MP10 ANALYTICAL STYLE PREDICTS RELIGIOUS AND TELEOLOGICAL BELIEF

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Purpose of Study Shenhav *et al.* (2011) found that individual analytical style (reflective vs. intuitive) predicts belief in God or a higher power. Although intuitive thinkers are more likely to have strengthened religious beliefs since childhood, there is no correlation between analytical style and familial religiosity during childhood. This study examines the hypothesis that the link between intuitive thinking and religious belief is part of a broader preference for teleological explanations. We also test a possible mechanism responsible for teleological endorsement: intuitive thinkers may endorse teleological explanations because they confuse causal directionality.

Methods Used A questionnaire comprised of a randomized series of stimuli was administered via Amazon Mechanical Turk. Stimuli included the Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT; Frederick, 2005) to determine analytical style, questions on conditional probability to judge causal reasoning (Kahneman & Tversky, 1977), and a series of true or false questions on various teleological statements (Kelemen *et al.*, 2013). Participants were then asked to rank on a scale from 1–7 the extent to which they believe in the existence of God or a higher power, and the extent to which they believe such a higher power influences events in the world (agency). Statistical analysis was performed using Spearman correlation.

Summary of Results As expected, teleological endorsement levels positively predicted belief in agency of a higher

power ($R=0.28$, $p<.01$) and CRT score negatively predicted teleological endorsement levels ($R=-0.24$, $p<.01$). However, no significant correlation was found between CRT performance and tendencies in responding to conditional probability stimuli ($R=0.017$, $p=0.85$). Individual belief in agency of a higher power predicts teleological tendencies to a greater extent than religious belief alone ($p=0.075$) for belief in higher power, compared with $p=0.085$ for belief in agency of higher power.

Conclusions Our results replicate previous findings that show a relationship between intuitive thinking and religious beliefs and suggest that this may reflect a general preference for teleological explanations. However, the reasons why intuitive thinkers endorse teleological explanations are still unclear.