Research question:

How does quantification and visualization of the underlying data structure on social media impact our interpretation of social worth and additionally whether said quantification has cultural implications or not.

Through our work we will illustrate an aggravated user behavior on social media in order to observe and document the cultural implications of said behavior.

What we want to explore:

We have chosen to create a Twitter Bot with the foundation of the Twit API. The concept is to gather people on Twitter and make them keep our Twitter Bot alive by following it. The Bot has a timer which counts down from 30 minutes. Every time a user follows the Bot, the timer resets and starts over again. If the timer runs out, the Bot will delete itself and then the experiment ends.

Our Bot is equipped with different actions based on how much time there is left on the timer. For every minute the Bot gets more and more aggressive in its communication. Our Bot will have a separate website running accordingly and visualizing the life of our Bot. On the website it will be possible to follow the Bot, keep an eye on the timer and explore statistics of how many users that have participated in keeping it running etc. The goal with this project is to find out whether it is possible to keep the Bot alive by placing the responsibility on social media.

Through our experiment, we want to explore how the 'like-culture' works and how/if we can benefit from it. At the same time, we want to visualize and question the importance and impact of likes/follows on social media.

How does it work:

Our work is set up a social experiment that examines whether it is possible to keep a digital "pet" alive by relying on strangers on social media. As soon as the Bot is launched the timer will start to count down from 30 minutes. After the timer starts it is up to the users of twitter to keep it running. As said above the Bot is equipped with different actions depending on how much time there is left. The Bot will for example:

- Tweet for help
- Follow its followers' followers to draw attention to itself
- Tweet for help with trending hashtags, again to draw attention to itself
- Tweet aggressively for help
- Follow random users
- Tag followers and their followers in tweets

The Bot will if necessary take both unethical and socially unacceptable approaches to survive. The level of aggression in the Bot's communication will increase progressively as the timer gets closer to 0. If worst case scenario plays out and the timer reaches 0 the Bot will delete itself and it will be the end of our experiment.

The expression of our work:

Benjamin Grosser elaborates in his work "*What do metrics want?*" for the quantification[1] of behaviour on social media in relation to the visualization thereof, and how said quantification derives from a capitalistic understanding of personal growth as a requirement for survival.

"Thus, within our system of capital, quantification becomes the way we evaluate whether our desire for more *is being fulfilled. If our numbers are rising, our desire is met; if not, it remains unmet. Personal worth becomes synonymous with quantity." (Benjamin Grosser, 2014)*

Above mentioned concept is especially pervasive on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, where the visualization of their underlying data structure is reduced to mere; "likes", "friends", and "shares"

"Given the relationships between these metrics and the prestige, esteem, and various forms of capital I described earlier, this graphoptic potential manifests as an internalized need to excel in metric terms—to exceed in whatever areas are easily. seen and, most importantly, measured by others (e.g. "likes," friends, and all other metric presentations of self within Facebook)" (ibid.)

On social media, personal worth is portrayed and illustrated through the amount of likes or visits you have received, a process in which identity is homogenized, limiting personal individuality, as this "like" metric remains the only way to acquire and boost personal self-esteem. it becomes a fight to acquire the likes necessary for high metric performance.

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[1] *quantification—the reduction and enumeration of "things and energies and practices and perceptions into uniform parts."*

Above mentioned urge to excel in metric terms is essential because while a given user doesn't know if they are being observed, they are fully aware that their metric (read timeline) is accessible by anyone, and therefore users need to maintain this high-performing metric performance, in order to appear successful whenever they might be observed.

"When this need for esteem intersects with the desire for more, the accumulation of social and symbolic capital becomes the primary objective of the metricated social self." (ibid.)

Our work can be considered an abstract representation of this "fight" that we have mentioned above. Attempting to portray and bring attention to the notion of computational culture ("like" culture) and how it's portrayed and understood in society. Through our work we will illustrate an aggravated user behavior on social media in order to observe and document the cultural implications of said behavior.

We hope our product can start a debate on the subject and play a part in the de-quantification of social capital.

Critical Aspects:

Today it is a common matter that people strive to achieve acknowledgement through social media. It's important for a lot of people to achieve a high number of likes, followers and shares since it gives recognition and satisfaction for the user. As a consequence of the modern liking culture people can feel insufficient without this recognition of personal worth. Therefore we want to make some sort of social experiment, where our Twitter Bot reflects the modern culture of social media.

The Bot is made with an aggressive effect to emphasize how hard people are willing to work for this acknowledgement. It will draw attention to itself by using several different ways to achieve followers where some of them can be described as unethical.
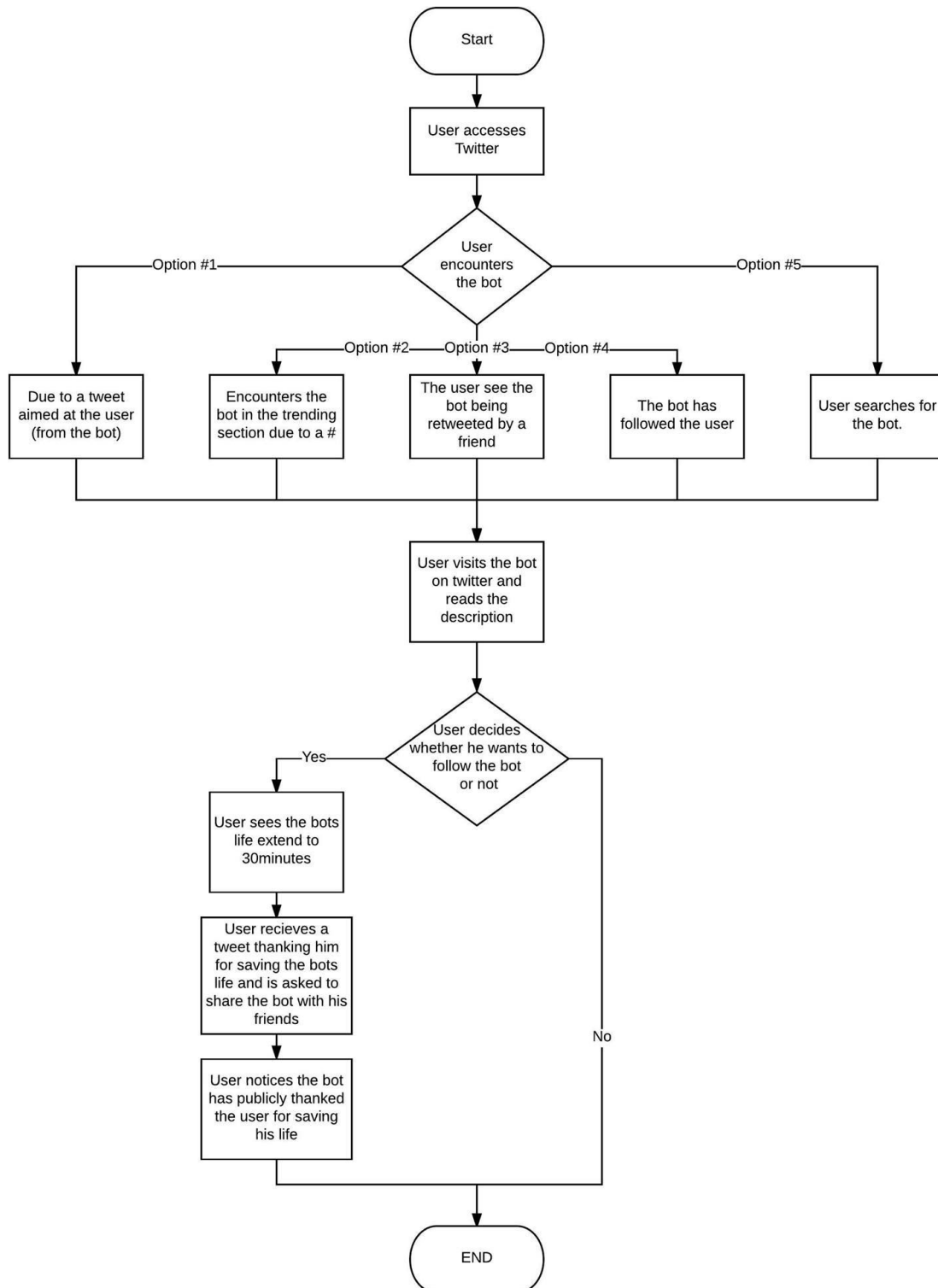
We have chosen that the project ends when the Twitter Bot has not received any followers within 30 minutes to accentuate that there has been no social acceptance. Therefore the lack of attention from other users on social media becomes a lack of the personal worth.

Literature list:

- Crosby, A. W. (1998). The measure of reality: quantification and Western society, 1250-1600. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Grosser, B. (2014, November 9th). WHAT DO METRICS WANT? HOW QUANTIFICATION PRESCRIBES SOCIAL INTERACTION ON FACEBOOK. Retrieved April 20, 2017, from http://computationalculture.net/article/what-do-metrics-want

Attachments:

First time user flowchart:

The Twitter Bot flowchart: