

HISTORY 140: EARLY CIVILIZATIONS

Topic 5: The State and the Sources of Social Power



Who Am I?

Introduction

This activity is to be completed at home. It is meant to prepare you for our discussion of state formation and the sources of social power by having you critically reflect on your identity and explore the ways others may perceive your identity. The assignment specifically asks you to consider this within the context of the social norms at El Camino College. However, you are encouraged to explore the context of this activity beyond the boundaries of this institution.

Part I: The Identity Wheel¹

The following is referred to as an identity wheel. It grants you the opportunity to specifically note identities that make up who you are. Take a moment to complete the wheel by ascribing a specific to each of the categories below. For example, I might note Mexican-American for Race/Ethnicity. Consider the following definition before you begin this activity.

Identity: The “set of traits and characteristics, social relations, roles and group membership that define who one is.” An individual’s identity impacts how one perceives and mediates the world. These identities can be self –claimed or ascribed.



¹ Adapted from the American Association of University Women, *Diversion and Inclusion Toolkit* and *Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege* - USC.

Part II: Target or Agent?²

El Camino College is an example an educational institution with its own norms. Reflect on your experiences on this campus both inside and outside of the classroom. Also consider your interaction with course content and faculty. Address the following questions.

Consider the following definitions before you begin this activity.

Agent: Members of dominant social groups privileged by birth or acquisition who have advantage over members of the target groups through societal/cultural “norms” and institutional biases.

Target: Members of social identity groups who are discriminated against, marginalized, disenfranchised by societal/cultural “norms” and institutional biases.

1. Do you feel that your self-acclaimed identity/culture is an agent or a target at El Camino College?
2. What specifically makes you identify with members of an agent or a target group on this campus?
3. With regards to course content and how it is presented, do you believe it re-enforces and favors members of agent groups or members of target groups? Why?
4. What would you like to see change with regards to course content and its facilitation to students?

² Adapted from <https://msw.usc.edu/mswusc-blog/diversity-workshop-guide-to-discussing-identity-power-and-privilege/>.