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Voting bias: The ‘Neighbour Effect’

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Abstract

The UK version of ‘The Weakest Link’ TV-game-show has been used to demonstrate a profound voting bias, as contestants significantly avoided voting for their direct neighbour(s) to be eliminated from the show as the *weakest link* (Goddard et al, 2013). To test this *neighbour effect* outside of the TV studio, a sample of Freshers (year one undergraduates n=233) was seated in a lecture theatre and were asked to ‘vote’ for one of their peers seated on the same row. Their vote either conferred a positive, neutral or negative outcome for its recipient, by ‘increasing’, ‘not-affecting’ or ‘decreasing’ the number of raffle tickets accrued for a subsequent lottery for course-related materials. The results indicated that the participants that cast a negative vote demonstrated a significant *neighbour effect* by not nominating their nearest neighbour. However, a reverse polarity pattern was found for participants issuing a positive vote (Noh et al, 2014). We suggest that the *neighbour effect* is a robust and strong bias in human decision making.

Keyword: Neighbour effect, decision making, voting

Reference

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