Course Journal

YOUR NAME

2025-12-03

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1 Journal Home

This journal renders as a **book**. Each dated entry is a chapter.

- **MC 451 entries:** 250–300 words
- At the **end of each chapter** you'll see **three prompts**. **Answer only one**.
- Write your answer in the **Response** box; the page shows an **automatic word count** and whether you're in range.

1.0.1 Add a new entry

1. In R, run: `source("scripts/new_journal_entry.R")`
2. A new chapter like `entries/2025-09-01.qmd` appears with three prompts injected.
3. The script updates `_quarto.yml` so the new entry is included in the book.
4. Render the book: click **Render** in RStudio or run `quarto render`.

2 2025-09-02

2.1 Choose one prompt to answer

> **Prompt B:** Choose a topic you're curious about in media or communication (e.g., the effect of streaming on movie watching, how politicians use TikTok, portrayals of families on TV). Write a specific research question about it. Then, briefly describe what you would do in each of the five stages of the research workflow (Conceptualization, Design, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Communication) to answer it.

2.2 Response

A topic I'm curious about learning more about is how college athletes can use TikTok to build their own personal brand. A research question for that would be "How do collegiate college athletes use TikTok to shape their own personal image and engage with fans. I would begin by looking for popular college athletes on TikTok and look at the type of videos they have on their page. I would investigate their "personal brand" and how they present themselves to the public and how their fans are interacting with their content (likes, comments, shares, and following). I would also review any existing studies on social media branding, digital marketing, and athlete-to-fan communication to have a better understanding of information that's already been found and any gaps that still need to be researched. I would then work on my design stage, where I would collect TikTok videos posted by NCAA athletes that represent content of them playing their sport, personal life, humor, trends, and endorsements. I would also measure the engagement they receive on those specific posts (likes, comments, shares). I would also consider the difference in male and female branding approaches, since my personal exposure has shown that female athletes receive different attention than men. An addition to that, I would look where athletes take advantage of the NIL (name, image, and likeness) offers to promote any endorsements they receive from companies. I would set up interviews with those specific athletes that I gathered data from to gain their perspective about their own branding strategies, what their goals are with their posts, and how they think their audience perceives them. For the data collecting stage, I would identify between 40-50 athletes who

are active on TikTok and gather a specific number of their most recent/most viewed posts (around 15 videos) to keep my data consistent. I would set up a Zoom call with the athletes to interview them and record their responses. In the data analysis stage, I would first examine the engagement the athletes received on their videos and compare them to the type of video it is (ex., lifestyle, humor, trendy). I would see what type of videos gained the most views, likes, shares, and comments. I would then look at the response from the interviews and see if I can identify any patterns from what the athletes said. I would then compare these two sets of data and see if there were any connections between them. In my final step, I would create a presentation of my findings and present them to collegiate athletes through in-person and virtual seminars. I would also publish my findings in a formal research paper for future athletes to learn from and enjoy for personal interests.

2.3 Word Count & Range Check

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**Word count:** 0

**Required range (MC501):** 450-500 words

**Status:**  Out of range
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3 2025-09-03.

3.1 Choose one prompt to answer

> **Prompt B:** Imagine you are researching a public social media platform like X (formerly Twitter), Reddit, or TikTok. Would you consider the content you're analyzing to be public or private? Would you need to obtain informed consent? Why or why not? Reflect on the ethical gray areas that emerge in digital research and how you would navigate them.

3.2 Response

If I were to research a public social media platform, my first thought is that I would initially consider the content to be public since the posts on those platforms are made available to a wide audience. Users understand that is they have a public profile, that anyone on that social media platform can view their postings. Even if an account it private, that doesn't prevent people from screenshotting or screen recording their content and posting it publicly. However, when consider if informed consent is required is not a straightforward answer. If I was just searching for specific video for my personal entertainment like memes, trending content, or humorous content I wouldn't feel the need to obtain informed consent because those videos were posted publicly on that platform. If I were to conduct research on a particular topic and need to pull specific quotes or videos for examples, ethically I would feel responsible for obtaining that consent even if their content was posted publicly. For example, for my job I need to get content at the SIUE Rainbow Affinity Welcome event recording the attendees answering some simple questions to be posting on Instagram. A lot of the attendees we ran into didn't want to be filmed. Although they may post publicly on their own accounts it can be different when it comes to a boarder or audience, they are unaware of. This shows how important context is since people may feel more comfortable posting to their small know circle of followers but not anything wider. Furthermore, this is how some of those gray areas can occur when doing digital research. Although content is made public, ethically that doesn't mean users view the content the same way as researchers. Additionally, the way one consumer views the content is different from the way another consumer views the content. For example,

a TikTok creator with a small following may not expect their content to be used for research purpose. Students at SIUE my not think their personal content would be used in a research study. To begin this approach, I would start with a cautious and respectful approach. If I would offer to remove usernames or blur faces of specific content if the users were on the edge of giving consent to use their content. I would also make sure to explain my goals and share my research in simple, easy to follow language so participants can give well informed answers. I would try my best to not use direct quotes or content that could be easily searched and traced back to the user. Providing paraphrasing and discrete images to still capture any patterns but not expose individuals. I would carefully focus on the participates well-being and privacy by respecting the public nature of social media and the personal intentions behind everyone who post publicly.

3.3 Word Count & Range Check

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**Word count:** 0

**Required range (MC501):** 450-500 words

**Status:**  Out of range
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4 2025-09-08

4.1 Choose one prompt to answer

> **Prompt A:** Think of a media-related issue or question you find interesting (e.g., misinformation on social media, representation in film, streaming habits). Now imagine researching that issue without using any theory—just collecting facts. What would be missing from your findings? Reflect on how theory might deepen or improve your ability to explain or understand the issue. What questions might theory help you ask?

4.2 Response

If I wanted to research a question about misinformation on social media without using any theories, my research would be very surface-level information. For example, I could find different content containing misinformation, including the number of likes, shares, and how quickly that information spreads. Although this data provides some valuable information, I wouldn't be able to give an explanation as to why the misinformation spreads the way it did. Even looking into how this information influences audiences would be challenging. Without theories, I wouldn't be collecting data analytics to back up my findings and connect the dots to develop the causes of the research. Theories provide researchers with better frameworks that go beyond the basic definitions and descriptions. For example, if I want to analyze the question about misinformation without theories, I will miss details about social and psychological dynamics that influence people when they engage with content. I might incorrectly assume why people are acting a specific way or why they chose to trust the misinformation, because I can't back my findings with their motivations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were many false claims going around about the vaccines and treatments online. Theories can help explain why people made those claims and show how political or cultural groups shape what people do and don't believe.

Another level theories adds to research is the ability to make more predictive questions. Without theories, I would only be able to make inferences about the data I've collected. For

example, how many views the misinformation content received, how to does a platform encourages or discourages the spread of misinformation, or how the word "trust" plays a role in social media platforms, and how the audience evaluate that information. Theories like framing can explain why how wording and visuals can shape people's perception on certain claims. With agenda-setting, the theory can help reveal why certain false stories get more attention than others. Additional theories like the cultivation theory, show how repeatedly seeing misinformation can shaped peoples long term trust with media portrayed online. These types of questions are only the beginning of the surface-level questions that can dive deeper into areas of solutions, changes, and education strategies. Ultimately, if I research an issue similar to misinformation without any theories, it will make my findings incomplete. The facts and data that I would find would only be the beginning that would need to be backed up to understand the social, cultural context, or generate insights so I can interpret the data and help address the problem. Theories help transform the research into explanations and form my personal observations into understandings for audiences. By including theories, I would be able to include what I see happening and also explain why it matters. .

4.3 Word Count & Range Check

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**Word count:** 0

**Required range (MC501):** 450-500 words

**Status:**  Out of range
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5 2025-09-14

5.1 Choose one prompt to answer

> **Prompt C:** In your own words, explain the difference between an annotated bibliography and a proper literature review. Why is that difference significant? Reflect on a time when you had to summarize multiple sources for a paper or project. Did you organize those sources thematically, or treat each one individually? Looking ahead, how will your approach change when writing your literature review?

5.2 Response

An annotated bibliography and literature reviews serve very different purposes in writing. An annotated bibliography is a collection of sources, with each of them summarized individually. The goal with an annotated bibliography is to explain what the source is about, talk about its credibility, and discuss how the source might be relevant for your research. Each of the summaries stand on its own, paired with the sources like present themselves like a series of notes that can provide a snapshot of the information you've gathered. Annotated bibliographies are helpful ways to organize information and keep track of your research materials. In comparison, literature reviews are a blend of multiple sources that highlight patterns, similarities, differences, and gaps within your research. A literature review shows the larger picture of how the research interacts with each other and what they reveal about the topic. Overall, annotated bibliographies show the collection of research, and literature reviews show the analysis and ability to structure your own research.

A specific paper that I remember collecting multiple sources was for my research paper freshman year. I wrote a big research paper about adoption, and I remember that it was my first time writing an annotated bibliography. I had to record each source I was planning on using and summarize each of them as part of the project. Although it helped me when I was writing my paper to go back to, I didn't take that extra step to integrate all my findings. This probably made my paper seem like a series a little topics instead of one combined discussion. I wasn't discussing how the sources related to each other or how they contributed to the topic

overall. While this was probably okay back then, I know now how to utilize the literature review to demonstrate a deeper level of knowledge.

When writing my literature review, I want to focus on categorizing my sources based on common findings or contrasting viewpoints. This will help me combine my sources together into a better discussion that flows logically rather than feeling like separate thoughts. For example, if I choose the topic about college athletes and social media, I wouldn't summarize the different studies I find about X, Instagram, and TnewikTok. I would organize those studies to all relate to different themes about branding, NIL, or social media content to show how the different studies contribute to those themes. If I do this, the literature review will show what present scholars have said, the areas they agree, disagree, and areas that still need to be studied. I will be able to create a stronger foundation for my own research and better my writing to demonstrate that I understand the bigger picture and can showcase my work within it. –>

5.3 Word Count & Range Check

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**Word count:** 0

**Required range (MC501):** 450-500 words

**Status:**  Out of range
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6 2025-09-23

6.1 Choose one prompt to answer

> **Prompt C:** Much of today's research relies on digital data—tweets, posts, videos, and online surveys. This chapter explains how population bias, self-selection bias, and data availability bias can distort digital research. Choose one of these forms of bias and describe how it might affect a study of online news consumption or streaming habits. What could a researcher do to acknowledge or reduce that bias?

6.2 Response

One of the challenges to today's research is the effect of self-selection biases. The way a person chooses to participate in a study or engage with online platforms differs from those who do not. These biases can affect findings and lead to misleading results if the issue is not addressed properly. When looking at the study of online news consumption, self-selection biases can easily influence the results of those findings. If a researcher conducts a voluntary online survey that asks participants how often they read the news, the platforms they prefer, and how long they spend consuming current events. People who consume a lot of news by reading the newspaper or online articles will be more likely to take the survey compared to someone who scrolls past the headlines on social media. Furthermore, if a college student is majoring in political science, they may want to participate because they may feel like they have strong feelings about the survey. Compared to other college students who use social media and glance at news headlines regularly but might ignore the survey. This could cause the study to suggest that most people are avid digital news readers, when they are actually a large portion of the population who minimally engage in the news. The same problem can occur when looking at streaming habits. Researchers looking to collect data through volunteers could purpose the question to users about what platforms they subscribe to and how often they watch. Someone who binged watched a show on Netflix or enjoys watching tv may have more to say about streaming and be more likely to participate. Compared to the users who are more casual viewers, or infrequent viewers, they may be more underrepresented. The study may overemphasize binge-watching or the popularity of some streaming platforms over others.

Many people may not stream as often or use other alternatives like YouTube or Twitch. The researchers' finding may not represent the diversity of streaming behaviors of the public. To reduce self-selection biases, it requires a more strategic approach is required. One option is to look at self-reported data with digital tracking. For example, instead of doing just surveys, researchers might look at browsers' history data or streaming logs, with the participants' consent. This could provide a more accurate, less biased picture about the behaviors since it does not depend on the participants' motivation or lifestyle to respond. Self-selection biases have their challenges of making too broad of claims from digital research. Studies about online news consumption or streaming habits can produce valuable insights, but researchers must not make overstated conclusions. Addressing self-selection bias and finding new strategies to limit it can help scholars to produce findings that better reflected the behaviors of the real-world.

6.3 Word Count & Range Check

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**Word count:** 0

**Required range (MC501):** 450-500 words

**Status:**  Out of range
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7 2025-09-24

7.1 Choose one prompt to answer

> **Prompt C:** The chapter emphasized that your research question or hypothesis should directly shape the method you choose. Why do you think that connection is so important? Choose one method (e.g., experiment, interview, content analysis) and describe what kind of research question or hypothesis best fits that method. Use your own topic or one discussed in the chapter as an example.

7.2 Response

In research, the research question or hypothesis, and the chosen method of exploration that is paired with it, are crucial. The connections between the two ensure that the research results are valid and meaningful. If the method and question are poorly matched, it can lead to unreliable conclusions and even misleading results. For example, if there was a research question about understanding people's experiences or perceptions, it would not be paired well with an experiment that involved controlled variables. The research must be directly shaped by the type of question that's asked so that the data collected can address the research's goal.

With my topic, how athletes represent themselves online and how that affects NIL opportunities, analyzing content comes to mind as an effective method. Analyzing content consists of examining communication like social media posts, videos, or interviews, to look for different recurring themes, patterns, or strategies. This method will work best with questions that look to describe or interpret how specific ideas are communicated or represented in media. For example, if I'm looking at a question like, "How do college athletes present their personal brands on Instagram?" or a hypothesis like, "Athletes who frequently post lifestyle content receive more NIL partnerships than athletes who primarily post sport-related content," would align properly with content analysis.

Some of the strengths of content analysis are the ability to move beyond impressions and provide a picture of communication practices. Looking at studying athletes' self-representation,

this method can analyze posts over time as well. It can categorize them into themes like performance highlights, family and personal life, endorsement promotions, or community engagement, and then look for the patterns in that. Interpreting those different themes can help me assess how different types of self-presentation connect to NIL outcomes like sponsorship deals and brand collaborations.

Additionally, content analysis is flexible enough to have both quantitative and qualitative elements. Quantitatively, it provides data on frequent counts and trends on how often athletes mention brands. Qualitatively, it can allow for a deeper interpretation of themes like the authenticity of an athlete's persona or the narratives they create around their identity. These two aspects make content analysis great for examining the intersection of online representation with NIL and measure behaviors with self-expression.

The connection between the research question and the methods ensures that the studies are both relevant and trustworthy. With my research top, the content analysis will align with the kinds of questions I would ask about athletes' online branding and how that shapes NIL opportunities. Examining social media representation, this method will provide both clarity and depth to make this one of the better choices for investigating how athletes make themselves marketable online. It connects those portrayals to the outcomes of NIL opportunities to make my study both relevant and impactful.

7.3 Word Count & Range Check

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**Word count:** 0

**Required range (MC501):** 450-500 words

**Status:**  Out of range
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8 2025-10-07

8.1 Choose one prompt to answer

> **Prompt B:** Select one of the following concepts: political engagement, body image, media literacy, or interpersonal trust. First, write a short conceptual definition for the term in your own words. Then, brainstorm 2–3 specific ways a researcher might operationalize that concept. What kinds of survey questions, observational criteria, or behavioral measures might capture it? How do your choices shape what "counts" as evidence?

8.2 Response

A body image definition is of one's feelings, thoughts, and emotional reactions towards their own body appearance. It is a cross between the way people perceive their bodies, the way they feel about it, and the way they perceive other people's thoughts about them. It is beyond just satisfaction or discontentment with a person's appearance. It is based on identity, self-esteem, and social comparison. The body exists both internally (emotional and mental) and externally (expressive and behavioral), and therefore researchers must carefully define and measure it in terms that capture all its aspects. To study body image, researchers must transition from theoretical definition to tangible methods of measuring the construct. The three methods I would operationalize body image are via self-report surveys, observational assessments, and behavioral tracking. Each method provides a distinct lens through which body image can be thought about and determine what "counts" as valid evidence of the construct. The first way of quantifying body image is through questionnaires or surveys, which may assess people's self-concept and body attitudes. Some examples of statements in surveys are: "I am contented with the size and shape of my body," or "I compare my body to other bodies I see on social media." The respondents may rate each statement on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale. Using these questionnaires, it can emphasize body image as a subjective, inner impression of the way people actively think and feel about themselves. It can get the emotional and cognitive dimensions, and therefore it can be useful in detecting trends about self-esteem, body satisfaction, or social comparison. However, it depends

on responses due to social desirability. Questionnaires measure the frame body image as an attitude and something that occurs through emotion. The second approach entails tracking participants' nonverbal movement or reaction in a setting that evokes body-related reactions. The researchers, for example, can track how participants spend time gazing at themselves in the mirror and observe their facial reactions or stance when viewing their reflections. They can also track avoidance reactions such as crossing arms, fiddling with their clothes, or side tracking. The behavior can be utilized as an indicator of body comfort or confidence. Observational measures are helpful since they yield more than the self-report, and they capture the expressive and behavior aspects of body image. This, however, depends largely on interpretation; one researcher can find a behavior and define it as discomfort, but the other my find the same behavior as normal. This approach organizes evidence to outline the external, overt presentation of body image in lieu of inner states. The third and final approach would be to quantify appearance management or surveillance behaviors. Researchers can look at how frequently participants post, alter images, or use "bodychecking" behavior, including weighing self or mirror-checking. These are all views of body image through action such as what people do in relation to their appearance. It enables researchers to observe how body image influences routines by illustrating how appearance preoccupation permeates daily routines.

8.3 Word Count & Range Check

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**Word count:** 0

**Required range (MC501):** 450-500 words

**Status:**  Out of range
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9 2025-10-13

9.1 Choose one prompt to answer

> **Prompt C:** Why do you think people often ignore or skip surveys? From your perspective as both a respondent and future researcher, what strategies would make you more likely to complete a survey? How do your answers shape the way researchers must think about sampling and nonresponse?

9.2 Response

I think many people avoid surveys for various reasons, including those related to convenience, motivation, and trust. From the perspective of someone who was a respondent, one of the main reasons I don't respond to surveys is time. I, and others responding to surveys, perceive surveys as time consuming, especially if they are long and complicated. If I'm too busy, a survey does not make my list of priorities. Another reason is my lack of interest in the survey. If the topic doesn't resonate with me or I don't see a direct benefit from participating, I am unlikely to take it. If people feel skeptical about how the date may be used, other respondents and I may feel concerned about privacy or spam and feel discouraged to participate.

Another reason people may skip surveys is because of fatigue. With today's digital age, people are constantly asked to provide feedback through emails, shopping receipts, or pop-up notifications that people simply ignore. A poor survey design can also play a role in people not responding to surveys. If questions are too long, confusing, or repetitive, people responding to the survey may abandon it halfway through or not start it at all. Even the way surveys are sent to people matters. Most emails can be overlooked, and QR codes can seem inconvenient to access.

There are some strategies I think that could help make respondents more likely to complete the survey. The first being, keeping the survey short. If I know the survey will only take a few minutes and provides a clear progress bar, I would be more inclined to take the survey. Surveys that are short and straightforward will feel like less of a burden to people taking the survey. Additionally, if there is an incentive along with the survey, motivation to take the survey

increases. Small rewards like entry for a gift card or discounts can increase the willingness to respond. Additionally, having clear communication is also important. If the purpose is clearly explained upfront and how my input will contribute to something meaningful, I am more likely to participate. Finally, making sure the survey is convenient will add to the willingness to take it. If I can take a quick survey on my phone or laptop without filling in a bunch of extra steps for signing in, I am more likely to respond.

These strategies show key challenges researchers face when they design surveys, especially when it comes to sampling and nonresponses. When a larger group of people ignore surveys, the sample is now unrepresentative and can lead to skewed results. For example, if highly motivated individuals with big opinions only respond, their views and opinions might not reflect the broad population. This is an issue that forces researchers to think about how they collect and interpret data. Finding ways to minimize non-responses, like follow-up reminders, a mixture of online and in-person surveys, to make participation as easy as possible.

9.3 Word Count & Range Check

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**Word count:** 0

**Required range (MC501):** 450-500 words

**Status:**  Out of range
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10 2025-10-21

10.1 Choose one prompt to answer

> **Prompt C:** Experiments often require researchers to deceive participants or control aspects of their environment. Reflect on how you feel about that. Do you think the benefits of experimental knowledge are worth these trade-offs? What would be essential to include in your debrief if you had to deceive participants in your study?

10.2 Response

I think experiments play a crucial role in furthering psychological and social science research by allowing researchers to identify a cause-and-effect relationships. However, they require manipulating variables or even deceiving their participants to maintain the integrity of the study. This brings up the question about whether the benefits of experimental knowledge gained justify the exchange of deception and control. I think that it is important that ethical principles like informed consent, remain at the center of any research involving deception. However, using deception comes with serious ethical implications. Misleading participants, even if it's temporary, can cause emotional distress, embarrassment, or feelings of betrayal once they figure out the truth. In comparison, tightly controlling a participant's environment, like restricting their choices or exposing them to stress, can make the participants feel manipulated. To justify these trade-offs, researchers must ensure that the benefits of the study significantly outweigh the risks and that there is no alternative and no deceptive method could produce equally valid results. If I were conducting a study that required deception, I would consider the debriefing process to be essential. I would provide a thorough and thoughtful debrief to help repair the trust between researcher and participant to ensure no lasting harm was done. In my debrief, I would clearly explain the true purpose of the study and the reasons for the deception and why it is necessary. I would emphasize that their participation and genuine reactions are very important to understanding the research question that the deception was not meant to trick or embarrass them. I would also open to the participant to share any questions or concerns about their experience. Furthermore, I will also reiterate the participants

right to withdraw their data if they feel uncomfortable with the deception after they learnt the truth. This will also help with an potential feelings of being misled. Finally, if the experiment could have caused any emotional discomfort, like anxiety or guilt, I would provide information on available support resources or counseling services. I understand that while deception and control in experiment can be ethically complex, I think that there are justified uses for it if it is used responsible and transparent. The pursuit of knowledge should not come at the cost of human dignity. Therefore, if researchers uphold ethical standards, minimize their harm, and prioritize a compassionate and honest debriefing process, the benefits of the experimental knowledge can out weight the trade-off. Experiments are very important for discovery, allowing researchers to explore complex human thoughts and behaviors in ways surveys and observations can't. Despite these ethical challenges, these studies help society progress, and improve education, healthcare, and workplace practices. As long as researchers prioritize participant welfare, transparency, and ethical accountability. The knowledge gained through experiments can meaningfully and responsibly advance our collective understanding of human nature and social interaction.

10.3 Word Count & Range Check

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**Word count:** 473

**Required range (MC501):** 450-500 words

**Status:**   In range
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11 2025-10-26

11.1 Choose one prompt to answer

> **Prompt A:** Think about a media environment you engage with regularly—TikTok, news headlines, TV dramas, YouTube comments, etc. Choose one and describe a research question that could be answered through content analysis. What would you want to measure? Would you be more interested in manifest content (what's there) or latent content (the underlying tone or message), and why?

11.2 Response

A research question I could investigate through content analysis on TikTok is, "How do college athletes use TikTok to shape their personal brand and influence audience perceptions of authenticity?" This is a question that investigates how athletes represent themselves on a platform driven by short-form video content and trends, and how that representation connects with audiences' views on credibility, relatability, and marketability. TikTok is a very new and unique site for this kind of study because it looks to combine the entertainment, self-presentation, and interaction in ways that influence both personal identity and public perception.

With content analysis, I would look to measure many different factors. To start, I would identify the types of content athletes post, like game highlights, training videos, lifestyle, and fun trends, to see which videos are the most common. I would also analyze their engagement metrics, including their likes, comments, and shares to determine which types of posts generate the most audience interaction. I would also look to measure self-presentation strategies like the use of storytelling, emotional expression, or brand affiliations (ex., wearing sponsored gear or tagging companies). Lastly, I would investigate the tone and message of each video to see whether athletes are portraying themselves as hardworking professionals, approachable peers, or entertaining influencers.

Conducting the study, I would put my focus into the underlying messages, tone, and meanings conveyed through the videos instead of just the content that is visibly presented. While that

content can still reveal patterns in the themes and visuals, the more underlying messages through latent content give a deeper understanding of how athletes construct identity and meaning in their posts. For example, an athlete may post a video of a workout routine (the manifest content), but the underlying tone could communicate discipline, resilience, or authenticity (latent content). Being able to understand these subtle cues is important with social media, where the perceptions are often shaped as much by tone and presentation as by the actual behavior. Analyzing the latent content will also help cover the broader social implications of athlete self-presentation.

TikTok thrives on relatability and authenticity, so an athlete's tone, whether it is humble, humorous, or confident, may influence how audiences perceive their character and brand. Focusing on the latent meaning, the study could reveal how certain communication styles foster one-sided emotional connections between the athletes and their followers. This has real-world implications for marketing, sponsorships, and even the broader conversation around college athletes' name, image, and likeness (NIL) opportunities. This research would examine how college athletes build their personal brands and connect with their audiences. Focusing on the latent content will provide a richer, more nuanced understanding of the message athletes send whether it is intentional or not. This approach highlight the powerful role TikTok plays in the blending of personal expression and audience perception.

11.3 Word Count & Range Check

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**Word count:** 468

**Required range (MC501):** 450-500 words

**Status:**  In range
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12 2025-11-04

12.1 Choose one prompt to answer

> **Prompt B:** Imagine you're analyzing survey data and discover that some responses are missing or strangely formatted. You realize you could remove them, impute values, or rewrite categories to make things "fit." What would guide your decision-making in that situation? How does data cleaning impact the honesty and transparency of research?

12.2 Response

Understanding why data are missing or inconsistent is the first step toward dealing with such a situation. Data may be missing for many reasons, such as participants skipping questions out of confusion, discomfort, or survey fatigue, or possibly even because of technical issues that prevented proper submission. In addition, responses that are strangely formatted suggest poor survey design, miscommunication of instructions, or respondent error. The identified cause can help to establish an appropriate solution. For example, if data loss is random-for example, perhaps a few participants accidentally skipped one question-statistical imputation methods (such as mean substitution or regression-based imputation) may be appropriate. However, if missingness is systematic-for example, if certain groups consistently skip a sensitive question-eliminating those responses could make the data biased. Knowing this, acknowledging one's limitation and conducting sensitivity analyses would in that case become the far better option ethically and transparently. Clear, preestablished protocols should guide a researcher's decision-making as well. The research plan/codebook should detail, in advance, how missing or anomalous data are to be treated. This type of proactive planning reduces the potential to engage in subjective decisions that can inadvertently manipulate the outcome. For instance, "rewriting categories to make things fit" might seem like an innocuous way to simplify data, but doing so can distort the original meaning of responses unless it is done in a systematic fashion and with justification. Recoding should only take place when categories conceptually overlap or when collapsing them enhances interpretability without erasing meaningful distinctions. Each modification should be documented in such a way that others can later replicate or

evaluate the process. Data cleaning has direct effects on the honesty and transparency of research. Cleaning data is not just a technical but also an ethical step. Transparency implies that any type of changes to the raw data should be fully documented in the methodology section. Researchers should explain what decisions were made, why they were necessary, and how they might affect results. Concealment of the procedures for data cleaning could mislead readers about the reliability of the findings, or it could imply a degree of precision not actually present. Overcleaning data in order to make results appear neater or more statistically significant crosses into unethical territory; it violates the integrity of the dataset and may lead to incorrect conclusions. Ultimately, cleaning should not alter but retain the truth reflected in the data. There is a fine balance between the need to create datasets that can actually be used and the responsibility of not violating the original integrity of participants' responses. Ethical cleaning is based on transparency, accountability, and respect for limitations in data. By documenting procedures, justifying decisions, and acknowledging uncertainties, researchers ensure their findings are trustworthy and reproducible, upholding principles of honest and transparent scientific inquiry.

12.3 Word Count & Range Check

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**Word count:** 460

**Required range (MC501):** 450-500 words

**Status:**   In range
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13 2025-11-09

13.1 Choose one prompt to answer

> **Prompt C:** The chapter describes descriptive analysis as a "first conversation" with your data. Why is it essential to fully describe your sample before jumping to conclusions or testing hypotheses? How might skipping this step lead to bad research or misleading claims?

13.2 Response

Descriptive analysis can often be called the "first conversation" with your data for a reason, before you can make any big claims or run a statistical test. You need to understand who and what you're working with. Describing your sample fully is like taking a step back and looking at the whole picture. Looking specifically at who participated? How many people responded? What does the average look like? Are there big differences within the group? These details are important because they set the stage for everything that is next to come. If you skip this step, you risk building your entire research story. One of the reasons to start with descriptive analysis is that it helps prevent bias and misinterpretation. If the sample is mainly demographic, like young adults, you can assume your results apply to all age groups. Without knowing how your participants are distributed, the findings might accidently be presented a universal when they aren't. Descriptive statistics like means, medias, percentages, and ranges, can help see whether your sample is balanced or if certain groups are underrepresented or overrepresented. This awareness influences how you interpret the results and how you communicate them. Descriptive analysis also reveals potential data issues early. For example, missing responses, extreme. Outliers, or oddly formatted answers that can seriously distort results. One outlier can bring the mean way down or up making it seem like something meaningful is happening when there is just an error or an odd data response. If data isn't looked at closely before testing the hypotheses, he wrong statistical test might be ran or the results are technically "significant" but complete misleading. Descriptive analysis acts as a reality check to show what is there versus what you expect and hope to see. Skipping this step can lead to flawed and misleading claims. Jumping straight into hypothesis testing without understanding your

data, the conclusions may reflect errors, imbalances or noise rather than genuine patterns. You could happen to unintentionally generalized results o groups you never properly analyzed or overlooked limitations that would have been obvious if the time was taken to explore the data first. This can potentially mis lead readers, create false confidence, or influence decisions based on inaccurate information. In fields like health, education, or public policies, these mistakes can lead to real consequences and even lead to harmful or poorly informed actions. Descriptive analysis is essential because it keeps researchers honest. It makes you slow down and look carefully to understand the dataset before claims are made. It builds transparency and trust by showing readers exactly who participated and the kind of data that was used. Treating descriptive analysis as a meaningful first step instead of a chore, researchers set themselves up for stronger, cleaner, and more responsible conclusions.

13.3 Word Count & Range Check

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**Word count:** 464

**Required range (MC501):** 450-500 words

**Status:**  In range
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14 2025-11-17

14.1 Choose one prompt to answer

> **Prompt A:** This chapter describes inference as a "leap" from sample to population. Reflect on what makes that leap trustworthy—or risky. Why is it not enough to observe a pattern in your sample? How does hypothesis testing help, and what limits remain even when your results are statistically significant?

14.2 Response

In this chapter, inference is described as a "leap" from a sample to a population, and hypothesis testing offers the structure that helps make that leap more trustworthy. However, even with statistical tools, the leap is never risk-free. Understanding the why requires examining both how hypotheses and testing work and what their limits are.

A pattern observed in a sample is never enough on its own because samples are imperfect and representations of the population. Random chance, sampling error, and uneven group assignments can all produce differences that appear meaningful but actually reflect noise rather than a genuine effect. Without a formal way to evaluate how probable a sample result is under the assumption of no real relationship, researchers risk mistaking coincidence for evidence. This is why simply seeing a difference like a 10-point test score increase by the treatment group and the control group. This is not as compelling on its own. We need to know whether the difference could easily appear even if the treatment had no actual effect.

Testing a hypothesis by introducing a cautious process that begins with assuming the null hypothesis is true. This forces researchers to evaluate how surprising their data would be if there really were no relationship in the population. The p-value tells us that if the probability is very small, the result is statistically significant, and we reject the null hypothesis. This does not prove the research hypothesis, but it does provide evidence that the observed pattern is unlikely to be due to random chance alone.

The chapter also talks about how hypothesis testing protects against two types of errors. Type I errors occur when we reject a true null hypothesis, while type II errors occur when we fail

to detect a real effect. These errors highlight the unavoidable risks of drawing conclusions from incomplete information. Even when a result is statistically significant, there is still a chance of a 5% that we are wrong. Recognizing these risks can help make the leap from sample to population more careful and transparent. Even with hypothesis testing, there are still important limits. Statistical significance only addresses whether an effect is likely real; it says nothing about how large or meaningful that effect is. With large samples, even trivial differences can become statistically significant. The chapter underscores the importance of effect size as a measure of practical importance. This is something that hypothesis testing alone cannot provide. A tiny effect may be real but irrelevant, and reporting only significance levels can mislead readers into overestimating the impact of a finding. Finally, statistical significance cannot address issues like biased samples. Poor measurements or confounding variables. Even a well-executed test does not establish causation or guarantee that results generalize beyond the sample.

14.3 Word Count & Range Check

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**Word count:** 0

**Required range (MC501):** 450-500 words

**Status:**  Out of range
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