

## Reasoning about Current Issues (RCI)

The Reflective Judgment Model describes changes in epistemic assumptions and how these affect the development of critical or reflective thinking skills and related constructs in young adults and adults, especially college students.

*Prereflective Reasoning* (Stages 1-3): Belief that "knowledge is gained through the word of an authority figure or through firsthand observation, rather than, for example, through the evaluation of evidence. [People who hold these assumptions] believe that what they know is absolutely correct, and that they know with complete certainty. People who hold these assumptions treat all problems as though they were well-structured" (King & Kitchener, 2002, p. 39).

*Quasi-Reflective Reasoning* (Stages 4 and 5): Recognition "that knowledge-or more accurately, knowledge claims-contain elements of uncertainty, which [people who hold these assumptions] attribute to missing information or to methods of obtaining the evidence. Although they use evidence, they do not understand how evidence entails a conclusion (especially in light of the acknowledged uncertainty), and thus tend to view judgments as highly idiosyncratic" (King and Kitchener, 2002, p. 40).

*Reflective Reasoning* (Stages 6 and 7): People who hold these assumptions accept "that knowledge claims cannot be made with certainty, but [they] are not immobilized by it; rather, [they] make judgments that are "most reasonable" and about which they are "relatively certain," based on their evaluation of available data. They believe they must actively construct their decisions, and that knowledge claims must be evaluated in relationship to the context in which they were generated to determine their validity. They also readily admit their willingness to reevaluate the adequacy of their judgments as new data or new methodologies become available" (King & Kitchener, 2002, p. 40).

**For what purposes should the RCI be used?** The RCI should be used to assess people's assumptions about the nature, source, and certainty of knowledge claims. In addition, the instrument should only be used to make inferences concerning groups, not individuals. Whether the RCI is an appropriate assessment tool for a specific study depends in large part on the research question.

**What suggestions do you have for administering the instrument and obtaining an adequate response rate?** Reiterate to participants the underlying assumptions of the test (i.e., that the questionnaire is designed to assess how respondents think about a few current issues; it is not a test of their factual knowledge about these topics, their individual abilities, or their mastery of content of particular classes they may have taken). It is helpful to conduct the survey in a more controlled setting, such as a computer lab that you have reserved.

SOURCE: <http://www.umich.edu/~refjudg/index.html>