Reasoning About Current Issues

Instructions: Because this questionnaire is designed to help understand how people like you think about various current issues, it asks not only what you think, but why you hold the opinions you do.

The Task: You will be shown three statements, each concerning a current issue. These issues are similar to each other because people sometimes disagree about the best way(s) of dealing with each. For each issue you will be asked four questions.

Question 1: You will first be asked, in general, about your personal opinion of the issue.

Question 2: You will be asked to write a short explanation of why you believe the way you do.

Take a moment to consider your opinion of the issue. Write your response to the question in a few sentences. (Do not, for example, write, “I think that food additives are safe.” Instead, write a few sentences that explain why you believe as you do.)

Question 3: You will be shown statements taken from interviews with people who have discussed this issue. Please indicate how similar or dissimilar each statement is to your own opinion by checking the appropriate box.

If your view of the issue does not match exactly those presented, please mark a few statements for each issue that are at least somewhat similar to your own.

We have included one or more statements that make no sense to encourage careful reading of the statements. If you read a statement that you think is meaningless, please mark the box beneath the “meaningless” heading.

Question 4: You will be asked to indicate which statements from the list in question 3 are most like your own opinion. Rank (that is, most like your opinion, second most like your opinion, etc.) the three statements from the list that are most like your view, even if the statements do not exactly match your view.

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Preparing the Work Force for the 21st Century

Educators, civic leaders, and members of the business community disagree about how to best prepare the work force of the 21st century. Some claim that colleges should emphasize basic subjects such as math, English, or history. If these courses are well-taught, they argue, students will have the general skills necessary for the future. Others argue that the rapid rate of change in the 21st century requires specific training in skills that are adaptable to many situations, such as critical thinking or problem-solving. They argue that colleges should emphasize such general skills in order to better prepare people for learning after they leave college.

Please indicate your personal opinion on this issue.
1. I think colleges should:
   - [ ] emphasize teaching basic subjects.
   - [ ] equally emphasize BOTH.
   - [ ] emphasize teaching critical thinking/problem solving.

2. People give different explanations for their opinions about what colleges should emphasize. Write the basis for your point of view about this issue on the lines below.

3. Many people disagree about this issue and give different reasons for their own beliefs. How similar is each of the following reasons to the basis for your own beliefs of what colleges should emphasize.

   - Very Similar
   - Similar
   - Dissimilar
   - Very Dissimilar
   - Meaningless

   - [ ] A. There isn’t much proof on either side of the issue about what colleges should emphasize so I believe what I want to believe. My point of view just makes sense to me.
   - [ ] B. The facts aren’t very clear because there is so much information involved in deciding what to emphasize in college. So I just believe what seems right to me based on my own background.
   - [ ] C. When I hear people I respect say what they believe about how to best prepare the work force of the 21st century, then I will know what to believe.
   - [ ] D. My beliefs are based on what I have been taught about how people should be educated by those who really understand what will be needed in the 21st century.
   - [ ] E. I look at the ocular opinions and the assumptions I can draw from its collusiveness. Generally, the facts of this issue must be probabilistically migrated from that which is proven to that which is unproven.
   - [ ] F. My point of view is based on an evaluation of the evidence and its fit with related arguments and assumptions. As a result of that evaluation, I am confident about the reasonableness of my conclusion.
   - [ ] G. I believe what I want to believe because there are no correct answers right now. We won’t know the right opinion about what colleges should emphasize until some time in the future.
   - [ ] H. The issue of what colleges should emphasize is a very complex one. I try to move beyond quick and easy solutions and draw a conclusion after evaluating and weighing the evidence on both sides.
   - [ ] I. After comparing the interpretations on both sides of the issue, my point of view seems more reasonable to me because the evidence is stronger and the assumptions on which this view is based seem more valid.
   - [ ] J. There are several valid ways of looking at this issue. People’s conclusions are related to their assumptions about the nature of the 21st century as well as their values and their understanding of the evidence. People’s assumptions determine how they interpret evidence.

4. Please write the LETTERS of the THREE statements in the above list that are MOST LIKE YOUR THINKING on the appropriate lines below. If you cannot find a statement in the above list that exactly matches your thinking, choose the three that most closely capture how you think about this issue.

   _____ is most like my thinking.
   _____ is second most like my thinking.
   _____ is third most like my thinking.
Some researchers contend that alcoholism is due, at least in part, to genetic factors. They often refer to a number of family and twin studies to support this contention. Other researchers, however, do not think that alcoholism is in any way inherited. They claim that alcoholism is psychologically determined. They also claim that the reason that several members of the same family often suffer from alcoholism is due to the fact that they share common family experiences, socio-economic status, or employment.

Please indicate your personal opinion on this issue.

2. With respect to alcoholism, I think that genetic factors:

- contribute at least partially.
- I do not know/cannot decide.
- do not contribute.

2. People give different explanations for their point of view about this issue. What is the basis for your point of view about this question? Write the basis for your point of view about this issue on the lines below.

3. Many people disagree about this issue and give different reasons for their own beliefs. How similar is each of the following reasons to the basis for your own beliefs about the influence of genetic factors on alcoholism

- Very Similar
- Similar
- Dissimilar
- Very Dissimilar
- Meaningless

A. When I hear a scientist say whether alcoholism is genetically determined or not, then I know what to believe.
B. My beliefs are based on what I have been taught about alcoholism by people who really know the right information.
C. There isn’t much proof on either side of the issue about the determinants of alcoholism, so I believe what I want to believe. My point of view just makes sense to me.
D. After comparing the interpretations on both sides of the issue, my point of view seems more reasonable to me because the evidence appears stronger and the assumptions on which this view is based seem more valid.
E. My point of view is based on my analysis of where the weight of the evidence lies. It is more probable because it best accounts for the evidence and other things I know about related topics, such as other addiction, personality, and genetics.
F. I look at the quality and density of the proof-claim of this issue and align my assumption intrinsically. The facts of this issue must be probabilistically migrated from that which is unproven to proven.
G. I believe what I want to believe about whether alcoholism is genetically determined because there’s no right answer right now and there may never be one.
H. There are several valid ways of looking at this issue. People interpret evidence using different criteria; further, their conclusions are related to their assumptions about how scientists do research and draw conclusions.
I. The issue of the causes of alcoholism is a very complex one. I try to move beyond stereotypes and draw a conclusion after evaluating and weighing the evidence on both sides.
J. The facts aren’t very clear because there are so many variables involved in assessing the origins of alcoholism. So I just believe what seems right to me about the causes.

5. Please write the LETTERS of the THREE statements in the above list that are MOST LIKE YOUR THINKING on the appropriate lines below. If you cannot find a statement in the above list that exactly matches your thinking, choose the three that most closely capture how you think about this issue.

_____ is most like my thinking.
_____ is second most like my thinking.
_____ is third most like my thinking.
Immigration Policy

Some economic experts claim that a less restrictive immigration policy adds to the overall economic prosperity of the United States. Admission of new immigrants, they argue, expands the tax base and economic competitiveness of American products and services. Other economic experts suggest that such policies result in a drain on the medical, financial and educational resources of the United States. These experts argue that a less restrictive immigration policy harms the economic well-being of the country.

Please indicate your personal opinion on this issue.
3. I think that a less restrictive immigration policy would generally:

- [ ] harm the economic prosperity of the U.S.
- [ ] I do not know/cannot decide.
- [ ] add to the economic prosperity of the U.S.

2. How is it possible that different economic experts can disagree or arrive at different conclusions about the effect of immigration policy on economic prosperity? Write the basis for your point of view about this issue on the lines below.

3. Many people have heard about disagreements among experts about this, and they suggest different reasons why that might happen. How similar is each of the following reasons to your own understanding of why experts can disagree?

- [ ] Very Similar
- [ ] Similar
- [ ] Dissimilar
- [ ] Very Dissimilar
- [ ] Meaningless

A. Experts disagree because they approach the issue with different opinions already in mind and then find evidence to support their own opinion.
B. Experts who are honest will not disagree about whether a less restrictive immigration policy improves or reduces the overall prosperity of the United States.
C. Experts disagree about this issue because, like everyone else, they are confused about the role that immigration policy plays in economic prosperity. So what they conclude is just their opinion.
D. Experts disagree about whether enough research has been done to show that a less restrictive immigration policy contributes to or reduces the prosperity of the United States.
E. Experts disagree because of the different ways they were brought up and/or the different schools they attended.
F. Experts might say that one view about the contribution of immigrants to economic prosperity was better but they would also say that this viewpoint was relative to a particular way of understanding this issue.
G. Experts disagree because the rule for allusiveness offers a solidified basis for choosing whether immigrants contribute to economic prosperity or reduce it.
H. Experts arrive at different conclusions because the evidence itself is complex, and they examine it from several perspectives. They arrive at a decision based on synthesizing their knowledge, experience, and other expert opinions.
I. Experts disagree because they are really interested in different facets of the issue and the ways to more clearly understand one facet of the issue are different than the ways to more clearly understand other facets.
J. Experts disagree because their evaluation of the evidence leads them to defend different conclusions. Some experts’ conclusions are more reasonable, however, and reflect a more comprehensive synthesis of the available information.

4. Please write the LETTERS of the THREE statements in the above list that are MOST LIKE YOUR THINKING on the appropriate lines below. If you cannot find a statement in the above list that exactly matches your thinking, choose the three that most closely capture how you think about this issue.

[ ] is most like my thinking.
[ ] is second most like my thinking.
[ ] is third most like my thinking.