Preliminary Honours Proposal

Research Plan

For my honours project, I plan to look at how nationalism was conveyed by Canadians through Twitter during the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics. I will use the theory from Benedict Anderson's (1983) "Imagined Communities" in order to inform my research. I will look for instances of imagined communities in tweets sent during the Sochi Olympics. The Olympics are a good time to look for occurrences of Canadians demonstrating the idea of an "imagined community," as rooting for one's nation is likely to be at the forefront of citizens' discussions.

The London 2012 Olympics were deemed the first time social media was used extensively during the Olympics, andworking on the presumption that more people used social media over time, the Sochi Olympics may prove to have more social media interactions amongst Canadians (Marshall et al, 2010; Tang & Cooper, 2013). It will be interesting to see whether or not the increased use of Twitter may result in a feeling of an "imagined community."

This research question involves many areas of study, such as Canadian nationalism, social media, and the Olympics, so a base of knowledge in these areas will likely aid me in my research. This knowledge will hopefully be achieved through the completion of summer reading.

Significance

Instances of social media, and the Internet in general, creating a sense of globalization among users has been a prominent area of study in academic research since the emergence of these new technologies. Research has also been done on mass audiences, and the creation of a sense of community through various media (Athique, 2008). However, the question of whether or not social media aids in creating a sense of community within a nation has been researched to a lesser extent. In addition to this, none of the research found thus far on these topics looked at Canadian audiences, or Canadian nationalism. Canadian nationalism is a complex area of research, as the Canadian identity is intricate, and is often defined regionally. This gap in research regarding social media and nationalism, as well as the general lack in research on Canadian nationalism, is why I believe this research project is significant.

Theory and Methodology

This topic will be researched using a content analysis of tweets sent out during the Sochi 2014 Olympics. These tweets will include ones obtained from

- CBC's Olympic Twitter page
- Canadian Olympians' Twitter pages
- Citizens' accounts, located through hashtags

Due to the fact that citizens' tweets will be analyzed, Research Ethics approval may be needed, and this will be obtained before collecting any private data.

What will be looked for in these tweets will be defined more specifically in the future, but will center on Anderson's (1983) idea of "imagined communities." Anderson's theory is based on the idea that even though members of a nation have never met one another, they feel connected to each other through the feeling of community.

The content analysis will be combined with a literature review on the subject in order to understand how nationalism was conveyed over Twitter by Canadians during the Sochi Olympics.

Reading list

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Tang, T., & Cooper, R. (2013). Olympics everywhere: Predictors of multiplatform media uses during the 2012 London olympics. *Mass Communication and Society*, 16(6), 850-68. doi: 10.1080/15205436.2013.804936

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