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.

What we want to explore:

We have chosen to create a Twitter Bot utilizing the Twit API. The concept is to gather people on Twitter and make them keep our Twitter Bot (read virtual pet) alive by following it. The Bot has a timer which counts down from 60 minutes. Every time a user follows the Bot, the timer resets and starts over again. If the timer runs out, the Bot will deactivate and make its last tweet where it informs about its total lifetime. The social experiment will then come to an end.

Our Bot is equipped with different actions based on how much time there is left on the timer. It will have a separate website running accordingly visualizing the life of our Bot. On the website, it will be possible to track the Bots progress. We wish to bring attention to the debate and realization that likes/follows on social media do not equal social worth, as our bot works as a satirical illustration of this approach.

Through our experiment, we want to explore how this above mentioned '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 as 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 60 minutes. After the timer is initialized, it is up to the users on twitter to keep it running and alive.

Our Bot utilizes a progressively more aggressive algorithm as the timer nears 0, with certain intervals extending the range of the bot in terms of which functions it will utilize in its pursuit for likes.

At 45 minutes remaining:

-   The bot will follow a random user every 10 minutes.
-   The bot will tweet out for help every 10 minutes notifying users of remaining time.

At 30 minutes remaining: - in addition to the above:

-   The bot will start using popular / random hashtags to acquire more attention.

At 15 minutes remaining: - in addition to the above:

-   The bot will start following random users every 1 minute.

At 0 minutes remaining

-   The Experiment will be over, and the program terminated. The bot will prior to this notify its followers of said event, while also notifying them of the total lifetime of the bot.

The expression of our work:

Benjamin Grosser elaborates in his work *"What do metrics want?"* for the quantification[1] of behavior 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".

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[1] *Quantification* - "The Reduction and Enumeration of things and energies and practices and perceptions into uniform parts" - Crosby, A. W.

"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.

Above mentioned urge to excel in metric terms is essential because while a given user don'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 belief 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 audit culture people

might feel insufficient without this recognition of personal worth. We strive to make our Twitter Bot reflect said modern culture of social media.

The Bot is made with an aggressive algorithm to emphasize how hard people are willing to work in order to achieve acknowledgement. Through this algorithm, It will draw attention to itself by utilizing a wide range of functions.

We have chosen that the project ends when the Twitter Bot has not received any followers within 60 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.

We are aware that we can't consider our result as a scientific conclusion, as several factors will impact the popularity of our bot, and thereby affect the end result.

As mentioned earlier in this synopsis, we're not trying to make the conclusion that lack of likes equal lack of personal worth. Rather we wish to create the foundation for a debate and make people reconsider their view and approach to the value of follows/likes on social media. In short, our social experiment strives to provoke new ways of thinking about the underlying data structure (read likes/follows) that make up sociality on social media. If we manage to change the view of just a simple person, our project will be considered a success.

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).

Grosser, Benjamin, "WHAT DO METRICS WANT? HOW QUANTIFICATION PRESCRIBES SOCIAL INTERACTION ON FACEBOOK." Retrieved April 20, 2017, from

http://computationalculture.net/article/what-do-metrics-want

Links to related projects:

Benjamin Grosser, *"Facebook Demetricator", 2012*

http://bengrosser.com/projects/facebook-demetricator/