Banal Nationalism in 140 Characters or Less: The Reproduction of Canadian Nationalism over Twitter During the Sochi 2014 Olympics

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Abstract

Canadian nationalism appears to be reproduced over Twitter largely in relation to the “Us” versus “Them” binary and the national sport associated with Canadian identity: hockey. This project uses Michael Billig’s (1995) theory of banal nationalism to examine how Canadian nationalism was reproduced over Twitter during the Sochi 2014 Olympics. Using a corpus of 528 tweets from the Sochi 2014 Olympics, both a qualitative and quantitative content analysis was performed using a coding scheme that looked for: references to country names, indexical pronouns (“We/Our”, “Their/They”), and Canadian symbols. These words and symbols were coded for in addition to various themes such as reverence, pride and excitement. The interpretation of the findings also elicits the discussion of the type of national identity captured on Twitter. Rather than reflecting Canada’s multicultural framework, this identity was lacking in any diversity. In summary, this project suggests Canadian nationalism was reproduced largely in relation to the discourse of “Us” versus “Them”, and through the problematic picture of Canadian identity found in the corpus of tweets.
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Introduction

This research project looks to answer the question: how was Canadian nationalism reproduced over Twitter during the Sochi 2014 Olympics? Using Michael Billig’s (1995) definition of banal nationalism, a content analysis was performed on a body of tweets published during the Sochi 2014 Olympics in order to answer this question. 528 tweets were analyzed, and it appears as though, when the nation is invoked, Canadian nationalism is reproduced in relation to the “Us” versus “Them” binary, and largely in relation to hockey as a part of the nation’s identity. I will argue that although banal nationalism was demonstrated less than expected, when the nation was mentioned, it was in relation to the “Us” versus “Them” divide (mostly between Canada and the United States), and did not reflect the multicultural framework often associated with Canada’s national identity.

The Olympics are expanding digitally, with viewers watching the Games on multiple viewing platforms, such as their laptops and smartphones, and using social media to discuss the events as they are happening (Tang & Cooper, 2013). The Sochi 2014 Olympics saw an increase in the amount of viewers who watched the event, as well as an increase in the number of followers on the official Olympic social media accounts (Facts and Figures, 2014). Special events such as the Olympics are likely to be collectively remembered by societies as a historic event (Dayan & Katz, 1992). These events are said to privilege the home, and in doing so, they provide a space where members of the community can deliberate and celebrate together (Dayan & Katz, 1992). Along with the overall grandeur of the Olympics and the event’s ability to pause the routine of everyday life, these considerations are what make the Olympics significant to
study. My research will further explore the ways in which Canadians deliberate and celebrate the Olympics by relying on the discourse of Canadian nationalism.

It is important to examine nationalism in the context of the Olympics, because the International Olympic Committee takes for granted the concept of the nation, rather than questioning it. This can be seen in the Olympic Charter, where nations are eluded to many times when discussing National Olympic Committees, but are never defined (International Olympic Committee, 2013). The reader is assumed to already have the knowledge of what constitutes as a nation. With so many individuals watching the Olympics and discussing them on social media, it can be presumed that, like the International Olympic Committee, these individuals are taking the concept of the nation for granted. Nations are reproduced through actions and motives of the individual, therefore it is worthwhile to look closely at the processes through which this happens, for we may be able to better understand these concepts by doing so (Billig, 1995). By researching nationalism in the context of the Olympics, we may be able to see how nationalism is reproduced, as well as whether or not the concept is challenged and re-defined by individuals.

Canadian nationalism is particularly interesting to look at, for Canada is an established country, and as such, we do not often question the concept of the nation. We do not distance ourselves from what we accept as natural, and instead take Canada as a nation for granted. Also, Canada is considered to be a multicultural country. It is interesting to look at the role, and the complexities of nationalism in a country which is said to value the “Other”, when the idea of nationalism itself is said to value “Us”. This evokes the question: do Canadians use nationalism to include or exclude? In order to
better understand this part of ourselves, we must take a step back and admit that nations as a concept are not “natural”, rather that there are processes that have to happen in order for a nation to continue to exist (Billig, 1995). This is what I will do in this research project. I will distance myself from preconceived notions of nationalism and Canada as a nation in order to better see how Canadians use nationalism, for what purposes and in which ways.

It is interesting to look at nationalism in the context of social media, for these websites connect individuals globally. If social media aids in connecting individuals around the world, this raises the question: how does social media aide in connecting individuals within a nation? Looking at nationalism on Twitter may aide in answering this question and determine in a globalized world, how nationalism fits into the equation. Also, it has been found that racial prejudice takes place more often online than in person (Farrinton, et al., 2015). It is therefore be interesting to see if one tends to categorize “Us” and “Them” online.

Taking these questions into consideration, the objectives for each chapter will noe be discussed. The goal for the theoretical framework of this thesis is to determine the best definition of key concepts possible for this thesis. This will be done by providing several definitions of nations, nationalism and national identity. The differences between primordialism and constructivism pertaining to the nation will then be discussed. After the best definitions of these key terms are justified, literature pertaining to special events will then be detailed. All of the theory in the section will inspire the methodology section of this thesis. In the methodology section, the goal is to outline the methodological process this thesis will take: the content analysis. I will also review literature on content
analyses pertaining to Twitter and nationalism that will inform the coding scheme, and outline what both the implicit and explicit coding scheme categories will include. The way in which the data will be analyzed after completing the content analysis will also be discussed. The analysis section of this thesis will detail the main findings of the content analysis, as well as provide insights into these findings, and connect them to the research question. The discussion and concluding remarks section to this thesis will connect these findings with questions brought up in the theory section, discuss several limitations of the thesis, provide several factors that are up for interpretation in light of the findings, as well as suggest areas for further study.
Theoretical Framework: Defining Nationalism, Nations and National Identity

The objective of this project is to look at how nationalism was reproduced over Twitter during the Sochi 2014 Olympics. Due to the fact that this thesis examines nationalism, it is important to first define key concepts: nationalism, nations and national identity. The difference between a constructivist and primordialist perspective when looking at the notion of the nation will also be discussed, as well as the rise of nationalism in Canada. Then, the framework that is most suitable for the present question will be adopted, in addition to looking at texts surrounding media events and sport in the context of nationalism.

Nationalism, nations and national identity are notoriously difficult to define (Anderson, 1983; Billig, 1995; Gellner, 1983). These concepts have become naturalized in our daily lives, and are therefore terms that we, in established nations, take for granted (Billig, 1995). The overall effect of individuals taking the notion of nations for granted is something that will be looked at while articulating the findings of this project. Defining these key concepts will give more clarity to this project (Anderson, 1983; Billig, 1995).

Defining Nationalism

The conventional definition of nationalism is a feeling of loyalty and devotion to a nation. The average individual may see this definition as being synonymous to patriotism, which can be defined as a feeling of love for one’s country. For example, a Canadian may watch an Olympic hockey game where Canada is playing, and root for the Canadian team due to the feeling of loyalty associated with cheering for one’s own nation. Yet, nationalism is more than this conventional understanding, and many scholars
(Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1983) have studied the concept in great detail, expanding on the surface-level definition of nationalism in order to provide a more thoughtful understanding of this concept.

Modern nationalism is seen as a political doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Kedourie, 1960; Wrong, 1926). Elie Kedourie (1960), one of the first scholars to discuss nationalism, defines the term as a political ideology or doctrine of national self-determination. Similarly, Ernest Gellner (1983) defines nationalism as a political principle that holds the political and national unit should be congruent. Nationalism in this context is the correlation of industrialized societies dependent on education (Gellner, 1983). This is not the revitalization of a dormant force, but rather a new way of thinking that makes use of pre-existing cultural patterns in order to legitimize the right to self-determination within these borders (Gellner, 1983). Individuals begin flagging themselves as members of a given nation when nationalism becomes a political principle (Gellner, 1983). That is to say, we do not start to think of ourselves as a nation until the political and intellectual elites begin telling us that we are a nation. Soon after, these ideas become reproduced through the education system, public policy, art and culture institutions, and national economic institutions (Gellner, 1983). This results in the creation of an “impersonal society, with mutually sustainable atomized individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind, in place of a previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves” (Gellner, 1983, p. 56). Nationalism and patriotism work together, for through the shared culture of a nation, patriotism, pertaining to the love and loyalty for this nation, is born.
Gellner also recognizes the weakness of nationalism, stating that what constitutes as culture in the context of nationalism is unclear, and that not all feelings of nationalism result in the formation of a nation. If culture is understood as a linguistic community, this further complicates matters. For instance, in countries such as Canada, we have two official languages under the same nation. If language constitutes culture, and culture recommends where politically defined borders should be placed, English-speaking Canada and the United States would need to be the same nation state. Gellner (1983) also argues that most potential nationalisms either fail or will not attempt to find political expression. This is primarily due to the culture of these nationalisms being dominated by the culture of another potential nationalism (Gellner, 1983). Importantly, Anderson (1983) reminds us that nationalism is not simply the awakening of a pre-existing nation that was dormant until now; feelings of nationalism create a sense of an imagined community, an idea which will be further expanded upon below.

Nationalism scholarship distinguishes between ethnic and civic nationalism (Smith, 2006). Ethnic nationalism is tied to ancestry and kinship, and is therefore said to be natural and organic (Smith, 2006). This nationalism is based on shared customs, religions and languages (Smith, 2006). It can be classified as illiberal, particularist and exclusive (Brubaker, 1999). This is because members of ethnic nations need to have been members of the given nation since birth, and will be members of this nation for life, unable to change this matter of fate (Smith, 2006). Civic nationalism is classified as liberal, voluntarist, universalist and inclusive, and is based on common citizenship, rather than ethnicity (Brubaker, 1999). This is because civic nationalism does not require members of a nation to be ethnically related (Brubaker, 1999). Instead, members of these
nations that feel a sense of civic nationalism can become a part of the community, rather than having to be born into the community (Brubaker, 1999). Leaders of certain nations sometimes use the language of civic nationalism to represent the nation itself to international audiences (Brubaker, 1999).

This is the case with Canada, as the nation is internationally branded as being multicultural inclusive, and every individual, no matter their national or ethnic origin, is said to be equal before the law, a concept included in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom (1867). In the past, Canada’s pluralistic nature was represented as a history of tolerance, while more recently, this theme has transformed into the mythology and policy of multiculturalism in Canada (Mackey, 1999), seen manifested through various multicultural acts implemented by the Canadian federal government. The multicultural myth can be seen as a way to combat the problem of Canadian nationalism: the fact that the nation is so diverse; it can be hard to unify the different cultures within the nation (Mackey, 1999; Bannerji, 2000). By unifying the nation through difference, a sense of identity is given to the nation, allowing for nationalism.

In “House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada” (1999), Eva Mackey discusses the origins of the multicultural myth in Canada. She claims that it started with the “Benevolent Mountie Myth” (p. 14), in which a Mountie is seen as benevolent due to their ability to manage the expansion of the Canadian nation with less bloodshed than its American counterpart (Mackey, 1999). While the American symbol of the cowboy, often picture killing Indians, stands for individuality, the Mountie stands for the state, representing the benevolence and compassionate treatment of minorities by the nation as a whole (Mackey, 1999). The benevolent nature of the
Mountie was believed to be due to the naturally superior structure of British justice and was important in the construction of Canadian national identity (Mackey, 1999). Bannerji (2000) also looks at the relationship of multiculturalism and Canada, claiming that Canada will not realistically be able to escape its fragmented framework. As multiculturalism as a concept is dependent upon the concept of difference, Canada as a nation is therefore relying upon recognizing the multicultural “Other” within the nation as different than the majority (Bannerji, 2000). This idea is manifested through the prejudice towards immigrants, and the creation of the “two solitudes” discourse in Canada that represents the divide between the dominant English Canada, and the minority of French Canada (Bannerji, 2000). This problematic branding of Canada as a multicultural nation will be looked for when performing a content analysis on the text later on in this thesis.

This relates to the idea of the “Other” within the nation being overshadowed by the “exalted subject”, those accepted as Canadian nationals, that is the hegemonic citizen is discussed in Thobani’s (2007) work. In her book, Thobani (2007) looks at how these exalted subjects, anglo-Canadians, have come to be taken as the norm in Canada, the power relations that aid this process, and the qualities these individuals are imagined to possess. Thobani (2007) argues “exaltation has been key to the constitution of the national subject as a particular kind of human being, a member of a particular kind of community, and, hence, ontologically and existentially distinct from the strangers to this community” (p. 5). In order to understand this community better, the notion of the nation will be unpacked.
Defining Nations

In everyday terms, nations are thought to be a natural form of social organization; not much thought is given to how, or why nations form, or how nations could be defined (Kedourie, 1960). The nation is connected to concepts such as language, ethnicity, shared history and culture. Culture, language and history are often seen as the shared traits of group members that lead to the development of nations (Billig, 1995). There are two stances taken by scholars when it comes to the formation of nations: primordialism and constructivism (Vörös, 2006).

The literature on nationalism defines the nation in at least two ways. Primordialists see the nation as a historical fact: something that exists since time immemorial by virtue of the ethnic ties and networks between people (Vörös, 2006; Smith, 2006). Myths, symbols and collective memories are central to primordialism, for they are deeply embedded in the culture (Ozkirimli, 2003). These things never have to be explained to members of the nation, for members know these things since childhood. The bonds between members of the nation are strong, for they understand one another from the beginning (Ozkirimli, 2003). It is also argued that many national events are festivals and cultural gatherings which centre around shared ethnicity aide in creating a sense of a nation through teaching members about their shared history (Ozkirimli, 2003). This group of scholars sees the notion of the nation a self-aware ethnic group, and the largest group of individuals based on ancestral relatedness (Smith, 2006). Nations come into being, and are awakened in a sense, when members feel as though they belong to, and participate in a community (Smith, 2006). Primordialists conceive nationalism as having
existed since the formation of a nation, meaning they believe nationalism, much like
nations, is inherent (Vörös, 2006).

For constructivists such as Kedourie, Gellner, Anderson and Billig, ethnicity
plays, at best, a minor role in the formation of nations (Smith, 2006). Constructivists see
the nation as a result of modernization and its many forms, including bureaucratization,
political and social emancipation and the spread of literacy and secular education (Smith,
2006; Hroch, 2006). The nation is characterized by a clearly defined territory with strict
borders, a standardized legal system, civil and political rights for all members, a mass
culture distributed through a standardized public education system and the political status
of independence (Smith, 2006). These scholars take both nations and ethnicity as
phenomena that are born as a result of people starting to think of themselves as members
of a nation or ethnicity (Vörös, 2006). To constructivists, the fact that the nation is
constructed does not make the idea of the nation any less real (Ozkirimli, 2003).

Constructivists also conceive nations and nationalisms as being constantly
reproduced (Billig, 1995). This means that members of nations collectively remember
and demonstrate nationalism because they feel part of the nation, and, in turn, reproduce
the very concept of the nation, only to again remember their nationhood and go through
this cyclical process over again (Vörös, 2006; Billig, 1995). In this sense, the nation is
seen as a social construct, and without the processes of reproduction, constructivists
believe that both nations and nationalism would not exist. The idea of reproduction will
be further discussed in more detail below. For now, other constructivists’ definitions of
the nation will be discussed in-depth.
Gellner (1983) defines nations as the convergence of will, culture and nationalism. Will can be defined as loyalty and identification amongst members, and culture can be defined as a system of ideas and signs (Gellner, 1983). Nationalism is central to the formation of nations, for with only will and culture constituting a nation, many other types of communities, such as sports teams, could be included in this definition (Gellner, 1983). In other words, Gellner believes that nationalism is the factor which gives rise to nations. Anderson (1983) adds to this definition, for he defines nations as imagined political communities. Nations are imagined communities in a sense that there is no way for an individual to personally know every other member of their nation, therefore they imagine members of their nation which they do not personally know (Anderson, 1983). Anderson (1983) uses the term “community” when describing the nation, for he argues, “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (p. 7). That is to say, Anderson (1983) sees the term “community” as representing equality, where all members of the nation imagine themselves to be of the same social rank, and it is this sense of fraternity that makes the nation so strong in its imaginings. Canada is an imagined community in this sense, as the nation is not built upon a shared ethnic identity. Instead, Canada relies on multiculturalism as an official policy in order to instill a sense of national identification within its citizens, therefore creating an imagined community. The idea of an imagined community will inform the analysis for this thesis.

**Defining National Identity**

National identity is a key element of nation-building processes. The concept pertains to the feeling of belonging that allows members of a nation to identify
themselves as being a part of their nation, and consequently with its shared religion, culture, and language. For example, to be Canadian means to recognize yourself as being part of the Canadian nation, and may mean identifying as polite, a hockey fan, someone who enjoys nature and someone who is tough enough to take on the Canadian climate. All these are widely recognized themes when conceptualizing what it means to be Canadian. Individuals rely on national identity when filling in the identity of those they do not personally know within their nation, in turn reproducing the idea of the nation (Anderson, 1983). This means that Canadians would use the imagined national identity, with traits such as being polite and liking hockey, to imagine other Canadians who they do not know personally. The nation is, in this case, reproduced, for a sense of “Us” as a nation is being created when imagining members of a nation when individuals do not know everyone personally (Wodak, 2006).

This sense of “Us” is a good example of the importance of language when considering national identity (Wodak, 2006). The division between “Us” and “Them” is a habit deeply embedded in our way of thinking. National identity, and a sense of “Us” and “Them” can be understood as a process of drawing boundaries around “Us”, the nation, in order to separate ourselves from the “Other”. The use of this language creates in- and out-groups (Wodak, 2006). In-groups are equated to sameness and “Us”, while out-groups are equated to difference and “Them” (Wodak, 2006). This construction of “Us” and “Them” frames how we reproduce our national identity through a discursive construction, which is “internalized through socialization” (Wodak, 2006, p. 106). The discursive construction of national identity also may effect the way we see the “Other”, which in turn distinguishes how we construct “Us”, for “stereotypical images of other
nations, groups of ‘the others’ and their culture, their history, are included in such schemata, marking differences and distinctions which allow for constituting the ingroup” (Wodak, 2006, p. 106).

In Canada’s case, the main “Other” the United States. Canada is constantly trying to define itself as different from the United States. For example, Canadians often pride themselves in being more polite than Americans. However, not all Canadians are polite, and not all Americans are impolite. This is part of the national identity, and the sense of Canadians as “Us”, a community that shares these certain features, is distinguished as being different from “Them”, the United States, who do not belong within our nation. This categorization between “Us” and “Them” through using the national identity creates a feeling of difference towards the “other”, and we may categorize this group negatively due to the unknown qualities associated with them.

When discussing the distinctions between “Us” and “Them”, it is also important to recognize the negative associations we place onto the “Other”. Many intellectuals object to nations and nationalism because of the potential for extreme patriotism and racism that comes with the principle (Anderson, 1983; Forgasm & Fiedler, 1996). Historically, this happens when nations overtly worship themselves (Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983). When a nation overly worships themselves, they express a sense of superiority for their own nation, “Us”, and extreme hatred towards members of other nations, “Them” (Anderson, 1983). A well-known example of this, of course, is Hitler’s reign of Nazi Germany during World War II, when nationalism was taken to an extreme and resulted in the hatred and genocide of an entire race.
Another result of the negative associations placed on the “Other” is the inability for immigrants to display social mobility. The distinction between “Us” and “Them” can create a stigma of difference seen when “They” immigrate to “Our” country. This makes it difficult for immigrants to practice social mobility, as there is a social preference to the “Canadian-Canadians”, rather than “Indian-Canadians” or “Chinese-Canadians”, for example. This preference can be seen through the very act of labeling someone as “Indian-Canadian” or “Chinese-Canadian”, for it is assumed that the norm is to be “Anglo-Canadian”.

Canadian nationalism is a particularly interesting case to look at when studying the manifestations of nationalism and nations, for, as previously stated, Canada is a multicultural country that officially values a variety of cultures and ethnicities through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1867). It is significant to look at the role, and the complexities of nationalism in a country which is said to value the “Other”, when the idea of nationalism itself is said to value “Us”. This contradiction was mentioned earlier when discussing the emergence of the narrative of multiculturalism in Canada (Mackey, 1999). When the idea of multiculturalism relies on the presence of an “Other”, the question is evoked: do Canadians use nationalism to include or exclude? This idea will be kept in mind when it comes to the analysis section of this thesis.

In this overview of nationalism, nations and national identity, a working definition of nationalism has been constructed as a political ideology that is the consequence of social organization in industrialized societies (Gellner, 1983). Definitions of the nation and national identity have also been given in order to better contextualize their meaning in the context of nationalism. Starting from this definition of nationalism as
a political ideology, Michael Billig’s (1995) definition of banal nationalism will be defined, and a case will be made as to why banal nationalism is a fitting theory to adopt when studying Canadian nationalism over Twitter.

**Banal Nationalism**

Although we defined nations and nationalisms, the interest of this thesis is in how nationalism is reproduced in daily interactions. It is for this reason that Billig’s (1995) work on banal nationalism was chosen here as the theoretical framework of this project. Banal nationalism, theorized by Billig (1995), differs from other scholars’ definitions of nationalism, for instead of focusing on nationalism as a political ideology, Billig imagines nationalism as pertaining to everyday aspects of life. This take on nationalism is useful for empirical analysis compared to the previous forms of nationalism discussed, which looked at nationalism on a larger, more theoretical standpoint (Skey, 2009). Banal nationalism is defined as ideological habits that reproduce established nations on a daily basis (Billig, 1995). It is conceived as an ideological consciousness that is deeply embedded in contemporary ways of thinking. Ideological habits can be defined as a taken for granted system of ideas and are practiced regularly, with a great difficulty in abandoning them. Billig argues that banal does not imply ‘benign’, but is in fact an important mechanism through which the nation is “created” or “constructed” in everyday life through flagging. Flagging in this sense can be defined as taking notice to something for a brief moment. Banal nationalism proposes that in established nations, there is a constant flagging of nationhood (Billig, 1995). Not only are nations collectively remembered through this flagging, but there is also collective forgetting which goes along with banal nationalism (Billig, 1995). While watching the Olympics, for example,
members of a nation may collectively remember their nationhood when viewing a
Canadian athlete win a gold medal, but they simultaneously may forget that not every
member of their nation is watching this happen, as they may have to go to work, may
speak very little English, or may have dual citizenship, which may complicate how they
view Olympic events (Skey, 2009).

Billig (1995) uses the distinction between the “waved” and “un-waved” flag when
clarifying this idea of banal nationalism. The waved flag symbolizes nationalism on
special occasions, while the unflagged flag represents nationalism on an everyday basis,
when it is not on the forefront of citizens’ minds (Billig, 1995). For example, if a flag
bearer led a parade carrying a Canadian flag for an event such as the Calgary Stampede,
this would not fall under Billig’s (1995) definition of banal nationalism, for such a
waving of the flag is not an everyday example of nationalism. The un-waved Canadian
flag hanging in the corner of a local hockey arena, however, would be an example of
banal nationalism, for the flag is not calling attention to itself (Billig, 1995). License
plates are another example of the unwaved flag, and therefore banal nationalism (Leib,
2011). Often plagued with regional symbols and slogans that commemorate historic
regional events, passersby on a daily basis see these license plates; yet these symbols are
usually not on the forefront of one’s mind (Leib, 2011). However, Billig (1995) argues
that it is these examples of the unwaved flag that reproduce banal nationalism.

Billig holds that the nation is not a historic fact, but is instead a political project that is
sustained by people’s internalization of it in everyday life (Billig, 1995). Banal
nationalism therefore falls under the constructivist school of thought, for the theory
works under the belief that the nation has not existed since the beginning of time, and instead is collectively reproduced on a daily basis (Vörös, 2006; Billig, 1995).

A main criticism of banal nationalism is its simplicity (Skey, 2009). Billig does not take into account certain complexities of nations such as dual citizenship, and problematic identities aligned with the state (Skey, 2009). For example, Francophone identity in Canada complicates Canadian nationalism, as many Francophone Canadians may feel a strong sense of Francophone nationalism, while still feeling Canadian nationalism. These two may be contradictory, for Francophone nationalism is linked solely to pride of French identity and culture, while Canadian legislation officially values both Anglophone and Francophone identity (Constitution Act, 1982).

Banal nationalism is also simplistic in the sense that in an increasingly globalized world where new technologies transcend borders, the idea of nationalism is only becoming more complicated than Billig acknowledges through dual citizenship and other complexities of then nation (Skey, 2009). This is very important to remember while looking at the Olympics, for the Olympics are expanding digitally, with viewers watching the Games on multiple viewing platforms, such as their laptops and smartphones, and using social media to discuss the events as they are happening (Tang & Cooper, 2013). The Sochi 2014 Olympics saw an increase in the amount of viewers who watched the event, as well as an increase in the number of followers on the official Olympic social media accounts (Facts and Figures, 2014). This means that individuals who identify with another nation are more easily able to view the Olympics through that nation’s media outlets, and contribute to nationalistic conversations on social media. In order to deal with these limitations, Skey (2009) suggests deciphering “whether and when a national
framework is utilized in order to make sense of a particular issue” (p. 342). This will be done in the present thesis in order to understand how groups are addressed, ignored, and respond to or challenge the national discourse (Skey, 2009).

This paper will use Billig’s (1995) definition of banal nationalism in order to look at how nationalism was reproduced over Twitter during the Sochi 2014 Olympics. Banal nationalism is relevant when looking at this case study, for it makes more sense to use a definition of nationalism which pertains to everyday life when looking at this case study, rather than using a definition of nationalism which sees the notion as a political principle. This is because on Twitter, the conversation of Canadian nationalism is largely open to the public, and everyday people, rather than just the political elite. Banal nationalism pertains to the nationalism that “people consume as part of giving meaning to the experiences of everyday life” (Hutchinson, 2006, p. 295). Although it can be argued that the Olympics do not constitute an everyday event, the fact that Twitter and the individuals contributing to the Olympic conversation are usually everyday people make for a good case study to apply banal nationalism.

In this section, the concept of banal nationalism, which will serve as the theoretical framework for this thesis, has been further expanded upon. To summarize, banal nationalism can be defined as the everyday flagging of the nation that, in turn, reproduces the nation. It was noted, however, that the simplicity of the theory is problematic. Nonetheless, banal nationalism pertains to everyday example of nationalism, and Twitter is a site of everyday conversation will inform the analysis undertook here. Next, I will explain the relationship between the Olympics and nationalism.
Media Events, Sport and Their Connection to Nationalism

In the following section, several studies looking at nationalism in the context of sport and media events will be examined. This will aid in informing the methodological portion of this thesis, and provide some insight into why it is important to examine nationalism in the context of the Olympics. Media events foster a sense of participation (Dayan and Katz, 1992), and sport reinforcing the nation through sport paraphernalia (King, 2006), reiterating the duality of “Us” versus “Them” (Billings, 2014), and sport becoming a part of the national identity (Wong & Trumper, 2002) and a nation’s collective memory (Hayes, 2010).

Dayan and Katz (1992) propose that most media events have a large number of qualities in common with each other, many of which are applicable to the Olympics. Firstly, audiences stop their daily routine and see the media event as a type of holiday experience (Dayan & Katz, 1992). This is evident during the Olympics, as most national broadcasters pause and interrupt the regular television schedule to show the Olympics. This interruption is monopolistic “in that all channels switch away from their regularly scheduled programming in order to turn to the great event”, aside from a few independent stations (Dayan & Katz, 1992, p. 404). The broadcaster is not typically the one to initiate media events; instead, public bodies such as the International Olympic Committee initiate media events (Dayan & Katz, 1992). Media events are also said to not fit into the regular genres of broadcasting, which is true for the Olympics (Dayan & Katz, 1992). The events are usually live and are therefore characterized as being unpredictable, in addition to being “preplanned, announced and advertised in advance” (Dayan & Katz, 1992, p. 405, researcher’s de-emphasis). This is true for the Olympics, as they are often talked about
and anticipated long before they begin. Media events are also said to be ceremonial with a deep respect associated with the event (Dayan & Katz, 1992). This can be seen when Olympic broadcasters suspend their critical judgment and replace it with one of awe and reverence when viewing, for example, the Olympic opening ceremonies. The ceremonial aspect of the Olympics goes against Billig’s argument of the waved and unwaved flag in the sense that banal nationalism does not generally apply to waved flag events, meaning events of the ceremonial type. Although the fact that the Olympics are being looked at through an everyday medium, this is a limitation to be recognized in this project.

Large audiences are held captive by these media events, with the Sochi Olympics being a good example of this, for the potential number of viewers for these Olympics is said to have been 4.1 billion people (Facts and Figures, 2014). Often media events are viewed in large groups, rather than alone, and evoke a “renewal of loyalty to the society” (Dayan & Katz, 1992, p. 406). This is where nationalism and media events are linked, and why it is important to study nationalism and the Olympics, for there is an inherent connection between large media events and a collective feeling of the renewal of loyalty to one’s nation (Dayan & Katz, 1992). Media events are also said to privilege the home in the sense that viewers gain a sense of participation when viewing these media events (Dayan & Katz, 1992). This will be an interesting facet of media events to look for when analyzing tweets, for a sense of participation can also be linked to nationalism, for one might say that “We” won the hockey game, speaking for the nation of Canada as a whole.

If media events foster a sense of participation, the ways in which sport fosters nationalism could also be seen as the result of this feeling of participation. For example, if an audience member feels a sense of participation, they may wear sports paraphernalia
in order to add to express their loyalty to a team. King (2006) claims that sport is a ritual that reinforces the nation. He expands upon this by explaining that sport is important to nationalism, for “it constitutes a charged interaction ritual out of which imagined national communities arise” (King, 2006, p. 251). That is to say, sport is a ritual where we are able to imagine ourselves, and other members of the national community, for we imagine other members of the community as rooting for the same team, and therefore sharing other aspects of the national identity such as shared history and religion. Specifically, King (2006) looks to sports paraphernalia, such as flags attached to vehicles in England during the 2004 European Championship to show how sport reinforces the nation. Sports paraphernalia act as an identifier, and a symbol of solidarity with other members of the community (King, 2006). By wearing, or displaying sports paraphernalia, one is broadcasting their unity with others who cheer for the same sports team. A Canadian example of a piece of sports paraphernalia which reinforces the nation would be the Olympic-themed mittens with the maple leaf, a Canadian emblem, first made popular during the Vancouver 2010 Olympics. Many Canadians have these mittens, and by wearing them, Canadians are identifying their solidarity within the imagined community of Canada. Displaying sports paraphernalia such as these Canadian mittens on Twitter will be something to look for when analyzing tweets later on in this thesis.

Sport also contributes to the reiteration of the idea of “Us” and “Them” (Billings, et al., 2014; Buffington, 2012). Billings, et al. (2014) go so far to say that a self-categorization of the protagonist and antagonist are created through sport. The protagonist is the home nation of wherever the broadcasting station is based out of, and the antagonist is everyone else attempting to thwart the home nation’s victory (Billings,
et al., 2014). The “Us” is also emphasized by highlighting what members of the nation have in common, such as history and traditions (Buffington, 2012). “They” are categorized by highlighting the opposing nation’s uniqueness and difference (Buffington, 2012). Media often create and reiterate this “Us”/”Them” binary in their presentation of sports. Studies reveal that broadcasters cast the home nation’s team in positive light with the other nation being characterized in much more objective terms, therefore reproducing the idea of “Us” as the familiar protagonist, and “Them” as the unfamiliar antagonist (Billings, et al., 2014). The “Us” and “Them” binary is something to look for in the tweets. Is the general public reflecting this binary on Twitter?

Sport is also as a symbol of national identity. Sport can act as “invented traditions” in the sense that they are not naturally associated with nations, but overtime nurture “a common and enduring sense of experience, place, and affiliation with what it means to be” a part of the said nation (Hayes, 2010, p. 159). For instance, research on Canadian nationalism and sport, shows that hockey is an “invention” of Canadian identity (Wong & Trumper, 2002; Hayes, 2010). The sport has become “an integral part of the imagined national culture, identity formation, and identity politics” (Wong & Trumper, 2002, p. 184). That is to say, hockey has become a part of the national identity, and another way for Canadians to identify with each other, and imagine other members of this national community (Wong & Trumper, 2002). One study looking at Slovenia’s national sport, skiing, states that “sports have helped shape national identities, and further, that national cultures have shaped contemporary sports” (Kotnik, 2008). This is true in Canada, for many go so far to say hockey is “Ours”, as in Canadians’ game, and overtime, Canadians have adopted pastimes such as watching professional hockey and
adoring Canadian hockey players, both of which support this invented tradition (Wong & Trumper, 2002; Hayes, 2010). It is also important to recognize that with this constructed tradition also comes a collective national memory (Hayes, 2010).

The “invented tradition” of hockey as a part of the Canadian identity has also become something that Canadians can collectively remember (Hayes, 2010). An example of this collective hockey memory is the Summit Series of 1972 where the Canadian national team and the Russian national hockey team went against each other in a series of eight hockey games (Hayes, 2010). In the final game, Paul Henderson scored the game-winning goal with only 34 seconds left, and it is still common for Canadians who were living at the time to recall the exact time and place they were when this happened (Hayes, 2010). Due to the number of Canadians who remember this specific moment in Canadian sport, this goal has become a part of the collective Canadian memory (Hayes, 2010).

While many Canadians remember this moment, however, this collective consciousness is a constructed notion, and there are Canadians who do not remember this moment in time due to a disinterest in hockey, or have recently immigrated to the country (Hayes, 2010). In this section, media events, sport and their connection to nationalism have been discussed. It was found that media events are connected to nationalism through the link to a false sense of participation, and a feeling that “We” accomplished something. This is linked to nationalism, for the very idea of the construction of “Us” as a national group is one that is imagined through national identity. Then, a few common themes of sport and nationalism were discussed, including sport paraphernalia as symbolizing imagined communities, a construction of “Us” versus “Them” manifested through sports teams,
and sport as a constructed national identity. These findings will be used when analyzing the data set later in this thesis. Now, a discussion on methodology will be expanded upon.

In the theory section of this thesis, the definitions of nationalism, nation, and national identity that will be used in the analysis section of this thesis were defined. Nationalism was defined as a political identity that unites “Us” as a nation, and differentiates “Us” from “Them”. Nations were defined as the imagined community of individuals that is the consequence of social organization in industrial societies (Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983). National identity was defined as a feeling of belonging that allows members of a nation to identify themselves as being a part of their nation, and consequently with its shared religion, culture, and language. Media events were defined as large televised events that interrupt regular programming and may foster nationalism, as well as the suspension of critical judgment when viewing such an event (Dayan & Katz, 1992). Next, several ideas surrounding nationalism and sport were taken into account in order to inform the methodology and analysis section of this thesis. First, the idea of sport paraphernalia representing imagined communities was discussed (King, 2006). Also, the idea that sport contributes to the reiteration of the idea of “Us” and “Them” will be taken into account in the next sections of this thesis (Billings, et al., 2014; Buffington, 2012). The “invented tradition” of hockey as a part of the Canadian identity, and therefore as something that Canadians can collectively remember will also be looked for in the next sections (Hayes, 2010). Taking these definitions, and ideas surrounding sport and nationalism into account, the methods of this thesis will now be discussed.
Methodology: Coding for the Nation

This chapter will look at the method undertaken in this thesis, defining content analyses, and discuss the steps associated with this method, as well as the limitations and benefits of using it. Then, examples of content analysis studies that relate to my own case study will be discussed, and the coding scheme that will be used in the present thesis will be detailed.

Quantitative and Qualitative Content Analyses

Content analysis can be defined as a “technique used for gathering and analyzing the content of text” (Neuman & Robson, 2009, p. 207). In this context, content refers to any piece of information which can be communicated, including symbols, pictures or words, via written, visual or spoken means (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Examples of text include newspapers, books, speeches and films, but also tweets. The researcher conducting the content analysis “uses objective and systematic counting and recording procedures” in order to produce a description of the patterns in the symbolic content examined (Neuman & Robson, 2009, p. 207). A coding system provides the researcher with set rules to systematically analyze the data (Neuman & Robson, 2009).

Content analyses consist of using a text to answer a research question (Krippendorff, 2013). There are several steps taken while performing a content analysis: unitizing, sampling, recording/coding, reducing, inferring, and narrating (Krippendorff, 2013). Unitizing refers to defining a corpus of text, with justification for why the given unit is being used (Krippendorff, 2013). A corpus of text could be any unit of text, defined by parameters set out by the researcher. Sampling refers to narrowing down the number of units analyzed to a manageable number (Krippendorff, 2013). Although the
researcher may not use the whole population, a representative sample, made up of a random portion of the population, should yield the same results (Krippendorff, 2013). Recording/coding is when the researcher then relies on a strict set of coding instructions to look at the data through, then recording what is observed (Krippendorff, 2013). A coding sheet with the researcher’s coding instructions is usually used to document these observations (Krippendorff, 2013). Reducing data refers to summarizing the findings, while inferring refers to relying on patterns to negotiate meaning from the data (Krippendorff, 2013). Next, narrating refers to answering the research question by relying on conventions found (Krippendorff, 2013). These steps are performed in logical order so they would be able to be repeated by another researcher.

There are two types of content analysis: quantitative and qualitative. The main difference between quantitative and qualitative content analyses is epistemological position on meaning (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Quantitative research methods equate knowing with numbers and science (Krippendorff, 2013). Sometimes quantitative approaches are criticized in their restriction of meaning to counting (Krippendorff, 2013). This is in opposition to qualitative content analyses methods that require a hermeneutic approach to knowing in order to inform the method (Krippendorff, 2013). This method uses a variety of literature to contextualize and interpret the data (Krippendorff, 2013).

In quantitative analyses, plainly observable content is the main focus, with patterns being discovered through statistical analysis (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Qualitative analyses differ, as they use the coding process to find patterns between codes, rather than statistics (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Qualitative analyses examine texts for their meaning as a whole, and the themes discovered often make a statement on social
life, focusing on implied meanings rather than clearly observable content as in quantitative analyses (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Both quantitative and qualitative analyses have their benefits and limitations, which is why this thesis will use a combination of both.

One of the most intrinsic benefits of using content analyses is that they enable the researcher to reveal meanings in a text (Neuman & Robson, 2009). The method is persuasive, and is known as “one of the most direct methods of textual analysis which can be applied to a range of media and cultural artifacts” (Stokes, 2012, p. 131). Content analyses produce data that is generally reliable and replicable (Stokes, 2012). These benefits can be applied to both quantitative and qualitative content analyses. Quantitative content analyses are beneficial over qualitative analyses as their results can be easily displayed through graphs and visual data, making them easy to comprehend (Stokes, 2012). The main benefit of qualitative content analyses over their quantitative counterpart is their ability to decipher the meaning of a text for instances where the number of times a code appears does not provide enough information (Neuman & Robson, 2009; Stokes, 2012). Of course, neither of these analyses comes without limitations (Stokes, 2012).

A main limitation of both qualitative and quantitative content analyses is the fact that they are only “as sophisticated as the categories which the researcher defines”, meaning the categories which the researcher creates are critical in the content analyses’ effectiveness (Stokes, 2012, p. 139). Another limitation often noted with content analyses is that the counting and classifying is very labourious and time consuming (Stokes, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This is intensified when using a content analysis to examine the mass amount of data that is on the internet (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), however, this
method is noted for being useful in providing valid results for online case studies (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003, as cited in Small, 2011). This is assuming that the researcher is prepared to overcome this time limitation, or that they will employ a computer aided qualitative data analysis software, which codes the text for the researcher (Stokes, 2012). In order to inform my own content analysis, it is now useful to draw on existing content analyses for inspiration. These studies either involve Twitter or nationalism, or can therefore give me ideas on how to approach my current case study using a content analysis.

Tamara Small’s (2011) study is interesting to my research in terms of methodology. She uses a content analysis in order to decipher meaning on Twitter, something that I will take into consideration when creating my own coding scheme. Small (2011) looks at the most popular Canadian political hashtag, #cdnpoli, in order to analyze the intersection of Twitter and Canadian politics. Popular hashtags, Small argues, are a useful criteria for data selection as individuals on Twitter are able to extend beyond their personal network when using hashtags that receive a lot of attention, and contribute to a larger conversation, as these tweets are easily searchable and can be seen by many. This model of collecting the corpus of text to analyze will serve as a model for my own content analysis, for Small’s (2011) clear and concise coding scheme consists of three parts: contributors, categories of tweets, and other. The categories under each part in this scheme are well defined, and are mutually exclusive, leaving little room the possibility of a tweet not fitting into any of these categories (Small, 2011). This is what I aim to achieve with my own coding scheme, of course, with the categories relating to Canadian nationalism rather than Canadian politics. Yet, it is also important to recognize the
inherent constraints introduced when using this type of text to code. Firstly, the corpus of
tweets is limited to tweets that are shared publicly. Also, the maximum number of
characters in a tweet, 140, may restrict the user in fully expressing their thoughts;
therefore a simplified message may be conveyed on Twitter.

A study on French nationalism as seen in presidents’ New Years speeches (van
Noije & Hijams, 2005) and a study on Canadian nationalism in comic books (Dittmer &
Larsen, 2007) aide in informing the categories which I will include in my coding scheme
later in this chapter. In their study, van Noije and Hijams (2005) code nationalism along
the lines of 3 types of attitudes, applied to several presidents’ New Years speeches. These
attitudes coded for are: explicit exclamation of French superiority and a positive attitude
towards the in-group, a hostile attitude towards the out-group, and the urging towards
future action as a nation (van Noije & Hijams, 2005). Two of these attitudes, the positive
feelings towards the in-group and the hostile attitude towards the out-group, have been
brought up previously in this thesis when talking about how sport and nationalism create
the duality of Us versus Them (Billings et al., 2014). This will likely be an important
element to include in my coding scheme. Dittmer and Larsen’s (2007) article on
Canadian nationalism in comic books brings up the central role of the United States in the
construction of Canadian identity. It was suggested that Canada’s need to differentiate
and contrast itself from America’s identity, specifically in the case of Canada’s
multiculturalism, is the reason the United States is brought up many times when
Canadian nationalism is present (Dittmer & Larsen, 2007).
Method: Unitizing and Sampling

This project consists of a content analysis of Twitter use mapping the reproduction of Canadian nationalism during the Sochi 2014 Olympics. In my project, I have used the most popular hashtags during the Olympics in order to draw boundaries around the relevant corpus of text. To identify the most popular hashtags during the Olympics, I used the website Treninalia (2014). The website provides a list of hashtags trending on Twitter for a given day, although it is unknown how this website has gotten this information, a recognized limitation of this research project. For the seventeen days of the Olympics, I went through and took a tally of which hashtags having to do with the Sochi Olympics were trending in Canada. I tallied these all up and found the mean number of hashtags used, selecting the top three to use for my thesis.

The three most popular hashtags used by Twitter users in connection to the games were: #Sochi2014, #WeAreWinter and #GoCanadaGo, However, given that #Sochi2014 was used by anyone with an interest in the Olympics and did not have an explicit Canadian connection, so it has been eliminated.
Figure 1: Twitter's Advanced Search Function

After the most popular tweets were determined, it was then time to select a sample size. A search was done for these hashtags using the 'advanced search' function of Twitter. The ‘advanced search’ function of Twitter can be seen pictured in Figure 1. In this search function, you are able to see tweets that were published on specific dates, in this case, February 7-23, 2014, the duration of the Sochi Olympics. This search function is useful to me as a researcher, for tweets published a few months ago are not accessible using the standard search function on Twitter. The search function gives the option of searching for the most popular tweets, or all the tweets under a certain hashtag during a set number of dates. I selected the search function that retrieves all tweets using the predetermined hashtag, as this will likely give a better, more random set of data to work with. From there, I transferred every fifth tweet to a document. After evaluating the
number of tweets I had collected, I deemed the sample size was still too large, and chose to only do a content analysis on every fifth tweet in this document.

**Method: Coding**

The coding scheme was determined only after applying this scheme to two test samples in order to ensure that important themes in the coding scheme matched what was in the tweets. The rules for coding created for this project’s content analysis is split into three categories; explicit references to the Canadian nation, implicit references to the Canadian nation, and themes. These three categories are not mutually exclusive, and will be coded for in an Excel document, creating a spreadsheet where, when a category is present, I will be easily able to mark down the presence of this reference, easily accessible for later use.

Explicit references refers to the specific reference to the Canadian nation or other nations through use of plural personal pronouns such as ‘we’, ‘our’, ‘us’, or ‘their’, ‘they’, ‘them’. References to names of other countries are included in this category, as the reference to other countries indicates the awareness of the “Us” and “Them” dichotomy. Explicit references to Canadian nationalism also includes symbols of the Canadian nation, or other nations, that can be in the form of photos attached to the tweets as well, such as flags, the maple leaf, the colours red and white, and Canadian sport paraphernalia, such as the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Olympic mittens and apparel. The act of cheering for Canada is also included as an explicit reference, including references to watching and cheering for Canada in groups. Special attention will be paid to those who are cheering for Canada abroad and stating this online, as this act may indicate the presence of an imagined community. The country that Canadians cheer from may also
give insight into these imagined communities. Lastly, the act of cheering for specific Canadian athletes, wishing them good luck, and sending congratulatory messages will be noted as an explicit reference to Canadian nationalism when performing the content analysis. It is important to note that many articles and links are shared on Twitter, therefore it will be noted which articles come from Canadian sources, such as the CBC, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian newspapers, and news stations. The existence of these explicit references indicates the presence of banal nationalism, for they indicate the taken-for-granted use of symbols of the nation. Therefore, the presence of explicit references will help answer my research question; how was banal nationalism reproduced over Twitter during the Sochi 2014 Olympics?

Implicit references to Canadian nationalism will be looked for and flagged through marking down reference to national identity, such as beer, hockey, and politeness, as well as reference to the nation’s collective memory, such as previous matches and meetings with opposing teams, and noting that an event is something that will be a part of a nation’s collective memory for a long time. These references also include remarks such as Canada being different than the United States through Canada’s multiculturalist attitude, and seeing a specific sport as a symbol of the national identity, such as hockey being a part of the national identity for Canadians. While implicit references will be looked for within tweets and photos on Twitter, they will also be looked for in articles that are linked within a tweet. The presence of implicit references indicates banal nationalism, for, unlike the presence of explicit references to the nation, these are the references to the nation that are not obvious through the explicit coding scheme. The implicit references include insinuated references to the nation, indicating,
like the explicit references, the presence of taken-for-granted symbols of the nation, in turn, answering my research question.

The last category of the coding scheme is the theme or topic. These are themes that the tweet conveys as a whole, but may not explicitly state. Several themes that will be looked for include: pride in Canadian athletes or accomplishments, the feeling of nervousness for the outcome of an event that Canada is participating in, inspiration, excitement, and teamwork as a nation. Nervousness indicates that the user deeply cares of the outcome. If needed, more themes or topics will be added to the coding scheme as they are recognized. While the explicit reference to being proud Canadian athletes or Canada as a nation would be better suited for the explicit reference section of the coding scheme, the general theme of pride differs, for the user may not explicitly state that they are proud of Canada as a nation, rather a general theme can be supposed based on the content of the tweet. For example, if a user states “Yes! Canada wins gold again! #GoCanadaGo”, although the user is not explicitly stating their pride in the Canadian team, it can be concluded that the user is deeply satisfied with the accomplishments of the Canadian team, therefore it can be supposed that this user feels pride. The presence of these themes, such as pride, indicates banal nationalism through the flagging of the nation in an everyday sense.

In this section, the methodology called the content analysis was defined as a “technique used for gathering and analyzing the content of text” (Neuman & Robson, 2009, p. 207), and major steps of the method were defined and outlined. Then, the difference between qualitative and quantitative content analyses, that being in their epistemological understanding, was detailed. Then, two examples of studies that utilized
content analyses, which also have to do with the current case study, were detailed. Using these two case studies as inspiration, the coding scheme for the current thesis was outlined. By following these coding rules strictly, the content analysis will be able to be replicable. Now, the way in which the analysis of this thesis was done will be detailed.

This thesis did not use statistical analysis in order to interpret the findings, which is a recognized limitation of this project. The data collected was analyzed and placed into categories of findings using a qualitative thematic analysis. A thematic, qualitative analysis allows patterns to become observable through the researcher’s close reading of the data (Dumitrica, 2013). Rather than becoming preoccupied with the frequency of the themes identified, the patterns were recognized in light of the insights they made into answering the research question and other questions identified in the theoretical framework of this thesis. The next section, the analysis, will detail the categories of findings found using this thematic qualitative analysis of the data.
Analysis: Inferring the Nation

In this chapter, the findings will be discussed in general, followed by the decoding of patterns found within the explicit section of the content analysis. Following this, the implicit findings will be discussed. These findings will aid in answering this project’s research question: how has banal nationalism been reproduced over Twitter during the Olympics? Collectively, these findings can be interpreted as processes of remembering the nation, but at the same time forgetting the inherent problems associated with using the nation as a label for an allegedly homogenous group of people. The Canadian nation is imagined largely in relation to the United States, and as a nation that collectively loves hockey.

Findings: Counting the Nation

The process of explicit coding consisted of analyzing the body of tweets for references to country names (Canada, sub-state national groups, other countries), indexical pronouns (“We/Our”, “They/Their”), and Canadian symbols (pictures of Canadian flags and maple leaves, references to the national anthem and watching the Olympics, pictures of watching the Olympics, pictures of Canadian sport paraphernalia, pictures consisting mainly of red and white, the colours of the Canadian flag, references to cheering for Canada, including cheering for Canada abroad, pictures of Canadian athletes, congratulating athletes, or wishing them good luck, thanking athletes, and links to Canadian articles). These words and images were taken as indicators for the reproduction of banal nationalism, for the unproblematic use of these words and images to express the feelings and attitudes related to the Olympics indicates that they are taken
for granted. This is a form of banal nationalism, for everyday representations of the nation are being shared through the platform.

Across the sample of 528 valid tweets we can observe the patterns summarized in Figure 1. Firstly, the word “Canada” was mentioned 153 times, meaning 28.97% of all tweets used the country’s name. The pronouns “We” and “Our” were the next most-coded for words, with 12.87% of the tweets containing one or both of these terms. Next, congratulating athletes, or wishing them good luck, as well as pictures of athletes, were coded for sixty-four times (12.12% of the tweets), and sixty-two times (11.74% of the tweets), respectively. Coding for pictures of Canadian sport paraphernalia, as well as references to other countries garnered similar results. 7.38% of all tweets contained a picture of Canadian sport paraphernalia, while 7.20% of all tweets referenced a country other than Canada. That being said, although there were a few references to these countries, the use of “They” or “Their” was significantly lower, with only 0.75% of all tweets containing these terms. This finding, as well as other patterns, needs to be looked at further in order to determine possible interpretations of their meanings.
“We” and “Our”: Problematic Personal Pronouns

The content analysis showed that words such as “We” and “Our” were used sixty-eight times out of the 528 tweets, or 12.87% of the time. This number was a little bit lower than expected, especially considering twelve of these uses of “We” and “Our” refer “we” as a corporation, or “we” as a class of students. For example, a tweet by WestJet states, “@JesseLumsden28 @BobTeamSpring All 10k of us owners are cheering for you guys! We know you can do it. #GoCanadaGo #WeAreWinter” (WestJet, 2014). The “We” in this case does not refer to “We” as a nation, but rather “we” as WestJet. This can be compared to the use of “We” or “Our” to speak for all of Canada, as seen in the tweet that reads, “Another sweet win by our @CDNOlympicTeam men’s hockey team against Finland at @Sochi2014! Congrats guys! #WeAreWinter #GoForTheGold” (Vrbanovic, 2014). The use of “Our” in this case is evidently referring to “Our”, as in Canada’s,
Olympic men’s hockey team. These tweets can be classified as banal nationalism, for by using these personal pronouns to speak for all Canadians; the Twitter users are reproducing the idea of the nation. As spoken about in the theory section of this paper, banal nationalism involves both collectively remembering the standardized image of Canadians and forgetting those who are not included in this typical image of a Canadian, demonstrated through homogenization and exclusion, respectively. In the context of the Olympics, the user is remembering that they belong to the nation of Canada, and that “We” are in opposition to the “Other” through sport and competition. The user is simultaneously forgetting that while praising the nation, we are also forgetting the exclusions operated by the discourse of Canadian nationalism. For example, Bannerji (2000) dissects the construction of the multicultural mosaic associated with the Canadian identity. As a country made up of many ethnicities, Canada is united as a nation through using difference in order to construct similarity (Bannerji, 2000). Bannerji (2000) sees this as a strategy to unite a nation that’s framework that is evidently fragmented, therefore mitigating possible conflicts between groups. When referring to Canada, one is using the nation as a label for an allegedly homogeneous group of people (Bannerji, 2000). This is problematic, for although this multicultural ideology appears to have the effect of anti-racism and political equality, multiculturalism as a concept requires and creates “Others”, and by labeling a group or individual as different than the norm, negative connotations are given (Bannerji, 2000). This can be seen through her discussion of how the Canadian nation, as a discourse, ignores the power relations involved in the construction of race, gender and class, serves as a good reminder of the erasures performed by nationalism.
Applying Bannerji’s (2000) ideas to the tweets, it is evident that there is a general absence of individuals who do not fit the typical image of what it is to be Canadian. In other words, there is an absence of those who do not love watching hockey, buying and wearing Canadian sport paraphernalia, and see the United States as the “Other” of the Canadian nation. In turn, the absence of individuals on Twitter who do not challenge the typical image of what it is to be Canadian implicates the idea that all Canadians love watching hockey, buying and wearing Canadian sport paraphernalia, and see the United States as the main “Other” of Canada.

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![Graph](image.png)

**Figure 3: Number of Times “We/Our” Used on Each Day of the Olympics**

The use of “We” and “Our” seems to pick up when the men and women’s hockey teams play the United States. This can be seen in Figure 2, which shows an increase in occurrences of the use of “We” and “Our” on February 7, 8, 12, 21, and 23. The Canadian women’s hockey team played the United States on February 12, while the
Canadian men’s team played the country on February 21 and 23. While neither the men’s or women’s hockey teams played on the 7 and 8, the spike in using “We” and “Our” may be attributed to the beginning of the Olympics, and the opening ceremonies, or the women’s freestyle skiing moguls event, in which two sisters, Justine Dufour-Lapointe and Chloe Dufour-Lapointe won gold and silver. This event is also linked to the theme of reverence, to be talked about more in the implicit findings section of this thesis.

The increase in the number of times “We” and “Our” are used during these hockey games may be attributed to seeing the United States as the main “Other” of the Canadian nation, and also hockey being attributed as “Our”, Canada’s, game. As discussed previously, individuals rely on national identity when filling in the identity of those they do not personally know (Anderson, 1983). The nation is in turn reproduced, for a sense of “Us” as a nation is created when imagining members of a nation when individuals do not know everyone personally (Wodak, 2006). This creates in-groups, equated with sameness, and out-groups, equated with difference. As the United States is the main “Other”, or out-group, of the Canadian nation, this may be why the uses of “We” and “Our” increase in relation to the United States, as we are creating difference and separating ourselves from the American nation.

Although there was not a sweeping trend within the tweets of stating outright that hockey is “Our” game, one tweet exemplifies how “We” is used in relation to the United States on a day where the Canadian men’s hockey team played the United States, evidently creating an in-group and an out-group division/sentiment. The tweet reads, “@Rebelshockey: Sorry, America, but we had to. Great game today! #GoCanadaGo #WeAreWinter” Now THAT hurts! Ouch!” (Arnold, 2014). This tweet that Arnold
(2014) is replying to is making reference to the men’s gold medal hockey game, using “We” to refer to the fact that “We” as Canadians had to win the game. That being said, what is important in this tweet is what is not outright stated, Canada had to win the game, for the game is associated with our national identity, therefore making it important that we as a nation show our dominance of the game. By stating “We” as a nation had to do something to another nation, who does not belong with “Us”, both the sameness of “Us” and the difference of “Them” are reinforced, while erasing the differences within the nation.

The fact that the tweet used the hashtag #WeAreWinter also speaks collectively on behalf of all Canadians. Originally started by the Canadian Olympic Team, the #WeAreWinter hashtag symbolically links Canada’s national identity to winter, for, unlike our American counterparts, we are able to collectively survive the snow and harsh climate, resulting in a strengthened national identity (Duressh & Krishnan, 2012). Marshall (2010) shows that Canada’s national identity is associated with winter and wilderness due to a fear of becoming too urbanized, like the United States, therefore conveying Canada as a more wholesome nation. It can be said that “We” as a country embody the idea of winter ourselves; therefore “We” are winter. This is relevant to the Sochi 2014 Olympics, because these Olympics were winter Olympics. As this hashtag is speaking to the national identity, it is interesting to look at in terms of how Canada as a nation is being branded.

Nation branding can be seen as a method of creating and distributing Canadian values and identity (Aronczyk, 2008). One of the ways Canada is often branded through a multicultural lens, which can be seen as problematic when using personal pronouns
Aronczyk, 2008). By disseminating the idea that “We” are winter, the Canadian Olympic Team, and those using the hashtag #WeAreWinter are in turn reproducing this idea. That being said, it is also important to recognize that although the term “We” is being used in this hashtag to represent all of Canada, there is a very specific population of individuals this represents. While the Canadian nation as a whole is being branded as a winter nation, the concept of multiculturalism, as spoken about previously in this chapter, is also strongly associated with the national identity. While branded as a multicultural nation, this idea is problematic, as the very idea of a multicultural nation calls for recognizing the multicultural population of the nation as the “Other”. The concept of nation branding will later be talked about in relation to Canadian sports paraphernalia. For now, a look at the findings associated with the “Other” outside the nation of Canada will be looked at.

Another example of a tweet that again exemplifies the use of “We” and “Our” to invoke the nation as a taken for granted category reads, “Proud of our athletes so far in the Olympics! Keep showing other countries that #WeAreWinter. . .

instagram.com/p/kQTTp1x_jY/” (Evans, 2014). The fact that “We” and “Our” are mentioned in relation to “other countries” solidifies the binary spoken about previously in this thesis between “Us”, the familiar, and “Them”, the other. The manifestations of the solidification of this binary will be spoken about next when discussing the findings of tweets using the words “Them” or “Their”.


Naming the “Other”

Figure 4: Number of Times Other Countries Mentioned in Tweets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>#WeAreWinter</th>
<th>#GoCanadaGo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07-Feb</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09-Feb</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Feb</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Feb</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>15-Feb</td>
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<td>17-Feb</td>
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<td>19-Feb</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-Feb</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-Feb</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: Number of Times Each Country Mentioned Under Each Hashtag

While “They” or “Their” was mentioned four times, these were not in reference to other countries, but instead to the Parti Quebecois, the Canadian hockey team, and
Canadian athletes in general. It can therefore be determined that over Twitter, the presence of this category was not significant in reproducing nationalism, and the “Other”, and the reproduction of the “Us” and “Them” divide was better represented through making explicit reference to other countries, for other countries were mentioned thirty eight times, or 7.20% of the time.

Explicit references to the names of other countries come up on days when team sports such as curling and hockey are on (see Figure 4 and Figure 5). Figure 4 shows spikes in mentioning other countries on February 19 and 21. On both of these days, there were men’s hockey games, against Latvia and the United States, respectively. On February 19, Latvia was mentioned three times within the content analysis, while the United States was mentioned seven times. On February 21, the United States was mentioned eight times, likely due to the fact that the win against Latvia meant Canada would be playing the American hockey team in the next round.

This suggests that hockey moves users to talk about the “Other”. Team sports provoke the “Us” and “Them” frame, for it is directly apparent who is “Us” and who is “Them”. Non-team sports, which have many more countries participating and less of “Us”, therefore the divide may be less apparent. The names of other countries were also only used primarily during curling and hockey events, while using “Canada” in tweets was pretty consistent throughout.

Another possibility is that, as mentioned above, since hockey is linked to Canada’s national identity and is seen as “Our” game, the “Us” versus “Them” divide comes up when Canada plays hockey. Also, as the United States was by far the most-
mentioned country, it is important to note once again that they are the main “Other” of the Canadian nation.

**Canadian Sport Paraphernalia: Branding the Nation**

7.38% of the tweets in the content analysis displayed Canadian sport paraphernalia: four of these were images, two were videos, and three were textual references to Canadian sport paraphernalia, for example, “Breaking out the old #TeamCanada Jersey. I think this one is from the mid 90’s. @CDNOlympicTeam #WeAreWinter #Sochi2014” (Bernatt, 2014). Sport paraphernalia does more than signify that one is cheering for a certain team; it also acts as an identifier, for it signifies that the owner is part of the community of individuals that cheers for the given team (King, 2006). In turn, this helps solidify the “Us” and “Them” divide. With this in mind, branding the nation is therefore again useful to talk about. Through branding the Canadian nation as being multicultural, the country is strategically framed by cultural elites as being united through difference (Aronczyk, 2008). This is strategic in the sense that as a nation, Canada is better managed when sub-populations get along. Canadian sports paraphernalia, or “promotional patriotism” as Aronczyk (2008) calls it, may therefore be a way to support the strategy of being united through difference, and advertising this to the “Other”, and to each other. For example, one tweet reads, “Just received my toque in the mail! #GoCanadaGo Instagram.com/p/kilyC4PWs_f/” (Poore, 2014).

Another finding surrounding sport paraphernalia was the theme of individuals dressing their pets up in Canadian sport paraphernalia. There were three cases within the content analysis where individuals extended their Canadian sport paraphernalia to their
dogs in a satirical way. There was also an instance where a user dressed a skeleton, presumably from a classroom, in a Canadian hockey jersey. This form of humour is satirical, something that is inherently linked to the Canadian identity (Hanna, 2009). By satirizing the Canadian identity through dressing pets and objects up in Canadian sport paraphernalia, the user is in turn maintaining the Canadian identity that is being reflected through humour, as the joke rests on the user recognizing the “Canadianess” of the image in the first place.

**User-Generated Content**

User-generated content, such as memes helps reproduce banal nationalism over Twitter during the Olympics through the reliance upon a shared set of knowledge that is taken for granted. A meme is a humorous artefact, usually an image, which makes reference to elements of culture and are shared and spread rapidly on the Internet. 7% of the images that did not fit into the categories of Canadian sport paraphernalia, and the other image categories coded for, were memes. This means that memes were coded for 1.32% of the time within the content analysis. There were three memes that were present within the content analysis: the Canada and USA baby meme, the “Play Like Girls” meme, and the “Sorry for Being So Awesome” meme (see Appendix for these memes). The Canada and USA baby meme, and the “Play Like Girls” meme were tweeted twice, while the “Sorry for Being So Awesome” meme was tweeted three times within the sample. The fact that there is no contextual information given on the memes spoken about in this chapter speaks to the fact that there is collective forgetting going on, for the user assumes that the majority of individuals viewing their tweet will understand what the meme is referring to. At the same time, these memes invoke a particular
discourse of Canadian nationalism, for those who are not immersed in this discourse feel excluded, or reminded, yet again, that they are “different” because, although the may hold a Canadian passport, they do not have the contextual knowledge required. The Canada and USA baby meme, pictured in Figure 3 shows two babies: one in a Canadian outfit, and one in an American outfit. The American baby is crying while the Canadian one is laughing; the babies’ emotions represent the outcome of the hockey game, where Canada won and America lost. This meme aids in reproducing banal nationalism, again, due to the fact that it solidifies the “Us” versus “Them” binary. The meme is pointing out the difference between the United States and Canada on this given day, the fact that the Americans are losers and the Canadians are winners. It is also important to note that although this meme is referring to a single hockey game, the fact that the Americans are the “Other” in this meme also speaks to the rivalry that Canada has had with the country in the past. As spoken about previously in this chapter, with the United States being the main “Other” of the Canadian nation, the meme is defining once again the imagined Canadian community as being non-United States.

The “Play Like Girls” meme was found twice within the content analysis. The text words refer to the performance of the Canadian women’s hockey team who eventually won the gold medal. It suggests that if the men were to play as well as the women, they would be successful. This meme is reproducing the idea of the nation through again referring to the nation’s collectively memory. The user tweeting this meme is assuming that most individuals will understand what the meme is referring to, once again calling upon the shared knowledge of the nation, excluding those who do not share this knowledge. It is also important to recognize women as another category of “Other”
within Canada, particularly those who are already seen as the multicultural “Other” (Bannerji, 2000). The meme is calling for the men’s hockey team to “Play Like Girls”, differentiating between the two, and recognizing the inherent power relations of the patriarchal nation by presenting it humorously.

The final meme found more than once within the content analysis is the “Sorry for Being Awesome” meme. The meme is referring to the hockey game that the Canadian men’s team had just won. Not only does the meme make reference to speaking on behalf of all Canadians, again forgetting that not all Canadians feel this way, but the meme is also making reference to the national identity through saying “sorry”, as being apologetic is often associated with Canadian identity. The meme is also on the background of ice with skate marks on it, making reference to hockey.

**Implying the Nation: Reverence**

The implicit coding scheme was implemented in order to account for words and images that were unable to be coded for in the explicit reference coding scheme, due to their emotional nature being hard to consistently code. The implicit references looked for images and tweets connected to the emotions one feels regarding representations of the nation. The coding scheme looked for pride, excitement, inspiration, reverence, and nervousness. In the corpus of tweets, pride was coded for 11.93% of the time, and excitement was coded for 6.44% of the time. While these findings were taken into consideration, they largely reflect the preference given to “Us” versus “Them” already spoken about in the explicit reference section of this thesis.

The implicit findings were different from the explicit findings in the presence of one category: reverence. Reverence in relation to nationalism can be defined as the
emotional regard given to one’s nation. As the emotional component is difficult to measure in an explicit matter, implicit references to the feeling of reverence were looked for in the sample of tweets. Reverence was coded for 1.51% of the time, which was not very often in comparison to other categories. This category was not originally coded for, but rather emerged as a common thread across different tweets during the coding process. An example of a tweet that exemplified reverence was: “Chills, every time. Can’t wait to get this underway! #WeAreWinter
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yeiWaXkJSo…” (Wallace, 2014). Unfortunately, the YouTube link did not work, but the user tweeting the fact that he had chills in relation to the Olympics displays the idea that he was in awe, therefore demonstrating the powerful emotional reaction given to a particular event.

Another example of a tweet that displayed reverence in a similar way was in response to a picture of the Canadian flags being raised at the Dufour-Lapointe sisters’ medal ceremony, where Canada had won both silver and gold. The tweet reads “@CDNOlympicTeam What an incredible sight! Hearing our national anthem=emotional #WeAreWinter” (Monica, 2014). Here again, the user is overcome by emotion in relation to Canada’s involvement in the Olympics. The idea of reverence in this, as well as the previous, example relates to Anderson’s (1983) concept of the imagined community. The user’s emotional response is in connection to an imagined community of individuals connected arbitrarily. Nations are imagined as “communities” for members of the nation imagine themselves to be of the same social rank as everyone else in the nation, creating a fraternity in a sense, which is what makes the nation so strong in its imaginings, and therefore why the nation is able to elicit such an emotional response from its members.
Since the explicit references to the nation were reproduced through formulations, it was therefore useful to look for the implicit emotional references, for the theme of reverence would have not otherwise been found.

Within the content analysis, it was evident that the percentage of tweets found that explicitly mentions or invoke the nation through the words and images considered was lower than expected. This may be due to the words and images chosen to look for in the analysis portion of this thesis. For further studies, it would perhaps be beneficial to study the body of tweets in more depth before determining the words and images to observe during the content analysis. While I was expecting explicit references to the “Other” through the use of words such as “Their/Them”, I did not find any examples of this, instead finding references to the “Other” solely through the mention of other countries’ names. Also, while initially looking through the tweets, several examples of tweets that mentioned cheering for Canada while in another country were evident, therefore evoking an interesting use of the “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983). The results after the content analysis did not show the presence of this theme as hypothesized.

That being said, there were common themes found that are worth discussing, for they provide some insight into how nationalism was reproduced over Twitter during the Sochi 2014 Olympics. Instances in which the findings provoked a discussion of difference and similarities were present, particularly in relation to the United States. It is evident that the findings reinforce the idea that the United States is the main “Other” of the Canadian nation. The use of “We/Our” was found to increase on the days in which Team Canada was playing hockey, therefore lending to the idea that hockey is “Our” game, for it is associated with Canada’s national identity. The uses of “We/Our” were
also seen as being problematic, for it is obvious that there is a certain type of Canadian that is imagined when these terms are used. Canadian sport paraphernalia was seen to also represent the “Us” versus “Them” divide through acting as an identifier, and signifying that the owner is part of the community of individuals that cheers for the given team. These explicit references were found using formulations, and the emotional theme of reverence was found using through implicit means. Reverence was found to exhibit the emotional bond users have to the imagined community (Anderson, 1983) of Canada.
Concluding Remarks and Possible Future Studies

This project looked to answer the question: how was Canadian nationalism reproduced over Twitter during the Sochi 2014 Olympics? Although the presence of banal nationalism was not as pronounced as hypothesized, there were three main ways in which nationalism was evidently reproduced over Twitter during the Sochi 2014 Olympics.

Firstly, it was evident that there was an “Us” versus “Them” attitude present in many of the tweets analyzed. This was manifested through the tweets that used “We/Our” to speak for the nation as a whole. With this binary comes the collective remembering of the differences that “We” as a nation have compared to “Them” outside our nation, and a collective forgetting that “We” as a nation is a fragmented, and exclusionary concept. This problematic notion of “We” is rooted in multiculturalism and Canada’s national identity, for although Canada is branded to be a multicultural nation, the very idea of multiculturalism relies on the perceived differences between “Us” and “Them”.

In this “Us” versus “Them” binary, it is important to discuss the absences evident in this discourse within the corpus of tweets. It was evident that there was an absence in tweets that challenged the idea of the typical Canadian. This typical Canadian is one who has strong feelings about the nation, stemming from the theme of reverence, one that is an avid consumer, evident through the sport paraphernalia that subjects buy and display with pride, one who enjoys watching hockey, and sees the United States as the main other of the nation. Due to the complexities of the nation being absent in the corpus of tweets, it can be concluded that Skey’s (2009) criticisms regarding the simplicities of banal
nationalism were not a factor when analyzing the tweets, and that the banal nationalism reproduced over Twitter was of a familiar discourse of the nation.

This image of the typical Canadian relates to Bannerji’s (2000) critique of multiculturalism, for the projected image of the Canadian nation on Twitter does not reflect the diversity that Canada so proudly includes as part of its national identity. While one of the goals of this thesis intended to examine the ways immigrants are spoken about, or are included in the discourse of Canadian nationalism on Twitter during the Olympics, this group was not represented at all. The absence of this group of individuals in the tweets is telling, for it implies that the definition of what it means to be Canadian within the body of tweets does not include complexities of the nation such as being a Canadian immigrant. This is evidently problematic, for instead of the horizontal space that Canada advertises for all individuals, including visible minorities and immigrants, there is only one type of group being represented in the corpus of tweets. That being said, a limitation of this project is the inability to know the background of every user that tweets. Therefore, while the discourse of Canadian nationalism seems exclusionary towards the “Other” within the Canadian nation, it is important to recognize that immigrants may make up a portion of the users without making reference to their diversity. Another limitation of this project in terms of determining whether or not the body of tweets was representative of Canada’s diversity was the exclusion of Francophone tweets. Due to language restrictions, tweets were only looked at in the English language; therefore, there may be a discourse present on Twitter in French that this thesis was not able to include. The lack of diversity is something that should be noted, and looked for in future studies of Canadian content.
Bannerji’s (2000) critique of multiculturalism also relates to the connection between patriotism and nationalism noted in this thesis. While nationalism refers to identifying or flagging oneself as being part of a nation (Billig, 1995), patriotism is the devotion to one’s country (Borusiak, 2009). A Canadian who watches Team Canada play a hockey game and flags themselves as being Canadian while watching the game is demonstrating nationalism, while one who is actively rooting for Canada to win in opposition to other teams is demonstrating patriotism. Patriotism is therefore very closely related to sports, as identifying oneself as a member of the nation while watching their team play is often followed by cheering for the nation’s team, and wanting “Us” to win rather than “Them” (Borusiak, 2009). While demonstrating patriotism is positive in the sense that winning sporting events gives reason to be proud in one’s nation, it is also negative in the sense that it can create aggression towards the “Other”, the rivals of the sport at hand (Borusiak, 2009).

It was evident that in the tweets, the main “Other” outside of Canada was the United States, due to the country being mentioned way more than any other country in the sample. This was expected, but was confirmed by the findings in this project. It was evident that many of these tweets involving the United States had negative connotations, implying that sport aided in creating aggression towards the “Other”. Related to this was the finding that the United States was often mentioned in relation to hockey, the second main finding of this thesis. This finding may suggest that hockey moves members of the nation to talk about the “Other”, as the sport is said to be “Our”, as in Canada’s, game. Therefore, Canadian nationalism was often reproduced in relation to hockey.
With the “Other” of the Canadian nation being evident in the corpus of tweets, as well as the general picture of Canadians represented in the corpus of tweets being very limited, it is therefore evident that Canadians use nationalism to exclude, rather than include in the body of tweets. This provides insight into my interest as to how Canadians celebrate and deliberate the Olympics; they do so by the exclusion of the “Other” and the celebration of the already exalted subject (Thobani, 2007). This is despite the fact that Canada often prides itself on its multicultural framework. That being said, intentionality is central to Billig’s (1995) ideas concerning banal nationalism. While banal nationalism lacks and intentional reproduction of the idea of the nation, it may be interesting to look at when Canadians intentionally conjure up the idea of the Canadian nation, if their idea of the nation is any different, or lacks more diversity than the nation reproduced in the tweets does.

Another way in which Canadian nationalism was reproduced in relation to hockey was by user’s relying on the nation’s shared knowledge of hockey when creating and passing around memes. This can be seen in examples such as the “Play Like Girls” meme, where the humour rested in the user calling upon a previous game played and won by Team Canada. In the theory section of this thesis, it was noted that Thobani (2007) argues “exaltation has been key to the constitution of the national subject as a particular kind of human being, a member of a particular kind of community, and, hence, ontologically and existentially distinct from the strangers to this community” (p. 5). The Olympics as an event seems to call attention to the exalted subjects of Canada. As previously talked about, there is a particular identity reflected in the tweets that does not leave room for an unfamiliar discourse regarding what it means to be Canadian. This
identity is exalted in the sense that humour in such examples such as the “Play Like Girls” meme relies on the knowledge held by exalted subjects.

The third way in which nationalism was reproduced was through the notion of the imagined community seen through sport paraphernalia and emotionally through the theme of reverence. It was evident that Canadians may feel tied to one another through wearing hockey jerseys, or the Hudson’s Bay’s Team Canada mittens. By wearing or displaying Canadian sport paraphernalia, one is signifying to others that they are a member of the imagined community called Canada. The idea of the imagined community holds an emotional bond, for members imagine others to be of the same social rank as they are, creating a fraternal sense of other members of the community. The emotional ties to the imagined community are manifested in the theme of reverence found in the content analysis. Reverence is an emotional response, in the case of this project, elicited by a moment of nationalism. In the sample of tweets, reverence was seen in reference to user’s getting chills while watching the Olympics, or becoming emotional while listening to the national anthem being played at a medal ceremony. The feeling is a manifestation of one’s sense of an imagined community, and shows just how strong one’s feelings for a nation can be in its imaginings.

One finding open for interpretation is the possibility that team sports provoke this idea of “Us” versus “Them”, for it is readily apparent who the “Other” is, as there are only two teams competing compared to other events. In further studies, it would be interesting to take a better look at how nationalism is reproduced in relation to hockey. A good text to draw on might be the tweets surrounding the men’s and women’s gold medal hockey games from the Sochi 2014 Olympics, as it was noted when collecting data that
there was a larger amount of tweets on these two days than there were any other day of the Olympics. By looking at how nationalism is reproduced in relation to this sport that has a connection to the nation’s national identity, we may be able to gain better insight into Canadian nationalism, for the corpus would be likely to possess many rich references to the nation. It may also be interesting to be able to confirm or prove false the idea that team sports aid in creating an “Us” versus “Them” mentality compared to other sports; therefore, team sports may be more likely to reproduce nationalism than other sports.
On behalf of all Canadians, sorry for being so awesome all the time.
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