

Bridget Hall
Preliminary Research Proposal
Research Methods
3/16/15

Preliminary Research Topic Proposal

Introduction

The topic that I have chosen to explore as my preliminary research topic includes cultural institutions in Canada and how they address the issue and questions of Canadian identity in the artwork and exhibitions that they showcase. I have also chosen to explore the possibility of what role policy plays in these types of representations. Although I do not currently have a singular question to base my research around, I have found three methods that I believe will help in the process all of which center around an examination of success and failure. Case studies, various types of emancipatory research and literary analysis are all methods that I intend on utilizing and have already done initial research with. I have also considered the possibility of human subjects and interviews to a point, but further work would need to be done in order to discuss this more in-depth.

My interest in this topic comes from researching the basic history of Canadian cultural history. Since learning about the issues that Canada has with nationhood and colonial influences, I had begun to wonder in what different ways they defined themselves. Throughout this term I have explored different avenues in which to take this idea, and I began running into the two different themes, institutional representation and policy making. From there I built upon my 'problem statement' by asking a multitude of sub questions. How has Canadian identity previously been formed? What is the feeling towards artistic or institutional representations of Canadian identity? Why, for so long, has there been indifference towards these representations? What is the role of colonial influence in these processes? Does this representation differ throughout the country? If so, how? How do different institutions approach the topic of Canada's colonial past in their

programming? What are some successes and failures of representations of Canadian identity? How is Canadian identity defined today and is that definition taken into account in cultural programming? And finally, what are the trends in the successes as well as failures to represent Canadian identity?

By asking these questions and continuing to do research in order to answer them, I have been able to take a topic that was in the beginning, a historical inquiry, and turn it into something that involves arts management. The case studies, essays and literary works that I have already utilized and will talk about next, have been the foundation for this development. At this point in my research, I am leaning more towards doing a capstone paper for my terminal research project. I found the exercise that we did in Research Methods that addresses what type of writing it is you prefer to do to be extremely helpful in figuring out how it was I wanted to frame this proposal and eventual final paper. I believe that I fall into the category of addressing an issue and identifying it as a real problem and explaining it. What I have found since then from discussing my topic with other people is that incorporating solutions may benefit my research as well. Because of this, I have decided that I would like my research to take the shape of hypothetical tools that future researchers might use to create a hybrid solution for my topic. I have also found this tactic to be used in some of the articles that I read for my literature review earlier in the term. I believe that a huge part of my paper will include the successes and failures of particular case studies and comparing those outcomes.

Truncated Literature Review

At this point in my research I have relied mainly on case study analysis and different kinds of emancipatory research to support my questions and claims. As I read through my literature review that was completed earlier in the term, I noticed that there were three different kinds of elements

that came out of the five articles that I discussed. The first component that I formed my research topic around was the case study written by Jennifer Salahub that focused on the British banners that were hung in Canadian colleges in the years leading up to the Great War. What this article provided me with was an argument that supported the idea that remnants of colonialism are still present in Canadian art and institutions today. The indifference that Salahub talks about towards these banners is what intrigued me even more. It was as if this kind of propaganda never really ceased working. The second component came from the Wilden and Bronson essays that I reviewed. These two essays/excerpts served as what I have been referring to as my “calls to action”. A lot of their content focuses on awakening the masses and demanding change for themselves, by themselves. In both of these, there is again the theme of the acceptance of a colonial past and its continual representation in day to day Canadian life. Influence and image are major factors that drew me to both of these articles. What I found interesting and useful from both of these scholars though, was that in both of their essays they begin to provide the framework for a new and wholly Canadian idea of identity. Finally, these two articles are where I began to see the beginnings of policy makings influence in the world of representation of Canadian identity as seen through art and institutions such as museums.

The third component came in the form of institutional representation and its failure as seen in the Ashley article that focuses mainly on colonialism and misrepresentation of Canadian cultural heritage by museums as well as the Krishtalka article that uses the specific case of Toronto and the artist’s inability to represent themselves. The first article by Ashley really struck my interest in how museums deal with Eurocentric narratives in their programming today. Not only did Ashley present the problems she found during her research but, she also analyzed solutions of her own, such as hybridity that in a way, were not complete fully developed solutions. It is almost as though

she was doing a case study on herself. Krishtalka's article added to this narrative in the way that it addressed the failures of past exhibitions whose main themes were representation of Canadian identity.

Besides the written assignment portions of class, I believe that the advice and information I was provided with during the poster session can also fit into this section of my proposal. Speaking with Patricia Lambert gave me more perspective on Canadian cultural policy and comparing context. She also opened up my options in regards to different kinds of research methods that I might use as I narrow down what it is my topic will be. Since talking to Patricia, I have considered site visits and the use of human subjects in my research. Phaedra Livingstone also providing me with valuable input in regards to different case studies and museums that reflect the core of my research topic. David Turner also provided me with information on different artists and institutions that relate to what it is that I am researching.

Methodological Design and Discussion

Case Studies: Case Studies were and are the foundation for my research topic. What I am essentially doing is a compilation and comparison of several of them. When I was deciding what my topic might be, I drew from case studies that I had previously read and turned my research into something that would fit into the parameters of AAd. This research, based in situational analysis, will help me to explore different facets of the same topic. "If you look at these traces of 'texts' as data, you begin to realize just how rich our world is. So it is worth thinking twice about producing more of it without at least considering what's already out there" (O'Leary, 2014).

There are two things that I want to look at in regards to case study analysis, content and context. For obvious reasons, the content of the case studies will provide valuable experiences and examples. The content of these case studies also serve as an introduction for comparative case

analysis, which becomes a possibility when using case studies. An example of doing this would include picking a theme or sub-question, and scanning through different data bases and case studies that address it. Content can also oftentimes lead to more questions and possible resources. The second component that I mentioned was context. Because the issue that I am dealing with has a lot to do with its evolution throughout time and the influence of outside forces, context becomes key. Looking at the time period in which certain studies were done, who wrote them, where the researcher is from and what kind of biases take form in their writing are all things to consider and examine in my research. Sholem Krishtalka's article that I mentioned in my truncated literature review before, and the more detailed one that I handed in earlier in the term does a good example of explaining this. Krishtalka explains how a researcher from the United States was evaluating Canadian exhibitions of identity across the country and asks "why are we unable to make an account of ourselves?" (Krishtalka, 2012).

Another way that I have considered using this research method throughout the data collecting process is by the creation of my own, loosely defined case study. During the Cultural Museum course that I took this past term, we did an assignment where we analyzed and compared different online galleries from three different museums. This personal case study of online galleries allows me the opportunity to integrate both primary and secondary research into this particular method. The primary research comes from the analysis that I will be doing of the online galleries and the observations that I make. Deciding which galleries to compare to certain kinds of case studies done by other researchers and scholars makes up the secondary research. Providing my own perspective along with what I will be able to take from the case studies, will give a more well-rounded view of the problems and solutions that I am analyzing.

Issues that might arise in this research method along with the rest of the methods that I will bring up later, is bias. In this situation though, I believe that bias can work in a way that will be beneficial to my research. My research focuses narrowly on one country and its struggles with creating and defining an identity for itself and the use of case studies will highlight this. Another struggle that I have already run into is deciding what kind of case study it is that I would like to use. Because I am still trying to decide what aspect of the art and administrative world that I would like to focus on, the abundance of materials can sometimes be overwhelming, and creating a focus becomes a longer process.

A tool/prototype that I might use for this research method has to do with something that Patricia Lambert suggested to me during the poster session. Even though I will talk about policy more in the upcoming research method, I believe that comparing different case studies done of different policy changes throughout time will be very beneficial. Not only this, but by doing this kind of research and using this types of materials, I will be able to look at how this policies are implemented and compare and contrast their successfulness. In addition to comparisons, I will look at what process it is that certain institutions took in implementing new types of policy into their programming.

Emancipatory Research: The second kind of research method that I plan on using is emancipatory research. This type of research involves several different kinds of media including scholarly articles, essays, interviews, policy making processes and transcripts from past speeches on the topic. Compilations of these different resources are also an option. What all of these have in common is they will be calls to action or materials that written to promote change and reform. What I am looking for in this type of research is self-awareness. Therefore I plan on relying mainly on Canadian born researchers and authors for this method.

The purpose of using a research method such as emancipatory research is to identify the issues that Canadian society is facing in the form of problem identification and presentation of possible solutions through the use of these calls to action. This emancipatory research will provide background for the other types of research methods that I will use with the opportunity to leeway into the literary analysis research method that I will talk about later. Because most of the information and resources that I have collected connect to my topic in a broad sense, and do not focus in on institutional representation or clear artistic policy, creating context along with historical and political backgrounds will be the purpose of this research method. Thus far, excerpts from essays have been my strongest form of this type of data. All of these essays have had a structure that follows that of history, problem, awareness and solutions. The usefulness and information that comes from these essays, point out the issues that Canadians face in regards to the representation of a national identity in everyday life and addressing these issues as real problems. I find that the bias in these articles are oftentimes unfiltered opinions with the passion to carry my research in the right direction.

Throughout the poster session I also received a lot of feedback relating to policy making. I believe that this can be incorporated into the emancipatory research that I will be doing by looking at the history of policy reform that has to do with these particular institutions and where they sit in society right now in regards to procedure. Not only will process be a huge factor in this, but the usefulness of its implementation as well. Success and failure is a huge theme that I have found throughout the small bit of research that I have done so far, and I want to carry that over into my own research as well. The connections and resources that I received during the poster session will be very valuable in this section of my research. Media and politics also play a huge role in this because of the idea of perception that I have been playing around with. As was mentioned in one of the articles that

was in my literature review, several Canadians rely on media and visual reassurances to tell them who they are as people and as a nation. After reading through this I found that it connects directly to what it is I am trying to represent and get across in my topic. This type of “follower” persona is the whole focus and my utilizing popular culture I can frame my research question that invites this dialogue that uses these types of resources.

A tool/prototype that I have already used to do my research in regards to this method is the book *Canadian Culture Studies* that provides a wide variety of essays and perspectives on the topic that I am researching. Another benefit of using this book is that it provides me with the certain demographic of Canadian authors and scholars that I am looking for. Essays, legislation and policy are all issues that are addressed by Mookerjea in this compilation of Canadian identity. The cultural background that it will and has provided me will has allowed to me a greater understanding of the background of my topic. Another benefit of using this particular research is the history I have with reading it. I first acquired this book because of a class that I took in my undergraduate studies. The professor that I had for this course was extremely helpful and well-rounded in the area of Canadian history and contemporary culture. Reaching out to him and using him as a resource for my research could be extremely beneficial to me.

Literary Analysis: Literary Analysis is the final type of research method that I will talk about in-depth in this paper. This method can be seen in the last two that I explained, but I still believe that it can be put to different uses as well. Books will be the main resource, fiction and non-fiction. Representation and symbolism are the key to using this type of analysis correctly. The topic that I am focusing on is abstract, and no one clear definition can be made for it. Therefore, looking at the answers through different perspectives will widen my scope of understanding. So far I have only focused on material that is in the realm of being tangible in regards to being realistic, but I

think reaching beyond that and into the literary world whether it be novels, poems or songs, will be extremely beneficial and enlightening as well.

During my undergraduate studies I took a course called Canadian Imagination. My instructor was a Canadian poet himself, and he oftentimes had us look at artistic representations of what Canadians saw themselves as in order for us to understand that there really was no clear or singular answer. I would like to take this type of analysis and add it into my research process. Adding an element of storytelling will not only make things more interesting, but I also believe that it will break up the paper in a way that will make it easier to read and more organized.

Roadblocks or problems that I might run into in using this type of analysis, especially fictional resources, is debated perspectives or opinions. Symbolism can be taken in several different ways, and oftentimes what is truly meant is not always agreed upon. This can become even more difficult when the author does not provide an explanation themselves. Relating this to institutional or policy models might also present a challenge as well. Of course I would like my resources to line up nicely with what it is I am researching, by that being said, fiction that is grounded in reality has always been a resource that I have wanted to use in my research. This makes me reconsider the initial idea of using institutions as models for my paper, but I am hoping to find a way around excluding one issue for another and instead including both of them. I believe that these fictional additions to my research will add to the context that I mentioned earlier and they may even be able to contribute something in the way of policy.

As for a tool or prototype that I might use for the method of literary analysis, I would turn to short stories that I have read on issues of Canadian identity. In writing this paper, I struggled to recall specific stories that I had read that carry this theme through them. I looked back on papers that I had wrote in undergrad and found one entitled “The End of the World” by Mavis Gallant in the

book *From Ink Lake* to use as an example for this method. This short story has both the themes of colonialism and imperialism as well as reaffirming the idea earlier that many Canadians seem to define themselves as the world sees them and not as they see themselves. How I believe this kind of resource can tie into my research is its focus on the emotional aspects of oppression and not the physicality's. Most of the artwork or policies in the institutions that I will be examining will be things that evoke an emotional response. This intangible characteristics of my research are what give it life.

Wrapping Up

Throughout this essay I have provided you with three different methods that I plan on using through my research for the next year and a half. What I want to address last and in this conclusion is that there is a reason that I have not named any institutions or policies that I want to look at specifically yet, because I have not decided in which direction that I would like to go. I believe that the research reading course will flesh this out for me and allow me to make a decision on this matter, but for now I believe that getting as much background support and information for my claim is the most important. The topic that I am pursuing is a sensitive one for many reasons, the first of which is that I am not Canadian and I am claiming ideas about nationalities other than my own. Calling to action a country that is not my own would be to fall into the trends of research that has been done before and is mentioned in some of the articles that I have already read. The research I do can be biased to an extent, but I believe I can curve it by knowing the facts and then trends of my topic, and therefore I must look into and discuss the different facets of research that I have mentioned above. What I truly intend to do with this research is gain a better understanding the meaning of Canadian identity and the measures that cultural institutions go to, to understand, define and represent it.

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