**Reflections on the learning process involved in carrying out module activities.**

Going in to this module I had planned to follow my usual method in the modules. This basically involved getting the assignment and doing everything on my own. Contact with tutors was not something I had needed before. Going to the mandatory workshop I thought would be waste of my time and I am still not too sure it really gave me anything of worth. Initially I thought that John McCarthy had given me some good pointers but these were discarded soon after.

Going to the qualitative and quantitative workshop on the other hand made a big difference. Going to this workshop I had decided on my research idea and at the start of the workshop we all had to give a brief description about it to Eve Griffin and Mary Galvin. We had been assigned tutor at this point and Mary was mine. When I explained my research proposal the feedback Mary gave me was of immense help. This part of the workshop was by far and away the biggest help over both workshops.

Writing up my formal research proposal seemed like it would be straight forward but when I ran it past Mary she pointed out that I was making too many assumptions and I had to tighten things up. At this point I was starting to realise that on this module you simply can't go it on your own. The guidance of a tutor is vital. This is something that I have heard echoed by many other students.

Performing the data harvesting and analysis, while not straight forward was still handy enough for me as I am a programmer and I was harvesting tweets and analysing them with a script written in Python.

The research for the literature review was daunting and the more you read the more you had to read. When the deadline for the draft loomed I decided that I had to start writing something. I started with section heading and this simple task focused my mind on exactly what papers in needed to concentrate on and what papers I could discard. Writing the paper wasn't as bad as I thought but I really wasn't sure what my tutor would think of it. Thankfully everything was okay.

**Reflections on the content learned during the course of the module.**

From the research I put in for the literature review I learnt a lot about the gender gap in terms of coverage that women's sports gets. This is especially true in the mainstream traditional media. The online world on the other hand seems to afford women's sports a more equal footing.

It was also noticeable how things are changing on this side of the world. Over 500,000 watched the women's All-Ireland final last year, which was 40% of the countries viewership. RTÉ also increased their coverage of the Irish Women’s 6 Nations campaign in 2017, broadcasting every game and seeing average viewership peak for the Ireland v England game at 185,000. America on the other hand is dominated by NBA, NFL and baseball, all of which are male sports organisations.

An area that was completely new to me was self-presentation. I was surprised that the idea is over 60 years old. It was 1956 when Goffman first wrote about the idea of people having front stage and back stage performances. Reading about self-presentation and the motivations behind it was very interesting and made the analysis much more interesting.

**Experience of learning with technology.**

This was a really enjoyable experience. I am a programmer and I mainly work with Java. I have written a few things in Python but nothing too extensive. As I was harvesting tweets and analysing the data with cluster analysis most of my research would be done via programming Python scripts. This was a great experience for me. I had a chance to get a greater knowledge of Python as I had to write scripts to access Twitters API, harvest the correct data, write it to a files. Extract the tweets from the correct dates from those files. Clean the data, analyse it and print out the results. None of it too taxing but it was nice to create the whole harvesting to analysis pipeline.

**Comments on the difficulties encountered.**

One of the main problems I faced in this module was coming up with the research idea in the first place. When we went to the initial workshop I had an idea of analysing Facebook feeds to see how the news there differed from traditional media sources. I wanted to go down a route like this as I came at the problem of identifying a research idea from the angle of, 'where can I get data from without causing myself too much trouble!' This is more than likely the wrong approach but having seen the struggles of one or two of my fellow students in getting interviews done I am certainly glad I didn't go down that path. At the workshop I was at a table with John McCarthy and I admitted to him that I approached the research idea from the data gathering point which he said was actually a very reasonable approach.

I had a problem framing my research question but Mary guided me on how to phrase it so as to remove as many assumptions as possible.

When I was 'cleaning' the data it was a bit of a mess at first as I had issues with ANSCII, UTF-8 and other character encodings. I had downloaded the data with one encoding and then I was writing my code to extract with different encodings. It took a bit of time before I realised my error and fixed the problem.

Dealing with non English tweets was another problem but we decided to simply remove any athlete who tweeted in a language other than English and reference this issue in the final paper.