggs Foundation 2003.

<sup>31</sup> McCauley 1990.

---

*H4: Extraversion and Introversion will have no effect on policy opinions.*

As a structure for people's attitudes about the world around them, the Extraversion/Introversion factor sets the stage for most of the initial decisions a person makes. This sets these two types apart from each other in their initial views of the settings around them. But because it impacts an initial reaction with not much critical thinking, rather than the decision-making that follows, I predict that this spectrum will have little to do with political opinions.

*H5: Personality type will influence policy preferences more strongly than any control variable (intolerance of ambiguity, sociodemographic variables, religiosity).*

It may be likely that the way one makes political decisions revolves around assessing ambiguity, rather than the judgment and choice patterns that are a part of personality. However, I predict that intolerance of ambiguity will not be as significant of an influence as personality. In fact, it might be the case that personality affects tolerance of ambiguity, which then affects policy opinions. If that is true, this provides another way of examining the relationship between political beliefs and personal characteristics. Additionally, it has been suggested that sociodemographic factors play a role in political decision-making.<sup>32</sup> The education level of participants' parents and their household income may predetermine what they believe about different political policies. In the continuous overlap between religion and politics, it is typically thought that religion serves as a guiding influence in forming opinions and choices regarding candidates, platforms, and specific issues.<sup>33</sup> Participants' religiosity may be more influential than the personality factors being tested. However, I predict that personality will still prove to be the most significant factor in making political choices.

#### LIMITATIONS

The aforementioned survey and its related hypotheses face several limitations that are imperative to keep in mind while reviewing data results. Because this study is exploratory research, it does not have the same depth that a more refined study would. Most of these findings and conclusions only scratch at the surface of a connection between the MBTI and

---

<sup>32</sup> Cutler 2003.

<sup>33</sup> Sigel 1965.

political beliefs. Therefore, while this research does not tell the entire story, it illustrates a significant relationship and opens up the possibility of a more concrete correlation.

Noticeably, this study revolves around common stereotypes about certain types of people, especially when it comes to their political beliefs. For example, not all liberals fit the “bleeding heart liberal” label, and not all conservatives are resistant to changes in the world around them. The research here seeks to challenge that idea, analyzing whether or not the personalities one would expect to correspond with different political views actually do connect.

Additionally, it has been found that individuals do not always act on the characteristics the MBTI suggests they possess. While people may believe their answer to a question is how they would truly respond, others close to them may understand that individual’s actual behavior differently. It also is the case that certain traits do not function in the ways one would assume. For example, those who show a preference for Thinking are not always proficient in logical activities, such as mathematics.<sup>34</sup> This may partially be due to the fact that, as stated earlier in this study, the MBTI is a forced choice instrument, meaning that individuals are asked to summarize their behavior into one answer. In limiting responses, it is unclear how strong this person’s preference for the opposite function is. For example, one may behave as a Judger in some instances and a Perceiver in others.<sup>35</sup>

This study is also limited in its pool of participants. Because the survey was only conducted at one university, the variety of respondents’ demographic characteristics was restricted to who attends the institution. It might be argued that surveying students from the same education environment could skew variables being tested. This limits the generalizability of these results. The small sample size and narrow assortment of characteristics in this study do not capture individuals outside of the university who may possess other traits. Therefore, it is difficult to say any of these findings apply across the board.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### *Respondents’ Demographics*

In this study, 88 students were surveyed. The mean Liberal-Conservative Index score was approximately 3.5. Again, being that 1.0 signified a “perfect liberal” and 7.0 a “perfect

---

<sup>34</sup> Coe 1992.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

conservative,” the respondents in this study leaned slightly liberal. In comparison with self-identified political ideology, 29.5% of participants said they were conservative, 44.3% labeled themselves as liberal, 21.6% identified themselves as moderate, and 4.5% chose the “Other” option, which included written-in responses such as “libertarian,” “apathetic,” and “communist.” 44.3% of respondents were male, and 55.7% were female. When compared to reported values for this university, the distribution was similar. At Illinois Wesleyan University, 42% of the student body is male, and 58% is female.<sup>36</sup> In this regard, these participants are representative of the institution as a whole.

*H1: “Thinkers” will have more conservative policy preferences while “Feelers” will have more liberal ones.*

Prior to generating results, I hypothesized that Thinking and Feeling would correlate with distinctly different political preferences. An interest in particular, personal concerns versus an objective desire for equal treatment was the decisive factor that influenced this hypothesis. However, after testing this via a bivariate correlation, there is no statistically significant relationship. Hypothesis 1 was not confirmed.

A possible explanation for this is that since the MBTI is not assessing personal values, Feeling and Thinking condenses to simple decision-making without regard for the motivations behind that process. Indeed, a conservative could have the same rationales as a liberal, but express them differently when it comes to political opinions. A Feeling conservative could be deeply interested in humanitarian and charitable causes but not be concerned with the same ones a Feeling liberal might. Moreover, a Thinking liberal could believe his or her ideas are good for the whole, but a Thinking conservative may have a different concept of what “good” means. Because there is no significant relationship, it is clear that this part of decision-making is not affecting policy preferences.

*H2: Sensing/Intuition will interact with Thinking/Feeling and influence policy preferences. Sensing-Thinkers and Sensing-Feelers will have more conservative policy preferences, while Intuitive-Thinkers and Intuitive-Feelers will have more liberal beliefs.*

---

<sup>36</sup> Illinois Wesleyan University 2011.

To test this theory, the Sensing/Intuition variable was multiplied by the Thinking/Feeling one to analyze whether the resulting interaction significantly affected the Liberal-Conservative Index. It was expected that Sensing-Thinkers would be more strongly conservative than Intuitive-Thinkers, and that Intuitive-Feelers would be more strongly liberal than Sensing-Feelers. However, the bivariate correlation shows there is no significant relationship. For the interaction variable of Sensing and the Feeling/Thinking component, a p-value of 0.118 resulted in its test against the Liberal-Conservative Index, ruling out a possible connection. The Intuitive Feeling/Thinking variable also does not yield a significant relationship, with a p-value of .611 recorded. This leads to the conclusion that when the way one takes in information and the way one processes that information are brought together, there is not a straight-forward way it connects to specific political opinions. Hypothesis 2 was not confirmed.

*H3: Judgers will be more conservative while Perceivers will be more liberal.*

Judging and Perceiving revolve around the concepts of change and sensitivity to time. While Judging is stricter in these regards, Perceiving is much more open, possibly reflecting similar patterns in liberalism and conservatism. To assess this in relation with policy preferences, a bivariate correlation was computed.

The relationship between the Liberal-Conservative Index and the Judging/Perceiving variable is significant at the 0.05 level ( $p = 0.027$ ), illustrating that there is a connection between one's preference for Judging or Perceiving and his or her political ideologies. The Pearson correlation (0.236) shows that as one's inclination toward Judging increases, partiality for conservatism also increases. Hypothesis 3 is confirmed.

*H4: Extraversion and Introversion will have little effect on policy opinions.*

Because Extraversion and Introversion capture a surface-level assessment of a situation, this hypothesis holds that it will not elicit much of an impact on political beliefs. Since this simply focuses on absorbing and analyzing circumstances at a first glance, this phase of the decision-making process involves little critical thinking and therefore is not likely to be influential in forming policy opinions. However, the bivariate correlation suggests a different theory.

The relationship here is significant at the 0.1 level ( $p = .079$ ), showing that there is a correlation occurring between these two variables. The Pearson correlation of .188 illustrates that as one exhibits a stronger preference for Extraversion, he or she also shows a partiality for conservative beliefs. If any relationship were to exist here, one would think it would be in the opposite direction because Extraversion is characteristic of being open to new occurrences. With that, it is not surprising that the relationship, even if significant, is weak. However, given that I hypothesized that this variable would have no significant influence, Hypothesis 4 was not confirmed.

*H5: Personality type will influence policy preferences more strongly than any control variable (intolerance of ambiguity, sociodemographic variables, religiosity).*

**Table 1:** The MBTI Personality Types and all control variables  
Dependent Variable: Liberal-Conservative Index

Independent Variable	Liberal-Conservative Index
Constant	9.428 (1.076)
Extraversion-Introversion	.005* (.002) .164
Sensing-Intuition	.002 (.003) .050
Feeling-Thinking	2.513E-5 (.003) .001
Judging-Perceiving	.001 (.003) .031
Intolerance of Ambiguity	-.075*** (.014) -.482
Parents' Education Level	.024 (.082) .025
Family Income	-.024 (.086) -.024
Religiosity	-.744*** (.159) -.383
N	88
Adj. R-square	.457
Model Significance	.000
F-test	10.061

Note: Standard error in parentheses and beta weights italicized; \*p≤.1, \*\*p≤.05, \*\*\*p≤.001

This model explains 45.7% of the variance in the dependent variable. With all control variables taken into account, the only significant MBTI personality variable is the Extraversion/Introversion factor. As one exhibits an inclination toward Extraversion, he or she is more likely to hold conservative beliefs. As previous research concluded, as one's tolerance of ambiguity increases, he or she is more likely to support liberal ideologies.<sup>37</sup> To further examine

<sup>37</sup> Jost 2003.

this, I chose to assess whether or not Intolerance of Ambiguity relates directly with specific areas of an individual's personality. Table 2 presents the bivariate correlations between MBTI personality variables and Intolerance of Ambiguity scores.

**Table 2: All personality variables and Intolerance of Ambiguity**

	<b>Extraversion and Introversion</b>	<b>Sensing and Intuition</b>	<b>Thinking and Feeling</b>	<b>Judging and Perceiving</b>
<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	.005	-.271	.134	-.335
<b>Significance (2-tailed)</b>	.966	.011	.214	.001
<b>N</b>	88	88	88	88

Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity scale shares a significant relationship with the MBTI dichotomies of Sensing/Intuition and Judging/Perceiving. This raises the possibility that personality is directing Intolerance of Ambiguity which, in turn, affects policy preferences, measured by the Liberal-Conservative Index. For the purposes of assessing this, an interaction variable was coded, multiplying Sensing/Intuition values by individual Intolerance of Ambiguity scores and doing the same with Judging/Perceiving. A bivariate correlation was then computed for each separate interaction variable and compared with the Liberal-Conservative Index.

For the first bivariate correlation, the Sensing/Intuition variable interacting with Intolerance of Ambiguity shows a significant relationship with the Liberal-Conservative Index. With a p-value of .063, it is statistically significant at the 0.10 level. When added into the regression model with all control variables, it remains significant (.10 level) with a p-value of .057. It is therefore possible that personality, in this area, is affecting Intolerance of Ambiguity values, which is leading to penchants for certain political views over others.

In the second correlation, the Judging/Perceiving interaction variable did not have a significant relationship with political opinions. In this case, the p-value was recorded at .123. It is clear, then, that the Judging/Perceiving aspect is not swaying tolerance of ambiguity scores.

Religiosity is significant at the 0.001 level, influencing the Liberal-Conservative Index (beta weight = -.383). The B-value of -.744 illustrates that those committed to a particular religion are more likely to hold conservative viewpoints. This is consistent with Layman's own conclusions about religiosity.<sup>38</sup> The sociodemographic characteristics of parents' education level and family income were both insignificant in determining political views. This goes against previous research that suggested these factors may be influential, but is consistent with my expectations.<sup>39</sup>

Through multiple regression, it is illustrated that Budner's Intolerance of Ambiguity scale and religiosity are having more of an overall effect on policy opinions than is personality. While Extraversion/Introversion still holds some influence, the recorded beta weights suggest it is not as impactful as these control variables. Additionally, the previously significant correlation between Judging/Perceiving and policy preferences is not significant in the regression model. There is a significant interaction between Intolerance of Ambiguity and Sensing/Intuition, which holds a significant relationship with policy preferences. This suggests that the way one analyzes information affects how he or she assesses ambiguous situations. Consequently, this affects policy preferences. But the initial belief that personality would be the most dominant factor in one's political opinions does not hold true, and Hypothesis 5 can be rejected.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Personality is not having as significant of an effect on political views as expected. When looking solely at personality factors' bivariate relationships with policy opinions, the Judging/Perceiving dichotomy has the strongest correlation with policy preferences, illustrating that the way in which one understands time and flexibility affects his or her political ideas. After running a multiple regression with all control variables taken into account, only Extraversion/Introversion remains a significant predictor of policy preferences. Since this study cannot fully explain the implication of the Extraversion/Introversion scale, it suggests further research is warranted for this particular variable.

Furthermore, the interaction between personality and Intolerance of Ambiguity was only significant in regard to the Sensing/Intuition variable, suggesting that as an individual takes in information, this affects Intolerance of Ambiguity which, in turn, affects political views.

---

<sup>38</sup> Layman 1997.

<sup>39</sup> Cutler 2003.

---

On its own, Intolerance of Ambiguity had a stronger relationship with political preferences than did all MBTI personality variables. Religiosity also accounted for more impact on political beliefs than did any other factor aside from Intolerance of Ambiguity, including the sociodemographic traits of family income and parents' education level – both of which were not significant. Because of this, it would be useful to look at both Intolerance of Ambiguity and religiosity more closely. Are there other, undiscovered ways in which these relationships act? For religiosity, are different types of people predisposed to religious beliefs?

After reviewing the limitations of this study and the data that resulted from it, several suggestions for further analysis come about. It would be useful to look at the family environment factor more closely, examining parents' political party in addition to economic background and education level. Moreover, I believe that similar findings will exist in other settings outside of this university, but this has not yet been explored. As this study can only be generalized to the student population at Illinois Wesleyan University, expanding the survey to different locations, age groups, and personal backgrounds would be valuable in looking at Myers-Briggs personality type and political ideas together.

This study goes beyond previous research by connecting daily decision-making tactics via the MBTI with the political realm and assessing whether or not they coincide. By observing this, it opens a new arena in which policymakers and candidates can use newfound ideas to market their positions toward certain types of people. If a legislator is aware that his or her stances, proposals, and ideas are more likely to be well received by a certain type of person over another, it would be wise to shape discussion and construct information about these things in a way that this voter will understand and connect with. In the event these findings become more significant with additional research or point to new relationships between personality and political views, this could indicate a new way to fuse psychology and politics more actively than has been done in the past for the benefit of all participants in these fields.

## APPENDIX

### *Procedure and Coding*

#### **The Myers-Briggs Typology Indicator**

For the purposes of capturing the breadth of personality, each dichotomy is scored on a scale of -100 to +100, determined by the numerical value related to strength of preference for each individual respondent. The first term in each set is the positive value, and the second is the negative.

#### **Policy Opinions**

Responses to those statements regarded to be conservative standpoints had their numerical values reversed (7=1, 6=2, etc.). These were then added to the scores of the liberal positions and divided by the number of statements, the final result being labeled and referred to here on as the Liberal-Conservative Index. In this, a respondent who scores a 1.00 would be considered a “perfect liberal” and a 7.00, a “perfect conservative.”

#### **Intolerance of Ambiguity**

Included with the test, Budner constructed a method of calculating one’s tolerance of ambiguity from these responses. This involved flipping the answers to certain questions (7=1, 6=2, etc.) and adding them together for a total Tolerance of Ambiguity Score. After each participant turned in the survey, their responses were calculated through this design and coded as is.

In the 88 cases involved in this study, the lowest Intolerance of Ambiguity score was 44.0 and the highest was 91.0, with a mean of 73.52 and a standard deviation of 8.56. The possible values for this factor range from 16.0 and to 112.0. According to Budner’s own research, respondents tend to fall within the 44.0 to 48.0 range, meaning that subjects in this study had a higher than average tolerance of ambiguity.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Budner 1962.

## REFERENCES

- Beck, Paul Allen, and M. Kent Jennings. 1991. "Family Traditions, Political Periods, and the Development of Partisan Orientations." *The Journal of Politics* 53(3): 742-63.
- Budner, Stanley. 1962. "Intolerance of Ambiguity as a Personality Variable." *Journal of Personality* 30(1): 29-50.
- Carpini, Michael X. Delli, and Scott Keeter. 1997. *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Coe, Charles K. 1992. "The MBTI: Potential Uses and Misuses in Personnel Administration." *Public Personnel Management* 21(4): 511-22.
- Cutler, Fred. 2003. "The Simplest Shortcut of All: Sociodemographic Characteristics and Electoral Choice." *Journal of Politics* 64(2): 466-90.
- Greenstein, Fred I. 1992. "Can Personality and Politics Be Studied Systematically?" *Political Psychology* 13(1): 105-28.
- Hirsh, Jacob B., Colin G. DeYoung, Xiaowen Xu, and Jordan B. Peterson. 2010. "Compassionate Liberals and Polite Conservatives: Associations of Agreeableness with Political Ideology and Moral Values." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36(5): 655-64.
- Humanmetrics. 2011. "Personality Test Based on Jung and Briggs Myers Typology." <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp> September 04, 2011..
- Illinois Wesleyan University. 2011. "Illinois Wesleyan: Facts." from <http://www.iwu.edu/aboutiwu/facts.shtml> November 23, 2011.
- Jost, John T., Brian A. Nosek, and Samuel D. Gosling. 2008. "Ideology: Its Resurgence in Social, Personality, and Political Psychology." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 3(2): 126-36.
- Jost, John T., Jack Glaser, Arie W. Kruglanski, and Frank J. Sulloway. 2003. "Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition." *Psychological Bulletin* 129(3): 339-75.
- Kajs, Lawrence T., and Daniel L. McCollum. 2010. "Dealing with Ambiguity: Assessment of Tolerance for Ambiguity in the Context of School Leadership." *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, 14(Special Issue), 77-91.
- Layman, Geoffrey C. 1997. "Religion and Political Behavior in the United States: The Impact of Beliefs, Affiliations, and Commitment from 1980 to 1994." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 61(2): 288-316.
- McCauley, Mary H., and Isabel Briggs Myers. 1990. *A Guide to the Development and Use of the*

*Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists.

Myers & Briggs Foundation. 2003. "MBTI Basics."

<http://www.myersbriggs.org> November 23, 2011.

Owen, William, and Robert Sweeney. 2002. "Ambiguity Tolerance, Performance, Learning, and Satisfaction: A Research Direction." Presented at the Information Systems Educators Conference. San Antonio.

Sigel, Roberta. 1965. "Assumptions About the Learning of Political Values." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 361(1): 1-9.