

Social Mobility in Goal! The Dream Begins (2005) : An Analysis of The Main Character's Journey

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History Article:

Received 08 01, 2025
Accepted 08 11, 2025
Published 08 13, 2025

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the theme of social mobility as portrayed in the film Goal! The Dream Begins, focusing on the life journey of the main character, Santiago Muñez. It aims to examine the character's experience of social mobility and identify the key factors that contribute to his transformation. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, this research adopts a sociological approach to literature, using Sorokin's theory of social mobility as the analytical framework. The study closely analyzes selected dialogues from the film to uncover how Santiago's background, personal ambition, talent in football, and support from key individuals influence his mobility. The findings indicate that Santiago undergoes upward vertical social mobility, reflected in his transition from a low-income, working-class background to a successful professional footballer. This shift demonstrates not only a rise in his economic standing but also a significant improvement in his social status. In the end, the film emphasizes that personal determination, available opportunities, and social connections are crucial in facilitating social mobility, particularly when sports serve as a channel for transformation.

Keywords: Social Mobility, Upward Mobility, Social Stratification, Film Analysis, Sorokin's Theory

How to Cite:

Wahyu Andika Rustanto, & Wahyu Budi. (2025). Social Mobility in Goal! The Dream Begins (2005) : An Analysis of The Main Character's Journey. Jejak Digital: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin, 1(5), 3126-3134. <https://doi.org/10.63822/mqjkb231>

INTRODUCTION

In society, people are categorized into different layers based on factors such as income, education, occupation, and social influence. This categorization is known as social stratification. Social stratification is a structured system in which individuals or groups are classified into various social levels, each with different roles, privileges, and responsibilities (Muin, 2004). According to Sorokin (2015), social stratification is the hierarchical grouping of people into different social classes, where some groups occupy higher positions than others. Social stratification creates layers within society that indirectly influence a person's opportunities to experience changes in social status.

The shift in an individual's or group's social standing, driven by ongoing and dynamic processes, can occur as movement between different social layers whether as advancement (upward mobility) or decline (downward mobility) in social status known as social mobility. According to Sorokin, social mobility refers to any movement of an individual, object, or social value created or modified by human activity from one social position to another (Soekanto, 2017).

Sorokin identifies three main forms of social stratification: economic, political, and occupational, which describe how social positions can shift from one class to another. These forms highlight the complex and dynamic nature of class movement in a structured society. There are two types of social mobility that can occur in real life: horizontal mobility and vertical mobility (Yadav, 2001).

The concept of social mobility exists not only in real life but also appears in literary works, including films. One such film that clearly reflects socioeconomic realities, particularly the process of social mobility, is *Goal! The Dream Begins* (2005). In the film *Goal! The Dream Begins*, the determination of main character, Santiago Muñez to achieve his dream of becoming a professional football player is greatly influenced by his life experiences, including his family's migration from Mexico to the United States. Living as an immigrant in a difficult economic situation taught him to work hard and face challenges from a young age. Despite facing many hardships, he held on to his dream. Moreover, his talent in football and strong motivation to change his life played a significant role in realizing that dream.

This research focuses on the analysis of social mobility experienced by the main character in the film *Goal! The Dream Begins*. Santiago Muñez undergoes a transformational journey of social mobility by seizing the opportunity to pursue a career as a professional football player, after previously working in the informal sector under economically challenging conditions. Sorokin's theory is chosen in this study because it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding social mobility, facilitating a deeper analysis of the social forces influencing status changes, which is highly relevant to the main character's journey in the film *Goal! The Dream Begins*.

This film is selected because it effectively portrays social mobility through the lens of the sports world, showing how talent, motivation, and external support can enable individuals from underprivileged backgrounds to overcome obstacles and achieve significant improvements in their social standing.

This study analyzes the main character Santiago in *Goal! The Dream Begins*, focusing on his social stratification, the type of social mobility he experiences, and the factors influencing his journey. It aims to reveal how sports function as a medium for social transformation, using Pitirim Sorokin's theory to explore Santiago's rise in social and economic status. The research is limited to Santiago's character and offers both theoretical contributions by linking character development to sociological concepts and practical value as a reference for future studies on social issues in literature and film.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

This chapter provides the theoretical framework for analyzing social stratification and mobility, serving as the foundation for understanding the key sociological concepts that guide this research. It outlines definitions, classifications, and dimensions of social stratification, along with the forms and processes of social mobility, as proposed by relevant scholars such as Pitirim Sorokin.

By presenting these theories, the chapter establishes the lens through which the main character's experiences in *Goal! The Dream Begins* will be examined, ensuring a clear connection between the film's narrative and the academic concepts that explain the character's social position, movement, and influencing factors. This research focuses specifically on the concept of plot. Plot is the organized sequence of events in a story, where each event is linked by cause and effect relationships. It serves as the main structure of the narrative, helping to move the story forward in an engaging and logical way. Unlike just showing events in the order they happen, the plot goes beyond a simple timeline of events (Suminto, 2017).

By examining the plot, the researcher is able to identify key moments that highlight the development of the main character, Santiago Muñoz, and his progression throughout the film. The plot functions as an analytical tool that filters which dialogues are most significant in revealing the character's background, challenges, and achievements. Therefore, the dialogues analyzed in this study are those that align with the structure of the plot and reflect the thematic focus of the research.

Social Stratification

In society, people are categorized into different layers based on factors such as income, education, occupation, and social influence. This categorization is known as social stratification. It is a structured system in which individuals or groups are ranked into various social levels, each with specific roles, privileges, and responsibilities that differ from one level to another (Muin, 2004). This system plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' access to resources and opportunities within the social hierarchy.

According to Sorokin, social stratification is the hierarchical arrangement of people into different social classes, where some groups are positioned above others. Sorokin argues that the root of this structure is the unequal allocation of rights, obligations, responsibilities, social values, and influence among members of society (Maunah, 2015). Therefore, social stratification refers to the division of society into distinct levels or social ranks. Sorokin defines social stratification as the hierarchical classification of people within a society into different social classes.

This structure is manifested in the existence of upper and lower social classes. The term 'stratification' is derived from the word stratum, which is the plural form of strata and means 'layers'. Sorokin's theory, social stratification refers to the classification of people into higher and lower social classes within a society. This layered social structure is fundamentally based on the unequal distribution of various important aspects within the community, including rights, responsibilities, social values, and influence (Basrowi, 2005).

Sorokin divides social classes into three groups based on wealth, power, and influence: (1) the upper class, which controls significant resources, enjoys privileges, and holds broad political and economic influence; (2) the middle class, which has moderate wealth, stable jobs, and some social status but less influence than the upper class; and (3) the lower class, which faces poverty, unstable employment, and limited access to basic needs. This classification explains how social hierarchies persist and why opportunities vary across society.

Social Mobility Theory

Social stratification creates layers within society that influence an individual's opportunities for changes in social status, a process known as social mobility. According to Sorokin, social mobility refers to any transition of an individual, object, or social value created or modified by human activity from one social position to another (Soekanto, 2017). It involves the movement of individuals or groups within the social structure, either upward or downward, affecting the position of a person or an entire group, and can occur in economic, political, or occupational forms (Kerbo, 2017). Social mobility is categorized into horizontal mobility, which is movement within the same social level, and vertical mobility, which is movement between different strata (Indera, 2016). Vertical mobility can be upward, when moving from a lower to a higher class, or downward, when shifting from a higher to a lower class (Indera, 2016).

Vertical mobility is the change in social status when an individual or group moves between different social layers. Upward vertical mobility takes two forms: (1) when individuals of lower status rise to an established higher position, e.g., a salesperson becoming a regional sales director; and (2) when a new group emerges with higher status than existing layers. Downward vertical mobility also has two forms: (1) when an individual's position declines, such as a famous actor losing roles due to controversy; and (2) when a role loses its high status, such as a CEO demoted to a consultant with no decision-making power.

Horizontal mobility refers to movement within the same social layer, where the social class remains unchanged (Suyanto, 2004). Unlike vertical mobility, it does not involve a higher or lower rank. For example, a high school teacher transferring to another school in a different city while keeping the same position and status experiences horizontal mobility.

To understand the dynamics of social mobility in the film, it is essential to identify the key factors that influence an individual's rise or shift in social standing. According to Sorokin (Yadav, 2001), these factors include: (1) motivation, (2) achievements, (3) failure, (4) education, (5) skills and training, (6) migration, (7) industrialization, (8) urbanization, (9) legislation, (10) politicization, and (11) modernization.

METHODOLOGY

This study applies a descriptive qualitative method, as outlined by Sardiana and Fuad (2020), which enables a detailed and organized analysis without requiring fieldwork. This approach is well-suited for examining social situations and issues, such as social mobility and its influencing factors as depicted in *Goal! The Dream Begins*. Rather than relying on numerical data, it seeks a deep understanding through careful analysis, revealing richer insights into the phenomenon. By focusing on significant dialogues, the study captures subtle nuances of Santiago Munez's journey.

A key strength of this method lies in its emphasis on depth and richness of data, allowing close observation of interactions, emotions, and pivotal moments that quantitative methods might overlook. This facilitates a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between social mobility within the film's narrative.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Social stratification of Santiago Muñez in *Goal! The Dream Begins*

In *Goal! The Dream Begins*, Santiago Muñez is portrayed as coming from the lower class despite having a home and jobs. According to Sorokin, the middle class holds moderate wealth, stable employment, and some financial security, though with less influence than the upper class. Several dialogues in the film

highlight Santiago's position within this social stratification during the early part of his life. It can be proved in this movie sequence:

*"Rápido. Rápido. This is the United States
border patrol"* (00:02:27-00:02:32)

In the opening scene of *Goal! The Dream Begins*, Santiago and his family cross the U.S. border illegally and are chased by patrol officers, who declare, "This is the United States Border Patrol." This dialogue reflects Santiago's lower-class status both economically and legally as an undocumented immigrant with limited access to protection and proper opportunities.

*"Hey, boss. I've been a busboy now
for six months. Why can't I be a waiter?"*
(00:06:55-00:06:59)

Santiago says, *"I've been a busboy for six months. Why can't I be a waiter?"* This line highlights his position as a lower-class worker, hindered from moving up. Despite working for a long time, he remains in a low-level role, reflecting limited social mobility. Several months of hard work bring him neither progress nor recognition, reflecting the stagnation of his social position. This stagnation reinforces the idea that hard work alone is not always enough to break out of the cycle of poverty. It also illustrates how structural barriers prevent individuals from going beyond the roles assigned by society. Santiago witnesses this firsthand, which shapes his motivation to break free from the cycle.

"There are two types of people: those who live in big houses and people like us who wash their cars." (00:10:35-00:10:46)

Santiago's father says, *"There are two types of people: those who live in big houses and people like us who wash their cars."* This line clearly indicates that Santiago's family comes from a lower social class. They live as low-wage workers serving the upper class, with little hope of moving up. The statement reflects an awareness of their low position in the social structure. Santiago's father voices this reality with a sense of resignation, emphasizing that people like them are meant to serve, not to dream. His words highlight the internalization of class boundaries and the belief that upward mobility is beyond their reach. This perspective shapes Santiago's early understanding of his place in society and the limitations imposed on him.

The reference from the dialogues above shows Santiago's situation in *Goal! The Dream Begins*, where he is introduced as an undocumented immigrant crossing the U.S. border illegally. Even after settling, he works as a busboy and questions why he can't become a waiter, showing how he is stuck in a low level job. His father also says, *"There are two types of people: those who live in big houses and people like us who wash their cars,"* which clearly reflects their identity as lower working-class people with little hope of rising to a higher social status. It relates to Sorokin's theory of social classes, where the lower class is often characterized by limited access to legal protection, low-paying jobs, and minimal opportunities for upward mobility. Therefore, in this study, Santiago and his family can be categorized as part of the lower class.

Type of Santiago Muñoz's Social Mobility in *Goal! The Dream Begins*

There are two types of social mobility, but in the film *Goal! The Dream Begins*, only one type occurs vertical social mobility, more specifically, upward vertical mobility. According to Sorokin in Yadav's article (2001), vertical mobility refers to the change in social status experienced by an individual or group as they move from one level of the social hierarchy to another, either upward or downward. Upward vertical mobility happens when a person improves their social standing. For example, moving from a working-class

background to becoming a successful professional. This is exactly what happens to Santiago Muñez, whose journey from a poor immigrant working menial jobs to a professional footballer illustrates a clear rise in his socioeconomic position. His progress reflects not only personal success but also societal acknowledgment of his changed status. These are dialogues in the film *Goal! The Dream Begins* that reflect the type of social mobility experienced by Santiago Munez:

*"Rápido. Rápido. This is the United States
border patrol"* (00:02:27-00:02:32)

This dialogue powerfully highlights Santiago's position at the very bottom of the social hierarchy. As an undocumented immigrant, he lacks legal recognition, official documents, and the basic rights and protections that come with citizenship. This status not only places him in a vulnerable and marginalized position in society but also severely limits his access to opportunities, mobility, and even freedom of movement. This action labeling him and his family "illegal" reduces his identity to his legal status, reinforcing the systemic barriers that prevent people like him from improving their lives, regardless of their talent or ambition. It underscores the harsh reality faced by many in similar situations, where social and legal exclusion go hand in hand.

"There are two types of people: those who live in big houses and people like us who wash their cars." (00:10:35-00:10:46)

The line, *"I've been a busboy for six months. Why can't I be a waiter?"* reflects Santiago's position as a low-wage worker stuck in an unskilled job with limited prospects for advancement. Despite his dedication, he faces barriers to even minor promotions, highlighting the stagnation common in lower-class employment. However, this moment also contrasts with a turning point in his life: soon after, he is offered a chance to attend a football trial in England. This opportunity becomes a symbol of potential upward mobility, showing how a single break can shift someone from a life of limited options toward a path of personal and professional transformation that go hand in hand.

*"This is your chance to prove your worth...
Show them what you've got, kid,"*
(01:23:03 – 01:23:52)

This moment represents far more than just a professional milestone in Santiago's football career; it is a turning point that signifies a profound transformation in his social standing and identity. It marks the culmination of his journey from anonymity and marginalization to visibility and recognition. Santiago, who once lived in the shadows as an undocumented immigrant working low-wage jobs, is now stepping into the spotlight of a prestigious professional arena.

His selection to play at such a high level not only affirms his talent and relentless dedication but also grants him a form of social validation previously out of reach. It places him within a sphere where he is no longer invisible or underestimated, but instead seen, celebrated, and respected. His debut represents more than participation in a match; it publicly affirms his entrance into a higher social class marked by professional recognition, financial prospects, and social prestige.

*"Unbelievable. Newcastle's youngest player
gives the fans a new song to sing," followed
by the crowd chanting, "Santiago, Santiago,
olé, olé, olé!"* (01:50:46 – 01:50:58)

The lines, *"Young Santiago Munez steps up... the hope of the entire city rests on his shoulders,"* followed by the crowd chanting, *"Santiago! Santiago! Olé, olé, olé!"* mark the peak of Santiago's

transformation and serve as a powerful symbol of his successful social mobility. This moment not only underscores his evolution from an undocumented immigrant with limited prospects to a celebrated athlete on a global stage, but also serves as a powerful symbol of his successful social mobility. The crowd's unified chant represents public recognition, acceptance, and admiration things once far beyond his reach. It encapsulates the journey of a young man who defied societal and structural barriers, proving that with determination and opportunity, one can rise above their circumstances and claim a new identity within a higher social stratum. This moment also reflects a shift in how he is perceived not just as an athlete, but as someone who has earned a rightful place in a world that once seemed inaccessible.

"Hey, let me introduce you to my friends.

That's Zizou. This is Raúl. Santiago Munez,"

(01:26:41 – 01:27:00)

The line, *"That's Zizou. This is Raúl. Santiago Munez,"* captures a significant moment in Santiago's journey, where he is introduced to world-renowned football legends like Zinedine Zidane and Raúl. This brief yet powerful exchange symbolizes Santiago's entry into the elite circles of international football a space typically reserved for the most accomplished and respected players. It signifies not only his professional achievement but also his acceptance into a realm of prestige and influence. This moment affirms his transformation from a marginalized outsider to a peer among the sport's most celebrated figures. It marks the culmination of his social ascent and the recognition of his place within the global football community.

Based on dialogues above, it can be concluded that social stratification is closely related to social mobility, as understanding one's position within the social structure helps to identify the type of mobility they experience. This connection is clearly seen in the character of Santiago Munez in the film *Goal! The Dream Begins* (2005). Santiago comes from a lower-class background as an undocumented immigrant who works low-wage jobs with limited opportunities.

However, through talent, determination, and support from others, he seizes the chance to pursue a professional football career. Unlike many cases of stagnation within lower classes, Santiago's story presents a successful example of upward vertical mobility, based on Sorokin's theory about the type of social mobility. He not only improves his economic condition but also gains social recognition and acceptance. His journey illustrates how individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds can rise up the social ladder when given the opportunity and support to grow.

Factors of Santiago Muñoz's Social Mobility in *Goal! The Dream Begins*

There are several factors that facilitate social mobility for certain individuals. These factors are performance and development, which can lead to significant changes in how social status is evaluated. According to Sorokin in Dr Kumar Satyendra Yadav's article (2001), these factors are divided into motivation, achievement and failure, education, skills and training, migration, industrialization, urbanization, legislation, politicization, and modernization. Among all the various factors, only four can be identified as contributing to Santiago Munez's social mobility as the main character in *Goal! The Dream Begins* (2005): they are Motivation, Achievements, Skills and training, and also Migration.

The following dialogues illustrate how these factors are reflected in the main character of Santiago Munez throughout the film:

1) Factor of Motivation

"That could change if I become a

professional player” (00:10:48 – 00:10:50)

Santiago’s statement, *“That could change if I become a professional player,”* reflects his belief that football can be his way out of a lower-class life. He sees an opportunity to improve his living conditions, not only for himself but also for his family. This line expresses his strong hope and determination to achieve social mobility through talent and hard work in the world of sports.

2) Factor of Skills & Training

“Did you teach him to do that?”

- *God taught him.*” (00:08:45 – 00:08:49)

The dialogue, *“Did you teach him to do that?”* followed by, *“God taught him,”* emphasizes Santiago’s natural ability in football. It suggests that his talent is instinctive rather than taught, making it clear from early on that he possesses something special. This raw skill becomes a crucial factor in his journey, helping to create opportunities and paving the way for his rise in social status. It sets him apart from others and becomes the foundation upon which his success is built. Over time, this talent earns him not only recognition but also the respect he had long been denied.

3) Factor of Achievements

“Hey, let me introduce you to my friends.

That’s Zizou. This is Raúl. Santiago Munez,”

(01:26:41 – 01:27:00)

The line, *“Hey, let me introduce you to my friends. That’s Zizou. This is Raúl. Santiago Munez,”* marks a key moment in Santiago’s journey, where he is welcomed into the inner circle of international football elites. Being introduced alongside world-renowned players like Zinedine Zidane and Raúl signifies that Santiago has reached a level of recognition and success far beyond his humble beginnings. This scene reflects not only his professional achievement but also his acceptance into a prestigious social space, symbolizing that he is no longer just a rising player, but someone acknowledged and respected among football’s top figures, a clear indicator of his upward social transformation.

4) Factor of Migration

“Rápido. Rápido. This is the United States

border patrol” (00:02:27-00:02:32)

The lines, *“This is the United States Border Patrol.”* depict a tense and defining moment that reveals Santiago and his family’s status as undocumented immigrants. Fleeing from border patrol officers, the scene captures the fear and urgency of entering a country illegally in search of a better life. Santiago’s childhood, marked by this experience, sets the tone for his lower-class position not only economically, but also legally, as someone forced to live in the shadows without proper documentation. This early moment in the film powerfully illustrates the vulnerability and limited opportunities faced by immigrants in his position, reinforcing the social barriers he must overcome throughout his journey.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of *Goal! The Dream Begins* (2005), Santiago Muñoz undergoes upward vertical social mobility, moving from the lower class where he works low-wage jobs as an undocumented immigrant to becoming a recognized professional footballer. This shift, in line with Sorokin’s theory of social layers, shows how talent, opportunity, determination, and external support can overcome structural barriers and significantly improve one’s economic and social standing.

This upward mobility is not the result of a single event but is instead driven by a combination of four primary factors that have been thoroughly identified and analyzed in the study:

1. Factor of Motivation: Santiago's strong personal desire to change his life and achieve his dream of becoming a professional football player pushes him to persevere through obstacles.
2. Factor of Skills & Training: Santiago's natural football talent, honed through consistent effort, becomes a vital asset in gaining access to professional opportunities.
3. Factor of Achievement: Santiago's debut and performance in major football matches gain him recognition, leading to social acceptance and a rise in status.
4. Factor of Migration: Although his undocumented status poses initial barriers, his migration journey ultimately leads him to environments that offer greater opportunities for advancement.

Santiago's story exemplifies Pitirim Sorokin's theory of social mobility, particularly highlighting how structural barriers and individual agency intersect in the pursuit of a better life. The type of social mobility reflected in his journey is vertical upward mobility, where an individual moves from a lower to a higher social status. Santiago begins as an undocumented immigrant in the lower class, working low-paying jobs with limited opportunities. However, through his determination, football talent, and the support he receives, he is able to rise to a respected position as a professional athlete. Through the lens of film, *Goal!* offers a compelling narrative on the potential for transformation among those at the bottom of the social hierarchy when persistence, skill, and opportunity come together.

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