Sociology: The Weberian perspective of Social stratification.

Paper 1: Stratification and mobility.

Introduction

The three-component theory of stratification, more widely known as Weberian stratification or the three class system, was developed by German sociologist Max Weber with class, status and power as distinct ideal types. Weber developed a multidimensional approach to social stratification that reflects the interplay among wealth, prestige and power.

Weber argued that power can take a variety of forms. A person's power can be shown in the social order through their status, in the economic order through their class, and in the political order through their party. Thus, class, status and party are each aspects of the distribution of power within a community.

Weberian view of stratification

Weber argues that the major class division is between those who own the forces of production and those who don't. Those who have substantial property holdings will receive the highest economic rewards and enjoy superior life chances. Weber distinguish the following class grouping in capitalist society:

- The propertied upper class.
- The property less white-collar workers.
- The petty bourgeoisie.
- The manual working class.

According to Weber factors other than the ownership or non-ownership of property are significant in the formation of classes. In particular the market value of the skills of the property less varies and the resulting differences in economic returns are sufficient to produce different social classes. Weber sees no evidence to support the idea of polarization of classes.
In many societies class and status situations are closely linked. Weber notes that property as such is not always recognized as a status qualification but in the long run it is and with extraordinary regularity. However those who share the same class situation will not necessarily belong to the semi status group. The nouveau riches are sometimes excluded from the status groups of the privileged because their tastes, manners and dress are defined as vulgar. Status gross may create division within classes. Weber's observations on status group are important since they suggest that in certain situations status rather than class provided the basis for the formation of social group whose members perceive common interests and a group identity.

In addition the presence of different status groups within a single class and of status groups which cut across class division can weaken class solidarity and reduce the potential force class consciousness. These points are illustrated by Weber's analysis of parties. He defines parties as groups that are specifically concerned with the influencing policies and making decisions in the interest of their membership. In Weber's words parties are concerned with the acquisition of social power. Parties include a variety of association from the mass political parties of western democracies to the whole range of pressure or interest groups which include professional associations, trade unions, the automobile association etc.
If you respect someone or view him as your social superior, then he will potentially be able to exercise power over you. In this respect, social status is a social resource simply because he may have it while you may not.

The influence of laws is based on the social action of members of the classes. The degree in which "social action" and possibly associations emerge from the mass behavior of the members of a class is linked to general cultural conditions.

It is noncontroversial that the class situation in which each individual finds himself represents a limitation on his scope, tends to keep him within the class. It acts as an obstacle to any rise into a higher class.

Max Weber was although having a different point of view from Marx. He insisted that the political and social division was mainly based on the account of production rate of deserving people, whereas Marx has seen class division as capitalism and iron cage view. Weber particularly stated that control was in hand of those people who can earn the maximum profit and production. The people who could not afford much in production were put up in the situation of survival of the best. Weber supported Marx ideas on some crucial situation but he exercised his ideation in an analytical way. He stated that men in the society will always thrive for power and thus it becomes the reason for social stratification. But on the other hand, he did not support the ill-treatment of poor peasants.

1. According to Weber, “The economic aspect is crucial in classes, honour is crucial in status groups and power is crucial in parties”. Explain this in the view of his theory on social stratification. (250 words)

2. Distinguish between people being socially excluded and people excluding themselves socially in societies. (250 words)