

The influence of individual performance and relative group performance on the selection of the best-fit group

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The new concept of “the best-fit group” is proposed in this study. In the best-fit group, individuals are able to maintain their positive self-evaluation. The author suggests that the purpose of social mobility is to achieve a positive self-evaluation, and therefore the “best-fit group” should be the target group of the movement. The best-fit group is qualified when two criteria were met: 1) the individual should feel he himself is more capable, at least not worse, than the average group members. 2) among all the possible alternatives, this group should be the best group that the individual can get.

In experiment 1, four hundred and twenty one senior high students were assigned to read different scenarios. The scenarios were constructed based on a 3 (individual performance: good vs. medium vs. poor) \times 2 (the cue of the relative group performance: explicit vs. vague) factorial design. The main dependent measures were behavior intention of social mobility and the expectation of future performance. As predicted, results indicated that when the explicit cue was provided and participants were able to identify their own best-fit group, they tended to choose the best-fit group as their tar-

get group. In contrast, individuals showed no psychological mobility toward the best-fit group, when the cue was vague and the best-fit group could not be identified.

In experiment 2, one hundred and twenty one Chung-Yuan University students were randomly assigned to the best-fit or the non-best-fit conditions. The “best-fit” or the “non-best-fit” conditions were qualified by matching the relative group performance and individual performance. The results gave further support to the hypotheses, participants who were already in the best-fit groups showed higher in-group identification and lower social mobility, whereas those who were in the non-best-fit conditions had lower in-group identification and showed a strong tendency moving toward their own best-fit groups.

The concept of “best-fit group” gained strong support in the study and it did provide the best explanations and most accurate predictions of social mobility. Further implications are also discussed.

Keywords: *the best-fit group, social mobility, group identification*

