

Who are you? More importantly, how do you define yourself? The Twenty Statements Test (TST) is a deceptively simple but powerful research instrument that reveals how people understand themselves and their place in society. The TST was originally developed in the 1950s by social psychologist Manfred Kuhn to determine the degree to which we base our self-concepts on our membership in different groups (Kuhn and McPartland 1954). Group affiliation was a significant and prevalent quality that defined Americans of the 1950s and 1960s.

In some of the earliest and most influential works using the TST, Louis Zurcher (1977) studied the changing self-images of Americans in the 1970s and 1980s. Zurcher found that respondents in this later group were more likely to base their self-concept on individual traits and independent action than group membership. These results represented a major shift in how people defined themselves and, perhaps, society—a shift that concerned some scholars who worried about the loss of collective identity. What are people like now? Have things continued to change since the 1980s? What can the TST tell us about contemporary society and ourselves today?

This exercise develops two essential sociological skills:

1. Analyzing how people construct identity and self-concept
2. Using systematic data collection methods to reveal patterns in how we understand ourselves

## Assignment Overview

In this research application, you will complete the Twenty Statements Test (TST) by writing twenty different responses to the question “Who am I?” You’ll then analyze your responses using a standardized coding scheme to identify patterns in your self-concept. Depending on your level, you may recruit others to take the test and compare responses, or develop your own categorization scheme. Through careful analysis, you’ll uncover whether your self-definition is more group-based or trait-based, role-based or individual, and what this reveals about identity in contemporary society.

**Note:** Some students find the TST unsettling or emotionally revealing. That reaction itself is sociologically interesting and worth noting—but you are never required to share anything you’re not comfortable analyzing or discussing in your paper.

The specific requirements for what you need to do vary depending on what grade you would like to earn: Basic (75), Proficient (87), or Advanced (100). Students who come close but do not satisfactorily complete the requirements for a level will be allowed to revise and resubmit their application.

## Report Structure

Use the standard [research report template]. Below are the specific requirements for each section:

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**In your submission, clearly state if you are doing a “Basic,” “Proficient,” or “Advanced.”** You must complete all components of that grade category to earn the grade.

## Rubric: Assignment Components by Level

### Introduction: Project Overview

**All levels should:** - Briefly explain what the TST is, why it’s sociologically significant, and what research question guides your analysis (e.g., How do I define myself? What does this reveal about identity in contemporary society compared to earlier generations?) - Note any specific focus (e.g., group vs. individual identity, role-based vs. trait-based responses)

### Methods: Analytical Roadmap

**All levels should:** - Explain that you completed the TST by writing twenty responses to “Who am I?” (Respond as honestly as possible rather than aspirationally; there are no “better” or “worse” identities for this assignment.) - Describe how you classified your responses using the TST coding sheet - Explain how you counted responses in each category - **Describe how you handled any responses that were difficult to categorize.** (Which responses were ambiguous? How did you decide where to place them?) - If conducting multiple TSTs (Proficient/Advanced), explain how you recruited participants and ensured anonymity: **Remove all names from response sheets and identify participants only as “Participant 1,” “Participant 2,” etc.**

**Include in appendix:** - Your completed TST response sheet (or image of handwritten sheet) - At higher levels, images of all response sheets (anonymized as described above)

### Findings: Trends and Significance

**All levels should:** - Present the results in a table or figure showing the count of responses in each category - Identify patterns in your responses (e.g., did early answers differ from later ones? Were you more group-focused or trait-focused?) - Interpret what these patterns might mean about your self-concept

**Basic (250 words minimum):** - Summarize your coding results - Note at least one pattern or comparison (e.g., “My first 10 responses were mostly role-based, but later responses were more trait-based”) - Make a clear connection to one course concept (bold the concept, e.g., **socialization** or **identity**)

**Proficient (400 words minimum):** - Recruit **at least two additional participants** (total N = 3, including yourself) to complete the TST - Create a summary table or figure showing your results and comparing across all participants - Compare your response types from your first ~10 answers versus later answers - Explain what this difference might reveal about how self-concept develops - Make a clear connection to one or more course concepts (**bold them**)

**Advanced (700 words minimum):** - Recruit **at least four additional participants** (total N = 5, including yourself) to complete the TST - Create a summary table or figure showing results for all participants - Develop and clearly explain your own **conceptually justified categorization scheme** for the responses (beyond the standard TST coding) - **Create a second table comparing your coding results to the standard TST scoring.** Show how responses were classified differently and what insights your scheme reveals - Discuss what patterns emerge across all participants, not just yourself - Make clear connections to two or more course concepts (**bold them**)

### **Conclusion: Sociological Synthesis**

**All levels should:** - Reflect on what your analysis reveals about self-concept in contemporary society - Connect your findings back to Zurcher's research and the shift from group-based to individual-trait-based identity - Discuss limitations: Are there biases in how you categorized your own responses? Would others have categorized them differently? What assumptions did you make?

### **Appendix: Supplementary Information**

**All levels should include:** - Your completed TST response sheet (or image of original) - Your coded responses (showing which category each statement falls into)

**Proficient should add:** - Images of all response sheets (anonymized as described in Methods)

**Advanced should add:** - Images of all response sheets (anonymized as described in Methods) - Your custom coding scheme documentation - Both the standard and custom coding tables