Social Mobility:
Types and Factors
Types of Social Mobility

Change of a social position of an individual or group of individuals takes different forms and shapes. At one period of time, there can be one type of mobility and at another period of time, there can be another. Each type is not exclusive. They may overlap. It is only for the purpose of convenience and analysis that they are given different labels. Following slides shall focus on different types of Social Mobility.
Horizontal mobility is the transition of an individual or social object from one social group to another situated on the same level. While explaining mobility, we are mainly referring to movement of individuals from one position to another of more or less equal prestige.

“Horizontal Mobility refers to a territorial, religious, political party, family, occupational and other horizontal shifting without any noticeable change in vertical position.”

Sorokin

**CHARACTERISTICS:**

1. Under this type of social mobility, a person changes his or her occupation but the overall social standing remains the same.

2. Certain occupations like those of a Doctor, an Engineer and a Professor may enjoy the same status but when an engineer changes his occupation from an engineer to teaching engineering, he has moved from one occupational category to another.

3. There has been no change taken place in the system of Social Stratification.

4. Shifting of individuals from one job or factory or occupation to another of the same kind refers to horizontal circulation, especially, if they do not represent any noticeable change in vertical direction.
Vertical mobility refers to any change in the occupational, economic or political status of an individual or a group which leads to a change in their position.

“By vertical social mobility we mean the relations involved in the transition of an individual (or a social object) from one social stratum to another. According to the direction of transition, there are two types of vertical social mobility: ascending and descending or social climbing and social sinking.”

SOROKIN HAS INDICATED THE FOLLOWING GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF VERTICAL MOBILITY:

1. There has scarcely been any society whose strata were absolutely closed or in which vertical mobility, in its three forms: economic, political and occupational, was not present.
2. There has never existed a society in which vertical social mobility has been absolutely free and the transition from one special stratum to another has had no resistance.
3. The intensiveness as well as the generality of vertical social mobility varies from society to society.
4. The intensiveness and generality of vertical mobility: Economic, Political and Occupational – fluctuates in the same society at different times.
**UPWARD MOBILITY**

1. When a person or a group of persons moves from a lower position to an upper position, it is called ‘Upward Mobility’.
2. For instance, when a person belonging to lower caste and occupying a lower position after winning elections becomes a minister and occupies a higher position.
3. There are many social and psychic costs involved in upward mobility. In the course of upward movement, the mobile man must leave behind many people and places.
4. He must leave the ways of thinking and behaving that characterized many of his earlier associations, and he must learn, if he can, new ways of thinking and behaving appropriate to his new status.

**DOWNWARD MOBILITY**

1. Downward mobility indicates that one loses a higher position and comes to occupy a lower position.
2. For instance, if an engineer is caught accepting a bribe, he may be sentenced to jail, hence occupying a lower position.
3. Under the traditional Indian system, if a lady of a Brahmin caste married a man of the Sudra caste, not only the man and the woman were ostracised but their children were declared as ‘chandals’.
4. Downward mobility is more stressful for persons who suffer a drastic decline in status or position than upward mobility. Men who enjoy an orderly and consistent career tend to make a stable personal, family, and community adjustment.
1. This type of mobility means that one generation changes its social status in contrast to the preceding generation. However, this mobility may be upward or downward. For e.g. people of a lower caste or class may provide facilities to their children to get higher education, training and skills. With the help of these skills, the younger generation may get employment entitling them to a higher position. If the father is a shoemaker but his son, after acquiring becomes a clerk or a doctor or an engineer, it would be called Upward Intergenerational Mobility.

2. Similarly, a family of Bhramins may be engaged in the traditional occupation of teaching and performing rituals but its younger generation may not be intelligent and may fail to acquire education enough to follow the family occupation. They may, thus, become daily wagers. It is the case of downward inter-generational mobility.

With the improvement in economic position, people start changing their life styles by discarding the old practices and adopting the practices of those who are higher on the social ladder. After two or three generations, their new position may be recognized. This process of social mobility according to Srinivas is the process of Sanskritization.
According to Sorokin, following conditions affect the rate of mobility between generations:

1. **Difference between Parents and their Offspring:** If a parent occupies an important position requiring high capacity, his children who are less capable are likely to be downwardly mobile. Conversely, children who are more capable than their parents are likely to be upwardly mobile, especially in open-class societies.

2. **Population Change:** In developed and developing countries, greater population expansion at the lower than at the higher levels contributes to upward mobility. Overall, population growth creates new positions at the upper and middle levels, where growth is not great enough to fill their vacancies.

3. **Changes in Occupational Structure:** With the changing times, many occupations have been upgraded or downgraded because their socially defined importance has changed. Some occupations have moved up or down because of changes in the availability of workers willing and able to perform these tasks. Such changes in occupational structure also affect the rate of mobility between generations.
Intra- Generational Mobility

This type of mobility takes place in a life span of one generation.

A person may start his career as a clerk. He may acquire more education and skills. Over a period of time, he may become IAS officer or a Professor. In this way, he may move up and occupy a higher position than the one with which he had started his career.

Family member of the same person (his brother) may also have started his career as clerk but may not have moved up to occupy a higher position in his life span, therefore within the same generation, one brother changes his position and other does not.
Occupational Mobility

Occupational mobility means change from one position to another. Different occupations are hierarchically arranged because the incumbents of these occupations get different economic rewards and enjoy different degrees of power, prestige and privileges based on their economic returns, authority and prestige.

Occupational mobility stands for a change from an occupation of a lower prestige to an occupation of higher prestige and vice versa.
Factors Responsible for Social Mobility

There are many factors which facilitate social mobility. These factors may be attributed to individual motivation, affecting social mobility:

1. **Motivation**: Each individual has a desire not only to have a better way of living but also to improve his social status. This desire motivates and without such motivation social mobility is not possible.

2. **Achievements and Failures**: Remarkable achievements affect status. For instance, a poor man who has acquired wealth or an unknown writer who has won a literary prize will improve his status. On the contrary, failures and misdeeds have a similar effect on the downward mobility.

3. **Education**: Education not only helps an individual to acquire knowledge and works like a passport to a higher prestige occupational positional. Education facilitates upward mobility, whereas lack of education can lead to downward mobility.

4. **Skills and Training**: Each society makes provision to impart skill and training to the younger generation. Skill and training facilitate in the improvement of social position, thus leading to social mobility.
Factors Responsible for Social Mobility

There are many factors which facilitate social mobility. These factors may be attributed to individual motivation, affecting social mobility:

5. **Migration:** People migrate from one place to another either due to push or pull factors. Migration affects one’s position and results in social mobility; it can be both ways – upward or downward.

6. **Industrialization:** The industrial revolution ushered new social system in which people were given status according to their ability and training. Therefore, industrialization facilitates social mobility.

7. **Urbanization:** Urban settlements offer lots of work and educational facilities to people keeping aside their ascribed status. Therefore, urbanization facilitates social mobility by removing those factors which hinder social mobility.

8. **Legislation:** Enactment of new laws also facilitate social mobility. Legislations like right to education to all, property rights to women and secularisation and so on help people to grab opportunities and prosper, therefore resulting in social mobility.
Therefore, we can conclude that forms of social mobility are not comprehensive and there is overlapping. Also, the mobility occurs in the framework of time and space. The factors that affect mobility are found universally true.
THANK YOU ...

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