

Sociology 465, Social Interaction Processes
Cathryn Johnson and Karen Hegtvedt

In our course, Social Interaction Processes, SOC 465, we examine three fundamental processes in social interaction: status, power, and justice. Our focus on status and power reveals processes that underlie the development and reproduction of inequalities in groups, which often engender conflict. The third topic captures one form of evaluating those inequalities – i.e., the fairness of differences in interaction, in resource distributions, etc. Moreover, justice processes involve examination of factors that affect perceptions of injustice and reactions to it, both by individuals and by groups. We apply our justice analysis at the community level, focusing on perceptions of and reactions to *environmental injustice*. Specifically, we discuss how environmental justice is defined (e.g., Pellow 2000) and what leads to concerns for environmental justice. In doing so, we examine a case study on environmental justice (see Pellow [2000]) to determine how the status and power dynamics between stakeholders combine with contextual factors to affect perceptions and responses to an environmental justice issue. As part of our study of justice processes, students will develop a survey study that addresses environmental beliefs and participation in efforts to ameliorate environmental injustices. To achieve this goal, we explore current measures of environmental attitudes and behaviors and investigate how they have been used in several recent studies (e.g., Clayton 2000; Barkan 2004; Johnson et al. 2004). In summary, the key to this course is to tell a story of how status, power, and justice processes are interrelated, and to demonstrate this interconnection through a case study on environmental justice, and conclude with an execution of a survey study on an environmental justice issue. Our participation in the *Piedmont Project* highlighted for us the unique yet frequently overlooked ways in which the study of environmental issues brings together theoretical concerns about status, power, and justice. In addition, exchanges with colleagues involved in the *Piedmont Project* suggested to us resources, examples, and assignments relevant to our class topic. For example, students are asked to analyze a newspaper article of their choosing that represents an environmental situation perceived to be unjust by some people.

SOCIAL INTERACTION PROCESSES

(Tu, Th. 10:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m., Tarbutton Hall, room 116)

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Course Objectives

This course focuses on three fundamental processes in social interaction: status, power, and justice. The first two topics focus on structural factors that often lead to inequalities in interaction. The third topic captures one form of evaluating those inequalities – i.e., the fairness of differences in interaction, in resource distributions, etc. For each process, we will address both abstract theoretical ideas as well as relevant concrete issues. In doing so, we will move from examination of informal groups, to formal groups, to larger groups such as communities.

The first part of the course examines status processes. Specifically we investigate how the status of individuals within groups affects patterns of influence among group members. In doing so, we raise the issue of how status processes reproduce and maintain inequality in groups.

A focus on power dynamics within groups constitutes the second portion of the course. Here we study how power processes affect the exchange of valued resources and decision-making processes in formal groups. Often inequalities in exchange provide the basis for conflict in organizations.

We conclude the course by examining justice processes. We analyze how people differentially perceive and respond to injustice in distributions, procedures, or treatment. We will apply our analysis at the community level, focusing on issues of environmental injustice. This application also integrates previously discussed issues of status and power.

The course thus provides students with analytical tools and requires them to apply those tools to understanding concrete issues. Working together, class members will discuss theoretical materials and design investigations, which will be jointly undertaken. As a consequence, by the end of the course, class members should more clearly understand how status, power, and justice processes affect the groups in which they are embedded as well as have a firm grasp on how to empirically investigate these processes.

Course Requirements

Participation

Timely class attendance and regular participation in discussions is expected. Taking part in discussion may involve asking a question, giving a response, making a comment on reading or lecture materials, offering an example, etc. Involvement in class research projects is imperative. Attendance and participation will be duly noted at the end of the semester.

Readings

All assigned **readings** should be completed *before* class to ensure active participation in class discussions and activities.

Readings: Other readings are available through electronic reserves. (You need Adobe Acrobat to read the files). Some other readings may be added.

Memos

One short (1-2 page) response paper will pertain to each topic of the course. For the status and power, these memos may involve summaries or issues raised in the reading. For the justice topic, we will ask students to analyze a newspaper article of their choosing that represents an environmental situation perceived to be unjust by some people. Details will be forthcoming.

Papers

The class will collaborate on one project for each of the three processes. Class members will independently write-up results each project in the form of an empirical journal article (each about 8 pages long). The article format includes a theoretical argument based on materials from the class and two additional published empirical studies, specification of an hypothesis, description of data collection procedures, presentation of data analysis, and a discussion of whether the data confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis. A handout will detail the format of the papers. (And, procedures regarding statistical analyses will depend upon the background and abilities of class members and the demands of the projects.) Tentative paper due dates are:

Status: Thursday, October 4

Power: Thursday, November 8

Justice: Thursday, December 13

Policies

Late assignments: ...are papers that are turned in to me any time after the class period in which they are due. Papers will be docked 5 points per day.

Honor Code: The Emory University honor code applies fully to this course. When you sign an exam or submit your assignments, you are pledging to the honor code. For reference, please consult http://www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor_code.html.

Disabilities: Students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (7-6016) to obtain proper documentation if accommodations are needed. Please do this early in the semester in order to make sure that everything is in order.

Blackboard: We will use the Blackboard site for this course regularly. Please check the site several times a week in order to ensure that you are aware of class announcements and so forth. We may also use the site to arrange discussions with your colleagues in the course.

Email: Please allow at least 24 hours for replies to emails. If you have an urgent concern regarding the course, you should try to contact us by phone. All assignments should be submitted in paper form, not as email attachments (unless otherwise approved ahead of time). If any WORD documents are sent via email, please be sure to send them “saved as” an earlier (not 2007) version of Office so that all students and faculty may open them!

Mobile phones: All “ringing” gadgets (phones, pagers, watch alarms) should be turned off during class. Failure to do so may result in confiscation of said gadget.

Course Outline

(This is the intended ordering and longevity of topics. Modifications may occur as the course progresses. Also, consult the Bb site for a “schedule” that lists date, topic, required reading.)

Thurs, Aug 30 **Introduction: What does social interaction encompass?**

QUESTIONS, APPROACH, METHODS

Tues, Sept 4 **Classic Status Studies: What are status processes?**

Whyte, William F. 1943. *Street Corner Society*, pp. 2-25. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Michener, Andrew and John DeLamater. 1999. Chapter 14, "Group Structure and Interaction." Pp. 336-348 in *Social Psychology*. Fourth Edition, Harcourt Brace.

Thurs, Sept 6 **Theoretical Statement on Status: Why does status affect interaction?**

Berger, Joseph, Susan Rosenholtz, and Morris Zelditch, Jr. 1980. “Status Organizing Processes.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 6:479-508.

Tues, Sept 11 **Applying Status Processes: How does gender as status affect group interaction?**

Wood, Wendy and S.J. Karten. 1986. “Sex Differences in Interaction Styles as a Product of Perceived Sex Differences in Competence.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 50:341-7.

Ridgeway, Cecilia, Joseph Berger, and L. Smith. 1985. “Nonverbal Cues and Status: An Expectation States Account”. *American Journal of Sociology* 90:955-78.

Thur, Sept 13 **Status Project – Stage 1: Development**

Ridgeway, Cecilia and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 1999. "The Gender System and Interaction." *Annual Review of Sociology* 25:191-216.

Tues, Sept 18 **Status and Inequality: How do status processes reproduce inequality?**

Correll, Shelley J. 2004. "Gender, Status and Emerging Career Aspirations." *American Sociological Review* 69:93-113.

Brezina, Timothy and Kenisha Winder. 2003. "Economic Disadvantage: Status Generalization, and Negative Racial Stereotyping by White Americans." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 66:402-418.

Thur, Sept 20 **Status Project – Stage 2: Data Collection**

Tues, Sept 25 **Undoing Inequality: How do status interventions reduce inequality?**

Pugh, Meredith D. and Ralph Wahrman. 1983. "Neutralizing Sexism in Mixed-sex Groups: Do Women Have to be Better Than Men?" *American Journal of Sociology* 88:746-62.

Lucas, Jeffrey N. 2003. "Status Processes and the Institutionalization of Women as Leaders." *American Sociological Review* 68:464-480.

Thur, Sept 27 **Status Project – Stage 3: Data Analysis**

Tues, Oct 2 **Writing Status Paper – NO CLASS**

Thurs, Oct 4 **Status Paper Due (beginning of class)**

Theoretical Statement on Power (I): What is power dependence and how does it affect power use in dyads?

Emerson, Richard. 1962. "Power-dependence Relations." *American Sociological Review* 27:31-40.

Tues, Oct 9 **FALL BREAK**

Thur, Oct 11 **Theoretical Statement on Power (II): How does power dependence and power use affect commitment and trust in social networks?**

Cook, Karen S. and Richard Emerson. 1978. "Power, Equity and Commitment in Exchange Networks." *American Sociological Review* 43:721-739.

Tues, Oct 16 **Applying Power Processes: How does power in organizations affect conflict processes?**

Johnson, Cathryn and Rebecca Ford. 1996. "Dependence Power, Legitimacy, and Tactical Choice." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 59:126-139.

Kanter, Rosabeth M. 1977. "Power." Pp. 164-205 in *Men and Women in the Corporation*. New York: Basic Books.

Thur, Oct 18 **Power Project – Stage 1: Development**

(Review Johnson et al. 1996 assigned for Oct. 16)

Tues, Oct 23 **Power and Inequality: How do commitment and trust in social networks reduce inequality?**

Kollock, Peter. 1994. "The Emergence of Exchange Structures: An Experimental Study of Uncertainty, Commitment, and Trust." *American Journal of Sociology* 100:315-45.

Thur, Oct 25 **Power Project – Stage 2: Data Collection**

Tues, Oct 30 **Combining Structural Factors: How are status and power processes linked?**

Theye, Shane R. 2000. "A Status Value Theory of Power in Exchange Relations." *American Sociological Review* 65:407-432.

Thur, Nov 1 **Power Project – Stage 3: Data Analysis**

Tues, Nov 6 **Writing Power Paper – NO CLASS**

Thur, Nov 8 **Power Paper Due** (*beginning of class*)

Theoretical Statement on Justice (I): How is justice a means to evaluate the consequences of status and power processes?

Hegtvedt, Karen A. 2006. "Justice Frameworks." Pp. 46-69 in *Contemporary Social Psychological Theories*, edited by Peter J. Burke. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. (Note: article also applies to Nov 13 & 27 materials)

Tues, Nov 13 **Theoretical Statement on Justice (II): How do people perceive injustice?**

Freudenthaler, Heribert H. and Gerold Mikula. 1998. "From Unfulfilled Wants to the Experience of Injustice: Women's Sense of Injustice Regarding the Lopsided Division of Household Labor." *Social Justice Research* 11:289-312.

Thurs, Nov 15 **Applying Justice Processes: What is environmental justice?**

Pellow, David N. 2000. "Environmental Inequality Formation." *American Behavioral Scientist* 43:581-601.

Tues, Nov 20 **(Environmental) Justice Project – Stage 1: Development**

Clayton, Susan. 2000. "Models of Justice in the Environmental Debate." *Journal of Social Issues* 56:459-2000.

Barkan, Steven E. 2004. "Explaining Public Support for the Environmental Movement: A Civic Voluntarism Model." *Social Science Quarterly* 85:913-931.

Johnson, Cassandra Y., J. M. Bowker, and H. Ken Cordell. 2004. "Ethnic Variation in Environmental Belief and Behavior: An Examination of the New Ecological Paradigm in a Social Psychological Context." *Environment and Behavior* 36:157-186.

Thurs, Nov 22 **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Tues, Nov 27 **Theoretical Statement on Justice (III): How do people respond to injustice?**

Lind, E. Allan, Laura Kray, and Leigh Thompson. 1998. "The Social Construction of Injustice: Fairness Judgments in Response to Own and Others' Unfair Treatment by Authorities." *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 75:1-22.

Lerner, Steve. 1997. "Juana Beatriz Guitierrez: The Mothers of East Los Angeles Conserve Water, Protect the Neighborhood, and Create Jobs." Pp. 277-285 in *Eco-Pioneers*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Thurs, Nov 29 **(Environmental) Justice Project – Stage 2: Data Collection**

Tues, Dec 4 **Social Context of Injustice: How does the social context affect perceptions and reactions to injustice?**

Hegtvedt, Karen A. and Cathryn Johnson. 2000. Justice beyond the individual: A future with legitimation. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63:298-311.

Thurs, Dec 6 **(Environmental) Justice Project – Stage 3: Data Analysis**

Tues, Dec 11 **Conclusions: Status, Power, and Justice in Everyday Life**

Thurs, Dec 13 ***Justice Paper Due*** (to Hegtvedt/Johnson mailboxes)