CSC 450**, Senior Research**

**Journal Article Evaluation**

***Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks***

Discuss these questions as a group, and select one person to type up your answers. Your answers should be e-mailed to [dancikg@easternct.edu](mailto:dancikg@easternct.edu) with the subject CSC-450: FB article

**Directions:**

1. Previous studies have shown that individuals who spend time with happy individuals are more happy than individuals who spend time with unhappy individuals. Why is this not sufficient evidence for social contagion. That is, these studies do *not* not show that a person's happiness increases *as a result of* spending time with happy individuals? Why not?
2. In this study, Facebook posts were determined to be positive or negative based on Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count software (LIWC2007), with the following reference given in the article:

Pennebaker JW, Chung CK, Ireland M, Gonzales A, Booth RJ (2007) The development and psychological properties of LIWC2007. Available at http://liwc.net/howliwcworks.php.

According to Table 1 of the LIWC web page (<http://liwc.net/descriptiontable1.php>), what are three words that are considered positive? Note: the website has recently been updated and the table is no longer available, but fortunately we can still view it thanks to the WayBack machine: <https://web.archive.org/web/20141018044447/http://www.liwc.net/descriptiontable1.php>

1. One of the major findings of this article is that "emotions expressed by others on Facebook influence our own emotions, constituting experimental evidence for massive-scale contagion via social networks." An experiment is conducted, and this claim is supported, in part, by the results presented in **Fig. 1**. What does the top half of **Fig. 1** show? Can you think of any reasons why this figure might be misleading?
2. In this study, what specific variable was being measured (Hint: this is the variable plotted on the y-axis in **Fig. 1**)? Do you think this variable accurately reflects the emotions of a Facebook user? Why or why not?
3. In the abstract, the authors state that “These results indicate that emotions expressed by others on Facebook influence our own emotions”. Based on your answers to 2-4, do you believe that the authors provide sufficient evidence to support this claim?

Additional notes: This type of experimentation (known as A/B testing) might be more common than you think. The following article is an excellent read: <http://www.wired.com/2012/04/ff_abtesting/>