INTRODUCTION

Why do we do nasty thing to one person not to another person? We suggest that in the realm of social influence, an underlying neighbour effect exists whereby people are biased towards being positive to their direct spatial neighbours. A study of voting decisions in the Weakest Link TV game show has shown that the contestants tend to avoid voting their nearest neighbour (Goddard, Hylton, Parke & Noh, 2013), presumably this is because the vote carries negative connotations. Yet, is this merely an artefact of a game show where the rules are well defined?

FINDINGS

Voting performance was contrasted with a theoretical model derived by simple probability theory. The observed frequencies of votes showed a significant drop on voting the direct neighbour, $\chi^2(10) = 49.31 \ p < 0.001$ from the expected frequency. According to hypothesised valence effects, participants casting a negative valence vote (Fig. 2) demonstrated a significant neighbour effect by avoiding their direct neighbour (n). Yet, those making a positive valence vote (as in Fig. 3) showed a reverse pattern where, they were more likely to pick their closest neighbour (n) rather than the furthest. We suggest that for our participants the fairness norm was stronger in negative valence to be compared with positive valence (Leviveld, Beest, Dijk & Tenbrunsel, 2009). Hence, neighbour and valence effect are robust biasing elements in decision making probably operating at unconscious, implicit level.

IMPACT AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It was suggested that neighbour effect is a significant psychological effect in a strategic decision making setting, with the possibility to be categorised as one of the cognitive and behavioural biases.

As for future research, cultural effect, spatial proximity and neighbourliness will be considered to test the neighbour and valence effects in a wider setting such as in a neighbourhood context.