**CSOC20010 Assignment 6 – Critique of *Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks***

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Kramer et al. (2014) suggest through experimentation (*N = 689,003*) that emotional states can be passed to others through social media platforms such as Facebook, and show that the simple passive viewing of others’ emotional experiences, either positive or negative, will lead to similar emotional responses in ourselves.

The experimental methodology involved running Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count software on Facebook’s News Feed and displaying posts that included at least one word of the desired emotional valence, and tracking the engagement of selected users across the platform. The researchers found that an increased exposure to positive posts led to an increase in positive posts from the users, (0.06%) and an increased exposure to negative posts led to an increase in negative posts from the users (0.04%), although it should be noted that there was a higher increase when users were exposed to positive posts as opposed to negative posts.

It should also be noted that posts were shown to the users at random, and it does not appear to be clear that the posts were not entirely positive or entirely negative, given that the researchers only searched for posts with at least one word of the desired emotional valence and may have disregarded the overall sentiment of the posts sampled. There is a chance that posts contained a mixture of positive and negative words, which in context may have led to the overall valence of the posts being different to that expected, which the researchers may not have been able to control for due to the anonymous nature of the posts sampled. Keeping in mind the imperfections of sentiment analysis software, subsequent experiments may be able to improve their accuracy by accounting for the overall sentiment of the posts as well as searching for keywords of a specific emotional valence.

**References**

KRAMER, A. D. I., GUILLORY, J. E. & HANCOCK, J. T. 2014. Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,* 111**,** 8788-8790.