

Framing Environmental Dilemmas:
The ethical positioning of the seal hunt in two Canadian newspapers

Ronnie Safarov

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University of Ottawa

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate how moral issues surrounding one of the lengthiest environmental conflicts – the Canadian seal hunt controversy - were communicated by two Canadian mainstream newspapers: the national *Globe and Mail*, and the Newfoundland-based *The Telegram* in 2009, the year in which the European Union banned the import of all seal products on the basis of a moral standard relating to the welfare of animals. At a general level, the purpose of this work is to examine how the news media construe and convey environmental ethical positions when dealing with complicated environmental issues. To this end, this thesis draws from media framing theory to implement a qualitative linguistic analysis of the 99 news articles to analyze how seals and sealers – the two main subjects of moral worth in this controversy – were framed in the two newspapers.

The analysis found that seals were predominantly framed in accordance with their perceived social and economic benefit, largely overlooking animal welfare considerations. Sealers, on the other hand, tended to be portrayed as people of moral rectitude and brave seafarers, with a concomitant onus placed on the cultural and economic importance of sealing for Northerners. The findings corroborate claims that our perceptions of animal species, especially those which are considered wildlife, and the type of our relationship with them vary in accordance with human utility. At the same time, these perceptions are influenced by the social and cultural aspects of humans' relationship with the environment, that may trump considerations of animal welfare and compassion toward sentient animals.

Seen in the perspective of environmental ethics debate, the seal hunt controversy reveals the current lack of consensus on determining the most sound ethical principle in order to ensure our treatment of the environment is morally consistent. As the seal hunt controversy is not a standalone phenomenon of the protest based in animal welfare considerations, this thesis can be of value for the future research of comparable environmental controversies. Reconciling antagonistic environmental ethics is important for environmental policy-making and management, in order to ensure a greater and more productive stakeholder participation in solving environmental issues more effectively, while at the same realizing our moral obligations towards the animal world and the rest of the nature.

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List of abbreviations

- AP – Associated Press
- DFO – Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- EU – European Union
- IFAW - International Fund for Animal Welfare
- HSI – Humane Society International
- NOAA -National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- OIPA – International Organization for Animal Protection
- PETA - People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
- SSCS – Sea Shepherd Conservation Society
- TAC – Total Allowable Count

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In order to ensure a constructive dialogue between conflicting sides within the context of complex environmental issues, it is crucial to comprehend the contrasting ethical positions underpinning different attitudes about human-nature relationships (Rottman, 2014; Markowitz & Shariff, 2012). The case of the Canadian seal hunt exemplifies this dilemma. For some fifty years this controversy has pitted successive federal and provincial governments and the sealing industry against domestic and international animal welfare groups (Busch, 1985; Guevara, 2008; Carrier-Lafontaine, 2009). The conflicting moral stances informing this conflict pit understandings rooted in animal welfare and environmental ethics against positions emphasizing the economic and cultural significance of seal hunting (Lee, 1989; Sturn, 2006; Marland, 2014; Carrier-Lafontaine, 2009; Foran, 2018). It seems plausible that the absence of constructive dialogue between the stakeholders in this ‘war,’ can be accounted for, at least in part, by contending notions of environmental ethics (Kortenkamp & Moore, 2001) and the misconstruing of the opponents’ understanding of the relations between people and animals (Foran, 2018).

A notable aspect of the Canadian seal hunt is the role mass media, and news media in particular, has played in perpetuating the controversy surrounding it by misinterpreting the ethical positions and rationales of contending stakeholders. Writing some thirty years ago, Lee (1989) argued that news media paved the way for a fierce public discussion of this topic, stimulating this confrontation and providing the contextual framework for what was then dubbed the ‘seal war.’ The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how news media coverage at national and provincial levels in Canada has represented particular ethical positions about the seal hunt. In order to realize this objective, I draw from media framing theory to analyze how the two main subjects of moral worth in this controversy – seals and sealers – have been framed

in newspaper reporting. Drawing on Elliott's (2009) definition the latter may be understood as subjects of moral worth insofar as they are living beings comprising part of a natural systems and cultural artefact that is vulnerable to harms, and which should, therefore, be protected from unjustified harm.

1.1 The Canadian seal hunt controversy: A brief background

Commercial seal hunting in Canada involves the annual killing of several thousands of seals on the Atlantic coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, and on the Gulf of St. Lawrence, near Quebec's Magdalen Islands. Its main targets are harp seals and grey seals, with the former accounting for more than 95% of the seals taken in the annual hunt.¹ The harp seal, also known as the saddleback seal (*Pagophilus groenlandicus*), is a marine mammal inhabiting the subarctic region of the North Atlantic, from Eastern Canada to Norway. It has three distinct stocks, one of which lives and breeds off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence (DFO, 2016a). Harp seal pups are born with a yellowish fur that quickly turns, and stays, white for 12-14 days. After this period, the pups begin to grow a black-spotted, gray pelt and by the end of their second molting, are called "beaters" (Lavigne, 2009). White-coat seals' fluffy fur was highly valued throughout history, making the newborn seals the main target of the hunt. In Canada, hunting of white-coat pups was permitted until 1988 at which time the federal government banned the practice in response to international outcries that it be stopped, and the European Economic Community's threats "to boycott Canadian fish products unless hunting stopped" (AP, 1988). As of 2009, 98% of commercially hunted seals in Canada were between 3 weeks and 3 months of age (IFAW, 2009: 16).

The hunting harp seals in Newfoundland and Labrador, and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence

¹ Harpseals.org (2019).

goes back to Inuit and First Nations' hunts predating the arrival of European settlers on North American shores and continues to have cultural and economic significance for residents of this region (DFO, 2011; Barry, 2005). Traditionally, the seal hunt was conducted to harvest meat, oil and pelts, with the latter becoming the most valuable object for the commercial hunt. Carried out each year between January and March, from the early 1800s onward the hunt became an annually recorded event in Newfoundland (Busch, 1985).

By the mid-19th century, commercial sealing made up about one-third of Newfoundland's exports, with more than 600,000 seals taken annually, slowly decreasing to an average catch of 156,000 in the years prior to World War II (Barry, 2005). From the end of World War II to the early 1960s the seal hunt intensified again. Between 1952 and 1971 there were 5,530,250 total reported kills of harp seals in Canada; an average of 291,000 kills per year (DFO, 2011; IFAW, 2009). Recent studies show that the hunt took a toll on the harp seal population. While it is difficult to estimate the size of the harp seal population prior to the World War II,² Hammill et al. (2011) estimate the population to have been around 3 million at the beginning of the 1950s. By the early 1970s the population dwindled to the range of 1.1 to 1.4 million (DFO, 2011).

Drawing from conservation history of other species of seals, such as the northern fur seal, which faced extinction in the beginning of 1900s due to overhunting,³ throughout the 1950s conservation scientists were voicing concerns about the depletion of the harp seal herd

² Lust (1967) gives the population estimate of 10 million harp seals for the beginning of the 1900s.

³ The history of northern fur seal contains one of the earliest accounts of successful international conservation efforts. Triggered by the concern of scientists who indicated that in just over 40 years the population of the species dropped catastrophically due to overhunting, and in 1909 amounted to only 150,000 (as opposed to 2.5 million in 1867), the North Pacific Fur Seal Treaty was signed in 1911. It was a landmark agreement between the U.S., Russia, Japan and Great Britain (on behalf of Canada), which aimed at allowing the herd to regenerate (Guevara, 2008; NOAA, 2017). After unregulated harvests were stopped, the fur seal population bounced back, and by the 1950s was thought to be back at mid-1800s levels again (NOAA, 2015).

(Lillie, 1955; Horwood, 1960; Sergeant, 1963). However, the Canadian federal government was slow to address these concerns, and continued to encourage sealing (Guevara, 2008). By the mid-1960s, seal hunting in Canada had become the target of harsh criticism from an anti-sealing movement initiated by various animal welfare groups, the most prominent of which were the Humane Society International (HSI)⁴ and International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW).⁵ At the time, the main criticisms levied against the hunt were based on conservation concerns for seal herds, and the inhumaneness of the hunting methods used.

In response to the ever-growing pressure from the anti-sealing movement and conservation scientists, in 1971 the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) set an annual hunt quota (i.e., total allowable catch (TAC)), at 245,000 harp seals. This quota varied in subsequent years, dropping to 150,000 in 1972 and rising to 186,000 by 1982 (DFO, 2011). Throughout the 1970s controversy surrounding the seal hunt intensified domestically and internationally. On March 22, 1977, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution condemning the Canadian seal hunt on humanitarian and conservation grounds. Two weeks later the Newfoundland government, then led by premier, Frank Moore, launched an international campaign aimed at garnering support for the hunt (Fifth Estate, 1978).

From 1982 to 1996 the TAC remained unchanged at 180,000. In 1983, European Communities imposed a ban on import of all whitecoat products, thereby drastically reducing the number of seal pelts imported into Europe. The Canadian federal government responded by providing subsidies to sealers (Guevara, 2008). Continued economic pressure from EU

⁴ The Humane Society International is a non-profit organization for animal welfare, addressing such issues as inhumane practices and harsh conditions affecting farm and companion animals, marine mammals, and animals used in research. See, URL <https://www.hsi.org/>

⁵ International Fund for Animal Welfare is one of the world's largest animal welfare and conservation charities. See, URL <https://www.ifaw.org>

ultimately culminated in the Canadian government banning all commercial hunting of seal pups in 1988 (AP, 1988).

The period between 1988 and 1995 was marked by a relative ‘calming’ of the conflict. Then, in 1995 the Canadian government decided to reopen the harp seal hunt and increase the TAC for 1996 to 250,000 (a number that has been rising ever since).⁶ This decision was rooted in the attempt to save the Northwest Atlantic cod fishery, which collapsed in 1992 (Dauvergne & Neville, 2011). Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s the DFO laid the blame for diminishing cod and herring populations on seals. Under the guise of enacting “sound conservation” measures aimed at protecting cod and herring stocks, the DFO encouraged sealing as a means of reducing the seal population (Guevara, 2008: 203). Despite commercial overfishing having been identified as the main cause for the collapse of cod and herring stocks,⁷ then Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Brian Tobin, blamed the collapse of the Atlantic northwest cod fishery entirely on harp seals that prey on cod (AP, 1995). The rhetoric surrounding Tobin’s claims resonated with one of the most cited arguments advanced by supporters of the hunt throughout the 1990s and 2000s (Dauvergne & Neville, 2011: 204).

Opponents of the seal hunt saw this policy as a covert attempt to employ the sealing industry as a tool through which the federal government could maintain the cod population (Watson, 2003). Members of the anti-sealing movement continued to demand an end to annual

⁶ For 2016 the quota was set at at 400,000 animals (Harpseals.org). The TAC for 2017, 2018, and 2019 was not announced (DFO, 2019). The last published policy decision on seals refers to 2016 <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/decisions/index-eng.htm>

⁷ Despite a wealth of scientifically corroborated evidence showing that the Northern cod fishery collapse had most likely been caused by decades of overfishing and unsustainable management of the cod stock (see, Steele et al., 1992; Myers & Cadigan, 1995; Cochrane, 2000; and Bavington, 2010), in 1995, Tobin was claiming that harp seals “eat an estimated 140,000 tons of cod annually, contributing to a decline that has left tens of thousands of fishermen and factory workers jobless” (AP, 1995). Later, Tobin famously claimed: ““There is only one major player still fishing that cod stock,” Mr. Tobin said. “His first name is “harp”, and his second name is “seal”” (Wente, 2002, para.12).

commercial sealing on the grounds of its inhumanity and concerns about the herd population, fomenting domestic and international opposition through the use of harsh images and videos of the seal hunt taken on the ice floes, and celebrity endorsements that focused attention on the cruelty of sealing (Barry, 2005; Guevara, 2008; Foran, 2018).

The early years of the new millennium were marked, on the one hand, by ongoing anti-sealing movement campaigns that sustained economic pressure on Canada to put an end to the seal hunt. On the other hand, the Canadian federal government continued its efforts to support the sealing industry by increasing the TAC and seeking out new markets (Guevara, 2008), as well as by providing subsidies to sealers and the sealing industry (“Seal Hunt Subsidized”, 2001, para.1).

Throughout this period both the reasonableness of the seal hunt and claims that sealers’ incomes are dependent solely on the hunt were increasingly questioned. For instance, Aldworth & Harris (2007: 94) note that since Newfoundland became a province of Canada in 1949 and the seal hunt’s management passed to the federal government, social benefits that came with the move “made sealing less necessary for economic survival.” Newfoundland’s well-known journalist and humorist, Ray Guy, described the history of confrontation between the anti- and pro-hunt supporters as a “three-decade devil’s dance over an industry whose value to Canada’s gross national product has been equated to two Macdonald’s hamburger outlets” (Guy, 2000).

The year 2009 was especially eventful in the history of this controversy. Citing “moral standard relating to the welfare of animals” the European Parliament enacted an unprecedented ban on the importing of all seal products into the European Union (with the only exception made for products of the traditional Inuit hunt) (Sellheim, 2016: 141). The U.S. Senate likewise

passed a resolution condemning the Canadian seal hunt, with President Obama calling the hunt “inhumane” (Potter, 2009, para.1).

The Canadian federal government’s defense of the commercial seal hunt rested on arguments about its economic and cultural importance, and the humaneness of its methods. These arguments are criticized by biologists David Lavigne and William Lynn (2011: 2) who posit that the sealing controversy is “ultimately, a political debate grounded in ethics.” Political expediency is also pointed out by Max Foran (2018: 141), who emphasizes the willingness of the federal government to strike a chord with the Newfoundland and Labrador government and Newfoundlanders, “whose culture is attuned to sealing as a traditional practice.”

The opponents of the seal hunt continue to maintain that it is carried out inhumanely and is only propped up by the federal government who for its own purposes spends millions of taxpayer dollars to create an illusion of a non-existent market for seal products (HSI, 2015; Fink, 2016). In response, pro-sealing advocates continue to assert that the seal hunt remains both economically and culturally important, is sustainable, helps keep seal population in control, saves cod stocks, and is conducted according to “humane standards” (Canadian Sealers Association, 2015, para.7).

1.1.1. The question of humaneness

Questions about the humaneness of the treatment of seals during the hunt play a central role in this controversy. Indeed, contending assessments about the hunt’s humaneness seemingly reflect different belief systems about standards of animal welfare; even among scientists. To this end, Foran (2018: 145) argues that the seal hunt dilemma is fundamentally anchored in contending visions and understandings of animal welfare wherein seal hunt supporters “derisively dismiss legitimate animal welfare concerns by misconstruing the rationales [of the

anti-sealing movement].” The main aspect feeding the controversy surrounding the seal hunt is based in its morality and ethics. Specifically, the humaneness of this activity. Whereas the DFO (2016b) claims seals are harvested “quickly and humanely,” animal welfare proponents counter that young animals, that have not learned to be quick enough, are killed by being repeatedly beaten with clubs and hakapiks,⁸ and to a lesser extent killed using high-powered rifles and shotguns, shot from a distance. At issue here is whether these methods ensure the quick and painless death of animals (Daoust et al., 2002; Butterworth et al., 2007).

In order to comply with Canada’s Marine Mammal Regulations,⁹ the DFO developed the three-step process for killing seals that “ensures that animals are harvested quickly and humanely” (DFO, 2016b). The steps include striking a seal on the top of the cranium, checking that the skull has been crushed to ensure the animal is irreversibly unconscious or dead, and bleeding the animal, allowing a minimum of one minute to pass before skinning it (DFO, 2016b). However, as stated by IFAW (2009), these steps are not required to be completed in rapid succession. Consequently, when a seal is shot with a rifle, a sealer can continue shooting other seals before conducting the test for “irreversible unconsciousness”, as well as bleeding the animal. Likewise, hooking a seal, dragging it across the ice and hauling it onto a boat before checking that it is unconscious also is legal (IFAW, 2009).

In order to dispel accusations of inhumane sealing, the methods of the hunt have been approbated by Daoust et al. (2002), who observed 167 harp seals taken during the 2001 seal hunt. The data provided by these researchers suggests that the observed hunting techniques resulted in only 51% of seals having their calvariums completely crushed, 5.4% being struck

⁸ A hakapik is a heavy wooden club with a hammer head designed to crush a seal's skull, and a hook for dragging away the carcass.

⁹ See, Online source of the consolidated Acts and regulations of Canada (2018), subsection (8): <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Regulations/SOR-93-56/index.html>

and lost under the water surface,¹⁰ and 2% remaining alive and conscious on the deck of a ship prior to skinning. Daoust et al. (2002: 692) also state that a “large proportion (87%) of the sealers... failed to palpate the skull or check the corneal reflex before proceeding to hook or bleed the seal or go to another seal.” Nonetheless, they conclude that “the large majority of seals taken during this hunt are killed in an acceptably humane manner” (Daoust et al., 2002: 693).

This positive assessment of the humaneness of the hunt is challenged by Butterworth et al. (2007: 3) who indicate that, on average more than 45 seconds elapses between a seal being shot and a sealer killing it with a hakapik, which is a “substantial period of potential suffering before the sealers could have ensured that the animals were insensible.” This leads these authors to conclude that existing methods of the hunt are “inherently inhumane” (p. 41). The data provided from an earlier report which was based on post mortem examination of 76 seal carcasses also suggests that 42% of the seals may have been skinned while still conscious, leading the researchers to conclude that “the hunt is resulting in considerable and unacceptable suffering” (Burdon et al., 2001: 36).

Although it is evident that the criteria of ‘humane killing’ depend on contrasting moral positions and therefore demand careful consideration prior to being used as a point of reference, the Daoust et al., report continues to be regularly cited by the sealing industry (Canadian Sealers Association, 2015), journalists (Crook, 2002; Winter, 2007; 2017), and perhaps most importantly, the federal government (House of Commons Canada, 2007, p.15; DFO, 2016b).

¹⁰ Being “struck and lost” refers to seals that are wounded by a sealer’s blow or gunshot, but either escape or sink before being recovered. According to IFAW estimates, some 26,000 seals die yearly in this manner (IFAW, 2009: 8).

The difference in ethical positions fueling the controversy surrounding the Canadian seal hunt is manifest in the failure of both sides of the debate to engage in constructive dialogue, and the dismissing of positions that do not clearly adhere to their own. In examining this divide, Foran (2018) emphasizes the lack of understanding about the difference between animal welfare (i.e., the practical concern for the well-being of animals) and the animal rights position (i.e., the inherent rights of animals and the discontinuing of all instrumental use of animals), which is especially manifest in the communications of pro-sealing supporters. For example, Jim Winter, formerly a CBC and SRC journalist, and founding president of the Canadian Sealers Association, in his publications on the seal hunt he refuses to ponder the ethical position of the anti-sealing movement, and dismisses any criticism of the seal hunt as an outcry by “animal rights groups [which] started their anti-sealing campaigns in Canada that have raised for them hundreds of million [*sic*] of dollars” (Winter, 2007; see also Winter, 2015; 2017).

More recently, Marland (2014: 71) has argued that media in general, and the news media in particular, have played an important role in perpetuating the controversy surrounding the Canadian seal hunt by employing sensationalist tactics in reporting on the hunt, trivializing animal rights, filtering the two sides’ messages and pitting the conflicting opinions that are anchored in contending ethical positions against one another.

1.1.2. The role of media

At the beginning of the 20th century, newspapers and other print media occasionally wrote about the northern seal hunt, providing readers with vivid accounts of the skinning and gutting of seals. There were no attempts to conceal or embellish the most gruesome parts of the hunt. Indeed, there was a tendency to include such details, as if to emphasize its integrity with the

hunt. Some of these early accounts tended to admonish the use of excessive cruelty, while at the same time describing hunters as brave, rough seamen who had no other choice but to make their living in such a grisly manner and whose lives were full of “grim disasters” (McGrath, 1902).¹¹ Seals, by contrast, were mainly portrayed as resources to be used for meat, pelts and oil. Throughout the sixty years spanning the period from the 1890s to the 1950s, the cruelty of the seal hunt seemed to be an open secret; an acceptable necessity of life. By the mid-1950s, some newspaper publications began to openly question whether the excessive cruelty associated with the hunt might tarnish the image of the city of St. John’s (Anonymous, 1953; Freeman, 1957).

The spark that ignited domestic and international outcries against sealing occurred on March 1964, when a film crew travelled to the Gulf of St. Lawrence to film the hunt.¹² The film, *Les Grands Phoques de la banquise (Seals of the Floes)* (Fleury & Fleury, 1964), was broadcast on Canadian domestic television in May 1964 and shocked its audiences with images of baby seals being skinned alive, clubbed to death, kicked and spiked on the head with hakapiks in front of mother seals.

During this period the now defunct local weekly *Montreal Star* published a news article titled “Murder Island” written by the Canadian journalist Peter Lust. This emotion-laden article¹³ referred to the seal hunt using words like “murder”, “tempest of horror” and “torture”;

¹¹ Early accounts include popular magazine articles (e.g., Bartlett, 1929; Whiteley, 1941), news articles (e.g., “Famed Vessel Refitted for Seal Hunt”, 1937), and even early documentary and fiction films (e.g., Frissell & Frissell, 1928; Williams & Frissell, 1931).

¹² It seems plausible that the initial intention of the film makers was to represent the hunt in largely the same way it had been portrayed up to this point in time – brave sealers, the struggle between the man and the nature, in which seals would play a passive role of a part of the nature. See, Sturn (2006), Guevara (2008).

¹³ Writing the article after having watched an uncut version of *Les Grands Phoques*, Lust (1967: 45) referred to the scenes that were cut before the public showing as “the most repellent cruelty” and “undiluted horror”, and after having watched the unedited film became a staunch opponent of the seal hunt.

the sealers were described as “murderers” and “humans who have lost all semblance to humanity”, and the seal pups were referred to as “tiny, innocent, helpless babies” (Lust, 1967: 49).¹⁴ This article turned the media representation of the seal hunt on its head by portraying seals as victims, not resources and in so doing challenged the media representation of sealers as brave seamen. One consequence of this shift was an extending of a moral recognition of the intrinsic value of seals.¹⁵ Reprinted later by a German newspaper *Hamburger Morgenpost*, Lust’s article set the tone for the public debate in media for years to come both in Canada and internationally (Barry, 2005; Braunsberger & Buckler, 2007; Guevara, 2008).¹⁶

From the beginning of the 1970s through to the end of the 1980s, sealing received extensive coverage in Canadian newspapers as the controversy surrounding it intensified both domestically and internationally. For the most part, the coverage pitted supporters and opponents of the hunt against one another and provided readers with the arguments for and against sealing.¹⁷ The Canadian government’s reopening of the commercial hunt in 1995 catalyzed a resumption of the anti-hunting campaign, which was marked, in part, by the controversy spreading to online media channels (Guevara, 2008). This period was marked by an increase in the numbers of well-organized, funded and experienced domestic and transnational NGOs opposing the seal hunt (e.g., Greenpeace <<https://www.greenpeace.org>>,

¹⁴ Excessive cruelty has long been part of the seal hunt. In his study of the seal hunt history in Newfoundland, Busch (1985) suggests that many of the 35 million seals taken by sealers during the 19th century were skinned alive. He quotes sealers who bragged that they could skin a seal alive, so that after knocking the pup out and “sculpting” him often the “carcus [*sic*] ran off all over the ice” (Busch 1985: 70). This said, Busch also recognizes the social significance of sealing in local Newfoundland culture, emphasizing that for sealers the importance of skinning seal extended beyond the pelt harvest to a certain rite of passage of a man (1985: 55).

¹⁵ Here, the intrinsic, or inherent value of an animal refers to the value the animal possesses in its own right, as opposed to instrumental one which is the value the animal has for human beings. See, Phillips & Kluss (2018).

¹⁶ Although there were voices condemning the excessive cruelty associated with the hunt at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, these condemnations never fostered widespread public indignation like the one that followed the publication of Lust’s article in Canada and Europe.

¹⁷ See, for instance, the following selected news articles: Anonymous (1972); Anon. (1974); Yaffe (1983).

Sea Shepherd Society <<https://seashepherd.org>>, People for Ethical Treatment of Animals <<https://www.peta.org>>), all of which have a well-maintained online presence. In more recent years, their opponents have also started to increase their online media presence, launching websites for organizations, clubs, and associations that promote sealing (e.g., Canadian Sealers Association <<https://www.sealharvest.ca>>, Magdalen Seal Hunters Association <<http://www.chasseursdephoques.com/en>>, Seals and Sealing Network <<https://sealsandsealing.net>>, Truth About Fur: The North American Fur Trade Blog <<https://www.truthaboutfur.com>>).

Today, both local and national newspapers in Canada continue to publish stories that make use of the same rhetoric that has prevailed throughout this controversy. The use of mutual accusations, rooted in the opposite ethical positions regarding animals, coupled with the lack of constructive dialogue or at least an attempt to seriously consider the ethical position of the opponent, is typical. This points to the importance of understanding the conflicting positions from the ethical perspective.

1.2. Aim of the study and research questions

There is growing recognition of the role belief systems play in influencing public, governmental and media discourse about complex environmental issues. Media discourse is an important vehicle in selecting and assigning importance to environmental issues as well as in interpreting and evaluating them (Park, 2013). Therefore, it seems logical to ask how news media discourses articulate morality in instances of complex environmental issues involving myriad stakeholders and conflicting interests.

This thesis is premised in the notion that discussing environmental dilemmas within the frame of reference to our moral obligations to non-human nature is crucially important for

two reasons. First, comprehending the gist of this philosophical entanglement gives us a better understanding of human relationship to the rest of the natural world (Jamieson, 2008). Second, elucidating the essence of a moral plea of all the stakeholders will hopefully grant us better understanding of the negotiation strategies they employ in advancing their respective positions (Kortenkamp & Moore, 2001).

With this in mind, the aim of this thesis is to examine how the news media construe and convey environmental ethical positions when dealing with complicated environmental issues. In so doing, I seek to contribute to the understanding of the role belief systems play in humans' attitude towards subjects of moral worth in complex environmental dilemmas; in this case, seals and sealers. In order to tackle this objective, this thesis examines how the moral intricacies of the seal hunt were articulated in two Canadian newspapers: *The Globe and Mail* and *The Telegram* (published in St. John's, Newfoundland).

The central research question driving the study is: *How do the moral profiles of the frames in the news coverage of the seal hunt reflect particular ethical positions?*

In seeking to address this question, two sub-questions are used as guides:

Is there any evidence of advancing a specific environmental ethical position, manifest in the moral reasoning about seals?

Is there any evidence of moral othering, manifest in the moral reasoning about sealers?

1.3. Thesis organization

This thesis is comprised of six chapters. This introductory chapter has set out the background and context for the study. Chapter Two provides a review of the relevant theoretical literature. The discussion is broadly divided into three parts. The first outlines key aspects of the anthropocentrism versus biocentrism and human-animal relationship debates. The second

examines the cultural facets of the seal hunt, viewing it from the perspective of ingroup/outgroup dilemma. The discussion in the last part of the chapter focuses on the concept of framing in news media. Chapter Three provides a detailed description of the methodology and the research process used to conduct my study. The results of the framing analysis is presented and discussed in Chapter Four. The analysis presents the principal moral reasoning themes advanced in the media frames identified. Chapter Five presents and discusses the results of moral reasoning analysis, looking at and discussing the ethical and moral aspects of how seals and sealers are framed within the sampled newspaper articles. Chapter Six concludes, answering the central research question and considering the implications of the study findings.

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework

The discussion in this chapter presents the theoretical framework underpinning my study. The basic premise guiding this work is rooted in the notion that it is impossible to discuss environmental dilemmas outside of the frame of reference to our moral obligations to non-human nature. As such, the first part of the discussion outlines key aspects of the environmental ethics debate about human-animal relationship, anchoring the Canadian seal hunt within this context (Soulé, 1985; Rottman et al. 2015, Justus et al., 2009, Francione, 2018; Jamieson, 2008, Foran, 2018). From there, I move on to compare the hunt with other examples of moral ‘othering’ that are rooted in culturally-influenced differences in the attitudes towards animals (Marland, 2014; Oh & Jackson, 2011). The second part of the discussion deals with the media representation of the seal hunt. Here, I examine media framing theory, paying particular attention to the moral framing of environmental news.

2.1. Environmental ethics

As a basis for better understanding the ethical backdrop of the seal hunt the discussion in this section expounds upon the main characteristics of the environmental ethics debate about ascribing value to animals. It begins by examining the development of the intellectual underpinnings of environmental ethics, describing the divide between anthropocentric and biocentric perspectives, and the values attributed to nature (i.e., intrinsic versus instrumental). From there, the discussion briefly sketches the historical development of human-animal relations, looking into the dichotomy between animal welfare and animal rights.

2.1.1. Intellectual underpinnings of environmental ethics

Reflections about the ethical roots of ecological crises can be traced back to transcendentalism, Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* (1854), the writings by 19th-century environmental author

John Muir, and Aldo Leopold's book *A Sand County Almanac* (1949). Environmental ethics is considered to be a branch of environmental philosophy, and its development is inseparable from environmentalism. Having emerged in the 1960s as a result of increased awareness about anthropogenic environmental impacts, environmentalism started as an amalgamation of various social, political and ethical movements, whose intellectual and ethical underpinnings are rooted in philosophic discussions about nature and humans' relationship to it (Elliott, 2018). The guiding premise here is that people's concerns about the environment are rooted in morality and, as such, it is impossible to discuss environmental dilemmas without simultaneously considering the ethical and moral obligations of people to other people and to nature (Jia et al., 2017; Öhman, 2016; Feinberg & Willer, 2013; Jamieson, 2008; Falhquist, 2009). It follows, therefore, that whether one is dealing with issues rooted in the depletion of resource systems due to overuse (i.e., tragedy of the commons) or issues pertaining to the ethical treatment of animals, elucidating moral reasoning about ecological issues is crucial for better understanding the positions of contending stakeholders (Kortenkamp & Moore, 2001).

Prior to the 1960s, environmentalism existed in two main forms which opposed each other: preservation of the integrity of nature for its own sake (rooted in the philosophy of wilderness movement of John Muir) and sustainable resource conservation (e.g., timber or ducks) for human purposes, propagated by utilitarianists such as Gifford Pinchot (Barnhill, 2010; Simons & Warfield, 2007). The tension between these two outlooks rests on whether to attribute intrinsic value (i.e., having a value 'for itself') or instrumental value (valuable for something else, most often, human needs) to the natural world (Elliott, 2018). This dichotomy manifests itself today in two main environmental worldviews. The first is anthropocentrism, or the human-centered approach to understanding humans' relationship to nature. According to this worldview, non-human nature has no value beyond its use as a resource for humans.

The second view is known as biocentrism. It encompasses a life-centered approach to understanding the humans/nature relationship claiming that the environment has intrinsic value in itself regardless of its usefulness to human beings (Brennan & Lo, 2016).¹⁸

The question of which philosophical outlook is best-suited to serve as the ethical foundation of the relationship between humankind and nature is unresolved. Comparing intrinsic and instrumental value, Justus et al. (2009) criticize “conservation biologists” for defending the notion of intrinsic values of natural entities as the ethical rationale for conservation decisions. The spearhead of these authors’ criticism is directed towards biologists as Michael Soulé (1985: 731), who maintain that “species have value in themselves, a value neither conferred nor revocable, but springing from a species’ long evolutionary heritage and potential.” Justus et al.’s (2009: 187) critique is anchored in the assertion that, since intrinsic value is “independent of stakeholder valuation” attributing it to non-human nature is counter-productive to successfully addressing conservation problems because it cannot be “measured, prioritized or traded off.” In contrast to this view, Jamieson (2012) and Foran (2018) point to the importance of redefining the human relationship to the rest of the natural world. Foran (2018), for instance, posits that the anthropocentric system of belief – which he claims permeates almost all the aspects of modern society, dominating scientific thought and overriding the environmental management policy and legislative decision-making – is responsible for the ongoing ecological degradation and the root of humans’ negative impact on wildlife worldwide.

These contending ethical positions hold crucial importance for environmental ethics

¹⁸ Biocentrism often is paralleled with ecocentrism. However, whereas biocentrism extends inherent value to all living creatures, ecocentrism extends inherent value to the whole of nature *including* non-living objects (Brennan & Lo, 2016).

and environmentalism in general. Kortenkamp & Moore (2001: 9, emphasis added) note that in the context of complex environmental dilemmas with a lot of stakeholders, the moral reasoning of supporters of both anthropocentric and ecocentric attitudes about the environment greatly differ, and that “satisfactory conflict resolution is not likely to result from simply bringing stakeholders together to negotiate *because they are speaking in different moral voices.*” The research conducted to prepare this thesis suggests that within the existing literature about the Canadian seal hunt insufficient attention has been given to this divide (i.e., speaking in different moral voices) and its implications. In order to begin addressing this gap the discussion below looks at the different moral voices undergirding the development of thought about the human-animal relationship.

2.1.2. Development of thought about the human-animal relationship

In the Western world human dominance over nature and especially over animals is underpinned by sociocultural plexus, namely religion and culture, as well as by the development of morality and human ethics rooted in the philosophy of Aristotle and Christian dogmatism, and takes shape in Descartes’ conception of animals as mere machines incapable of thinking or feeling (Serpell & Paul, 1994; White, 1967; Foran, 2018; Rummel, 1975). Several authors who write about environmental ethics agree that the traditional Western society is predominantly anthropocentric (Brennan & Lo, 2016; Phillips & Kluss, 2018; Kopnina et al., 2018). Anthropocentrism also is manifest in Asian cultural traditions pertaining to human-animal relations.¹⁹ Although it is certainly true that the ethical principles of some religions rooted in Asia (e.g., Buddhism or Jainism) attach a lot of importance to compassion

¹⁹ Parallels between Western and Asian cultural traditions of human-animal relations are further discussed in the subsection 2.2.1.

for nature and to all living beings, prompting some Westerners to assert that the Eastern Asian ethical perspective in general is more biocentrism-oriented (Kaza, 2014), the cultural background is more complex than it may seem. For instance, the rationale for using endangered animals such as tigers, Siberian musk deer, snow leopard and others in traditional medicine in today's China, is entirely anthropocentric, leaving no grounds for compassion (Swan & Conrad, 2014:6). With this in mind, Swan & Conrad (2014) and Horsthemke (2015) posit that anthropocentrism is most likely a panhuman phenomenon, rooted in culture and traditions of different societies in our world.

In discussing the separation between 'us' (Westerners) and 'the nature' Rummel (1975) suggests that the development of scientific ethics from Renaissance humanism is what glorified our ability to explore and control nature insofar as Descartes' conception of animals influenced scientific thought on animal sentience and intelligence at least until the end of 19th century (Maehle, 1994). Throughout the 19th century, however, the notion of animals as sentient creatures began to gain broader acceptance and coincided with increased questioning of traditional views about human superiority over nature. According to Serpell & Paul (1994: 127-128) increased pet ownership in Victorian England, the monarch's influential patronage of the animal protection movement, and the development of ideas advocating for *compassionate* approach to animals, rooted in the writings by John Locke who polemized with Descartes and argued that needless cruelty toward animals was morally wrong all contributed to changing social attitudes about animals. These ideals ultimately were reflected in early legislative acts aimed at protecting domesticated animals and pets from needless cruelty.²⁰

²⁰ This early form of animal welfare thinking distinguished between the animals that are kept close to humans and wildlife insofar as wild animals were not believed to have the same level of sentience as the non-wild animals.

By the late 1800s, the idea of being humane to animals on compassionate grounds started to influence personal and professional ethics, especially when triggered by the sight of suffering of animals, even in the name of science. After having witnessed for four months daily laboratory-based animal experiments that always resulted in animals' painful death George Hoggan, an assistant physician to the famous physiologist and a prominent proponent of vivisection in Europe, Claude Bernard, quit his job and wrote a letter to the *Morning Post*. In this letter he documented his experience in detail and denounced Bernard and the cruelty of his methods. Hoggan contraposed "the idea of good in humanity" and physiologic practice for which the practitioners have to "blunt their feelings" (i.e., suppress their compassion), concluding that "having drunk the cup to the dregs, I cry off, and I am prepared to see not only science, but mankind perish rather have recourse to such means of saving it" (Hoggan, 1875 cited in Preece, 2002: 312). This letter fueled one of the first public debates about the moral justification of vivisection. Much like the controversy surrounding the seal hunt, the vivisection debate divided participants in two sides – antivivisectionists demanding the practice be banned due to the suffering inflicted on animals versus proponents who emphasized its benefit to humanity as a greater good – continued for several decades with the press media as its main arena (Preece, 2002: 310).

The various articulations of opposition to cruelty to animals on compassionate grounds culminated in the *Reverence for Life* philosophy of Albert Schweitzer. This concept makes compassion an ethical principle, proclaiming that good is that which serves the preservation and development of life, whereas evil is that which destroys or hinders life – wherein life is understood as everything that lives, from human being to grass. Schweitzer developed his *Reverence for Life* concept while searching for a universal ethical concept to guide people's behavior toward 'world around us.' Despite falling short of his aim, the concept, nevertheless

exerted a strong influence on biocentrism and animal rights movements of the late 20th century (Attfield, 2014).

The development of compassion toward animals can also be viewed in terms of the moral evolution of humans. For example, in the *Descent of Man* Darwin (1874) argues that moral behaviour developed from a tendency for empathy through moral evolution and the development of sociability. Here, Darwin distinguished between ‘high moral rules’ based on altruism, and ‘low moral rules’ stemming from selfishness. According to this view, when observing an animal suffer, it is likely that one will feel compassion and want to end its misery; just as one would feel toward a fellow human being (Taylor & Signal, 2005). This said, whether we want to extend the right of the animal not to suffer again, depends purely on our belief system (Francione, 2018). In terms of morality, this means that it is not morally necessary to oppose the acknowledgement of the instrumental value of nature in order to be emphatic for animals, feel the urge to stop their suffering, and care for their well-being. However, advocating for the discontinuation of animal exploitation by humans necessitates more than mere compassion. Specifically, it requires recognizing that animals should be allotted a certain set of rights in accordance with which their own interests will be respected. Francione (2018: 18) refers to the latter dichotomy as the “animal lovers’ paradox” and the “vegetarian’s dilemma.” At issue here is the selective morality of individuals who love their companion animals, yet feel no moral guilt about exploiting other nonhuman animals.

The relation between compassion for animals and morality was, until recently, largely an under-researched avenue of environmental science. One of the key works in this domain, is Nancy Snow’s (1993), ‘Compassion for Animals’ in which she differentiates between compassion as an emotion and rational compassion for animals. Defining compassion as “emotional response to the misfortune of another, which includes suffering with the other, and

concern for the other's good,” she posits that rational compassion for animals is rooted in justified beliefs in vulnerability and the resulting misfortunes of animals, that frequently are “components of a complex network of emotions, values, beliefs, attitudes, and actions that connect us with other beings, describe our relationships with them, and locate our place among other inhabitants in a shared universe” (Snow, 1993: 66).

A key assumption guiding my thesis is that when it comes to opposite moral attitudes about the environment rational compassion can serve as a bridge between seemingly irreconcilable positions. Recently, several papers have been published that point to the necessity reconciling the intrinsic value of nature with pragmatic conservation purposes (Piccolo, 2017; Rottman et al., 2015; Paterson, 2006; Vucetich et al., 2014), or advocate the instrumental value of nature from the perspective of finding an adequate ethical basis for conservation decision making (Justus et al., 2009; Kopnina et al., 2018). A common thread throughout these works is the acknowledging of the need to overcome the human-nature dichotomy and come up with an “approach that does not separate humans from the natural world but places people within the web of all living things” (Paterson, 2006: 144). Biologist and ecologist Marc Bekoff, the progenitor of Compassionate Conservation movement, argues that making compassionate *and* conscious choices about the environment, nature and non-human animals is what eventually brings “practices and sciences of animal welfare and conservation biology closer together” (Compassionate Conservation, n.d., para. 3). Ramp et al. (2013: 309) posit that “compassionate conservation seeks to transcend the ongoing dilemma of choosing between an environmental and animal approach to wild animals by looking for synergy between these two approaches.” Bekoff (2008: 780) maintains that fostering compassion for animals can serve anthropocentric purposes as well:

By loving other animals we make the world a better place for all beings,

including ourselves. Showing children that animals are emotional and moral beings is critical.

2.1.3. Animal welfare and animal rights

The divide between anthropocentric and biocentric views about animals has had important ramifications for social and scientific discussion about issues concerning moral obligations for animals. The majority of contemporary debaters agree that we have at least some moral obligations for animals but disagree on what exactly should be the philosophical basis for the moral standing, and what exactly our moral duties come to (Jamieson, 2012). This said, the main obstacle to a constructive dialogue between the debaters is the lack of a common frame of reference between their worldviews which, in turn, fosters stalemate (Kortenkamp & Moore, 2001).

There often times is confusion between the concepts of animal welfare and animal rights. Animal welfare is a practical concern for the well-being of animals, based on “empirical science related to an animal’s quality of life and quantity of experiences, which is operationalized by biological measures, preference testing, and other indices” (Phillips, 2009 as cited in Phillips & Kluss, 2018: 485). It brings up the question of animal sentience, since welfare considerations are “usually restricted to animals... with conscious awareness” (Phillips & Kluss, 2018: 486). Animal welfare considerations are anthropocentric in the sense that they do not relate to an animal’s welfare from the point of view of the animal, but rather address human concerns based on some standards of “good” welfare that vary between contexts, and usually involve animal emotions (Proctor et al., 2013; Phillips & Kluss, 2018). Animal welfare advocates agree that the link between ‘high levels of sentience’ of an animal and a ‘higher moral status’ that people attribute to that animal is not always logical or based on empirical evidence, but rather is derived from the type of relationship humans share with an animal (i.e.,

utility to humans). For instance, Phillips & Kluss (2018: 495) posit that while a rat or a chicken is not necessarily less sentient than a horse or a cat, people perceive them as such because they tend to be recognized as pests or food, unlike cats and horses which are perceived as pets and companions.

In case of wildlife, the distinction between domestic and wild animals is much more substantial from the perspective of animal welfare. Wildlife is considered part of the environment, with the relationship between humans and wild animals not usually seen as being based on companionship. Instead, wildlife tends to be seen as food or even pests, with the welfare of wild animals' being understood as part of the well-being of an ecosystem (Foran, 2018). This frequently is manifest, for instance, in the conservationist orientation of wildlife management policies wherein an onus is placed on controlling populations of species.²¹

Proponents of animal rights adhere to an ethical position that “recognizes that all animals have rights that extend beyond basic animal welfare considerations and also include some of the rights afforded to humans” (Phillips & Kluss, 2018: 485). Rooted in bio- or eco-centrism, the foundational tenet of this position is that the most basic interest of animals – the need to avoid suffering – needs to be given the same moral consideration as the similar need possessed by the human beings. Hence, animal rights supporters maintain that the anthropocentric view of the environment is morally arbitrary in its treatment of ‘animals’, and that it amounts to a form of human chauvinism toward nature and animals – i.e., speciesism.²²

²¹ There is an opinion that control methods that are based on population estimates “are subject to assumptions more than understanding” (Foran, 2018: 148). In relation to the seal hunt, there are concerns regarding the decreasing population of harp seals voiced by some scientists even today, due to the fact that there is no possibility for estimating a harp seal population with great precision. See, Hammill & Stenson (2007; 2008); Stenson & Hammill (2014).

²² The term speciesism was coined by British psychologist Richard Ryder, who in his 1971 essay pointed out that while defending the scientific validity of experiments on animals on the grounds of the similarity between human and animals, scientists nevertheless vindicate the morality of such experiments on the

The main obstacle facing animal rights supporters is the lack of coherent criteria by which to determine what members of the animal world should receive our concern. Put simply, should the flatworm be afforded the same rights as a snow leopard? Peter Singer, moral philosopher and the author of *Animal Liberation* (1975), is often named as the progenitor of the animal rights' movement. He posits that if humans and animals share the capacity of feeling pain and pleasure, this is the ground for acknowledging intrinsic value and moral considerations of all animals who experience pain and pleasure (Singer, 1975). More recently, Justus et al. (2009: 187) have argued that despite the continued failure of existing ethical theories to provide “workable criteria for determining which entities are intrinsically valuable,” , sentience may nonetheless serve as one of the criteria for asserting the intrinsic value of living beings.

In their review of 2,562 scientific papers about animal sentience and subjective experience of higher animals²³ used in experiments covering a span of 22 years, Proctor et al., (2013: 894) showed that in the majority of papers (n=1,765), 5 emotions – fear, stress, pain, anxiety, and depression – were unambiguously documented in animals, and that the subjective states of animals “were not only measured but were often fundamental to the research being performed” that often demanded very high standard of scrutiny – for instance, in the research on development of drugs for human use.

It can be thus inferred that harp seals, which are considered to be higher animals (i.e., mammals), are sentient beings. In fact, the Canadian Sealing Act of 1965 that prohibited the live skinning of seal pups, is an example of an animal welfare-motivated decision based on

grounds of the differences. In his view, speciesism is just as illogical as racism and sexism (Ryder, 2004: 83).

²³ Vertebrates of 5 orders: Galliformes (Aves), Rodentia, Artiodactyla, Carnivora, Primates (Mammals) (Proctor et al., 2013).

acknowledging that seals feel pain (Guevara, 2008). Moreover, the Canadian federal government claims that animal welfare considerations continue to play the central role in seal hunt regulation which is “guided by rigorous animal welfare principles that are internationally recognized by independent observers” (DFO, 2016b, para.1).²⁴

A question therefore arises as to whether the seals’ sentience can serve as a basis for discontinuing the killing seals altogether. The distinction that the ethics scholar Deni Elliott (2009) draws between subjects of moral worth and members of moral community to assess human/animal relationships suggests the answer is no. For her, a subject of moral worth includes any being (animal or human) or a natural system that is vulnerable to intentional harm and entitled to some protection. Within this category, there exist members of moral community which only includes people from birth to death. Every member of the moral community, Elliott maintains, should be entitled to equal rights to full moral protection. Other subjects of moral worth, such as animals, do not have the rights equal to those of the moral community. They do in her view, though, have *some* rights and should be protected from *unjustified* harm. Put simply, “when a member of the moral community and a subject of moral worth have the same legitimate [moral] claim, the [interest of the] member of the moral community comes first” (Elliott, 2009: 31).

Expounding on the animal rights perspective, Francione (2018: 2) points to what he calls the hypocrisy of the adherents of animal welfare, for failing to recognize that “there is no morally coherent distinction between the animals whom we love and those into whom we stick a fork, or use to make clothing, etc.” His assertion infers that the only thing separating these

²⁴ In the face of these claims Foran (2018), Butterworth & Richardson (2013) and Lavigne & Lynn (2011) all note that, in reality the federal government often turns a blind eye to violations of these regulations.

two modes of action is one's personal moral belief in what is good and bad. Summarizing the two positions, Phillips & Kluss write (2018: 486, emphasis added)

The acceptability of the ways in which we manage animals cannot be evaluated solely from an assessment of their welfare. It must include an assessment of whether our treatment of the animals is *morally justifiable*. A fundamental issue is whether animals have a moral value just for the benefit that they bring to other species, in particular humans, or whether they have moral value in their own right. There is no doubt that animals bring us enormous benefits; the question is whether this justifies us using them without consideration of their intrinsic value.

2.1.4. The seal hunt controversy in the perspective of ethical debate

From the beginning, the seal hunt controversy has been a “moral-based conflict” (Lee, 1989: 37), whose outcomes has had a direct influence on the policy and regulation of the seal hunt. For instance, the 2009 European Union ban on seal products has been called a morality-based decision (Sellheim, 2016; Fitzgerald, 2011). Nonetheless relatively little attention has been given to morality and environmental ethics in the existing literature about the seal hunt. Moreover, the lack of seal hunt literature that engages with the ethical backdrop of the hunt suggests that ethical divisions and divergent moral attitudes regarding sealing likely exist among the authors themselves.

The seal hunt controversy-related literature can be divided in two categories. The first focuses on the conflict surrounding the hunt. The common link in this category is a propensity to view the seal hunt controversy as a socio-political scandal fostered by media-savvy radical environmentalists who created strife around an otherwise banal issue by successfully eliciting strong feelings among a sensitive and largely urban public (Dauvergne & Neville, 2011; Barry, 2005; Marland, 2014; Knezevic, 2009, Daoust et al., 2013; Allen, 1979). The moral aspect of the seal hunt controversy is not central to the analysis here. Indeed, within this category of

literature the questioning of the morality of hunt is portrayed being largely propaganda that is force-fed by the anti-sealing movement.

Viewing the controversy from the position of a “campaign on moral grounds waged by mindbomb activists” (Dauvergne & Neville, 2011:195), and “propaganda... by special interest groups [trying] to advance a social cause” (Marland, 2014: 80), both Dauvergne & Neville (2011) and Marland (2014) acknowledge the presence of the moral background of the controversy. However, these authors do not investigate the ethical underpinnings and the implications of this moral conflict, thereby overlooking the role moral considerations for animal welfare may have played in this issue.

Dauvergne & Neville (2011:2006), referring to the seal hunt controversy as “emotional and ethical”, conflate ethical considerations with emotional response as if the two concepts were synonymous.²⁵ They rightly point out the vast role that media images have played in the seal hunt controversy, maintaining that as the discursive landscape becomes increasingly crowded and the struggle to win the public opinion intensifies, it becomes more difficult for anti-sealing activists to “convince people that some practices are wrong, morally and environmentally” (2011:192). However, by not addressing the essence of this ‘right and wrong’ debate Dauvergne & Neville oversimplify the conflict, viewing it as a reciprocal battle of competing “mindbombs” that both sides throw at each other.

This type of the conflict-centric argument also lacks analysis of the ethical incentives of anti-sealing protesters. In explaining the incentives behind the conflict Allen (1979), and later Barry (2005), present the main opponents of sealing – the IFAW and Greenpeace – as

²⁵ Both emotions and ethics influence human actions. The main difference resets in how they are applied. Emotions are an internal response involving a reaction to various stimuli, both external and internal, whereas ethics is a set of moral principles that provide the underpinnings for human behavior in the outside world (Fieser, n.d.; Johnson, n.d.).

double-dealers, driven solely by monetary interests, skillfully manipulating the media with “shocking visual images of the whitecoat hunt to build public support... understanding that people did not oppose the hunt because it was inhumane but because it was repugnant” (Barry 2005: 149). Like Dauvergne & Neville (2011), Barry (2005) denies the seal hunt controversy an actual ethical depth, perpetuating instead the notion that morality is being force-fed to an ill-informed public, and that the controversy is just an emotional tearjerker campaign for consumption by urban publics.

The ethical background of the hunt is approached differently in Marland (2014) and Knezevic (2009). The latter approaches the hunt from a conservationist perspective and aims to reconcile hunting and environmentalism, which she claims appear to be mutually exclusive because of generalizations that result from their portrayals in the media. Knezevic (2009: 16) refers to environmentalists and hunters as groups, arguing that these media representations obscured “the ultimate goal of both groups is the same: (a) protection of wildlife and its habitat, (b) conscious management of natural resources, and (c) a more complete re-connection with our natural surroundings.” Assuming that “the vast majority of the hunters practice ethical hunting” Knezevic (2009: 13) nevertheless overlooks the essence of the ethical debate between conservationists and preservationists (i.e., the intrinsic versus instrumental value of seals), and likewise fails to spot the moral considerations surrounding the seal hunt.

Marland (2014) pays greater attention to the essence of ethical divide. He acknowledges the importance of the clash of morals and defines the ethical perspective of the conflict noting,

For many people, killing seals may be as unethical as killing animals for sport (e.g., bull fighting, fox hunts), for fashion (e.g., fur farms, ivory harvesting), when species depletion/extinction is a possibility (e.g. polar bears, whales), for scientific reasons (e.g., in laboratories), or over a concern for animals’ welfare (e.g., chicken farms, circuses, puppy mills). Opponents are not just vegetarians,

or an ideological fringe, but a *critical mass of mainstream global citizens who otherwise accept the slaughter of animals for food or clothing*. The political debate draws on these ethical dilemmas and ideologies, pitting idealism against relativism, and at its core is an annual media-centered battle for public opinion (Marland, 2014: 66-67, emphasis added).

In his examination of the different forms of propaganda used by contending stakeholders in the sealing controversy, Marland chooses not to delve into the ethical essence of the controversy (i.e., the addressing the reason why conflicting positions are considered ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ by the sides in this conflict), focusing his attention instead on gauging the effects of propaganda and the federal and Newfoundland governments’ defense of sealing.

The second category of seal hunt related literature, which is smaller in volume than the first, places the moral assessment of the seal hunt and the ethical considerations behind both sides of the debate at the center of the research analysis (Sumner, 1983; Lowe, 2008; Butterworth & Richardson, 2013; Foran, 2018).

For example, Sumner (1983) attempted to build and explain an objective moral appraisal of the seal hunt with an aim to reconciling both sides of the debate. In pursuing this goal, Sumner sets out the moral foundation of the positions of abolitionists (i.e., anti-sealing activists) and retentionists (i.e., supporters of sealing). He posits that in appraising sealing one has to make sure all morally relevant aspects of the hunt are considered, and that the moral assessment is impartial. Scientific dimensions, he continues, may serve as the reasons that substantiate the moral assessment (1983: 109-110).

In developing his argument Sumner (1983: 110) deprecates the “treatment of seals as a ‘natural resource’ to be ‘harvested’” on the grounds that it “reduces the animals to the status of cereal crops or forest products, that is, to the status of things.” At the same time, when searching for a formula that would allow to assign equal inclusion of all interests, both human

and non-human, he comes to the inevitable question “but when are the interests of different species equal?” (Sumner, 1983: 111).²⁶ Despite failing to come up with an answer to this question, Sumner proposes the principal of minimal decency as a rational solution for reconciling conflicting views about the hunt. According to this principal, the seal hunt is “morally unjustified if its human benefits are slight and its nonhuman costs are substantial” (Sumner 1983: 115). Viewed against the insignificant economic gain received by the contemporary sealing industry, Sumner contends that the high death toll for seals combined with the suffering of these animals, suggests the seal hunt fails the test of minimal decency. This said, it is worth noting that Sumner’s conclusion is partially based on his own moral perspective insofar as he claims that “servicing of a luxury market in fine furs and leathers is the wrong reason for killing a large number of animals” (Sumner 1983: 116).

In conducting the research for this thesis, I was not able to identify any works since Sumner (1983) that have sought to reconcile the ‘irreconcilable’ moral stands of the seal hunt. Calling the seal hunt controversy sociological warfare, Lowe (2008: 72) notes that a majority of Canadian and international audiences who do not have any other way of receiving information about a hunt that takes place thousands of miles away from them, is “fertile ground for attempts at shaping public perceptions” by anti-sealing activists and government agencies alike. In so doing, he seemingly agrees with the views of those who point out the manipulation of the public opinion by both sides in order to “raise moral sensitivity” (e.g., Lee, 1989:37) and/or make “moral appeals” (e.g., Dauvergne & Neville 2011). At the same time, Lowe (2008: 77-78) expounds on Sumner’s thoughts, outlining the moral divide which fuels the seal hunt controversy by asserting that,

²⁶ Recall, this is the same conundrum with which animal rights must contend – i.e., balancing human and non-human interests solely on scientific dimensions is impossible.

In terms of centrality of values and beliefs, each side in the controversy reveals differing value systems and the place of the seal hunt within it. For hunt defenders, the tradition of the seal hunt meshes well with both a cultural history and economic reality of utilizing both natural resources and nonhuman animals for economic subsistence. For the hunt opponents, the hunt reveals post-materialist values... in which nonhuman animals and the natural environment are given greater priority as objects of concern and are likely to be found in populations that are relatively economically secure and well-integrated into their host society.

Wishing to scrutinize and measure animal welfare, Butterworth & Richardson (2013) assessed the seal hunt from the position of veterinary science, by relying on anatomical and physiological data collected through post mortem examinations and video monitoring. Based on their observations, they conclude that “there is reliable data indicating that cruelty takes place on a large scale during the Canadian commercial seal hunt” (Butterworth & Richardson 2013: 466; see also, Butterworth et al., 2007).

In his newly published book about the failure of governmental officials to ethically manage Canadian wildlife, Foran (2018) devotes a chapter to the seal hunt. He posits that pro-hunt advocates bluntly deny the seal hunt an ethical relevance. Foran points out that, the pro-sealing rhetoric emphasizes seals’ instrumental value for humans and accuses “animal rights fanatics of using the Bambi syndrome to advance their goal of ending humans’ use of animals, noting that sealing was the perfect vehicle because of graphic bloody visuals and the misleading sight of “cute and cuddly” animals” (Foran: 2018: 144). At the same time, he notes:

The point is that the seal hunt is not about animal rights at all. Opposition to the seal hunt comes primarily from the animal welfare viewpoint, not from current animal rights philosophy... Organizations like the IFAW, Humane Society International, Greenpeace, and others simply believe that the needless, mass clubbing and shooting of young sentient mammals is in violation of ethical human standards and therefore should be discontinued... But by seeing all opposition to the seal hunt in terms of animal rights, the federal government and other seal hunt supporters have transformed a debate that is essentially

about humane ethical practice into a confrontation between normative cultural values and a perceived “nut fringe” philosophy. (Foran: 2018: 145)

The above quote perfectly emphasizes the lack of understanding the contending sides of this debate seemingly have about one another’s ethical positions. Put simply, the seal hunt controversy is widely perceived as a conflict between adherents of anthropocentric and biocentric environmental ethics who find themselves at opposing poles of a spectrum for understanding the nature of the human-animal relationship. However, as Foran argues, at least some of the anti-sealing protesters do not criticize the seal hunt from the perspective of fighting for animal rights (i.e., freeing animals from human exploitation); instead, they are concerned with the substandard welfare of seals. This suggests that some anti-sealing protesters and pro-sealing advocates may share more common ethical ground than often is assumed, thereby potentially opening an avenue for negotiation.

2.2. Seal hunt as a cultural difference: Newfoundland vs. the world outside

The discussion in this section examines the cultural facet of the seal hunt issue through the prism of an ingroup/outgroup dilemma. The first part of the discussion deals with the idea of moral othering, and then the discussion moves on look at the notion of Newfoundlanders as a distinct sociocultural group, paralleling the seal hunt to similar controversies across the globe.

2.2.1. Cultural norms come into play: Moral othering

Marland (2014) views the communication battle that is carried out in the media over the seal hunt as playing the central role to perpetuating a confrontation that is happening at national and international levels. Drawing from the results of a 2009 survey²⁷ looking at views about

²⁷ The survey was administered by telephone within Newfoundland and across Canada in August 2009 by Corporate Research Associates (CRA), a Halifax-based research firm. In total, 1375 people participated in the survey. See, Marland (2014).

sealing in Newfoundland and in the rest of Canada that found that 85.5% of respondents in Newfoundland (n=401) and 44.7% of respondents in the rest of Canada (n=974) expressed support for sealing, Marland concludes that the national level is pervaded by the sense of solidarity, sovereignty and nationalism and is less susceptible than international viewers to images of seal hunt frequently used by anti-sealing campaigners. He posits that killing seal pups drew so much international public attention because seal pups “are perceived to be cute, docile, and helpless, which conflicts with notions of Canada as a civilized, developed, and progressive society” (Marland, 2014: 71). However, in Newfoundland, where a local ‘nationalist’ propaganda contributes to the creation of a strong, shared group identity and a homogenous society, “there are considerable social pressures to conform to group norms” (Marland, 2014: 75) and consequently, a strong counter-movement is present.

Marland proposes that the anti-sealing campaign and its domestic counter-movement constitute a classic ingroup/outgroup dilemma, wherein the anti-sealing campaign is perceived locally as an attack led by outsiders, be they individuals from other parts of Canada or other countries. To this end, Marland’s observation’s vis-à-vis domestic approval versus international disgust seemingly parallel similar controversies, such as the killing of pilot whales on the Faroe Islands (*grindadráp*), the Yulin dog festival in China, and South Korean dog meat consumption. In all of these cases, there is evidence of othering that happens due to the difference between the cultural-moral norms of a society in which a practice takes place and the norms of other societies (Oh & Jackson, 2011).

The othering is a sociopsychological concept that describes a process of mental classification of an individual or a group as different or somehow not ours, based on various criteria ranging from physical appearance to social norms. In psychology, our group is dubbed the ingroup, and those groups to which we attribute people who do not belong to our ingroup

are called outgroups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979: 47). The problem with association of other with actions that differ from our own system of moral values is not commonly researched, but recently was addressed by Grassiani (2015) who coined the term moral othering to describe how Palestinians are made into a moral other by Israeli soldiers.

2.2.2. Media representation of animal welfare issues involving moral othering

Moral othering seems to underlie public resentment toward groups, nations, natives of a region who are associated, from an outgroup perspective, with an immoral behavior – in the case of this thesis, an immoral behaviour toward animals, and seals in particular.

The three cases mentioned above – the killing of pilot whales on the Faroe Islands, the Yulin dog festival in China, and South Korean dog meat consumption – share some common attributes. The first, is an acceptance of cultural practices within a group (a nation, or natives of a region) where such practices are considered a norm rooted in history and culture. Second, is the rejection of these practices by outside groups, who often times are influenced by shocking graphic imagery of the practices, resulting in negative stereotyped representations of entire cultural groups.²⁸ More often than not this rejection incites counter-protest from the people who belong to the accused side, such as the counter-indignation in China at the protest against Yulin festival (Williams, 2017).

Public resentment in the West to the practices taking place at the Yulin dog festival practices corroborates Marland's (2014) assertion that it is 'our' (i.e., Western culture) perception of dogs as pets that provokes negative emotional reaction at the exotic practice of

²⁸ Such representations are usually found in the animal rights' media outlets, often left in the comments sections by viewers who are shocked by the graphic images and videos. See, for example, the social media page for Sea Shepherd Conservation Society UK, <https://www.facebook.com/SeaShepherdUK/>. Similarly, negative representations are also found in the news media publications. For example, both *The Independent* and *The Huffington Post* recently labelled the Yulin festival practices "barbaric" (Williams, 2017; Kinoshian, 2016).

killing and eating dogs. We also see this echoed in Dauvergne & Neville's (2011: 206) assertion that, in China, "a tradition of eating a wide variety of animals, including dogs, makes it relatively immune to emotional appeals to spare cute seals." The public resentment noted by these authors manifests itself in the form of an ingroup/outgroup dilemma that is anchored in moral othering. As Marland (2014: 71) notes negative emotional reaction in such instances amounts to a form of cultural relativism insofar as "Westerners who are disgusted to learn that dogs are eaten in some Asian societies may see nothing wrong with boiling lobsters alive."

There is a similar issue with regard to the South Korean dog meat trade. Oh & Jackson (2011) discuss decades of opposition between animal welfare and animal rights organizations, such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and IFAW, aiming to ban the dog consumption in South Korea. They note that "Koreans responded to the INGOs' attempt to abolish dog meat consumption by developing a 'nationalistic discourse' to defend it... even people who did not like dog meat invoked attitudes reflective of 'cultural nationalism'... in an effort to combat the 'arrogance' of a 'Western centric' perspective that dismisses other cultures' practices as improper" (Oh & Jackson 2011: 36). Oh & Jackson (2011: 50) conclude that, contrary to what was expected, the attempt to integrate the Western cultural norms has transformed Korean cultural practices into an even more widespread activity "legitimized by greater protections against animal cruelty and greater awareness of the role of dog meat consumption within the discourse of South Korean national pride."

Faroese culture is considered part of the Western cultural tradition, nevertheless, every summer when the harsh images of slain cetaceans lying on the Faroe beaches fill social media and newspapers, it incites infuriated, emotional responses from the Westerners.²⁹ Here too

²⁹ See, for example, "These people are psychotic barbarians" (Facebook user Gray Grieve, Oregon, US); "Savage murderers of the Faroe Islands" (Facebook user Tracey Gilbert, Canada); "Boycott products from

international condemnation provokes public resentment in Faroe Islands (Bogadottir & Olsen, 2017).³⁰ Whereas the othering fostered by the consumption of dog meat in China and South Korea is linked, in part, to the Western perception of dogs as pets, the othering associated with the annual Faroese whale killing is seemingly catalysed by something different insofar as one does not usually perceive pilot whales as pets or as anything remotely resembling a pet. Indeed, othering in this instance appears to be rooted in some special status or symbolic perception of whales (Kalland, 1993), cultural imperialism (Aron et al., 2000) and animal welfare concerns (Bogadottir & Olsen, 2017).

It comes as no surprise that similar reactions are evoked by the Canadian seal hunt – i.e., overwhelming support of the hunt in Newfoundland, relatively strong support of the hunt in the rest of Canada, condemnation of the hunt internationally (Marland 2014).

2.3 Framing the seal hunt in the Canadian news

This discussion in this section is divided into three parts. The first focuses on the framing theory, outlining its main theoretical underpinnings and the importance of the framing perspective as a tool for understanding the controversy surrounding the seal hunt. The second part of the discussion engages with literature that focuses specifically on the moral framing of the seal hunt in the media. The final part of the discussion summarizes the whole chapter and re-iterates the central research question guiding this thesis.

iceland, japan and norway!! [sic]" (Facebook user Mario Aarts, Den Helder, Netherlands). For the aforementioned response in full, see the page for "Operation Mjolnir", the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society's protest campaign against Faroese whaling: <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1598401983597998&type=1&l=2d49cf13d5>. In the newspaper coverage of Faroese whale killing, *The Telegraph* journalist Bonnie Malkin similarly calls it a "barbaric practice" (Malkin, 2015).

³⁰ The Faroese' view on the controversy was also represented in the international news media. See, for example, the article "Yes, I butcher whales. What's all the fuss about? It's certainly no worse than what happens in slaughterhouses" published in the *Spectator.co.uk* (Joensen, 2016).

2.3.1. Framing theory

In his 2009 book dealing with the lack of global consensus about climate change, Hulme (2009: 215) writes, “One of the reasons why we disagree about climate change is that we receive multiple and conflicting images about it and we interpret them in different ways.” The role of public opinion in enacting environmental legislation and policy making has been increasingly noted in recent years (Miller & Riechert, 2015; Anderson et al., 2017; Fang et al., 2017), as has the role of news media in fostering public awareness about environmental risks (Mikami et al., 1995; more recently, Sampei & Aoyagi-Usui, 2008). Miller & Riechert (2015: 45) note the debate about contentious environmental issues involves opposing stakeholders trying to win the public and policy-makers support by “altering the frames or interpretive dimensions for evaluating the facts.” This points to the importance of understanding the ways in which news media frame environmental controversies at local, regional, and global levels (Putnam & Shoemaker, 2007; Lakoff, 2010; Cottle & Lester, 2011; Miller & Riechert, 2015).

Mass media in general and news media in particular do not merely provide the public with facts. They play a crucial role in shaping public opinions and agendas by selecting, highlighting and interpreting the content offered to audiences. Toward the end of 1960s, Max McCombs and Donald Shaw developed a theory describing the ability of news media to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda, that became known as agenda-setting theory (McCombs et al., 2014) and was further developed into second-level agenda setting theory which examines “properties, qualities, and characteristics that describe objects or people in the news and the tone of those attributes” (Wu & Coleman, 2009: 776). In parallel to these concepts, framing theory, which focuses on the ways in which mass media present

certain events, also emerged as a mainstay of media studies.³¹ The difference between the two is often summarised as follows: whereas agenda-setting tells people *what news* is important, framing shapes *the ways in which audiences opine* about the topics covered by the news (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

The concept of frames is employed by different disciplines, most of which assign similar definitions to it. For example, according to a neuro-linguist Robert Dilts (2006: 22), “frames relate to the cognitive context surrounding a particular event or interaction.” In media studies, *frame* is understood as the core idea of a communication text that reveals the content of a story (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Media framing theory focuses on identifying the frames used in media stories and their possible social implications. Entman et al. (2009: 177, emphasis added) add that frames “function to promote an interpretation of a problematic situation or an actor and (implicit or explicit) support of a desirable response, *often along with a moral judgment that provides an emotional charge.*” Thus, frames convey an interpretation of reality that the producer of a story (e.g., author of a news article), implicitly or explicitly, communicates to its audience (e.g., news article readers). The main quality of news framing, to use the words of Nisbet (2009: 47), is “connecting the mental dots for the public”, that is, suggesting an explanation of an issue that resonates with an audience’s perceptual lenses and, hence, serving as interpretative cognitive schema used to make sense of an issue. This interpretation may likely involve an emotional hue, influenced by the moral judgement that is suggested by the author of the story (Entman et al., 2009; Gurney, 2013). For framing analysts of the 1980s, the notion of frames referred to large units of social discourse; a certain ‘package’

³¹ According to some researchers, framing theory is just more ‘refined’ form of the second-level agenda setting theory (see, for example, McCombs, 2004 in Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007: 14). Some scholars also point out the blurriness of theoretical concept of framing at the level of operationalization (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2012; Cacciatore et al., 2016).

that includes various linguistic tools, known as framing and reasoning devices, used by authors to convey a specific meaning by directing the reader to a specific perspective for viewing a given social issue (Gamson & Lasch, 1983). The framing devices describe an issue through the use of specific lexical and visual choices (e.g., metaphors, key words, catchphrases, specific imagery), while the reasoning devices pertain to causes, policy consequences, and moral evaluation of the issue (Gamson & Lasch, 1983).

In theorizing about the consequences of framing De Vreese (2005: 52) posits that,

An individual level consequence may be altered attitudes about an issue based on exposure to certain frames. On the societal level, frames may contribute to shaping social level processes such as political socialization, decision-making, and collective actions.

This said, it must be noted that journalists are often members of the same society to whom they direct their messages. Scheufele (1999) calls this phenomenon ‘journalists as audiences’ and points out the closed circle of a society in which specific frames begin to circulate. Having been used by one journalist, a specific frame and its attributes can be picked by other journalists in the society, giving rise to as so-called news wave (Scheufele, 1999).

Discussing the way in which news media frame environmental issues, Miller & Riechert (2015) point out the role of journalistic norms in news making, and name factuality, attractiveness to audiences, and objectivity as the central norms at play in reporting on environmental issues. They note that “news does not exist in a vacuum”, and while the journalistic norms emphasize objectivity and ideally, should prevent journalists from openly taking sides on a contentious issue, these norms do not preclude news makers from accepting the ‘facts’ as provided by stakeholders, and from reporting the factual context offered by a source (Miller & Riechert, 2015: 49).

Framing theory also suggests that objectivity in news reporting often falls victim to news construction practices. Van Gorp (2009: 84) notes that journalists themselves partake in the process of meaning construction by adding “additional layers of interpretations of issues” or events in news stories. News journalists, he posits, “cannot tell stories effectively without preconceived notion about how to order story elements and about what meanings they could or should impose upon those story elements” (van Gorp, 2009: 84). He suggests that frames have cultural meaning and are part of cultural codes that, when embedded in the news message, implicitly influence the receiver’s interpretation of this message, “which lends meaning, coherence, and ready interpretation of complex issues” (van Gorp, 2009: 88). This view suggests that in a given society there is a link between specific frames that will likely be used to present an issue to an audience and the cultural context, unique to that particular society.³² This said, the context conditioning the frames extends beyond the cultural to include ideological and political outlooks (Kolmer & Semetko, 2009; Good, 2008; Cottle, 2013), and may also be morality-based in accordance with moral evaluations reflecting differences in moral values across societies (Cottle, 2013: 24; Graham et al., 2016).

The important role of the news media in conveying moral message is noted by Kirkhorn (1999) and a philosopher–journalist Michael Ignatieff (Plaisance, 2002), who point out how journalists take on themselves the role of ‘moral arbiters’ when reporting from conflict zones. Jones (2013) likewise notes the importance of moral media framing in political debates. Writing about media and environment interactions, Luedecke & Boykoff (2016:5) note that “media frames influence the ways that the environment is perceived and discussed and how

³² In his earlier work, van Gorp (2007) made the cultural implications of framing more explicit by positing that frames are cognitive mental structures that are culturally shared in the collective memory of a group or a society, providing a context within which the news message is interpreted on the receiver’s side.

the public then view environmental issues, from formulations of what are “problems” to considerations of potential, feasible, or desirable ways to alleviate problems” (2016: 5). Nonetheless, and despite the ability of the news media to influence the moral assessment of environmental issues, the investigation of the moral framing of environmental issues from the perspective of ethical debate appears to be an under-examined avenue of research.

2.3.2. The seal hunt issue in the perspective of moral framing in the media

In the research undertaken to produce this thesis I have only been able to identify three studies addressing the role of moral communication in the media regarding the seal hunt controversy that situate this issue against the backdrop of moral/ethical considerations; Lee (1989), Sturn (2006), and Carrier-Lafontaine (2009).³³

In his 1989 study looking at the representation of seal hunt in Canadian newspapers, John Alan Lee presents the seal hunt controversy as a battle of words between moral rivals – opponents and proponents of the seal hunt – for whom the central task of the claims-makers from both sides was to win the support of news reporters. In his study, Lee analyzes the rhetoric in *The Globe and Mail's* and *The Toronto Star's* coverage of the seal hunt by singling out moral keywords (i.e., terms that show moral topic of each sentence) to identify in whose voice – protestors, seal hunters, government, or media/journalist – particular messages were spoken. His findings suggest that the largest amount of moral keywords came from the journalists themselves, as opposed to the warring parties. He writes:

In moral talk, this is especially important because moral claims-makers are "sides" in a conflict where each [side] attempts to win supporters for an opposing view of reality. That the moral "reality" of the seal hunt is communicated in the apparently objective voice of the news reporter, rather

³³ It is worth noting that of these three works, only Lee (1989) was published in a peer-reviewed journal. Sturn (2006) is Master's thesis from Duke University that is available online. Carrier-Lafontaine (2009) is Master's thesis from the University of Ottawa that also is available online.

than directly (in quotes) or indirectly (by attribution) in the voices of the moral contestants, is a profoundly significant comment on the power of the newspaper to construct moral social reality. (Lee, 1989: 43)

Lee goes on to argue that both sides of the controversy appeal to morals, employing emotional tactics rather than common sense to assist in their respective efforts at garnering support for their cause. For instance, he found that anti-sealing protesters presented white-coats as ‘baby seals’ and emphasized their defenselessness by linking this image with that of a human baby. Pro-sealers, on the other hand, underlined that these are ‘stupid’, ‘parasitic’ creatures, and ‘pests’, and that attempts to stop the hunt were tantamount to cultural genocide. Lee (1989: 40) notes that due to pervasive moral agenda, news reports readily assign roles to each side:

What has not been so widely appreciated [...] is the extent to which a moralizing agenda pervades the media. Communication is not used only to imply that one side of an issue is correct, and the other mistaken, but that one side is good, and the other evil.

Carrier-Lafontaine’s 2009 study compares official news releases and website images used by the IFAW and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) to those of the Canadian government’s Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Paralleling Lee’s (1989) findings, Carrier-Lafontaine found that the anti- and pro-hunt rhetoric contained in the communication documents she analyzed advance a representation of harp seals that does not correspond with reality, and which seems to be oriented foremost at serving particular interests and influencing public opinion. In examining the rhetoric used in the media communication of the IFAW, SSCS, and the DFO, Carrier-Lafontaine (2009: 113) notes the use of what she identifies as “emotional appeals to engage the empathy of audience”, especially in the rhetoric used by the anti-sealing movement which, she argues, presents seals as subjects, emphasizing their human iconicity, cuteness, usefulness when alive and uselessness when dead, as well as the inexorable cruelty of the kill. The DFO’s communication documents, on the other hand, present seals as

objects, emphasizing the animality of seals, their lack of cuteness, their uselessness alive and usefulness dead, and present the kill as an attainment of important human resource.

While Lee's (1989) and Carrier-Lafontaine's (2009) illustrate the dichotomic representation of the seal hunt by the contending sides of the conflict, neither elucidates the essence of the conflicting moral stands; the understanding of which could help explain why they are conflicting. In her analysis of opinions about the seal hunt, Sturn (2006) analyses the content of opinion letters (N=320) published in Canadian news sources over a period of three years, aiming to single out prevalent attitudes and elucidate the moral standing of supporters of each side to the conflict among the general public. In her analysis, she identifies what she labels moralistic/humanistic attitudes in a majority of anti-seal hunt opinion letters in her sample, and utilitarian/anthropocentric attitudes in the majority of pro-seal hunt opinion letters. In examining the contents of these letters, she observes a dichotomy is "present in the respective valuations of animals by each side of the debate" while each side's attitudes do not address the moral concerns of their opponents (Sturn, 2006: 39).

There is an interesting interplay between the three abovementioned studies in the sense that together, they form an important body of knowledge regarding the moral nature of the seal hunt controversy. However, as best as I have been able to ascertain, no work has yet sought to investigate the peculiarities of moral framing of the seal hunt controversy in Canadian news articles while viewing it against the backdrop of environmental ethics. This is the task which this thesis seeks to achieve.

2.3.3. Conclusion and research questions

The discussion in this chapter has outlined two ongoing debates caused by the anthropocentric versus biocentric dichotomy in environmental ethics:

1. the polemic on ascribing intrinsic or instrumental value to non-human nature as a more adequate ethical basis for environmental protection and conservation decisions (Soulé, 1985; Rottman et al., 2015; Justus et al., 2009; Kopnina et al., 2018); and
2. the debate about animal welfare versus animal rights and, specifically, what should be our obligations toward the rest of the animal world (Francione, 2018; Jamieson, 2008; Bekoff, 2008; Foran, 2018).

These debates have been presented as a basis for considering factors influencing the framing of environmental dilemmas, and how the seal hunt has been presented in Canadian media.

The examination of literature discussed in this chapter points to a lack of analyses of the news media framing of seal hunt controversy that approaches this issue from the perspective of moral and ethical divide. This is the gap that this thesis aims to fill by investigating the way in which the morality of the seal hunt is articulated in newspapers, viewing these articulations against the backdrop of the divide in environmental ethics, on one hand, and culturally-influenced moral othering on the other hand.

Elucidating moral framing in newspaper coverage of seal hunt controversy may grant us a better understanding of the ethical reasoning that is communicated through news media, influencing the way this environmental issue is perceived. It can also have implications for other environmental issues, and for a “redefinition of human relationship to the rest of natural world” (Jamieson, 2012), as the main obstacle to constructive dialogue on similar environmental dilemmas is both ethical differences and the lack of understanding of each other’s position.

With this in mind, the central research question guiding this thesis is: *How do the moral profiles of the frames in the news coverage of the seal hunt reflect particular ethical positions?*

In seeking to address this question, two sub-questions are used as guides:

Is there any evidence of advancing a specific environmental ethical position, manifest in the moral reasoning about seals?

Is there any evidence of moral othering, manifest in the moral reasoning about sealers?

Chapter 3. Methodology

The discussion in this chapter describes the methodology used to identify and analyze moral framing in a sample of news articles about the seal hunt published throughout 2009 in two Canadian mainstream newspapers: one national *Globe and Mail*, and the Newfoundland-based *The Telegram*. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first presents the research design, explaining the rationale for the choice of media for analysis and the time period, as well as describing the data collection process. In the second section, the method used to conduct the frame analysis is discussed along with the main obstacles encountered in operationalizing the moral components of frames. The conceptualization and operationalization of the concept of media framing has been criticized for its perceived lack of uniformity and systematicity (Scheufele, 1999; Entman, 1993). In an attempt to avoid this, and to ensure transparency and consistency, this chapter presents the method used in a series of steps drawing from Linstrom and Marais (2012: 29) who summarized the methodological literature in order to suggest a comprehensible guideline for conducting a news frame analysis. The adopted methodology builds on Pan & Kosicki (1993) and van Gorp (2007; 2009), employing a qualitative linguistic-based analysis of inductively identified frames with a focus on seals and sealers. The news stories involving seals and/or sealers are used as proxies for investigating the presence and the essence of moral reasoning about the seal hunt.

3.1. Research design

The discussion in this section is divided into two sub-sections. The first explains the rationale for choosing newspapers as the media format for the study. Then, the rationale for selecting the specific timeframe and the technique used to select the data sample are presented.

3.1.1. Choice of media format

Being a key information source for the public confers an important social role to newspapers (Pew Research Center, 2011), not least because of the news media's ability to shape public opinion (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). As newspapers continue to be regarded as an important medium for acquiring information about the world as they expand beyond print and move to online and mobile formats (Wilby, 2014, para.1). As of 2015, "all daily newspapers in Canada and most of the over 1,000 community newspapers have an associated website" (News Media Canada, April 2015). Moreover,

daily newspapers continue to be strong news brands with 8 in 10 Canadians reading every week... Canadians are still avid readers of newspaper content. Between 50-60% of Canadians read newspaper content every day, with print continuing to be the primary source... Approximately 80% of the population in all of the markets measured read a newspaper over the course of the week, in either a printed or digital format (News Media Canada, April 2015).

According to 2016 Nielsen Scarborough study,

more than 169 million adults in the U.S. read a newspaper in a month—whether it be in print, on a website or via mobile app. In total, newspapers reach 69% of the U.S. population in a given month... 81% of monthly newspaper readers engage with the print product, with 51% reading print exclusively. The remaining 49% reads a newspaper on at least one digital platform, with 30% reading both digital and print (Nielsen.com, 2016).

Both newspapers sampled for this thesis – the *Globe and Mail* and *The Telegram* – are broadsheet dailies that are known for having a centrist political alignment. The rationale for juxtaposing a nationally-distributed Canadian newspaper with a Newfoundland-based one stems from the objective of analyzing possible differences in the ethical considerations for seals and/or sealers between Newfoundlanders and the rest of Canada.

3.1.2. Determining the timeframe for analysis and selecting the sample

Newspaper articles published between January 1, and December 31, 2009 were selected for study because 2009 was the year in which the EU banned the import of all seal products –

excluding products from the traditional Inuit hunt – from Canada. This ban, which was grounded in animal welfare concerns, was met with indignation in Canada. Part of the political backlash included the Canadian federal government challenging the legality of the ban at the WTO, and the prompting of research about whether the ban constituted part of a larger framework of European morality (Sellheim, 2016; Marland, 2014). It seemed plausible to assume therefore that contending moral frames would be present in 2009 newspaper coverage of the hunt.

Two strategies were used to gather the requisite materials for this thesis. Articles from the *Globe and Mail* were collected using the Canadian Major Dailies archive in the ProQuest database. The search within ‘news articles’ category was implemented with the main keyword ‘seal*’ within the chosen time range. Additional search strings used to enlarge the scope of the search query included: ‘seal*’ AND ‘hunt*’, and ‘seal* AND hunt* AND Canada*’ (and its forms: ‘harp seal hunt AND Canada*’, ‘saddleback seal hunt AND Canada*’). This initial search identified a total 73 articles for possible inclusion in the sample. These articles were then reviewed to identify and remove duplicates, resulting in a sample consisting of 61 articles. These articles were then downloaded from ProQuest in PDF text file format, with an indication of all articles’ details, including the placement in the newspaper, page and section, but without photo captions or illustrations.³⁴

The search to create a sample of articles from the St. John’s *Telegram* was more complicated because this newspaper is not included in the Canadian Major Dailies online archive. Hence, between October 2016 and April 2017 a manual search for articles was conducted at National Libraries and Archives in Ottawa, where editions of the *Telegram* are

³⁴ The Canadian Major Dailies archive in the ProQuest database does not include editorial cartoons.

kept on microfilm. The reels for 2009 were manually scanned for articles referring to the seal hunt. In the initial phase of the search, every newspaper edition for 2009 was browsed in search for the following words and lexemes: ‘seal’ (e.g., seal, seals, sealer, sealing); ‘seal hunt’ (e.g., ‘seal hunt in Canada’, ‘sealing in Canada’, ‘Canadian seal hunt’); harp seal, saddleback seal, grey seal, hooded seal, etc. In addition, words and acronyms in the headlines and leads that could potentially signify reference to the seal hunt (e.g., IFAW, DFO, PETA, fishery, etc.) were also searched for. The 67 articles that were identified as containing thematic reference to the seals, sealers, or sealing were saved in PDF format to a flash drive using the microfilm digital scanner. In cases for which the microfilm digital scanner was not available, a photo of an article was taken from the microfilm viewer’s screen using a high-resolution digital photo camera. Every saved article’s quality and readability was verified.

The articles from both samples were then carefully read for a first time. Articles that had homonyms (e.g., different/unrelated meaning, e.g. verb “to seal” as “to conclude something”) or mentioned “seal” without any connection to hunt were filtered out. Given that the study’s primary interest centers on media representation of the seal hunt, it was decided to filter out letters to the editor. Editorial cartoons were also removed from the *Telegram* sample in order to ensure coherence with the *Globe & Mail* sample. Once this culling process was completed, the final sample consisted of 46 editorials, columns, and news feature articles from the *Globe and Mail*, and 53 from the *Telegram* wherein (see Table 3.1):

1. the seal hunt was the main or secondary topic, mentioning seals and sealers;
2. seals were mentioned as part of the main or secondary topic; or
3. sealers were mentioned as part of the main or secondary topic.

Table 3.1. Articles sampled

Types of articles	<i>Globe & Mail</i>	<i>The Telegram</i>
Articles (news stories and feature articles)	33	39
Editorials	3	9
Columns	10	5
Total	46	53

In order to facilitate the working process, a database of all the articles selected for inclusion in the final sample (N=99) was created that identified the publication date, the title, and the author, and which assigned each article a registry number (e.g., TT01 for the first article in *The Telegram* sample, GM02 for the second article in the *Globe and Mail* sample).

3.2. Analytical framework

The discussion in this section is comprised of four subsections. The first provides a brief overview of the framing typology used for this study and provides the rationale for employing qualitative linguistic analysis of inductively identified frames as the method of analysis. The second section sets out how the selected method was operationalized. In the third subsection, the process of identifying and analyzing the frames is described. The last subsection touches upon the operationalization of the main moral themes, found during the analysis.

3.2.1. Frame typology

News framing literature usually classifies analytical methods by the strategies – deductive vs. inductive – used to identify frames (de Vreese, 2005; Matthes & Kohring, 2008), or by the type of frame analysis used (i.e., qualitative vs. quantitative) (Scheufele & Scheufele, 2010; Linstrom & Marais, 2012). The deductive approach seeks to identify pre-defined frames in the content being analysed (de Vreese, 2005; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), whereas the inductive method seeks to identify frames as they emerge from texts during the process of

analysis.

It is important to state that the techniques used for frame analysis are predominantly tailored to the particularities of a specific study (Mavletova & Lebedev, 2017; Linstrom & Marais, 2012). For example, quantitative techniques for analyzing frames (e.g., computer-assisted frame mapping) tend to be used when dealing with large datasets where the aim is to analyze trends in the frequency of occurrence of pre-defined frames (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Igartua et al., 2005; An & Gower, 2009; Dirikx & Gelders, 2010; David et al., 2009). Qualitative text-based analyses (e.g., discourse analysis) are recommended for examining more subtle framing effects in smaller datasets and tend to be associated with the use of inductive means of frame identification (Abrams & Meyers, 2010). There is also a combined qualitative-quantitative content analysis of frames, which usually is carried out with the help of corpus linguistic software (Touri & Koteyko, 2015).

Since the aim of this thesis is to analyze the subtleties of moral discourse that may be present in news articles about seals and sealers, I decided that the method employed would have to pertain to both the linguistic properties of frames and the manifestation of the moral frames. One of the main difficulties I encountered is the absence of an established methodology specifically tailored to analyzing moral frames that could serve as the definitive model for my study. Although I was able to identify three papers that primarily focus on the analysis of the moral framing in the news, none of the methodologies used entirely suited the research aim of my thesis. This is because in each of the latter studies the choice of methods was motivated by the large sample size (Jones, 2013; Diakopolous et al., 2014; Bowe, 2014), resulting in the use of computer-assisted, quantitative linguistic analyses based on dictionaries of “virtue and vice terms” (Diakopolous et al., 2013:1) or “moral verbs” (Jones, 2013: 10).

When examining moral communication, a key disadvantage of a purely quantitative

method rests in the “lack of consideration of syntax” (Diakopolous et al., 2013: 4). Whereas a quantitative approach may be suitable for studies that are principally interested in the frequency of ‘moral terms’ (i.e., words that contribute to the moral framing) it offers little insight into the complex cultural content and social meanings (Reese, 2010: 18) let alone ethical discourse about animals. To this end, Wood (2004: 69) warns that,

quantitative data cannot provide substantial insight into the texture and meaning of experiences... [whereas] qualitative methods are valuable when we wish not to count or measure phenomena but to understand the character of communication experience... This involves interpreting meanings and other unobservable dimensions of communication.

I was not able to identify any studies examining the moral framing of animals in mainstream news. This, I suspect, can be accounted for, in part, by my having observed during the process of conducting my research that the analysis of moral frames is predominantly anchored in examinations of political speech (Bowe, 2014; Jones, 2013) and political events (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; An & Gower, 2009).³⁵

Given that morality is understood, descriptively and normatively, as “certain codes of conduct put forward by a society or a group accepted by an individual for her own behavior” (Gert & Gert, 2017: Para. 2), the moralizing aspect of news discourse about seals and sealers can be revealed through the systematic analysis of the lexical choices used in reference to these subjects of moral worth. Such lexical choices may be defined as isolated moral keywords (Lee, 1989), or, in accordance with framing theory, as sets of phrases and utterances organized into

³⁵ In social linguistics, the role of language in the social construction of animals has been addressed by Stibbe (2001) and Jepson (2008), who successfully elucidated specific attitudes about the killing of animals through the linguistic analysis of everyday discourse and that of the animal industries. Jepson (2008: 27) singles out several terms used to describe the killing in such way that it becomes more “palatable” for humans, whereas Stibbe (2001: 157) uses critical discourse analysis to identify a connection between language and animal exploitation. Though not operationalized as frames, the results of these studies corroborate the important role that certain key words, catchphrases and idioms play in ingraining those norms and values that are grounded in superiority over animals in the social cognition (Freeman 2010).

framing and reasoning devices (Touri & Koteyko, 2014). That latter can be thought of as a logical chain of text that “convey[s] a coherent overarching idea” (Touri & Koteyko, 2014: 608; see also Diagram 3.1 in subsection 3.2.2). With this in mind, a key assumption guiding my investigation is that a detailed examination of the moral reasoning present in inductively detected frames may serve as a pathway for further discussion of ethical positions expressed in the frames because the moral directionality of the news text is revealed *a posteriori*.³⁶

3.2.2. Operational definitions

A foundational premise guiding the investigation of news frames presented in this thesis is the perception, as suggested by Pan & Kosicki (1993: 56), of news discourse as “a sociocognitive process operating in the universe of shared culture on the basis of socially defined roles”, and news texts as “a system of organized signifying elements that both indicate the advocacy of certain ideas and provide devices to encourage certain kinds of audience processing of the texts.” According to this view, every news story has a theme or a number of themes, that are not the same as the topic. Whereas the topic is a “summary label of social experiences covered by a story,” the theme is a central organizing idea that “connects different semantic elements of a story... into a coherent whole” (Pan & Kosicki 1993: 59). The semantic, or as Pan & Kosicki (1993: 59) label them, signifying elements, are “structurally located lexical choices of codes constructed by following certain shared rules and conventions.” The theme constitutes the frame through the signifying elements, which are the framing devices. According to Pan & Kosicki (1993: 59),

The structured array of signifying elements does set up parameters of a

³⁶ By contrast, in the deductively detected frames technique, this process is done *a priori*: questions that pertain to types of frames are meant to reveal underlying dimensions, e.g. questions as “Does the story contain any moral message? Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?” are applied to the text by a coder, which, by answering “yes”, confirms the presence of a moral frame (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

cognitive "window" through which a news story is "seen." In other words, the intended meaning of a news story has the capability of directing attention as well as restricting the perspectives available to audiences (Hall, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). Because of this structuring function, a theme is also called a frame.

In a news story, a frame can either be dominant (i.e., constituted by the main theme of the article) or secondary (i.e., constituted by a sub-theme or number of sub-themes), based on the logical relations of the semantic parts of the article (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 61). For Pan & Kosicki (1993), frames are central organizing ideas that offer cognitive windows on an event, action, or actors in a news story, and are evoked by lexical choices that act as framing devices.

By applying a systematic analysis of the lexical choices used in a news text, one is able to inductively identify frames that are present in the text. Pan & Kosicki (1993) classify signifying elements (i.e., framing devices) into four structural dimensions, or structures that serve as important framing devices: syntactical (e.g., sections sequence, sources attribution), script (e.g., sequence of activities in a mental representation of an event), thematic (e.g., sets of propositions forming logico-empirical relations about the content), and rhetorical (e.g., stylistic – key word, metaphors, exemplars).

According to these authors news writers fill the structures with lexical choices which then collectively create, or evoke, a frame (Pan & Kosicki 1993: 62). Since lexical choices are drawn from a shared sociocultural context, evoking a frame further reinforces it in the social cognition (Lakoff, 2006). In other words, lexical choices set frames more firmly among the shared conventions, rules and beliefs about the society (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Hence, sources also constitute crucial syntactic structures because whom an article quotes as well as how quotes are presented and placed are central for claiming validity by linking certain viewpoints to authority or marginalizing them by relating a quote or point of view to a social deviant (Pan

& Kosicki, 1993). Echoing this view Druckman (2001: 1061; see also, Takahashi, 2011) suggests “perceived source credibility is a prerequisite of successful framing.”

Pan & Kosicki (1993: 65) suggest creating data matrices using the four structural dimensions outlined above, where “each meaningful proposition – in the form of a noun unit plus a verb unit – could be coded.” This is the approach I have adopted, complementing the data matrix with an additional element that is absent in Pan & Kosicki’s operationalization; reasoning devices.

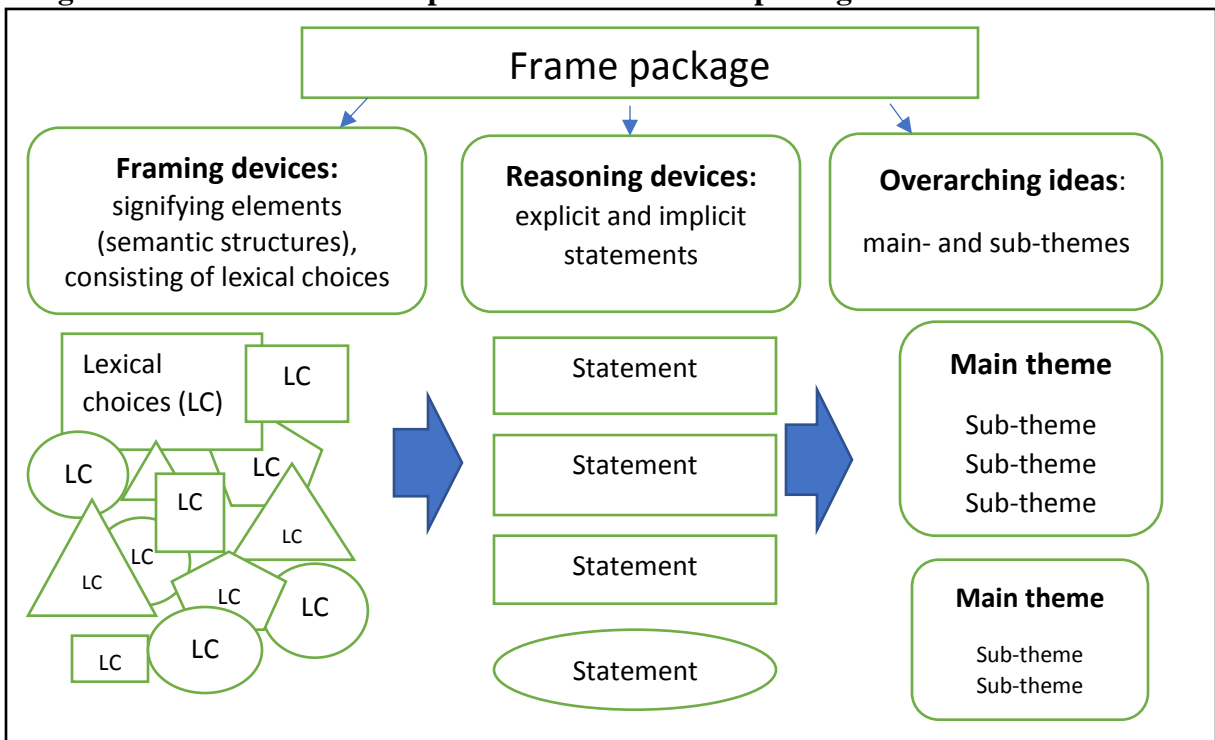
Touri & Koteyko (2015: 608) summarize role of the reasoning devices in social cognition as, “[the] elements that are not explicitly included in the message but are likely to come up in the interpretation of the message as they reflect a thought process... invoking a framework of thought at the audiences’ cognitive level”. Gamson & Modigliani (1989) maintain that the reasoning devices deal with principles, among which are moral claims. Hence, reasoning devices can be best understood as vehicles that help convey moral reasoning (Lakoff, 2002; Scheufele, 1999; Weaver, 2007; Bowe, 2014).

In adding reasoning devices to Pan and Kosicki’s data matrix I build upon van Gorp (2007; 2009: 64) who advocates for using a linguistics-based, inductively identified frames analytical method when seeking to examine, or otherwise understand, culturally embedded frames that form “universally understood codes that implicitly influence the receiver’s message interpretation, which lends meaning, coherence and ready explanations for complex issues.” For instance, in examining the role of reasoning devices in the media stigmatization of dementia van Gorp & Vercruyssen (2012: 1275) postulate that framing can be understood as a “process that is only partially conscious on the part of the person who creates a message” and which is deeply embedded in notions relating to the cultural common ground such as values, archetypes and shared narratives. This approach helps them to uncover the explicit and

implicit messages conveyed through reasoning devices. These explicit and implicit messages form strong cognitive bonds between certain issues and “a broader, cultural phenomenon” (van Gorp & Vercruyse, 2012: 1275).

Bearing in mind that reasoning devices are seen by the framing theoreticians as the main vehicles for conveying the moral evaluation of an issue (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Gamson & Lasch, 1993; Lakoff, 2002), for the purposes of this thesis the explicit and implicit messages they communicate are interpreted as elucidating the bond between the representation of seal hunt and broader cultural context within which it is situated.

Diagram 3.1. The schematic representation of a frame package



Van Gorp (2007: 24) defines reasoning devices as “explicit and implicit statements that deal with justifications, causes, and consequences.” Together with framing devices, reasoning devices are defining functions of frames, evoked when an issue is associated with a particular

frame and revealed during the interpretation of a message (van Gorp, 2007: 65; Van Gorp, 2009; van Gorp & Vercruysse, 2012).

Diagram 3.1 offers a visual representation of a frame package I used as methodological guide for my analyses. Building on the work of Pan & Kosicki (1993), van Gorp (2007; 2009), and Touri & Koteyko (2014), it presents a schematic summary of the operational definitions for ‘unpacking’ a frame package.

3.2.3. Analysis procedures

The first stage in seeking to identify the frames present in the sampled articles consisted of familiarizing myself with the content by conducting “sequential and multiple reading[s] of the text[s] to gain an understanding of the stories, while taking descriptive notes about the content” (Aloizie, 2005: 66; see, also Linstrom & Marais, 2012). The next reading session involved detailed note-taking, including creating data matrices in the form of a table in which every sampled article was analyzed in accordance with Pan and Kosicki’s (1993) classification of signifying elements. At this stage, every meaningful proposition was open-coded and inserted into a data matrix using a paragraph as a unit of the linguistic analysis.

The information presented below in Table 3.2 provides an example of one of the matrices created for one unit of analysis taken from article TT05 (Wakeham, B., 2009, Jan. 24. “The persecution of 101 sealers”. *The Telegram*, p. A21) that contains references to both seals and sealers. It is an excerpt from an editorial. There are no external quotes, so the source is designated as *The Telegram*. The topic of the article is the prosecution of 101 sealers from Newfoundland who, in 1996, were charged with hunting blueback seal pups and selling the pelts – both of which are illegal – and who refused to plead guilty. As of 2009, the case had yet to be resolved. In this excerpt, the lexical choices used in rhetorical structures serve as

examples of moral articulation. The sealers are referred to by the term: ‘good men’ and the proposition: “it is forcing good men to appear in court”. The verb ‘forcing’ completes the lexeme: ‘it’ (referring to the federal government) is forcing ‘good men’ to appear in court.

Table 3.2. Example of a data matrix

Example of the article text TT05, paragraph 12]	Framing Devices					Reasoning devices
	Rhetorical structures		Thematic structures	Syntactic structures	Script structures	Implicit and/or explicit statements
	Key lexemes, catchphrases, metaphors, style	Verbs + object	Key propositions / Themes	Placement / Sources	Sequence, actors	
And it’s forcing good men like Jack Troake, Mark Small and the others to appear in court as if they had used their rifles to hold up the nearest convenience store, or hijack a plane, not to simply kill seals off the northern coast.	Object of framing: SEALERS					
	<p>“Good men”</p> <p>Jocular tone, exaggeration, use of “as if” to invite the reader to agree</p> <p>Contraposition: sealers vs. real criminals</p>	<p>Forcing [good men]</p> <p>Appear [in court]</p> <p>Use [rifles]</p> <p>Hold up [a store]</p> <p>Hijack [a plane]</p> <p>Kill off [seals] – <i>agent of action</i></p>	<p>“Forcing good men to appear in court”</p> <p>“As if they hijacked a plane, not simply killed seals off the coast”</p> <p>-----</p> <p>The persecution of sealers by the federal government [main theme]</p>	<p>Body [paragraph 12]</p> <p>-----</p> <p>The Telegram</p>	<p>Actor [A1] (government – <i>cont. from the previous paragraph</i>) forces actor [A2] (sealers) – to appear in court. A2 is the object of the action of A1</p>	<p>Government prosecutes good men as if they used guns to commit a <i>really serious</i> crime, not to <i>simply</i> kill seals off [explicit statement]</p>
	Object of framing: SEALS					
<p>“Simply kill seals off”</p> <p>Objectification</p> <p>The adverb “simply” emphasizes the insignificance of their killing</p>	<p>Kill off [seals] - <i>object of action</i></p>	<p>“Simply kill seals off the coast”</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Seals are pests [sub-theme]</p>	<p>Body [paragraph 12]</p> <p>-----</p> <p>The Telegram</p>	<p>Actor [A2] destroys actor [A3] (seals), the object of the action of A2</p>	<p>Seals are pests [implicit statement]</p>	

Then, the author uses sets of key verbs and objects to contrapose sealers and real criminals, who “use rifles” to “hold up a store” or “hijack a plane”, not to “simply kill seals off the coast.” This is said in a jocular tone that invites the reader to agree with the supposed ridiculousness of the charge. The use of the adverb ‘simply’ is crucial because it serves to downplay the importance of the sealers’ action in “killing seals off.” The propositions “forcing good men to appear in court” and “as if they hijacked a plane, not simply killed seals off the coast” bear a key meaning in this paragraph. Together, they add up into an explicitly stated reasoning device: the government prosecutes good men as if they used guns to commit a really serious crime, not to simply kill seals off. As for the seals, their role in this particular excerpt is significantly smaller: they are mentioned as objects of the verb ‘kill off.’” This verb is especially important because it is a phrasal transitive verb meaning “to destroy or remove someone or something completely” (Cambridge Dictionary, para.1), and is most commonly applied to pests. Hence the proposition “simply kill seals off the coast” bears the implicit meaning: seals are pests and destroying them off the coast should not be considered a big issue.

During the first phase of analysis all the articles in the sample were analyzed in a similar fashion to the process outlined above. Key terms in the semantic structures identified were open-coded and collected in data matrices, in which each element was categorized into a corresponding type of framing device. The main explicit and implicit statements representing “routes of causal reasoning” (van Gorp & Vercruyssen, 2012: 1275), were also collected into the matrices.

The next phase of analysis involved axial coding. Here, all framing and reasoning devices about seals and sealers were analyzed again to identify similarities between the devices and to establish a logical chain of text conveying an overarching idea (Touri & Koteyko, 2014; van Gorp, 2009: 95). Then, the overarching ideas were grouped together into categories of

frame packages on a basis of the logical similarities. Each category was assigned a name (i.e., *Commodity, Pests, Seafaring heroes, Violators, etc.*) thus making an association with the motive functioning as the core idea of the frame package (van Gorp, 2009: 96).

The frame matrices summary for both *The Telegram* and the *Globe & Mail* samples is provided in the Appendix 1.³⁷

3.2.4. Moral evaluation analysis

Once all the frame packages had been deconstructed, I looked further into the moral reasoning advanced in each frame package, in order to elucidate common moral reasoning themes and identify the ethical positions underpinning them. Table 3.3 provides an example of a moral evaluation analysis, completed for one frame package (in this example, the *Commodity* frame).

Table 3.3. Example of the moral evaluation analysis

Main reasoning devices of the frame package		Main moral judgement	Ethical position
Common moral reasoning themes			
<i>The Telegram</i>	<i>Globe & Mail</i>		
- Seal harvest has economic value - Seals are humanely harvested - Seal fur is a valuable material: people have the right to wear seal fur as it is the sign of wealth	- Seal hunt has economic value - Seals are humanely harvested - Seal fur is a valuable material: European countries harvest animals for fur as well	Justifiable to use humanely harvested seals for economic gain	Anthropocentric, with bias toward instrumental value of seals. <i>Points for ethical discussion:</i> animal welfare, human use of animals.

Firstly, I looked into the main reasoning devices of the frame package in order to identify common moral reasoning themes. Then, I grouped the moral reasoning themes into the main moral judgement advanced in a frame package. Finally, I looked into the main moral judgement of all frame packages in order to establish the presence of a specific ethical position

³⁷ The complete codebook containing all the data matrices for all of the articles in the sample is too large to provide in the thesis Appendices. However, the author is happy to provide the complete codebook in the form of an electronic file upon request.

underpinning these moral judgements and marked the points for further ethical discussion for each ethical/moral position that was established during this analysis.

3.3. Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter described the methodology of the study, starting from the research design and continuing to explain the techniques used to analyze a sample of articles about the Canadian seal hunt published in 2009 in the *Globe & Mail* and *The Telegram*. Juxtaposing a nationally-distributed newspaper with a Newfoundland-based one stemmed from the research aim to analyze the possible difference in ethical consideration for both subjects of moral worth, seals and sealers.

The research design builds on Pan & Kosicki (1993) and van Gorp (2007; 2009) and implements a qualitative linguistic analysis of inductively identified moral frames that are present in the news articles. This design is appropriate for answering my research questions that aim to elucidate moral framing in newspaper coverage of seal hunt controversy in attempt to receive a better understanding of the ethical reasoning and how it is communicated through the news media.

Our attention now turns to the results emerging from the analysis of the sampled articles.

Chapter 4. Findings and discussion: Framing analysis

The discussion in this chapter presents the results of the framing analysis of the articles sampled from the *Globe & Mail's* and *The Telegram*. The framing analysis was implemented with the focus on two subjects of moral worth³⁸ central to the moral reasoning manifest in the seal hunt controversy: seals and sealers. Within the sampled articles, stories involving seals and/or sealers were seen as proxies for establishing the presence of moral reasoning based on my hypothesis that, stories about seals and/or sealers might involve moral conundrums that would be reflected in the way in which the topic is treated in news media.

The framing analysis was divided in two parts, each corresponding to the sections in this chapter. Section 4.1 focuses on the results of the analysis of the frame packages involving seals. Section 4.2 focuses on frame packages involving sealers. The results emerging from the framing analysis identified seven frames pertaining to seals and found seals to be most frequently framed as commodities in articles from both newspapers. Five frames pertaining to sealers were likewise identified. In the sampled *Telegram* articles sealers were most frequently framed as men under pressure, whereas articles from the *Globe & Mail* tended to frame sealers as carriers of cultural practice. The main moral themes advanced by each frame are singled out for further discussion about the moral reasoning and the ethical positions advanced in Chapter 5.

4.1. Framing seals

The information presented in Table 4.1 provides the summary of findings regarding how seals were found to be framed in the sampled articles from the *Globe & Mail* (n=46) and *The Telegram* (n=53) newspapers.³⁹

³⁸ Recall, subjects of moral worth are any living being, natural system, or cultural artefact that is vulnerable, and therefore should be protected from unjustified harm (Elliott, 2009: 30).

³⁹ Please see Appendix 1 for the full matrix summary per object of framing and newspaper (Fig.1-4).

Table 4.1. Identified frames by newspaper, object of framing: seals

<i>Globe & Mail</i>	Frequency of occurrence	<i>The Telegram</i>	Frequency of occurrence
Commodity	25	Commodity	29
Victim	9	Pests	9
Food	7	Well-managed wildlife	6
Well-managed wildlife	4	Victim	5
Sentient animals	2	Food	4
Marketed cuteness	2	Marketed cuteness	2
Pests	2		

It is worth noting that six of the seven frames identified were present in the samples from both newspapers. The discussion below provides more detail about the findings for each of the frames identified.

4.1.1. The Commodity frame

Seals as a commodity was the most frequently identified frame in the sampled articles from both newspapers (*The Telegram*, n=29; *The Globe & Mail*, n=25). The main characteristic of this frame is the referring to seals as assets – i.e., primary goods, products, or yield. In all occurrences of this frame, seals are objectified.

Framing and reasoning devices. The prevailing key words and phrases used in referring to seals in this frame are: seal products, pelts, fur, skin, meat, catch, harvest, and bulk. The latter are all nouns bearing specific semantic connotations to materials, primary goods, or agricultural products. In articles that refer to the methods of getting the seals, both newspapers used verbs such as kill, shoot, hunt, fish, harvest, and retrieve. When referring to marketing the seals, such verbs as trade, buy, sell, fetch, promote, commercialize are used. When referring to seals these verbs are employed either as transitive verbs, used with a direct object (e.g., “Dakins *buys* about 100,000 *seal pelts* every year and primarily *sells* to markets in Russia

and China” (TT08, emphasis added)) or, the passive voice of the verbs is used (e.g., “total number of seals that can be *hunted* in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is 84,424, which includes the 15,000 seals *taken* so far by hunters from the Îles de la Madeleine” (GM19, emphasis added)). Both of these grammatical features – transitive verbs and passive voice – are used to objectify seals.

Framing seals as assets is also achieved through thematic structures (i.e., key propositions) and narrative elements such as referring to seals as bulk numbers and/or their monetary value as agricultural products. Some examples found in the sample include:

TT52: *The industry is carrying about 60,000 pelts from the previous year in a market that is drying up due to. . . growing international distaste for seal products*

Pelt prices that have bottomed out at \$14

TT06: *Sealers harvested 1,250 of quota for Hay Island of 2,500 gray seals last year, selling the pelts for \$22 each and some of the meat to mink farmers*

GM28: *Seal pelts that fetched \$105 in 2006 fetch only \$15 today*

GM47: *The annual pelt haul, usually between \$5-million and \$20-million, declined to about \$1-million in 2009 after the recession slashed pelt prices to about \$15, from a 2006 peak of \$105*

The main themes of the articles (e.g., economic news, policy decisions, etc.) which employed the *Commodity* frame were found to be supported by three sub-themes⁴⁰ including:

- the downturn in the seal market and its repercussions (*The Telegram*: n=22; *The Globe and Mail*: n=21);
- the humaneness of the seal hunt (*The Telegram*: n=13; *The Globe and Mail*: n=5); and
- the material value of seal fur (*The Telegram*: n=2; *The Globe and Mail*: n=2).

The use of quotes from official sources as a mechanism for offering empirical validity to a text was found to be present in all three of the sub-themes. Some of the examples found

⁴⁰ Note that more than one sub-theme can be present in one article. Also, recall, sub-themes are frame-specific.

in the sample involved quoting high-ranked government officials who specifically emphasized the humaneness of the sealing:

GM71 (quoting Dana Cryderman, Department of Foreign Affairs' spokeswoman): *Canada goes to great lengths to ensure a humane, well-regulated and sustainable seal hunt;*

TT32 (quoting Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador Danny Williams referring to Europeans): *This is a humane harvest and they know it;*

TT29 (quoting Gail Shea, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): *Canadian seal hunt is guided by rigorous animal welfare principles.*

The analysis of the reasoning devices revealed the presence of commonplace language (i.e., language used in everyday situations) referring to seals as an economic asset (e.g., TT06, TT11, GM28, GM47). Such reasoning devices were comprised of implicit statements conveying the notion of seals being commodities. For example, in TT28 one reads:

In 2006, harp seal pelts could fetch \$105 from local buyers. That has steadily dropped since...

In the above statement the notion of a seal being nothing but a pelt is not explicitly accentuated or morally defended; it is taken for granted. On the other hand, moral reasoning through explicit statements defending people's right to wear fur and pointing out the harvest of animals is a widespread practice, was evident in the articles with this sub-theme (e.g. TT12, GM31).

The comparison of main reasoning devices in the sample with regard to the *Commodity* frame reveals the following moral reasoning themes that are advanced in the articles sampled from both newspapers: seal harvest has economic significance (n=43); seals are harvested humanely (n=18); seal fur is a valuable material (n=4). These moral reasoning themes are summarized into the main moral judgement: it is justifiable to use humanely harvested seals for economic gain (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Summary of moral reasoning found in the Commodity frame

Moral reasoning themes		Main moral judgement
<i>The Telegram</i>	<i>Globe & Mail</i>	
- seal harvest has economic significance (n=22); - seals are humanely harvested (n=13); - seal fur is a valuable material: people have the right to wear fur (n=2).	- seal harvest has economic significance (n=21); - seals are humanely harvested (n=5); - seal fur is a valuable material: European countries harvest animals for fur as well (n=2).	Justifiable to use humanely harvested seals for economic gain

4.1.2. The Victim frame

The *Victim* frame is characterized by the emphasis on the notion that seals are killed inhumanely during the seal hunt. Within the sampled articles, this frame was always presented by one sub-theme of inhumane hunt that served the role of antithesis to the main theme of a given news article (e.g., EU policy decisions, the responses of Canadian officials and anti-sealing protesters, etc.). The sub-theme of the inhumane hunt is attributed through direct or indirect quotes to representatives of the anti-sealing movement (such as animal welfare groups) or people who support them (such as celebrities).

Framing and reasoning devices. The main lexical choices manifest in the sampled articles involve presenting seals as objects of brutalization (e.g., passive participles bludgeoned, clubbed, bloodied, phrases such as: ‘while still alive,’ description of killed seals on a ‘blood-splattered ice’) or focusing on the defenselessness of seals (frightened, little animals, ‘they can’t escape’). The *Victim* frame is established through propositions consisting of quotes from animal welfare groups who argue that the seals are “clubbed and skinned while alive” (TT04) and “senselessly slaughtered” (TT09), as well as from celebrities such as Brigitte Bardot (GM18) or Pamela Anderson, who claims that “seal pups are bludgeoned in front of their mothers” (GM60).

Within the 14 articles within which the *Victim* frame is present, the view of seals as being brutalized is attributed to opponents of the hunt through the use of quotes that are contraposed to the opinion of seal industry representatives and/or federal officials. It also is achieved through script structures such as story sequencing. For example, the news story “Controversy, sadness mark start of seal hunt” (GM18) starts with a description of the mourning of sealers lost at sea and continues to the importance of the seal hunt to the local population of Magdalen Islands, QC and the struggles of the Canadian seal hunt amidst European resistance. Then, the narrative contraposes the first part of the article with Brigitte Bardot’s stand on brutalized/victimized seals. Bardot is described as having, “decried... excessive and savaged actions of Canada's sealers” and is quoted as having told French television,

*They strike these little animals. They can't escape, there is nowhere to hide...
You know, it's disgusting. I've seen it, and it really makes you sick.*

Bardot’s quotes are then followed by a quote from Rebecca Aldworth of Humane Society International (HSI) who expresses concerns with a devastating impact the seal hunt may have on the harp seal population especially in the light of climate change. The article then contraposes these anti-sealing views with two paragraphs quoting then Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Gail Shea stating, “Our government will continue to defend the rights of Canadian sealers to provide a livelihood for their families through our lawful, sustainable and humane hunt.” (GM18). The latter is seemingly aimed at ensuring readers that the seal hunt is sustainable and humane.

The news story entitled “Beauty and the beasts” (GM60) is similarly noteworthy with regard to the use of sequencing to contraposition opinions using the victim frame. The topic of the story is the participation of the actress Pamela Anderson in an anti-sealing campaign

organized by the People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in front of the Ontario Legislature. Using the name of a famous fairy tale, the headline is a sarcastic allusion to the loving relationship of a beauty (i.e., Anderson) toward beasts (i.e., seals). The lead implicitly challenges Anderson's stand by using single quotation marks around the word barbaric in the line, "PETA pitchwoman Pamela Anderson comes to Canada to protest against 'barbaric' seal hunt." Several paragraphs into the story, former Minister Gail Shea is quoted as saying "Hollywood celebrities are not going to dictate policy in Canada because we make decisions that are based on science and consultation with Canadians" (GM60). This statement is especially important from the perspective of pro-sealing argumentation because it distinguishes between the opinions of policy-makers and non-experts in a manner that emphasizes policy-makers base their decisions on science and consultation whereas anti-sealing protesters and celebrities do not.

The climax of the article involves contraposing Anderson and Shea's opinions in the same sentence:

Ms. Anderson said seal pups are bludgeoned in front of their mothers before they have their first swim, but Ms. Shea said the killing of seal pups hasn't been practiced in Canada since the early 1980s. Shea accuses the protesters of bending the truth to exploit the sensitive issue stating, "Activists focus on it because it tugs on the heartstrings" (GM60).

The way seals are framed in the two examples above is typical of articles in which the *Victim* frame is manifest. Put simply, cruelty to seals is presented as a key contention between opposing sides, but the articles do not explain the essence of the ethical differences between the sides. This may, in turn, cause an average reader to misconstrue the message being conveyed by seal hunt opponents. For example, when using the term 'seal pups' anti-sealing

campaigners usually are referring to beaters⁴¹ (IFAW, 2009: 16). In the above excerpt, Pamela Anderson saying “seal pups are bludgeoned” most likely refers to beaters, while Gail Shea specifically refers to white-coaters (i.e., newborn seals), which have been protected since 1988. Quoting the Minister is an important framing device (authority source) employed to validate the point that seal pups are not killed. The article, however, overlooks the fact that Anderson’s perception of seal pups may be different from that of Shea’s, thereby portraying Anderson as erroneous (GM60).

The analysis of reasoning devices reveals that the articles in which this frame is present mostly focus on antagonism between anti- and pro-sealing activists over the issue of whether the seals are killed humanely (four articles in *The Telegram* sample and in nine articles in the *Globe & Mail* sample). The contraposing of statements from anti-sealing groups with quotes from official sources and expert opinions (e.g., industry executives, sealing experts, and most importantly, governmental agents) within the context of the *Victim* frame serves to affirm claims that accusations about the cruelty of the seal hunt are unfounded. The moral reasoning themes of pro-sealing advocates also include concern for the welfare of Canadian sealers in the North as the ground for Canadian federal government’s policy-making on sealing (*Globe & Mail*: n=2).

The comparison of reasoning devices in the sampled articles with regard to the *Victim* frame reveals one difference between the two media outlets: whereas articles from *The Telegram* accuse the anti-sealing movement of presenting seals as victims for their own benefit, those from *The Globe & Mail* emphasize that claims that the hunt is carried out inhumanely are disputed by the government officials and other experts. Both of these main

⁴¹ Recall, “beaters” refers to harp seal pups aged 3 weeks to 3 months.

reasoning points advance the following moral evaluation: claims for inhumane killing of seals are unfounded. Table 4.3 presents the summary of the analysis of the main moral reasoning themes relating to the victim frame. These moral reasoning themes are summarized into the main moral judgement: The seal hunt is justified in the light of humane treatment of seals.

Table 4.3. Summary of moral reasoning found in the Victim frame

Moral reasoning themes		Main moral judgement
<i>The Telegram</i>	<i>Globe & Mail</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-sealing movement claims the seals are killed inhumanely, but the experts / government officials refute these statements (n=4): - According to experts, the seal hunt complies with the humane standards (n=4). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-sealing movement claims the seals are killed inhumanely, but the experts / government officials refute these claims (n=10): - Policy-makers are motivated by concern for the welfare of Canadians (n=4); - EU position is hypocritical (n=6). 	The seal hunt is justified in the light of humane treatment of seals

4.1.3. The Pests frame

The *Pests* frame is characterized by the contraposition of seals and fish, and by emphasizing the necessity of culling the herd for conservational purposes. In this frame, seals are presented as both objects (objects of the cull) and subjects (consuming fish).

Framing and reasoning devices. The *Pest* frame emphasizes the destructive impact of seals on fisheries, presenting the relationship between seals and fish as mutually exclusive – i.e., there may be an abundance of either seals or fish, but not both. For instance, seals are referred to as cod-eaters, threat, and ferocious fish eaters. An editorial in *The Telegram* (TT02) about PETA’s attempt to call fish sea kittens in their marketing campaign draws a jocular parallel with seals, using the metaphor ice rats, and sarcastically proposes:

We’d better take some decisive action to stop those evil ice rats from eating up all those helpless sea kittens, don’t you think?

Other articles either explicitly refer to seals as a threat (e.g., TT06: *threat to the survival of the fishery*) or imply that seals are mere pests that ought to be exterminated (TT05: *simply killed off*) in order to save fish (GM31: *seals are ferocious fish eaters... hunt is needed to protect fish stocks*).

The *Pests* frame was found in nine articles in *The Telegram* sample and in two articles in the *Globe & Mail* sample. Within the sampled articles, this frame is supported through one sub-theme: the destructive impact of seals on fisheries. Six of *The Telegram* articles establish the empirical validity for the sub-theme of the destructive impact of the seals by quoting experts and high-ranked government officials:

TT29 (quoting Earle McCurdy, President of the Fish, Food and Allied Workers' Union referring to EU parliament): *They are trying to tell us how to live... with no regards whatsoever for the impact a growing seal population would have on our fish stocks;*

TT27 (quoting Newfoundland's Premier Danny Williams): *These seals are consuming seven million tonnes of fish a year and that's putting a tremendous dent in the fish food resource...The seal herd has to be kept under control and if that has to be through a cull, then that's just another method.*

The observing of seals eating cod is another thematic structure used in the *Pests* frame. Despite being identified in only one article, the presence of this thematic structure is noteworthy because of its placement in a page 2 feature story in *The Telegram* that has a seal as its subject (TT22: "Seal gives dining demonstration"). The article starts with the lead "Puts on cod-eating show for Lewisporte man and his camera" which is supported by quoting a local townspeople who oversaw a seal in the harbor "ripping the belly out of a codfish just a few feet from the shore", something "he'd often heard of but never witnessed." On the one hand, this proposition is meant to give substance to the long-standing argument that seals eat cod. On the other hand, when this proposition is combined with another quote by the same

townsperson “There have been dozens of seals in the area lately” it implies an abundance of seals who are becoming so numerous as to eat cod in a town’s harbor (TT22).

In addition to the above statements from the official sources about seals presenting a threat to fisheries, reasoning devices supporting the *Pests* frame include the statements from sealers who also contrapose seals and fish, seeing seals as culprits for disappearance of fish, and consequently, as a threat to people of Newfoundland:

TT01: (quoting David Cassell, Newfoundlander sealer): *We’re trying to survive now on the bit of fish we’ve got in rural Newfoundland. You can’t have an ocean full of seals and an ocean full of fish at the same time.*

In comparing the reasoning devices employed in the sampled articles from the both newspapers in relation to the *Pests* frame one observes a common line of moral reasoning in advancing the proposition that seals present a threat to fish stocks and have to be culled in order to protect fisheries (*The Telegram*: n=9, *The Globe and Mail*: n=2). This said, in two of the nine articles in in *The Telegram* sample one observes another complementary line of moral reasoning that emphasizes Newfoundlanders depend on the small amount of fish still left in the province. Table 4.4 presents a summary of the analysis of the main moral reasoning themes relating to the *Pests* frame. These moral reasoning themes are summarized into the main moral judgement: Seals are a threat and they have to be culled.

Table 4.4. Summary of moral reasoning found in the Pests frame

Moral reasoning themes		Main moral judgement
The Telegram	The Globe & Mail	
- Seals are a serious threat to fisheries (n=5) and have to be culled (n=4): - Newfoundlanders try to survive on the scarce amount of fish that is left in the province (n=2).	- Seals are ferocious fish eaters, and therefore have to be kept under control (n=2).	Seals are a threat and they have to be culled.

4.1.4. The Food frame

As with the *Commodity* frame, the *Food* frame also entails presenting seals as products. The principal difference between the frames is that the *Food* frame focuses on the gastronomic use of seals. The three sub-themes associated with this frame include:

- normalcy – i.e., seal meat does not differ from any other meat (*The Telegram*, n=3);
- seal is ‘haute cuisine’ (*The Telegram*, n=1; *The Globe & Mail*, n=1); and
- the cultural significance of the seal meat for Inuit, which was brought into the spotlight by the Governor General Michaëlle Jean’s seal feast in Nunavut (*The Globe & Mail*, n=6).

Framing and reasoning devices. The *Food* frame is established through the presence of key words and phrases referring to parts of the seal (e.g., seal heart, seal liver, seal flippers), seal meat (e.g., raw seal, smoked seal, seal meat), specific dishes made of seals (e.g., seal paté, seal pepperoni, seal tartar, flippers pie), and the fineness of the food (e.g., delicacy, haute seal cuisine). Seals are further objectified through the use of transitive verbs (e.g., snack on, gut, slice open) and/or the use of verbs in a passive voice (e.g., sliced, cut up, eaten raw).

The sub-theme of cultural significance of seal as food for Inuit is found in all seven *Globe & Mail* articles that employed *Food* frame. For example, in three of these seven articles, the process of cutting up seals and eating their heart is described in detail. This is presented in relation to praising then Governor General, Michaëlle Jean, for her eating seal meat at a feast in her honour while visiting Nunavut in 2009, and thus sending a political message to EU. In these articles, Michaëlle Jean is depicted as “slicing the creature open from stern to stern and plunging her hands into the steaming guts” and quoted as saying “These are ancient practices that are part of a way of life” (GM34). In another article (GM33) one observes a similar pattern wherein after slicing up the seal, Jean is quoted expressing concern with EU ban in the light of significance of seal hunt for Inuit.

The sub-theme of normalcy of eating seal meat is found in three *Telegram* articles, and the sub-theme of seal meat being a ‘haute cuisine’ is found in one *Telegram* and one *Globe and Mail* articles. This sub-theme is established, first and foremost, through the use of statements acting as reasoning devices that implicitly support the dominant frame (i.e., seals are food), and through the quoting of authority sources. For instance, in (TT63) “MPs and senators set to snack on seal meat” two MPs are quoted praising the taste quality of seal meat that had been recently added to “haute cuisine menu” in the parliamentary restaurant:

TT63 (quoting former MP Gerald Keddy): *I’ve eaten seal a number of times. My preference is ringed seal out of the High Arctic. That is the tastiest of them all. Next to that, the grey seal is fine. Not a thing wrong with that.*

In the sub-theme of normalcy, the moral argument is established by comparing seal meat and other types of meat humans regularly consume without much thought:

TT63: *If you’re familiar with the farm animals and fish in the ocean, it is somewhere in between.*

In another article, (TT26), former provincial NDP Leader Lorraine Michael is quoted saying “*eating seal meat is no different than any other animal.*”

In each of the above examples moral reasoning also is conveyed through the dismissing of any suggestion that eating seal is any different than eating any other animal.

The comparison between reasoning devices employed in the sampled articles from the both newspapers in relation to the *Food* frame reveals a limited degree of commonality in the moral reasoning they convey. Whereas four articles from the *Telegram* convey that eating seal meat is normal, six of the articles from the *Globe and Mail* emphasize on the cultural significance of seal meat for the Inuit. These moral reasoning themes are summarized into the main moral judgement: The consumption of seals as food is justifiable (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Summary of moral reasoning found in the Food frame.

Moral reasoning themes		Main moral judgement
<i>The Telegram</i>	<i>Globe & Mail</i>	
- Seal meat is just like any other meat which is normally eaten by human beings (n=3) - Seal meat is a 'haute cuisine' (n=1)	- Seal meat has a cultural importance in the North (n=6) - Seal meat is 'haute cuisine' (n=1)	Consumption of seals as food is justifiable.

4.1.5. The Well-managed wildlife frame

The *Well-managed wildlife* frame focuses on seal-related successful conservation practices. Despite overlapping somewhat with the pest frame, the *Well-managed wildlife* frame is characterized by placing an emphasis on the notion that seals are sustainably managed fauna. *Framing and reasoning devices.* The main key words and phrases used to frame seals as abundant, sustainably managed wildlife deal with population measuring practices (e.g., population survey, estimation), designated hunting and culling limitations (e.g., annual seal quota, allowing a quota, size of the kill), and reference to seals as wildlife (e.g., herd). Among other rhetorical structures identified in the articles containing the well-managed wildlife frame were:

- (i) the comparing of seal populations in the 1970s and in 2009 that emphasizes the growth in numbers (e.g., GM10: “Canadian seal population is increasing”; TT30: “There are about 5.6 million seals off Canada, up from 1.5 million in the 1970s);
- (ii) the quoting of authority sources such as federal officials and scientists (GM18: “The decision on the size of this year's kill was made with the advice of scientists to ensure the seal population is maintained”); and
- (iii) the use of propositions that include statements indicating the seal hunt is monitored by the federal government, is sustainable, and will have to continue as a culling practice even if the commercial sealing ceases (GM71: “Canada goes to great lengths to ensure a humane, well-regulated and sustainable seal hunt”; TT58: “It will have to continue on the basis of conservation”).

The analysis of reasoning devices associated with this frame revealed a slight difference in moral reasoning between the articles sampled from the two newspapers. The

moral reasoning in *The Telegram* articles defend the need to keep the seal population under control in order to keep the ecosystem in balance and stress that the seal hunt is sustainable, and/or humane:

TT61 (quoting industry analyst John Sackton, the president of Seafood.com):
Sackton said the Canadian hunt is sustainable and warned of the dangers of an unchecked growth of the seal population... The growing seal population spreading south to New England was the primary reason a record number of great white sharks were sighted yards off Cape Cod beaches this summer.

TT06: (quoting Robert Courtney, the president of North of Smokey Fishermen's Association): *[The seal hunt] is no more inhumane than any other harvest. It's probably more humane than most... The grey seal population... eats so much fish it is a threat to the survival of the fishery.*

The moral reasoning in the sampled articles from the *Globe & Mail* also emphasize the success of Canadian seal herd management practices. However, instead of focusing on the negative impact of seal on other species, the rhetoric deployed in two of these articles favorably compare Canadian management practices with those employed in countries who condemned the Canadian seal hunt (e.g., Russia and European Union):

GM10: *The Russians say their hunt in the White Sea had an annual quota of about 35,000 seals. That represented approximately one-third of the current population, which is down more than 95 per cent since it was first counted in 1928. By contrast, the Canadian seal population is increasing. In recent years, the number of seals off Atlantic Canada has been estimated at more than five million, according to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.*

GM28: *Even Vladimir Putin called it a "bloody industry" that "should have been banned a long time ago." When a nasty thug like that comes out against it, you know the jig is up. [...] [Defenders of the hunt] actually believe that once those Europeans understand that the hunt is both sustainable and humane, they'll change their minds.*

Despite the differences outlined above, the comparison of the reasoning devices employed in sampled articles from both newspapers in relation to the *Well-managed wildlife* frame suggests

that they nonetheless convey the same main moral judgement, namely, that the seal population is successfully managed.

Table 4.6. Summary of moral reasoning found in the Well-managed wildlife frame

Moral reasoning themes		Main moral judgement
<i>The Telegram</i>	<i>Globe & Mail</i>	
- Seal population is abundant (n=6): - Conservation practices require culling of the herd (n=3)	- Seal population is abundant, well-maintained and sustainably managed (n=4)	Seal population is successfully managed.

4.1.6. The Marketed cuteness frame

The *Marketed cuteness* frame is the last of the frames identified as being present in the sampled articles from both newspapers. It aims at showing that the perceived ‘cute’ images of seal are merely a marketing tool used by opponents of the seal hunt.

Framing and reasoning devices. This frame is constructed through the use of rhetorical and thematic structures, such as key phrases and propositions, that help build two sub-themes that comprise the overarching idea of the frame. The first conveys that, the wrongful perception of seals (i.e., wild animals) as cute pets is exploited by the anti-sealing movement. This sub-theme is glaringly present in TT12 “First, seals – but it won’t end there.” This article accuses animal rights activists of fighting against the inhumanity of seal hunt as a cover under which they advance their real aim – i.e., eliminating the fur industry. The author of this column accuses animal rights groups of using seals for profit stating, “besides, seals are cute and cuddly and therefore an enormous asset in fundraising.”

The second sub-theme is the danger lurking in a perceived cuteness of a wild animal. The editorial (TT20) “Forget seals – what about kangaroos?” contrasts the seal hunt with the massive cull of kangaroos in Australia in order to morally justify the seal hunt by pointing out

the culling is the commonly accepted way of managing wildlife. The author maintains that,

arguments for and against the kangaroo cull in Australia are very similar to the ongoing debate over the seal hunt in Canada – kangaroos, like seals, are perceived as cute animals, but there is danger lurking in cuteness: kangaroos, like seals, are a great nuisance and even dangerous.

S/he further notes that despite the Australian government setting the yearly kangaroo culling quota at 4 million, or almost 15% of the population, there is no protest against the kangaroo cull. By contrast, the seal hunt quota in Canada is based on around 6% of the seal population and yet protests against the hunt persist. The editorial wraps up by posing a rhetorical question aimed at anti-hunt supporters, like Paul McCartney, coming to Newfoundland to be photographed with a cute seal, “What’s the matter – is Australia too hot for you?” (TT20).

Other examples within this sub-theme include two *Globe and Mail* articles in which the celebrities supporting the anti-sealing cause are depicted as people who fail to see that they are dealing with wild animals:

GM28: *When Paul McCartney and his wife showed up... to embrace a cuddly little white-coat, the creature tried to bite them. Good riddance, I thought*

GM60: *Pamela Anderson snuggles and smooches a seal... or at least, a faux seal*

The comparison between reasoning devices employed in the sampled articles from both newspapers in relation to the *Marketed cuteness* point to a shared view that the perception of seals as cute is mistaken and that anti-sealing groups exploit this erroneous perception for their own purposes. These moral reasoning themes are summarized into the main moral judgement: Unjustified perception of wildlife (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7. Summary of moral reasoning found in the Marketed cuteness frame

Moral reasoning themes		Main moral judgement
<i>The Telegram</i>	<i>Globe & Mail</i>	
- The perception of wild animals as cute pets is exploited by anti-sealing activists (n=2)	- The perception of wild animals as cute pets is exploited by anti-sealing activists (n=2)	Unjustified perception of wildlife

4.1.7. The Sentient animals frame

The *Sentient animals* frame was identified in two of the sampled *Globe & Mail* articles. This frame is comprised of one sub-theme that raises questions about the sentiency of seals in the light of the perceived hypocrisy of EU legislators.

Framing and reasoning devices. Both articles employing this frame refer to the official position of EU Parliament on seal hunt, first quoting the resolution that bans Canadian seal products: “Seals are sentient animals that can experience pain, distress, fear and other forms of suffering” and then criticizing the ban’s hypocrisy. One article notes the “ideological character of the ban” (GM27), the other refers to the ban as “not only illogical, but hypocritical” (GM31). As is evidenced by the following statements both articles also challenge justifications of the seal hunt ban on the grounds that seals as sentient creatures, “as if seals were the only creatures that could suffer” (GM31), and “as if the sentience were a rare quality among animals, not shared by the innumerable mammals and birds that are killed every day in slaughterhouses” (GM27).

The reasoning devices identified in these two articles advance the moral argument that, if the sentiency of seals is a basis for banning the seal hunt, then the killing of other sentient animals should also be banned (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Summary of moral reasoning found in the Sentient animals frame

Moral reasoning themes		Main moral judgement
<i>The Telegram</i>	<i>Globe & Mail</i>	
-	- Seals are sentient animals, but they are not the only animals that can suffer (n=2).	Banning the killing of seals on the grounds of sentiency has to be followed by the ban of killing other sentient animals

4.2. Framing sealers

The information presented in Table 4.9 provides the summary of findings regarding how sealers were found to be framed in the sampled articles from *The Globe & Mail* (n=46) and *The Telegram* (n=53).

Table 4.9. Identified frames by newspaper, object of framing: sealers

<i>The Globe & Mail</i>	Frequency of occurrence	<i>The Telegram</i>	Frequency of occurrence
Carriers of cultural practice	7	Men under pressure	12
Seafaring heroes	2	Seafaring heroes	4
Newfoundlanders	2	Newfoundlanders	2
Violators	1	Violators	2

4.2.1. The Men under pressure frame

The *Men under pressure* frame was unique to articles sampled from *The Telegram* (n=12). The main characteristic of this frame is the describing of sealers as a group of people who find themselves vulnerable to the joint pressures of being targeted for what they do and by the precarious economic situation in which they find themselves.

Framing and reasoning devices. The main key words and phrases used to establish the presence of the *men under pressure* frame entail describing sealers as good men, hard-working, need to make a living, sealing for years, who are morally upright, (e.g., good-hearted, generous, friendly, men of integrity), and vulnerable to conditions they cannot control (e.g.,

fishermen out of hunt, a soft target). Two types of verbs were identified as being used in these instances: active (transitive), describing what sealers do (e.g., ply, hunt, harvest, seal; kill off [the seals]), and passive, which tends to be used when depicting sealers as vulnerable to the conditions (e.g., persecuted, frustrated, endangered, are out).

The sampled articles in which the *Men under pressure* frame is present were found to also use other framing devices such as propositions, headlines, leads, and contraposition to portray sealers as:

- unjustly persecuted, contraposing them to *real* criminals (e.g., “Prosecutors haven’t spent as much money putting some of Canada’s most notorious crooks behind bars as they have on... a group of sealers, simply plying their trade, killing seals and selling the pelts”, TT05; also TT60, TT65);
- people of moral rectitude contraposed to federal government who does not do enough to help (e.g., “Jack Troake of Twillingate, a sealer all of his life, and a man of immense integrity. . . had turned his Canadian flag upside down. . . to protest the federal government’s half-hearted, token efforts to protect his industry”, TT39; also TT65, TT05); and,
- fishermen without work (e.g., “Out of the hunt: local fishermen staying away from seal hunt for second straight year”, TT15; also TT11, TT19, TT52).

The *Men under pressure* frame also is supported by the presentation of personal stories of sealers and men from the sealing industry. These stories and interviews serve to emphasize the professional seniority of sealers (e.g., “They have been sealing for years”, TT11; “After nearly 60 years of hunting seals... Jack Troake stayed home this year”, TT28), and their being targeted both by anti-seal proponents, and the federal government (e.g., “Anti-sealing ship endangered hunters last year, trial told”, TT25; “Feds obsessed with swilers”, TT05). Most of these thematic choices are summarized well by a quote from a former hockey legend and celebrity, Peter Stastny, in which he describes sealers as “the nicest people in the world, good-hearted, generous and friendly... all they’re trying to do is make an extra buck to help their families” (TT27).

The analysis of the moral reasoning themes in this frame are summarized into the main moral judgement: sealers are good men who do their work. Moral reasoning is conveyed through explicit statements confirming the moral rectitude of sealers (e.g., “Sealers are the nicest people in the world, good-hearted, generous and friendly”, TT27). In the news coverage in which this frame was present no evidence of moral othering towards the sealers was identified (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10. Summary of moral reasoning found in the Men under pressure frame

Moral reasoning themes		Main moral judgement	Evidence of moral othering
<i>The Telegram</i>	<i>Globe & Mail</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sealers are good, working men (n=12) who - are unjustly persecuted (n=5) - struggle to keep ends meet (n=4) - do not receive any help from the government (n=3) 	-	Sealers are good men who simply do their work	No

4.2.2. The Carriers of cultural practice frame

The *Carriers of cultural practice* frame was unique to seven articles sampled from *the Globe & Mail*. This frame emphasizes the cultural distinctiveness of the sealers and the seal hunt.

Framing and reasoning devices. The main key words used to establish the presence of the carriers of cultural practice frame include nouns referring to tradition (e.g., customs, habits, culture, life), and verbs (e.g., to be [part of the culture], to be preserved). In two of the articles in which the carriers of cultural practice’ frame is manifest, it is created based on the use of quotes from sealers, including Inuit sealers (“It’s part of me. I’m part of the land and it’s part of my culture”, GM21), in which they emphasize the importance they place on “maintain[ing] our habits and customs” (GM18). Stylistically as well as semantically, these quotes manifest

lamentations of people who are dissatisfied with the lack of recognition of seal hunt as their custom.

In the five other articles in this group, the sealers’ position seems to be well-understood and even defended by the federal government and the columnists. For example, in the article (GM24) “Trade talks expected to survive seal feud” quotes then Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon as referring to sealers as “Northerners who depend on the seal hunt” and criticizing Europeans for “evident lack of sensibility” for the cultural aspirations of the Northerners. The column “European seal hunt hypocrisy” (GM31) expresses similar position, criticizing European double-standards of labelling seal hunting as “inherently inhumane” while the European Union considers the Spanish bull fights (corrida) to be the part of “Spain's cultural heritage and, as such, they can be preserved” (GM31). The news feature “Act of courtesy” (GM36) continues in the same vein, criticizing the EU for not recognizing the cultural importance of the seal hunt for the Inuit despite the EU ban recognizing exceptions for traditional Inuit products made from seals.

The analysis of the moral reasoning themes in this frame are summarized into the main moral judgement: sealers have the right to maintain their cultural practice. The moral reasoning is conveyed through explicit statements (e.g., “Magdalen Islands seal hunter Denis Longuepee [...] said the seal hunt is a 450-year-old tradition”, GM66) justifying the sealing tradition. In the news coverage in which this frame was present no evidence of moral othering towards the sealers was identified (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11. Summary of moral reasoning found in Carriers of cultural practice frame

Moral reasoning themes		Main moral judgement	Evidence of moral ‘othering’
<i>The Telegram</i>	<i>Globe & Mail</i>		

-	- Sealing is a part of a cultural tradition in the North (n=7): - Europeans who criticize seal hunt are hypocritical (n=3)	Sealers have the right to maintain their cultural practice	No
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4.2.3. The Seafaring heroes frame

The *Seafaring heroes* frame is found in four of the sampled *Telegram* articles, and two from *The Globe & Mail*. This frame emphasizes the heroic character of the sealers, making reference to sealers of the past, and praising the character of contemporary sealers.

Framing and reasoning devices. The main key words used to establish the presence of the seafaring heroes frame are nouns, adjectives, and phrases serving to depict the brave character of the sealers. Examples include, such terms and phrases as courageous, tough, hard men to keep down, survive, cannot be claimed, and are to be admired. In the article “Sealer survives harrowing experience” (TT34), for instance, one also observes the thematic and script structures in the headline and the following proposition in the lead: “Freezing ocean can’t claim Saunders.” The article goes on to tell the story of a sealer who spent a few days on ice after his boat sank, but he survived and never lost his presence of mind. The news piece “New monument to honour lost sealers” (TT21) tells the story of the sealers who “died on the ice floes” during the Newfoundland sealing disaster of 1914, when 78 sealers died.

Within the two *Globe & Mail* articles one likewise observes sealers being framed as men of dangerous profession, that have to brave the sea to provide livelihood for their families and withstand the pressure of anti-sealing campaign. For example, the news article “Controversy, sadness mark start of the seal hunt” describes the remembrance of the sealers perished last year in the sea, while their vessel capsized (GM18), fostering a mood of empathy toward sealers through thematic and script structures.

Table 4.12. Summary of moral reasoning found in the Seafaring heroes frame

Moral reasoning themes		Main moral judgement	Evidence of moral ‘othering’
<i>The Telegram</i>	<i>Globe & Mail</i>		
- Sealers are the seafaring heroes (n=4)	- Sealers are the seafaring heroes (n=2)	Sealers are brave men who do their work	No

The analysis of the moral reasoning themes in this frame are summarized into the main moral judgement: sealers are brave men who do their work. The moral reasoning is conveyed through the use of explicit and implicit statements (e.g., “Tough vs. wimpy: say what you will about the seal hunt, you’ve got to admire the courage and toughness of the people who wage it”, TT37) portraying sealers being brave seafarers. In the news coverage in which this frame was present no evidence of moral othering towards the sealers was identified (see Table 4.12).

4.2.4. The Newfoundlanders frame

The *Newfoundlanders* frame was identified in four of the sampled articles; two from *The Telegram* and two from *The Globe & Mail*. The distinctive feature of this frame is the representation of sealers as Newfoundlanders who are subject to stereotype and bias in Canada. The framing and reasoning devices associated with the *Newfoundlanders* frame were closely analyzed to determine whether any evidence of the moral othering of sealers could be observed.

Framing and reasoning devices. Within the two articles from *The Telegram* different framing devices – stylistic (sarcasm, exaggeration) and semantic (word choice) were found to be associated with the *Newfoundlanders* frame. These devices were used in a manner that presents Newfoundlanders as if from the perspective of some other people in Canada. For example, in the article “Of columnists and sealing experts” the passage: “(Those despicable Newfoundlanders laughing with pleasurable glee as they skin baby seals alive, the pup’s mother in tears, wailing nearby. Oh, the horror!)” [parenthesis in the original] is used to

sarcastically present the train of thoughts of Pamela Anderson, who “recently told the world she, too, was ashamed of her Canadian citizenship because of the hunt” (TT65). The passage involves exaggeration and a distorted quote compared with the original words by Anderson (referred above in GM60) in order to portray the sealers as if it was how they were stereotyped by some other Canadians: despicable Newfoundlanders, laughing with glee, etc.

In another editorial, the same style is used to present what the Canadian government was supposedly secretly thinking of sealers:

Federal governments... throughout the years have quietly prayed that this hideous seal hunt, a black eye delivered by those new Canadians down east, would just go away and die a natural death (TT39).

It is worth noticing that the both editorials were written by the same author; Bob Wakeham.

Unlike the two editorials from *The Telegram*, within the two *Globe & Mail* news articles the *Newfoundlanders* frame is secondary. In the case of the first article, “PM in Europe for seal-hunt showdown” (GM25), one finds the *Newfoundlanders* frame manifest in the resentment towards the EU which is expressed by the then Newfoundland Fisheries Minister Tom Hedderson, who claimed that if the federal government does not “demand the EU drop the ban” it will mean it “abandons Newfoundland.” The article further quotes Hedderson, who expresses doubts regarding the importance of his province in the eyes of the federal government noting,

Obviously the seal hunt and perhaps us as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are not important... We joined this country in '49 and we became full Canadians. And we expect our Prime Minister to stand up for us (GM25).

The second news article tells the story of Jack Troake, a sealer accused of illegally hunting and selling blueback seal pups in 1996 and whose case was still before the court in 2009. This article quotes Troake, who presents himself as a “casualty of political decision to

escape a backlash from animal-rights groups” (GM04). Troake argues his case was matter of entrapment by the federal government that was aimed against the Newfoundland sealers in order to appease animal-rights groups but that, the federal government did not expect he would fight back by rejecting the charge. Troake is quoted again: “They didn't figure on a group of stomachy Newfoundlanders” (GM04).

The analysis of the moral reasoning themes in this frame are summarized into the main moral judgement: Newfoundland sealers are subjects to prejudice because of their sealing practices. The moral reasoning is conveyed is that, Newfoundland sealers are stereotyped by some other Canadians and subject to prejudice because of their sealing practices. However, since the source of the claims are Newfoundlanders themselves, it is not necessarily the evidence of moral othering by members of an out-group (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.13. Summary of moral reasoning found in the Newfoundlanders frame

Moral reasoning themes		Main moral judgement	Evidence of moral ‘othering’
<i>The Telegram</i>	<i>Globe and Mail</i>		
- Newfoundland sealers are subjects to prejudice (n=2)	- Newfoundland sealers are subjects to prejudice (n=2)	Newfoundland sealers are subjects to prejudice because of their sealing practices	No – the prejudice is claimed only by certain Newfoundlanders

4.2.5. The Violators frame

The main characteristic of the *Violators* frame is the referring to sealers as people who committed offences while sealing. This frame was evident in two of the sampled articles from *The Telegram* and one from the *Globe and Mail*. The common thread revealing this frame across the articles was an emphasis placed on the notion that while some sealers commit offences, their behavior is not characteristic of all the sealers, and that they are duly punished

for their misdeeds. The main key words and phrases associated with the establishing of the violators frame are some sealers, shady sealers, cash in; guilty, fined, sentenced.

Framing and reasoning devices. The first article from *The Telegram* frames a sealer who clubbed seals with a gaff and loaded them on the boat while they were still alive as the one whose “behavior put industry at risk”, since his offences “were committed under the watchful eye of the Humane Society of the United States” (TT7). Referring to a court decision about the latter case, the *Globe & Mail* article emphasizes that in announcing the sentence for using “an illegal weapon”, a Newfoundland judge “urged sealers to hunt humanely” (GM5).

The second *The Telegram* article refers to “shady sealers” who were selling seals by abusing special permits given to them for personal use. Despite no-one having been convicted, there was an investigation prompted by commercial sealers who complained “about unscrupulous hunters selling animals meant for personal consumption” (TT60). At the same time, the article emphasizes that despite this event having taken place, the sealers’ offence remained unproven and was not significant. The Canadian Sealers Association is quoted saying that the personal quotas, allocated for each sealer, are insignificantly small: “The number taken is so small it’s not even funny” (TT60).

The analysis of the moral reasoning associated with this frame emphasizes that the seal hunt is well-regulated, as there are rules that are meant to sustain a humane hunt, and those sealers who cannot comply or break these rules, get duly punished or will get duly punished, if their offence is proven:

TT07: *In sentencing Gould, Hyslop said he wanted to deter sealers from violating the rules, since it has serious consequences from the market and Canada’s reputation. “We try to convince the world our hunt is humane in order to service markets for our product,” Hyslop said.*

The moral argument in this frame aims to show as there are *some* sealers who may disobey the rules of seal hunt, they will be punished if found guilty, as even the sealing community itself will not tolerate unlawful hunt (e.g., other sealers will report “unscrupulous” hunters, TT60). In the news coverage in which this frame was present no evidence of moral othering towards the sealers was identified (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.14. Summary of moral reasoning found in the Violators frame

Moral reasoning themes		Main moral judgement	Evidence of moral ‘othering’
<i>The Telegram</i>	<i>Globe and Mail</i>		
- The sealers who violate the law get punished (n=2)	- The sealers who violate the law get punished (n=1)	Sealing is well-regulated, the rules are maintained	No

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter presented the main findings emerging from my analysis of how seals and sealers were framed in a sample of 2009 newspaper articles from the *Globe & Mail* and *The Telegram*. The commodity frame was found to be most frequently employed in the articles sampled from both newspapers when referring to seals. Sealers on the other hand were most frequently framed as men under pressure in the articles sampled from *The Telegram*, and as carriers of cultural practice in the sampled *Globe & Mail* articles.

The analysis of the framing and reasoning devices used in relation to seals identified a tendency to express their instrumental value. The main moral themes identified in this regard included the inherent right of humans to use of seals as a commodity, the use of seals as being justified by the universality of the human exploitation of animals; the cultural importance/significance of sealing; and the concern for seals from the conservationist perspective. With regard to the framing and reasoning devices used in relation to sealers, my analysis found no evidence of the moral othering of sealers.

Throughout this portion of the framing analysis I placed specific emphasis on the moral reasoning advanced in each of the frames. The main moral reasoning themes, identified in twelve frames, have been grouped into twelve main moral judgements, that were being advanced with regard to seals and sealers. Each of these moral judgements presents a certain moral conundrum having implications for the environmental ethical positions underpinning these judgements. That is the focus of discussion in the next chapter.

Chapter 5. Findings and discussion: Moral reasoning analysis

The discussion in the previous chapter presented the results of my framing analysis, identifying the main moral reasoning themes in each frame package. These themes were then grouped into twelve moral judgements. In this chapter, I examine the moral reasoning and the environmental ethical positions informing the framing of seals and sealers – the two main subjects of moral worth⁴² – in the articles sampled from the *Globe & Mail* and *The Telegram*. This chapter is comprised of three sections. I begin by looking at the moral and ethical aspects of how seals are framed within the sampled articles. I then examine the moral and ethical aspects of how the sealers are framed. The discussion concludes with a summary of the main takeaway points of the discussion.

5.1. Moral reasoning about seals

The discussion in this section examines the moral and ethical aspects of human-seal relations that were revealed in the Chapter 4's analysis of the seven frame packages⁴³ involving seals. Building on that analysis, the moral reasoning themes that were singled out in each framing package were then grouped into seven moral judgements; one for each package (see Table 5.1). The ethical underpinning for the attitudes expressed towards seals in six of the seven frames in both *The Telegram* and *The Globe & Mail* articles was found to be rooted in anthropocentrism.⁴⁴ The exception was the sentient animals frame that was identified only in

⁴² Recall, in this thesis subjects of moral worth are understood as any living being, natural system, or cultural artefact that is vulnerable to harms, and therefore should be protected from unjustified harm (Elliott, 2009: 30).

⁴³ Recall, a frame package refers to large units of social discourse that include various linguistic tools, known as framing and reasoning devices, used by authors to convey a specific meaning by directing the reader to a specific perspective for viewing a given social issue. See, Gamson & Lasch (1993).

⁴⁴ Recall, anthropocentrism refers to a human-centered approach to understanding the humans/nature relationship which claims that nature only has instrumental value to humans based on what it provides to humans. See, Brennan & Lo (2016).

the *Globe & Mail* sample. The moral reasoning associated with this particular frame package resonates with values rooted in biocentrism.⁴⁵

Table 5.1. Summary of moral evaluation, advanced in the framing of seals.

Frames	Moral judgements	Ethical positioning	Points for ethical discussion
Commodity	I. Justifiable to use humanely harvested seals for economic gain.	Anthropocentric, with bias toward instrumental value of seals	Human use of animals, animal welfare.
Victim	II. The seal hunt is justifiable in the light of humane treatment of seals.	Anthropocentric	Animal welfare
Pests	III. Seals are a threat and they have to be culled.	Anthropocentric	Conservation
Food	IV. Justifiable to consume seals as food.	Anthropocentric, with bias toward instrumental value of seals	Cultural significance, human use of animals
Well-managed wildlife	V. Seal population is successfully managed in accordance with conservational practices.	Anthropocentric	Conservation
Marketed cuteness	VI. Unjustified perception of wildlife	Anthropocentric	Conservation
Sentient animals	VII. Banning the killing of seals on the grounds of sentiency must be followed by the ban of killing other sentient animals.	Biocentric	Animal welfare, animal rights

5.1.1 The anthropocentric position: Human use of seals

The principal way in which the anthropocentric ethical perspective is reflected in the sampled articles from both newspapers is through the articulating of the perception of seals as natural resources and/or nourishment. Within the *Commodity* and *Food* frame packages this ethical

⁴⁵ Recall, biocentrism refers to a life-centered approach to understanding the humans/nature relationship which claims that the environment has intrinsic value in itself regardless of its usefulness to humans. See, Brennan & Lo (2016).

position was manifest in the framing of seals as commodities that are harvested for economic purposes including edibility.

The analysis of the moral reasoning articulated in the *Commodity* and *Food* frame packages revealed the presence of two moral judgements (see Table 5.1):

- *it is justifiable to use humanely harvested seals for economic gain* (Moral judgement I); and
- *it is justifiable to consume seals as food* (Moral judgement IV).

Within these frame packages the objectification of seals was articulated through two types of moral reasoning. The first entailed using commonplace rhetoric and language to refer to seals as assets or nourishment. This type of moral reasoning was advanced most notably by those for whom seals have economic and cultural benefit (i.e., governmental representatives, the sealers, the fur industry, and the food industry), and serves to establish the normalcy of harvesting seals for economic gain and their consumption as food. The second line of moral reasoning involved explicitly using moral arguments to portray seals as commercial assets or nourishment. It was manifest in defending people's right to wear fur, pointing out the harvest of animals is a widespread practice, and emphasizing the cultural importance of consuming seal as food.

Within the *Commodity* frame, the majority of the articles with the economic significance of the sealing industry sub-theme (n=39) do not explicitly substantiate the attaching of instrumental value to seals. Instead, the tendency is to refer to seals as if it is taken for granted that they are an asset. Text Box 1 presents the excerpts from two articles containing the economic significance sub-theme. Each laments the decreased demand for seals and seal products. In "Seal prices expected to drop" (TT08), the objectification of seals is exemplified

Text Box 1

"Fur is a luxury market item and people are not running out to buy fur coats", Courtney said this week." (Seal pelt prices expected to drop, TT08)

Top grade harp seal pelts sold for \$33 each last season. Courtney is worried the lack of demand this year will push prices down." (TT08)

"I'm not worried about it", said Dakins. "Business will continue as usual. People are still going to want fur, just like people will still want fast cars." (TT08)

"This year crab is looking to be around the same as last year, price-wise, and shrimp is going to be down a little, but not a big lot. [...] The price is way down [for seal] and there's a high chance of damage to your boat, sealing in ice. [...] I have decided not to take part." (Out of hunt, TT15)

by the use of the terms 'pelts' and 'fur' (i.e., commercial products) as synonyms for seals within the context of a discussion about fluctuations in the seal fur market. Put simply, one can substitute term seal pelts with lumber or coal or even automobiles and the ethical perspective of the story would not be altered. The article "Out of the hunt" (TT15) follows a similar storyline, with a local fisher quoted as referring to seals as a bulk commodity comparable to shrimp and crab (TT15). As the excerpt in Text Box 1 shows, the news coverage provided in both of the articles focuses on economic aspects of the seal

harvest and objectifies seals in a way that does not involve any explicit moralizing statements. To this end, this excerpt appears to exemplify van Gorp's (2007: 65) assertion that the tying of frame packages with shared cultural phenomena, may employ reasoning devices that are not explicitly incorporated in the message but are nonetheless read from "between the lines" thereby evoking cultural resonances.

One also observes that when the narrative turns to the sub-theme of seal fur being a luxury item, moral reasoning is substantiated more explicitly. In the articles "Seal prices expected to drop" (TT08), and "Forget seals – what about kangaroos?" (TT20), a moral claim that is grounded in the right of wealthy people to want fur is advanced, while the articles "European seal hunt hypocrisy" (GM31), and "A \$10-million fight to save \$1-million hunt" (GM47) all point to the moral inconsistency of European criticism of Canadian seal hunt given that EU countries also harvest animals for various human needs.

Text Box 2

“Two Montreal restaurants have seen a rush of orders for seal paté, seal pepperoni and seal smoked meat. (Haute seal cuisine gets a boost from Jean's nosh, GM37)

"Now everybody knows we have seal," said Mr. Lenglet, whose restaurant, Au 5ième Peché, has had seal on the menu for two years. "All we [hope] is that people discover that product, because it's one of the best meats I know." (GM37)

"I've eaten seal a number of times. My preference is ringed seal out of the High Arctic. That is the tastiest of them all. Next to that, the grey seal is fine." (MPs and senators set to snack on seal meat, TT63).

Another manifestation of the notion that it is justifiable to use humanely harvested seals for economic gain (i.e., Moral judgement I) was evident in the eleven articles containing the *Food* frame. Here, one observes commonplace language (i.e. the language average people use in daily situations) being used in justifying the consumption of seal as food either by placing emphasis on the normalcy of eating meat (e.g., seals are ‘haute cuisine’) (n=4), or by explicitly defending the cultural aspects of eating seals (e.g., as a Northern tradition) (n=6) (see Text Box 2). The *Globe*

& *Mail* news feature “Haute seal cuisine gets a boost from Jean's nosh” (GM37) advances the normalcy of eating seal by telling readers about a Montreal restaurant with various seal dishes on the menu quoting the restaurant’s chef who refers to seal as “one of the best meats” and mentions various haute cuisine dishes that can be made from seal.

The moral reasoning advanced with regard to seal consumption in the six articles that report on former Governor-General Michaëlle Jean’s participation in a traditional seal feast in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut articulate the cultural importance of seal meat for Northern people, and especially the Inuit. In the six items – four news articles (GM32; GM33; GM34; GM35) and one editorial (GM36) in the *Globe & Mail*, and one news article in *The Telegram* (TT50) – in which the cultural importance of consuming seal meat is advanced one observes the expression of explicit moral arguments, such as emphasizing that the anti-sealing campaign takes its toll on cultural heritage of Inuit people. This line of argument parallels the manner in which people’s right to wear fur is defended in *Commodity* frame.

One also observes in three of the six articles articulating the cultural importance of seal meat for the Inuit a contraposition between the anti- and pro-sealing sides. The pro-sealing position is presented as defending Inuit traditions, with the anti-sealing campaign and the EU presented as adversaries of Inuit people. For instance, in “Act of courtesy” (GM36) it is stated that the: “[anti-sealing] campaign is more clearly aimed at the commercial seal hunt off Newfoundland, but the Inuit are the ones who will pay the heaviest cultural price for the EU decision.” Contraposition also is evident through the presence of derisive statements aimed at critics of the seal hunt. This is evident in “She’s our very own Braveheart!” (GM34) wherein the author claims: “She’ll [Michaëlle Jean] go to any length to defend our national honour from the ignorant attacks of those effete, hypocritical, PETA-loving Europeans.” It also is present in “Mayor defends Jean's seal-eating habits” (GM33) wherein the author writes: “Urbanites and animal-rights activists who were roiled by the gusto with which Governor-General Michaëlle Jean gobbled back raw seal meat this week can hold their criticism.”

Text Box 3

“[Michaëlle Jean] is not afraid to wade into controversial waters when it comes to defending aboriginal traditions.

After using a traditional ulu blade to gut the furry animal at a community festival on Monday, she decried those who, like Sir Paul McCartney, have labelled the seal hunt inhumane.” (Mayor defends Jean’s seal eating habits, GM33)

There are two notable aspects to the way in which moral reasoning is articulated in the perception of seals as natural resources or nourishment. First, the use of commonplace language when speaking about the instrumental value of seals is indicative of a connection between the topic of a framed message and the common ground notion which, in turn, relies on a “common repertoire of symbols and worldviews” (van Gorp & Vercryusse, 2012: 1275). For those for whom the value of seals rests in their economic and cultural benefits (e.g., the food and fur industries; sealers) reference to a commonly known or shared cultural perception precludes the need for explicit moral reasoning because referring to seals as assets – whether

culinary or economic – helps affirm a cognitive connection between textual content and readers’ existing common ground notion of seals.

Second, when the news discourse deals with aspects of the human use of seals on which the societal attitudes diverge (e.g., wearing animal fur as garments) moral reasoning is more explicit insofar as pro-sealing positions tend to defend “status quo beliefs by falling back on anthropocentric sentiments,” portraying opponents of the hunt “as animal rights urban dwellers who are "out of it" in their ignorance of the real world” (Foran, 2018: 143).

Taken together, the examples outlined above are suggestive of a utilitarian attitude toward seals that justifies using them for human needs, and which is underpinned by an anthropocentric ethical position according to which animals are mere means to human ends (Kopnina et al., 2018; Justus et al., 2009). From the perspective of ethical discussion, framing seals as a commodity or a food item bears importance as it reduces their moral status from that of a sentient living being to that of mere things. This, in turn, frees humans from needing to consider themselves bound “to consult the interests of the commodities involved in addition to the human interests that they will serve” (Sumner, 1983: 110).

5.1.2. The anthropocentric position: Animal welfare concerns

From a moral perspective, framing seals as a commodity or a food item requires consideration be given to whether our treatment of animals is morally justifiable in the light of their well-being (Phillips & Kluss, 2018). The two frame packages most relevant for this task are *Commodity* and *Victim*. Two moral judgements were evident in these frame packages (see Table 5.1):

- *the seal hunt is justifiable to use humanely harvested seals for economic gain* (Moral judgement I); and
- *the seal hunt is justifiable in the light of humane treatment of seals* (Moral judgement II).

Both of these moral judgements assert that seal hunt is humane, and this is articulated by referring to experts (i.e., sealers, industry representatives, and/or government officials) who affirm the hunt's humaneness, and by presenting a moral counterbalance emphasizing European moral inconsistency in failing to adhere to the EU's own moral standards regarding animal welfare while nonetheless taking a moral stance against Canadian sealing.

Text Box 4

Brothers Clooney and Basil Goodyear [...] use rifles from their boat at a distance of 25-30 yards, and always aim for the seal's head to avoid damaging the pelt.

"I don't know any way to do it any more humane than the way we do it", said Clooney.

"As far as I am concerned, the only hunt that is humane is the seal hunt", added Basil, who also hunted birds and moose.

Simms said he sees hypocrisy in the EU's stance.

"Europeans engage in wild hunts as well. . .if the standard by which they regulate the seal hunt is applied to their own wildlife, I'm sure they would face a lot of uphill battles". (Sealers face uncertain time; TT11).

The moral reasoning theme of the humane harvest of seals was found in 18 articles of the *Commodity* frame package (*The Telegram*: n=13; *The Globe & Mail*: n=5). In these articles, the sub-theme of humane seal harvest is established through the use of both implicit and explicit statements from experts that serve to assert the main moral judgment – i.e., it is morally justifiable to harvest seals for economic gain precisely because they are harvested humanely. This is exemplified in the excerpt from "Sealers face uncertain time" (TT11) that is provided in Text Box 4. This article focuses on the lack of certainty about the future of

sealing in the light of an EU parliamentary vote on the proposed ban on seal products. Two sealers who are quoted in the text note that "[they] always aim for seal's head to avoid damaging the pelt." This statement serves as a reasoning device which implicitly advances the notion that, since seal pelt is a valuable material, it is in the interests of sealers themselves to harvest it carefully, and so they have the incentive of aiming for the head. The implication is that shooting seals in the head results in a quick and painless death. Then, the sealers are quoted as claiming that shooting seals from 25-30 yards and aiming for a head is the most humane

way of killing the seal, and that the seal hunt is “the only humane hunt” (TT11).⁴⁶ These claims of humaneness are further strengthened by the presence of a statement from a government official, MP Scott Simms, who is quoted criticizing the hypocrisy of the Europeans. He implies that the EU parliament does not judge wild hunts in European countries according to the same moral rules stemming from the concern in animal welfare, as they do in case of the Canadian seal hunt (TT11). This type of moral reasoning posits that, since the harvesting of wild animals is a widespread global practice, criticism of the ‘humane’ Canadian seal harvest is hypocritical. As former Premier of Newfoundland, Danny Williams, put it, “Europeans should have a good, hard look at themselves... They’re after us on this particular one when this is a humane harvest and they know it” (“Canada will ‘vigorously’ defend seal hunt: Harper”; TT32).

The notion that the seal hunt is justifiable in the light of humane treatment of seals (i.e., Moral judgement II) was also found to be articulated in the news articles employing the *Victim* frame in a similar manner to how the humaneness of seal hunt is articulated in Moral judgement I. Despite focusing on antagonisms between the conflicting sides, the news discourse in the sampled articles employing the *Victim* frame do not explain the essence of the ethical differences underpinning the conflict. Instead, this moral debate is presented in the form of contending polemics, with emotional accusations of cruelty of the hunt advanced by celebrity opponents being refuted by statements from government officials, industry representatives, and scientists. The rhetorical structures identified in these instances include the use of derisive or sarcastic tone conveys a sense of futility in debating the welfare of seals. Such structures are exemplified in the excerpt from the article “Ex-Beatle tells EU Parliament to let the seals be” (TT24). The article’s title bears a sarcastic allusion at the famous Beatles’

⁴⁶ It is worth noting that the article does not discuss the reasons for which this method is considered humane.

song; in the article text, Senator Hervieux-Payette refutes McCartney's claims of cruelty to

Text Box 5

"The position of the European Parliament on the seal hunt is not only illogical, but hypocritical. If the seal hunt is "inherently inhumane," as the European parliamentarians say, why do they tolerate bullfights?" (European seal hunt hypocrisy, GM31)

"She'll also go to any length to defend our national honour from the ignorant attacks of those effete, hypocritical, PETA-loving Europeans. You know the ones. They love to bash the seal-murdering barbarians across the ocean, even as they gobble down plates of foie gras produced from the monstrously enlarged livers of force-fed ducks." (She's our very own Braveheart! GM34).

"millions of seal pups" by stating her expert opinion: "As far as I'm concerned, we have highly ethical standards." Later, in what appears to be at least a half-serious manner, Hervieux-Payette accuses the anti-sealing movement of exploiting the issue and being the "vegetarian lobby." By quoting Hervieux-Payette saying "I'm not starting a campaign for people to stop eating vegetables" the article ostensibly ridicules concerns about seal welfare by advancing a false parallel that equates seals with vegetables (TT24).

Similar to what was observed for Moral judgement I, the other type of moral reasoning present here involves pointing to the moral inconsistency with Europe's opposition to the hunt. This counterbalance posits that, given EU member state's failure to adhere to their own animal welfare

standards, Europeans have no right to criticize the Canadian seal hunt. This sub-theme was found in four *Globe & Mail* columns presenting personal positions of the authors about the EU's ban on Canadian seal products decision. In addition to presenting a generalized portrayal of anti-sealing supporters in Europe, these articles also highlight the moral inconsistency of EU parliamentarians who, for example, turn a blind eye to bull fighting in Spain while condemning sealing as inhumane (see Text Box 5).

The existence of a European-wide standard relating to the welfare of animals, that served as the moral foundation of the 2009 EU ban on the import of seal products, is questioned by Sellheim (2016: 155) who posits that the well-being of animals is indeed considered a

Text Box 6

“[Inuit] don't kill seals for the fun of it, nor for religious purposes. They may keep the meat and part of the skin, but mostly they hunt to make money. Like the average worker anywhere in the world, they want a return on their investment and they want to sell their product at a profit.”

(European seal hunt hypocrisy”, GM31)

“The European ban will make exceptions for seals killed by aboriginal hunters. It reeks of European colonialism [...]. There isn't much sense in granting an exemption to Inuit hunters. Seal products ban will destroy a major market. [...]

One of the main arguments made against the seal hunt over the years has been that it is cruel and inhumane. [...] Sealers and Department of Fisheries and Oceans officials have repeatedly stated that hunters kill seals as quickly and painlessly as possible. Is the seal hunt violent? Absolutely. As has been pointed out many times, so is the killing of cows, pigs, chickens, etc., in slaughterhouses around the world.” (True lies about hunt, TT37)

European Community value, but only in “regard to animals that are kept or killed for human consumption.”

In other words, this Community value deems the killing of animals on the basis of perceived need acceptable, and deems this need to be absent with regard to the seal hunt given the lack of demand for mass-produced seal products. This is evidenced, in part, by the fact that EU sealing policy recognizes the importance of sealing for indigenous peoples, excluding seal products made to support Inuit subsistence and cultural purposes from its ban (Sellheim, 2016).

The columns “True lies about seal hunt” (TT37) and “European seal hunt hypocrisy” (GM31), however, present Inuit peoples as being interested in participating in the commercial seal trade principally for profit (see Text Box 6). The former is especially remarkable because it includes statements from experts affirming the humaneness of sealing, and poses an implicit question

pertaining to moral counterbalance: *Given that animals are killed for human needs around the world in massive numbers and that this is accepted, why the seal hunt is criticized?* (see the Text Box 6).

The analysis of sampled articles from both newspapers reveals a lack of in-depth consideration of the ethical aspects of the humane killing of seals. For example, none of the sampled articles mentioned the existence of contending scientific assessments of the

humaneness of the existing method of killing seals (Butterworth et al., 2007; Daoust et al., 2002). The moral conundrum regarding the humaneness of killing seals directly pertains to our ability to objectively assess whether our treatment of the animals is morally justifiable (Kortenkamp & Moore, 2001). As noted by Francione (2018), making a distinction between the animals whom we love and the ones whom we consume inevitably leads to moral inconsistency. As such, animal welfare considerations – i.e., practical concern for the well-being of animals – are best understood as being based on an anthropocentric ethical position, insofar as they do not relate to an animal’s welfare from an animal point of view, but rather address emotion-laden human concerns based on standards of welfare that often are arbitrary (Proctor et al., 2013; Phillips & Kluss, 2018).

Recognizing that the concerns of both anti- and pro-sealing stances are largely rooted in anthropocentric ethical position is important because it better informs our understanding of the essence of the conflict over what is perceived as irreconcilable standoff grounded in environmental ideology (Kortenkamp & Moore, 2001). More importantly, perhaps, this recognition implies the existence of more common ground between the contending interests in this debate than often is assumed (Foran, 2018). This said, within the articles sampled for this thesis one observes a seeming failure to acknowledge or otherwise articulate that the essence of the so-called seal wars is a debate about seal welfare and the standard by which a hunt may be deemed humane. This is most evident in the way the sampled articles from both newspapers’ blur the line between animal welfare and animal rights positions, continuously referring to the anti-sealing opponents as the animal rights supporters:

- animal rights activists (*The Telegram*: n=8; *Globe & Mail*: n=5);
- animal rights groups (*The Telegram*: n=4; *Globe & Mail*: n=7);
- animal rights lobby (*The Telegram*: n=1; *Globe & Mail*: n=1);
- animal rights loons (*The Telegram*: n=1);
- animal rights zealots and animal rights extremists (*Globe & Mail*: n=2).

At the same time, seven articles simultaneously referred to anti-sealing groups as animal welfare and animal rights advocates (*The Telegram*: n=4; *Globe & Mail*: n=3).

As noted in Chapter 2 (see, section 2.1.3), the inability to establish a standard of well-being applicable to all animals is a key flaw with the concept of animal welfare. Nonetheless, concern for animals' well-being is essential to humans knowing whether our treatment of them is morally justifiable (Phillips & Kluss, 2018). By accentuating antagonisms between seal hunt proponents and opponents, and relying foremost on official sources as the basis for assurances of the humaneness of the hunt the discourse observed in the sampled articles oversimplifies the ethical debate about seal welfare overlooking legitimate animal welfare concerns.

5.1.3. The anthropocentric position: Perception of seals as wildlife

Another important facet of the seal hunt debate pertains to the management of seal populations for conservational purposes. The analysis of the moral reasoning articulated in the *Pests*, *Well-managed wildlife*, and *Marketed cuteness* frame packages revealed the presence of three moral judgements (see Table 5.1):

- *seals are a threat and they have to be culled* (Moral judgement III);
- *seal population is successfully managed in accordance to conservational practice* (Moral judgement V); and
- *the unjustified perception of wildlife as pets* (Moral judgement VI).

Each of these moral judgements asserts that seals are wildlife and should be treated as such. This is articulated through three types of moral reasoning. The first emphasizes the negative influence of seals on fisheries. The second entails referring the expert opinion – quoting industry representatives, governmental officials, federal statements affirming the seal population is abundant and sustainably managed. The third accentuates the wildlife versus pets comparison, pointing out the perception of seals as pets is wrong and exploited by anti-sealing

activists. The moral reasoning theme of seals being wildlife that should be treated as such was found in:

- 10 articles employing the *Well-managed wildlife* frame (*The Telegram*: n=4; *The Globe & Mail*: n=6);
- 6 articles employing the *Pests* frame (*The Telegram*: n=5; *The Globe & Mail*: n=1);and
- 4 articles employing the *Marketed cuteness* (*The Telegram*: n=2; *The Globe & Mail*: n=2).

In these articles, the moral reasoning theme of seals being wildlife that should be treated as such is established through the use of both implicit and explicit statements from experts that work to advance the three moral judgments specified above.

Among all the sampled articles that were identified as employing the *Well-managed wildlife* frame (*The Telegram*: n=6; *The Globe & Mail*: n=4) there is an emphasis on seals being abundant and the seal hunt being sustainable (see Table 5.1, Moral Judgement V). To this end governmental officials and industry representatives are frequently quoted expressing such claims/phrases as:

- *viable, sustainable and humane* (Disappointing but not unexpected, TT58);
- *our lawful, sustainable and humane hunt* (Controversy, sadness mark start of seal hunt, GM18);
- *sustainable and humane*, (It's time to hang up the haka-pik, GM28); and
- *humane, well-regulated and sustainable seal hunt* (Ottawa seeks help with seal message, GM71).

Quoting federal government statements emphasizing efforts aimed at maintaining a stable seal population on the basis of scientific advice also is present in these articles. Two examples include claims such as “The Government of Canada makes every effort to ensure the hunt is based on sound conservation principles and conducted in a safe and humane manner” (Anti-seal-hunt group steps up efforts, TT61), and the comparing of Canadian seal hunt management practices with those of other countries (It's time to hang up the haka-pik, GM28).

The portrayal of seals as pests is articulated through an emphasis on the negative impact of seals on Newfoundland-based fisheries (see Table 5.1, Moral Judgement III). The *Pests* frame is more prominent in *The Telegram* articles (n=9) than in those from *The Globe & Mail* (n=2). Together, these articles assert that seals are the main culprits behind the disappearance of cod and suggest culling or hunting as key means of keeping the seal numbers down and protecting fisheries (e.g., TT01, TT06, TT27; TT29; GM31). The moral reasoning employed here affirms the need for pragmatic conservation measures (i.e., culling of the herd). A key omission in these articles however is the failure to address the scientific debate regarding the lack of evidence for the detrimental impact of seals on the collapse of the fishing industry (Myers & Cadigan, 1995; Cochrane, 2000).

Similar to the *Well-managed wildlife* and *Pests* frames, the *Marketed cuteness* frame portrays seals as a plentiful natural resource whose abundancy is beyond doubt (*The Telegram*: n=2; *The Globe & Mail*: n=2). The four articles employing the *Marketed cuteness* frame underscore that seals are wildlife, not pets. Here, seal hunting is presented either as comprising part of a conservation practice that helps keep the ecosystem in balance (TT02; TT20), or as an important part of economy and tradition of the coastal regions (GM28; GM60). Anti-sealing activists are portrayed as exploiting an erroneous ‘cute pets’ perception of harp seals serve their own purposes and to interfere with conservation, traditional, and economic activities (i.e., Moral judgement VI). The main moral reasoning theme advanced here is that portraying wild animals as cute pets is merely a clever tactic used by anti-sealing activists to exploit and perpetuate this misperception. As with the *Commodity* frame, the moral reasoning articulated in the *Marketed cuteness* frame posits that culling wild animals is a worldwide practice, and hence criticism of Canada’s seal harvest hypocritical. For example, the article “Forget seals – what about kangaroos?” (TT20) compares the seal hunt to the kangaroo cull in Australia noting

that despite kangaroos being perceived as cute, there are no international campaigns against the Australian government's massive cull of these animals. Another news feature, "PETA's latest ploy" (TT02) likewise accuses prominent organizations in the anti-sealing movement, of deliberately distorting perceptions of wildlife and using the seal hunt as a means of garnering funds from global audiences, as well as prompting readers to choose between animal exploiters or pity abusers as nicknames for the animal rights groups.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the moral status of an animal is derived from the type of culture-specific relationship humans share with that animal. For example, based on their perceived utility for humans, people perceive rats as pests and chicken as food, while cats and horses are perceived as pets and companions (Phillips & Kluss, 2018: 495). In Western culture the perception of dogs as companions (and puppies as cute companions) is common. In other cultures – South Korean, for example – the perception of dogs as food is rooted in a tradition of consuming dog meat and therefore accepted (Oh & Jackson, 2011). Similarly, our perception of wildlife is likewise derived from the type of relationship humans share with wild animals and is guided by perceived utility of the animals in question. Phillip & Kluss (2018: 491) posit that humans may feel the moral obligation to protect some wild animals especially when they are endangered species, sometimes feeling an "innate need to preserve elements of the natural world as we deem fit".

In the culture of Newfoundland, seals have traditionally been perceived as an abundant wildlife species, and thus exploited for human needs (Lamson, 1979; Busch, 1985; Wenzel, 1978; Barry, 2006). The anthropocentric concern for the environment sees the welfare of wild animals only as part of the overall well-being of an ecosystem (Foran, 2018; Rottman, 2014). Perceiving seals as wildlife that is an abundant and sustainably managed grants moral justification to controlling their population through conservation methods. Moreover, holding

seals responsible for the disappearance of cod stocks associates seals with pests and, in turn, reinforces the moral justification for culling them.

5.1.4. The biocentric position: Animal welfare vs. animal rights

Up to now, my discussion has focused on the prevailing anthropocentric ethical position evident in the sampled articles. This position is linked to the first six moral judgements listed in Table 5.1. The moral reasoning articulated in two items from the *Globe and Mail* that frame

Text Box 7

“The ideological character of the ban, far removed from hard-nosed commercial interests, is manifest at the very beginning of the European Parliament's text: "Seals are sentient animals that can experience pain, distress, fear and other forms of suffering" - which sounds as if sentience were a rare quality among animals, not shared by the innumerable mammals and birds that are killed every day in slaughterhouses.” (Bludgeoning the hunt, GM27)

“The position of the European Parliament on the seal hunt is not only illogical, but hypocritical. In a teary introduction to the resolution that bans Canadian seal products, it says the seals are "sentient animals that can experience pain, distress, fear and other forms of suffering" - as if seals were the only creatures that could suffer.” (European seal hunt hypocrisy, GM31).

seals as sentient beings and the concomitant moral judgement (i.e., Moral judgement VII, *Banning the killing of seals on the grounds of sentience has to be followed by the ban of killing other sentient animals*) necessitates a discussion of the biocentric position.

The two articles – an editorial titled “Bludgeoning the hunt”, GM27; and a column titled “European seal hunt hypocrisy”, GM31 – contrapose animal welfare and animal rights attitudes toward seals (see Text Box 7). Both of these articles note the “ideological character of the EU ban”, and highlight its moral inconsistency. The argument advanced here is that the EU’s banning of seal products on the basis of seals being sentient creatures that feel pain is misguided because seals are far from being the only sentient animals

who feel pain and who are killed every day for exploitation by humans. For example, the article “European seal hunt hypocrisy” (GM31) quotes an activist group who avers that “half the sheep in France are conscious when their throats are slit” and asks why, if we apply the EU’s

logic, are all products from sentient animals not banned. This line of argument places the moral inconsistency of the animal welfare position in the spotlight insofar as it makes clear that if our aim is to be morally consistent, we must either restrict cruelty toward all sentient animals, or stop putting forward propositions to ban the killing of a specific species (Francione, 2018).

In critiquing the moral inconsistency of the EU ban these two *Globe and Mail* articles advance the biocentric ethical position. Paradoxically, the moral reasoning articulated in these articles implicitly affirms the animal rights attitude that is anathema to the pro-sealing rhetoric identified in the vast majority of articles sampled from the *Globe and Mail*. This suggests that the portrayal of opponents of seal hunting as animal rights activists may be attributed to the lack of attention being paid to the distinction between animal welfare and animal rights. Within the context of the seal hunt controversy, however, the difference matters because it directly informs the understanding of whether our treatment of seals is morally justifiable. The ethical position of anti-sealing protesters – and EU legislators – is largely rooted in animal welfare concerns that are, in turn based on personal beliefs about what constitutes good or bad animal welfare and as such are morally arbitrary (Francione, 2018: 2).

By contrast, animal rights philosophy is morally consistent. It demands that the same moral consideration be given to all sentient animals regardless of their relationship with humans, and that they be recognized as having the fundamental moral right not to be treated as property or resources of humans (Francione, 2018). Put simply, animal rights philosophy stands in opposition to the anti-sealing campaign on that grounds that its adherents have arbitrarily decided to defend seals, instead of condemning the slaughter of all other sentient animals who are no different from the seals (Francione, 2009).

5.2. Moral reasoning about sealers

The discussion in this section examines the moral positions revealed in the analysis of the five frame packages involving sealers. The ethical underpinning for the attitudes expressed towards sealers in all five frame packages in both *The Telegram* and *The Globe & Mail* articles was found to contain no evidence of moral othering (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2. Summary of moral evaluation, advanced in the framing of sealers.

Frames	Moral judgements	Evidence of moral ‘othering’
Men under pressure	VIII. Sealers are good men who do their work	No
Carriers of cultural practice	IX. Sealers have the right to maintain their cultural practice	No
Seafaring heroes	X. Sealers are brave men who do their work	No
Newfoundlanders	XI. Newfoundland sealers are subjects to prejudice because of their sealing practices	No – as the assumed prejudice is cast by Newfoundlanders upon themselves
Violators	XII. Sealing is well-regulated, the rules are maintained	No

5.2.1. Moral reasoning in the portrayal of sealers: Working heroes under pressure

The portrayal of sealers in the sampled articles from both newspapers involved ascribing to them positive moral qualities and depicting them as working heroes with good ethical and moral credentials. The principal way in which this line of moral reasoning is advanced is through the articulating of the perception of sealers as good and hard-working men, seafaring heroes, who find their livelihoods under economic pressure as a result of anti-sealing activities, the EU ban on seal products, and insufficient help from the federal government of Canada. In the articles sampled from *The Telegram* sealers were framed as morally righteous working people and seafaring heroes who fight the difficult battle with the harsh nature and who find

themselves under the pressure due to the decline of the seal market and lack of help from the federal government. By contrast the articles sampled from the *Globe & Mail* emphasize the cultural distinctiveness of sealing for Northerners and frames sealers as stalwart seafarers who do not bend under the pressure from a government who accuses them for violating seal hunt regulations.

The analysis of the moral reasoning articulated in the *Men under pressure*, *Seafaring heroes* and *Violators* frame packages revealed the presence of three moral judgements (see Table 5.2):

- *Sealers are good men who do their work* (Moral judgement VIII);
- *Sealers are brave men who do their work* (Moral judgement X); and
- *Sealing is well-regulated, the rules are maintained* (Moral judgement XII).

Taken together, these moral judgements position sealers as what I have chosen to label as working hero under pressure. This position articulated through 2 types of moral reasoning. The first entails conveying the moral rectitude of sealers through explicit and implicit statements regarding moral qualities of the sealers that are voiced either by the articles' authors themselves, or through the quoting of experts. The second entails conveying the human face of the sealing, by relaying personal stories of sealers, and describing peoples' hardships.

The framing of sealers as good working people in the items sampled from *The Telegram* is supported by the use of quotes from personal interviews with sealers, their own stories, interviews with representatives of the sealing industry, representatives of federal and provincial government, and even celebrities such as former hockey star Peter Stastny. Sealers are quoted explaining their methods of sealing, including shooting or clubbing of seals. This services to give a human face of the sealing by setting out the hardships sealers encounter as a

result of economic recession and the declining demand for seal fur, and their struggle with the

Text Box 8

“[...] fishermen Jack Troake of Twillingate, a sealer all of his life, and a man of immense integrity [...] had turned his Canadian flag upside down [...] to protest the federal government’s half-hearted, token efforts to protect his industry. And who can blame him?” (Sealing the issue, TT39)

“[...] it’s forcing good men like Jack Troake, Mark Small and the others to appear in court as if they had used their rifles to hold up the nearest convenience store or hijack a plane, not to simply kill seals off the northern coast.” (The persecution of 101 sealers, TT5)

harshness of nature during the sealing season.

In the editorials and columns, this portrayal of sealers as people of moral rectitude is even more apparent, with sealers are described as good men, people of immense integrity, who suffer from half-hearted government efforts (see Text Box 8). For example, the column “Sealing the issue” (TT39) criticizes the federal government for not confronting the EU with greater determination. Likewise, in “The persecution of 101 sealers” (TT5) justification is provided for the actions of sealers who were charged

for illegally hunting blueback seal pups. The implication here being that the sealers have not been charged for a real crime, but simply for “killing seals off the coast.”

The personal stories of sealers play a less prominent role in the coverage provided in the articles sampled from the *Globe & Mail*. Instead, the focus here is placed on the importance of sealing for Newfoundlanders and Inuit. This is achieved by quoting representatives of the sealing organizations and industry, who emphasize the cultural and traditional aspects of sealing for the local population, and the quoting of representatives of the federal government who offer assurances that the government will continue to defend the interests of sealers and their families (Text Box 9).

No evidence of othering in the framing of sealers was found in the analysis in the framing packages of *Men under pressure*, *Seafaring heroes* and *Violators* in any of the sampled articles. On the contrary, the moral profile conveyed through these framing packages corresponds to Carrier-Lafontaine's (2009) and Marland's (2014) claims about pro-sealing propaganda speaking with pathos about sealers. Carrier-Lafontaine (2009: 119), for instance, contends that the forgoing of objective language in favor of "blatant appeals to pathos" evident in federal government communication when referring to sealers, helps to portray sealers as morally right people.

Text Box 9

"The four died while their vessel capsized during a Coast Guard tow operation.

"People still feel touched by the incident," Denis Longuepee, head of the Magdalen Islands sealers association, said yesterday [...]. "Our sealers are eager to head out this year. We want to maintain our habits and customs. But we can't forget the men." (Controversy, sadness mark start of seal hunt, GM18).

"We will continue to defend Canada's interests, defend the interests of sealers and their families on this issue." (Trade talks expected to survive seal feud, GM24)

Marland (2014: 79) likewise posits that the idealized characteristics of sealers as "rugged, industrious, seaworthy adventurers who have historically battled harsh elements and difficult economic circumstances" are directly linked to the traditional and cultural importance of sealing in Newfoundland.

5.2.2. Moral reasoning in the portrayal of sealers: Cultural and social aspects

The analysis of the moral reasoning articulated in the *Carriers of cultural practice*, and *Newfoundlanders* frame packages revealed the presence of two moral judgements (see Table 5.2):

- *Sealers have the right to maintain their cultural practice* (Moral judgement IX); and
- *Newfoundland sealers are subjects to prejudice because of their sealing practices* (Moral judgement XI).

Each of these moral judgements focuses on the cultural and social distinctiveness of sealers

and is articulated through two types of moral reasoning. The first pertains to the *Carriers of cultural practice* frame. It entails emphasizing, through explicit statements, the cultural aspects of sealing and its role in the traditions of Northern Canadians as well as by criticizing the EU for the lack of recognition of the cultural importance of the seal hunt. The second pertains to the *Newfoundlanders* frame, and focuses on claims about the stereotyping of Newfoundlanders by other Canadians.

The *Carriers of the cultural practice* frame package was unique to seven articles in the *Globe & Mail* sample. The articles employing this frame focused on telling the story of the Northerners who are displeased with the lack of recognition of their right to practice seal hunting as part of their cultural traditions. The gist of the moral reasoning applied here is that EU legislators display a “lack of sensibility” for the cultural needs of the Northern people (“Trade talks expected to survive seal feud”, GM24). The fact that the EU ban excludes “seal products which result from hunts traditionally conducted by Inuit and other indigenous communities” (EU, 2019: par.3) is criticized as being a patronizing post-colonialist approach toward the Indigenous peoples that fails to recognize that, Inuit and other indigenous communities,

hunt to make money. Like the average worker anywhere in the world, they want a return on their investment, and they want to sell their product at a profit. (“European seal hunt hypocrisy”, GM31).

The moral reasoning found in *Newfoundlanders* frame package is somewhat different insofar as four news articles employing this frame (*Globe and Mail*: n=2; *The Telegram*: n=2) advance the claim that sealers are subjects to a prejudice elsewhere in Canada because of their sealing practice, and specifically because they are Newfoundlanders. In so doing, the moral reasoning within these four articles advances the theme of prejudice towards Newfoundlanders

in Canada. What is most striking about this line of moral reasoning, however, is that claims about the stereotyping of Newfoundlanders come from Newfoundlanders themselves, and are not substantiated with evidence. Instead, one observes a trend of Newfoundlander commentators expressing the sense of shared ingroup identity (“we’ as Newfoundlanders and Labradoreans”, GM25). This observation would seem to parallel Marland’s (2014: 68) suggestion that when it comes to seal hunting there exists a “consciousness of psychological distance” between ingroups (Newfoundlanders) and outgroups (non-Newfoundlanders).

This psychological distance is evident in the criticism expressed by some of the Newfoundlanders cited in the sampled articles toward what they see as the federal government offering inadequate political support for the seal hunt. For example, *The Telegram* column “Sealing the issue” (TT39) accuses federal government of “quietly praying the hideous seal hunt [...] would just die a natural death” because “they kowtowed to the Greenpeacers and their like”. In “PM In Europe...” (GM25) Tom Hedderson, then the Fisheries Minister of Newfoundland and Labrador, is quoted lamenting, “obviously the seal hunt and perhaps us as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are not important” because “our Prime Minister” does not stand up for “us”.

These accusations, which come from Newfoundlanders, convey a sense that Newfoundlanders view themselves as not being considered full Canadians elsewhere in Canada. However, the moral reasoning advanced in this frame package cannot be attributed to moral othering because it is members of an ingroup (i.e., Newfoundlanders) who appear to be othering themselves.

5.3. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the moral profiles of frames packages in coverage of the seal hunt in articles sampled from *The Telegram* and *The Globe & Mail*, with attention given to how the moral reasoning in these articles reflects particular ethical positions with regard to seals and sealers. The analysis of the moral reasoning identified similarities in the ethical positions present in the sampled articles from both newspapers. Six of the twelve moral judgements present in the sampled articles were found to be rooted in an anthropocentric ethical position that advanced the normalcy of using seals for the social and economic benefit of humans, emphasized the moral inconsistency inherent in the position of adherents to animal welfare as a moral counterbalance for the seal hunt, and underscored the view of seals as wildlife rather than pets.

One moral judgement was found to be indirectly supporting a biocentric ethical position, emphasizing that since seals are sentient animals who suffer while being exploited for human needs, it is hypocritical to be concerned with their well-being while turning a blind eye to the exploitation of the other sentient animals. The moral issue here pertains to animal rights philosophy that proposes that if one wants to extend the right of a sentient animal not to suffer, and at the same time be morally consistent, one has to adopt biocentric ethical position which is to recognize the intrinsic value of all sentient living beings (Ryder, 2004; Francione, 2018; Phillips & Kluss, 2018).

The analysis of the moral reasoning regarding sealers found no evidence of the moral othering of sealers. On the contrary, the analysis points to a positive representation of sealers in the sampled articles from both newspapers that emphasises their moral rectitude, the importance of sealing as the traditional occupation, their heroic behavior, and the will to overcome the hardships of their occupation.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

This thesis set out to investigate how the news media coverage at the national and provincial level in Canada conveys particular environmental ethical positions about the seal hunt. In order to do so I looked at how the moral framing of the seal hunt controversy was articulated in samples of news discourse from the national *The Globe and Mail*, and the Newfoundland-based *The Telegram* – between January 1, 2009 and December 31, 2009.

The following key points sum up the thesis findings. First, within the sampled articles from both newspapers one finds evidence of ascribing instrumental value to seals that is manifest by a tendency to frame seals based on their perceived social and economic benefit for human beings, whether as commodities, abundant wildlife, nourishment and/or pests. Second, by focusing on antagonisms between anti- and pro-sealing interests, reiterating the position of official sources and stakeholders, and shirking the intricacies of the ethical debate about the well-being of seals, the discourse in the sampled articles overlooks animal welfare concerns; namely contending opinions about the humaneness of existing methods of killing seals. Third, criticisms of the anti-sealing stance and the 2009 EU ban on seal products highlight the moral selectivity of policy-making based on animal welfare considerations and reveal the presence of a pro-sealing attitude demanding moral consistency from anti-sealing interests.

The analysis of the way in which the sealers were framed in the sampled articles identified no evidence of them being morally othered. On the contrary, in the samples from both newspapers, sealers were found to be portrayed as people of moral rectitude and brave seafarers. Within the sampled *Globe and Mail* articles sealers also were portrayed as Northerners attempting to maintain their traditional way of life and occupation. Likewise, in the sampled coverage from *The Telegram* examples were found that presented Newfoundlander sealers as good, working men who struggle economically due to the

downturn in seal market exacerbated by inadequate measures to protect the seal hunt by federal government. Indeed, the only evidence of othering identified in the samples from both newspapers were instances of Newfoundlanders othering themselves.

The discussion in this chapter is divided in to three parts. The next section responds to the central research question that guided the study. Section 6.2 outlines the limitations and implications of this study for future research. Some concluding thoughts and personal reflections about the seal hunt controversy are provided in Section 6.3.

6.1. Brief summary of the completed work and the answers to the research questions

The aim of this thesis was twofold. At a general level, it sought to attend to the way in which news media construe complex environmental dilemmas involving myriad stakeholders holding contrasting attitudes about the relationship between humans and nature (Miller & Riechert, 2015). The guiding premise for this endeavour is my belief that culturally and morally resonant media depictions of nature “provide an affective charge to environmental discourses” (Cottle, 2013: 24). As such, contributing to a constructive dialogue between conflicting sides in complex environmental dilemmas requires having a clear picture of the environmental ethical positions underpinning contrasting attitudes (Rottman, 2014; Kortenkamp & Moore, 2001). It was important for me, therefore, to examine how the news media construe and convey these ethical positions, and whether the news coverage addresses ethical intricacies of complicated environmental issues.

At a narrower level my aim was to investigate how the moral issues surrounding one of the lengthiest environmental conflicts – the Canadian seal hunt controversy – was communicated by two Canadian newspapers in 2009. That year marked the 45th anniversary of the controversy, was well as the period within which the European Union made the

unprecedented policy decision to ban of the import of all seal products on the basis of a “moral standard relating to the welfare of animals” (Sellheim, 2016: 141; EU, 2009).

The contending moral stances informing this conflict – whether from anti- or pro-sealing activists – has often been noted (Lee, 1989; Sturn, 2006; Marland, 2014; Carrier-Lafontaine, 2009; Foran, 2018). However, my preliminary and subsequent research revealed a lack of studies examining the news framing of the seal hunt through the lens of moral and ethical dispute. Thus the impetus for my thesis was to investigate the environmental rhetoric manifest in one national mainstream newspaper (i.e., *The Globe and Mail*), and one provincial, Newfoundland-based newspaper (i.e., *The Telegram*) in order to see: (i) whether and how their respective coverage reflected particular moral attitudes about seals; and (ii) whether the presence of ethical belief systems underpinning these attitudes – namely, the dichotomy of anthropocentrism vs. biocentrism – was being articulated and/or addressed. At the same time, and recognizing the differences in cultural-moral norms between societies, and the implications such differences have had on the “rhetoric of environmental images” in other similar conflicts across the globe (Cottle, 2006: 24; Oh & Jackson, 2011), another motivation was to simultaneously investigate the ways in which the news discourse had portrayed the sealers, in order to see whether any evidence of moral othering can be found in the news coverage.

In order to realize the above objectives, media framing theory was used to operationalize and guide an analysis of the ways in which seals and sealers were framed in a sample of articles from each newspaper. The analytical methodology used in this thesis built on Pan & Kosicki (1993) and van Gorp (2007; 2009), employing qualitative linguistic-based analysis of inductively identified frames. The news stories involving seals and/or sealers were used as proxies for investigating the presence and the essence of moral reasoning about the

seal hunt, based on the assumption that the stories about seals and/or sealers might involve certain moral conundrums which, hypothetically, would be reflected in the way the news media treat this topic.

Drawing on research findings, the discussions in subsections 6.1.1. and 6.1.2. offer the answers to each of the sub-questions, respectively. In subsection 6.1.3. the central research question is answered.

6.1.1. Moral reasoning on seals

The first research sub-question of this thesis asked: *Is there any evidence of advancing a specific environmental ethical position, manifested in the moral reasoning on seals?* The news coverage of the seal hunt within the sampled articles from *The Globe & Mail* and *The Telegram* was found to be comprised of similar lines of moral reasoning about seals. Six of the seven moral judgements were found to be rooted in an anthropocentric ethical position, advocating for the use of seals based on the following aspects of human-seal relationship: the normalcy of using seals for social and economic benefit of humans; reference to the moral inconsistency of the animal welfare adherers as a moral counterbalance for seal hunt; and placement of emphasis on perception of seals as wildlife (pests and/or resources) as opposed to the perception of seals as cute pets. One moral judgement was found to be indirectly supporting a biocentric ethical position, criticizing the moral selectivity of the EU policy-makers and pointing out that seals are not the only sentient animals who suffer while being killed for human needs.

Summing up the discussion of the moral reasoning about seals in the news framing of the seal hunt, the following key points can be drawn:

1. *The coverage in the sampled articles shows evidence of ascribing instrumental value to seals, with a tendency to frame them based on their perceived social and economic benefit for human beings as commodities, abundant wildlife, nourishment or pests.*

The coverage in the sampled articles was found to be placing the human-seals relationship inside the traditional hierarchy of all animals with humans at the apex (Phillips & Kluss, 2018). This was especially evident in *Commodity*, *Pests* and *Food* frames. The discourse present in the sampled articles ascribes instrumental value to seals through the use of commonplace rhetoric while referring to them as commodities or food, establishing the cultural importance of hunting and consuming seals, and defending the moral right of people to wear seal fur and hunt seals as part of the traditional practices. By framing seals as commodities or food, this discourse implicitly reduces the moral status of seals from sentient beings to things in a manner that absolves humans from moral responsibility towards them (Sumner, 1983).

The analysis of the moral communication shows that when referring to seals as resources, the discourse present in the sampled articles tended to use commonplace language, without explicit argumentation. However, when the sampled articles dealt with aspects of animal exploitation on which the societal attitudes are known to diverge (e.g., wearing fur, or attaching special cultural value to seals, as in the case of Inuit people), the moral reasoning conveyed for using seals was more explicit (e.g., claiming that seal fur is a sign of wealth, referring to the fact that harvest of animals for human needs is a widespread practice, etc.).

At the same time, this type of moral reasoning contraposes anti- and pro-sealing sides, portraying the opponents of the sealing, including the EU, as urbanites, effete Europeans, ignorant, animal-rights activists whose actions affect Northerners. They are contraposed with defenders of the sealing, as Michaëlle Jean who showed support and respect to the cultural traditions of Inuit by eating raw seal (GM33, GM34, GM36). These findings seemingly corroborate Foran's (2018: 143) assertion that pro-sealing propaganda "defends status quo

beliefs by falling back on anthropocentric sentiments”, portraying the opponents of the seal hunt “as animal rights urban dwellers who are "out of it" in their ignorance of the real world”.

Anthropocentrism is also evident in conservationist concerns for seals as part of the wildlife. Perceiving seals as part of wild fauna corroborates Phillips & Kluss (2018) who point out that people’s moral status of an animal is derived from the kind of relationship humans share with that specific animal. Perceiving an animal as wildlife gives it a moral status of either an animal to whom humans feel an obligation to protect, in case the animal is considered endangered (Phillips & Kluss, 2018: 491), or a target for human utility, if it is considered abundant (Foran, 2018: 145). For the majority of Newfoundlanders, who traditionally perceived seals as an abundant and sustainably managed part of wildlife, hunting seals and controlling their population through culling is therefore morally justified.

2. *By focusing on antagonism between the contending sides (anti- and pro-sealing), reiterating the position of official sources and stakeholders, and not paying sufficient attention to the intricacies of the ethical debate about the well-being of seals, the discourse in the sampled articles overlooks important animal welfare concerns.*

The discourse in the sampled articles conveys animal welfare considerations as rooted in anthropocentrism. The welfare of seals is not approached from the perspective of their intrinsic moral value. Instead, it addresses human concerns based on standards of good welfare that are often arbitrary (Proctor et al., 2013; Phillips & Kluss, 2018). However, none of the sampled articles directly dealt with the ethical aspects of animal welfare. Instead, much reliance was placed on conveying official expert opinion about the seal hunt indeed being humane.

The criticism of animal welfare, however, rests on whether it is possible to adhere to a moral standard of humane killing of animals (Francione, 2018). For example, the 2009 EU ban was the premised on vetoing the “cruel hunting methods which do not guarantee the instantaneous death, without suffering, of the animals” (EU, 2009: par. 1). Yet, the position of

experts referenced in the sampled articles was to declare that the hunt is humane. The articles did not explain or investigate differences in positions regarding welfare standards as it pertains to seals. Instead, focus was placed on the antagonism between the contending sides of the controversy. This lack of attention to the differences in ethical positions is manifest in the blurring of the line between animal welfare and animal rights positions, and in misconstruing the anti-sealing protesters' call to end the hunt as a battle-cry for the liberation of all animals, which is anathema to capitalist values. By emphasizing the antagonism between the proponents and opponents of the seal hunt, overlooking the ethical essence of the debate, as well as by relying solely of the official sources that affirm the seal hunt is humane, the discourse present in the sampled articles both oversimplifies the ethical debate about seal welfare, and overlooks legitimate animal welfare concerns.

3. *The criticism of the anti-sealing stance and the 2009 EU ban in the sampled news articles highlighted moral selectivity of policy-making based on animal welfare considerations. Moreover, the evidence of moral judgement rooted in biocentric ethical perspective in articles whose narrative revealed the presence of pro-sealing attitude showed that demanding moral consistency from anti-sealing movement equals implicitly approving of the animal rights philosophy.*

Sampled articles employing the *Sentient animals* frame raised the issue of moral inconsistency of the animal welfare adherers, specifically European Union legislators, when specifically referring to the sentiency of seals. This, in turn, evokes the anthropocentrism vs. biocentrism dichotomy and the assessment of whether the treatment of the animals is morally justifiable (Phillips & Kluss, 2018).

Somewhat paradoxically, this issue was also raised by the pro-sealing rhetoric in two columns that otherwise criticized the anti-sealing stance. The paradox here is that demanding moral consistency from policy-makers who ground their decisions in animal welfare means at least indirectly approving of the animal rights position. In so doing, the contents of these two

articles implicitly affirmed the same animal rights attitude that was anathema to the pro-sealing rhetoric throughout the rest of the coverage.

6.1.2. Moral reasoning about sealers

The second research sub-question of this thesis asked: *Is there any evidence of moral othering, manifested in the moral reasoning on sealers?* The analysis of the moral reasoning regarding sealers in the articles sampled from *The Globe & Mail* and *The Telegram* found no evidence of the moral othering that could be seen as paralleling other similar controversies (e.g. Yulin dog meat festival). Indeed, the analysis revealed a positive representation of sealers in both newspapers. The analysis likewise found that rhetoric influenced by group consciousness, claimed Newfoundland sealers are subject to prejudice in the rest of Canada. However, due to the fact that these claims only came from Newfoundlanders themselves, it was not deemed as constituting moral othering.

Summing up the discussion of the moral reasoning of sealers, the following key points can be drawn:

1. *The analysis of the sampled news articles revealed a slight difference in the way sealers were framed in each newspaper. In articles sampled from the Telegram, the focus is on the moral rectitude of sealers, their economic struggles, the lack of support from the federal government. In articles sampled from The Globe and Mail, the focus was on the cultural importance of the seal hunt for Northern sealers. The sampled articles from both newspapers emphasize the heroic character of sealers and the fact that while there are some sealers who violate the rules of the hunt, these do not represent the majority.*

The representation of a sealer as a seafaring hero, a good working man, struggling with the economic fluctuations of the seal pelt prices and the lack of support from the federal government, is characteristic of the articles sampled from *The Telegram*. While also emphasizing the heroic character of sealers, the sampled articles from the *Globe and Mail* focused on their cultural distinctiveness and on the importance of sealing as a traditional way

of life the sealers want to continue having. At the same time, the sampled *Globe and Mail* articles refer to Northerners in general (including Inuit).

The representation of sealers in articles sampled from *The Telegram*, on the other hand, mainly refer to the sealers from Newfoundland, through personal stories, interviews, and quotes, portraying them as people of moral rectitude, brave seafarers, who attempt to maintain their traditional way of life and occupation. This representation exemplifies Marland's (2014: 79) observation about the idealized characteristics of sealers as "rugged, industrious, seaworthy adventurers who have historically battled harsh elements and difficult economic circumstances" which he claims "has become a metaphor for all that is strong and stoic in Newfoundland's collective ethos".

2. *The Newfoundlanders frame has revealed the presence of the claims for prejudice towards Newfoundland sealers from the outside of the province. Since these claims come from Newfoundlanders themselves, they cannot serve as the evidence of othering. However, its presence is indicative of a catalyzed sense of shared group identity.*

The analysis revealed the presence of the rhetoric expressed by some Newfoundlanders, which was pervaded by the sense of Newfoundland's shared identity and translated into self-othering. To better construe the nature of this finding, one has to bear in mind Marland's (2014) about the importance of sealing Newfoundland's collective ethos, catalyzing role of anti-sealing propaganda in fostering and sustaining group cohesion aimed at preserving the status quo. To this end, it seems very likely that the 2009 EU ban on the importing of seal products likely served to reinforce this sense of shared group identity. In this sense, these findings resonate with Oh & Jackson (2011) who studied the case of meat trade in South Korea and found the Western criticism of the dog meat consumption, was perceived as an attack on Korean cultural practice and traditional values, stimulating a sense of group identity and actually enhancing domestic interest in consuming dog meat.

6.1.3. The answer to the central research question

The central research question guiding this thesis asked: *How do the moral profiles of the frames in the news coverage of the seal hunt reflect particular ethical positions?*

The analysis of the moral profiles of the frames in the sampled articles about the seal hunt revealed the prevalence of anthropocentric ethical position regarding seals, manifest in ascribing instrumental value to them and providing a moral justification for their killing that is mainly grounded in their material value for humans. The sampled articles from both newspapers offer similar renderings of seals, emphasizing their social and economic benefit as commodities and food, and their harmfulness as pests. These perceptions are rooted in attributing to seals the moral statuses of things and wildlife. Referring to seals as mere things liberates humans from needing to consider their interests, and perceiving seals as abundant wildlife grants a moral justification to control seal population through culling and hunting (Sumner, 1983; Foran, 2018).

The news coverage in the sampled articles overlooked important seal welfare concerns, focusing instead on antagonism between anti- and pro-sealing adherers about the humaneness of the hunt. Reiterations of the positions of official sources and stakeholders who have interest in sealing and who unequivocally state the hunt is humane was observed in the sampled articles from both newspapers. The claims of humaneness were reinforced by the highlighting of the moral inconsistency at the core of the EU's 2009 ban on importing seal products.

Overall, this study shows the prevalence of the anthropocentric perspective on seals, rooted in economic, social and cultural benefits for humans. Compassion for seals was only evident in the emotion-laden statements attributed to the opponents of the seal hunt who claim the hunt is inhumane. No evidence of a constructive dialogue about animal welfare between the two contending positions was found. At the same time, the analysis identified two instances

wherein moral arguments were rooted in biocentric ethical perspective, juxtaposing the sentiency of seals with the moral selectivity of EU legislators. This finding is especially important in the light of its presence in the articles that defended sealing because it suggests that the pro-sealing rhetoric is not homogeneous in its reliance on anthropocentric values.

The analysis of the moral communication about sealers suggest the importance of the sociocultural perspective for environmental conundrums in which the moral aspects are entwined with social and cultural norms. At the same time, the lack of evidence of moral othering raises the question of whether moral othering can exist at all in the coverage provided by national newspapers.

6.2. Limitations of the study

Limited by the time and financial constraints, this study had to restrict its sample to two Canadian newspapers: one national and one provincial. The comparison between newspapers from other parts of Canada (e.g., *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Calgary Herald*) may have resulted in a fuller representation of the news media positions on the seal hunt in Canada. Time and resources permitting, it would have been beneficial to compare the coverage in domestic newspapers with that offered in newspapers outside of Canada. Doing so would enable assessing the extent to which, and how, national perspectives affect the moral and ethical positions conveyed about seals and sealers.

Space limitations did not permit me to devote a specific chapter to presenting results of a comparative analysis of frames presented in editorials versus those in news articles. Additionally, the data studied was restricted to textual documents, as the news articles from *The Globe & Mail* were available in text-only version and did not include illustrations. This

limitation influenced the research design in the sense of opting in favor of the linguistic-based framing analysis as opposed to the visual framing analysis.

6.3. Final conclusions: contributions and implications of the study

How is that we humans are able to find compassion for some species in certain circumstances, yet remain indifferent to the cruelty inflicted on other species?
- Nigel Osborne, letter to the editor, *The Globe & Mail*, 23 Feb 2009

This study was driven by an intention to investigate the moral communication of the seal hunt in order to establish how the ethical belief systems underpinning these attitudes – namely, the dichotomy of anthropocentrism vs. biocentrism – have been addressed and articulated by Canadian news media. This study contributes to increasing our knowledge of the role that ethical belief systems play in societal attitudes towards subjects of moral worth in complex environmental dilemmas with wide national and international resonance. Discussing such dilemmas within the frame of reference to our moral obligations to non-human nature is important, first, to better understand these obligations and the essence of the human-nature relationship, and second, understanding moral positions of the stakeholders can contribute to a constructive dialogue between the contending parties, and hopefully, help to solve environmental dilemmas.

The seal hunt controversy is not a standalone phenomenon of protest rooted in animal welfare considerations. Hence, this thesis can be of value for the future research of comparable environmental controversies such as the ongoing cull of feral cats in Australia and the recent culling of California sea lions in Oregon. The latter have caused an uproar among animal welfarists, fronted by celebrity figures like Morissey and Bardot (The Guardian, 2015) as well as animal welfare societies around the world (OIPA, 2019; SSCS, 2019).

Looking at the seal hunt controversy in the perspective of ethical debate, it is important to note that despite its being a “moral-based conflict” (Lee, 1989: 37) from its onset, not

enough attention has been given to the ethical backdrop of the seal hunt. To this end, my thesis continues an avenue of research started by Sumner (1983), and more recently, Foran (2018), and combines moral assessment with an evaluation of the ethical considerations behind differing sides of environmental controversies. However, in contrast to Sumner and Foran, I sought to analyse news media coverage in attempt to look into its representation of particular ethical positions. Another contribution of my study is in that it puts to the test the methodology specifically tailored to analysing moral framing through a qualitative linguistic-based analysis of inductively identified frames, building on Pan & Kosicki (1993) and van Gorp (2007; 2009).

It should probably come as no surprise that this thesis found a prevalence of attitudes rooted in anthropocentrism. Placing humans at the apex of the animal hierarchy is a panhuman phenomenon, embedded in culture and traditions of many societies (Swan & Conrad, 2014; Horsthemke, 2015). As the social and cultural aspects are inseparable from the relationship of human beings with non-human nature, it is precisely these aspects that govern the paradigms of perception of sentient animals in accordance to their human utility: cats and dogs are commonly perceived as pets, rats as pests, and chicken as food (Phillips & Kluss, 2018: 495). Therefore, the moral status of animals varies in accordance with human utility, but it is also culture-specific. For example, in many Western societies it may be morally acceptable to slaughter cattle (which are commonly perceived as food), but not dogs (perceived as pets); elsewhere, cattle may be considered sacred (e.g., in India), or dogs may be considered food (e.g., in certain parts of China and Korean peninsula) (Oh & Jackson, 2011).

In case of those animal species that are considered wildlife, such as the seals, they can be assigned a wide range of meanings based on social, cultural and other aspects of the human relationship with the nature. Animal sentiency in this case does not play a crucial role, as wildlife is considered part of the environment, and the human-environment relationship has

traditionally been built on the human exploitation of nature (White, 1967; Rummel, 1975). The sense of human superiority underpins the moral justification for perceiving seals as resources and for controlling their population through culling (Foran, 2018).

Existing alongside the traditionally and culturally resonant depictions of seals in news media that are rooted in human superiority, are contending visions that are rooted in considerations of animal welfare, animal rights and animal ethics. These visions render alternative meaning to the traditional role of animals within the human-nature relationship and call for “redefinition of the human relationship to the rest of the natural world” (Jamieson, 2012, 4:58). However, there is a disagreement as to what should be the philosophical basis for the moral standing of the animals, and what should be our moral duties for the non-human world (Singer, 1975; Jamieson, 2012; Francione, 2018; Phillips & Kluss, 2018).

One possible avenue for the future research lies within the domain of environmental ethics. Specifically, to determine the most sound ethical principle for ensuring our treatment of the non-human nature is *morally sound and consistent*. The ethical debate should take into the account such important paradigms as our moral obligations, values ascribed to non-human nature, compassion for animals, etc. The two main opposing ethical approaches are utilitarianist (judging the morality of an action by its outcome) and deontologist (acting while being committed to a moral duty). These ethical approaches have some irreconcilable differences when applied as guiding principles for the human-nature relationship. By contrast, virtue ethics postulates the need to develop a sound moral character in order to act correctly.

Seen from the perspective of the ethical debate, the seal hunt controversy exemplifies the current lack of philosophical consensus. For example, the positions of animal rights adherers who criticize animal welfarists for being morally inconsistent, and the opinions of pro-sealing advocates converge. The latter emphasize the preoccupation of the anti-sealing

protesters with the seal hunt, and point out the amount of effort and resources put into the anti-sealing campaign over the past 55 years could have had more valuable impact if aimed at combating cases of cruel treatment of other sentient wild animals, that unlike the harp seals, also happen to be on the brink of extinction – e.g., commercial tiger farming in China (Cao, 2015: 95).

An attempt to find a universal formula that would allow us to assign equal inclusion of both human and non-human interests in order to solve environmental conflicts was put forward by Sumner (1983) as the principle of minimal decency. However, it is flawed in the sense that the human benefits and nonhuman costs cannot be universally and objectively measured, especially when we deal with different sociocultural systems. Seen in this light, the concept of rational compassion aimed to syncretize the attribution of the intrinsic value to non-human nature with pragmatic conservational purposes appears to be of value for the future attempts to reconcile contending environmental ethics (Bekoff, 2008; Rottman et al. 2015, Piccolo, 2017). Moreover, making compassionate and conscious choices about environment and nature may catalyze the revision of our relationship to the rest of the natural world.

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Appendix 1. Frame matrix summaries

Figure 1. Frame matrix summary - *The Telegram*

Objects of framing: seals

Framed as	Main framing devices			Main reasoning devices	
	Rhetorical structures		Thematic structures	Syntactic structures	
	Key lexemes, catchphrases, metaphors, exemplars, references	Verbs + object / Grammatical features	Key propositions / Main themes and/or sub-themes	Placement/ Sources (who speaks or quoted)	
	Summary of main implicit and/or explicit statements				
Commodity	Seal(s) Animals Seal products Products Harvest Pelts Fur Meat Catch Wildlife Herd ----- Reference to monetary value	Kill Fish Trade Sell Hunt Take Buy Retrieve Harvest Ban Wear ----- Use of passive voice	“Seal pelt prices expected to drop.” “The industry is carrying about 60,000 pelts from the previous year in a market that is drying up.” “This is a humane harvest and they know it.” “The Canadian seal hunt is guided by rigorous animal welfare principles” “People have the right to want fur” ----- - Downturn in the seal market and its repercussions - Humaneness of the seal harvest - People have the right to wear seal fur	-Sealing industry - Federal and provincial officials - The Telegram - Animal welfare organizations	- Seal harvest is important for the economy - Sealing is becoming increasingly difficult due to EU ban, market decline, fluctuating prices - Canadian seal hunt complies with high ethical standards - seals are humanely harvested - No animal killing is pretty - People have the right to wear fur
Pests	Pests Cod-eater Ice rats	Eat Consume	“These seals are consuming seven million tonnes of fish a year and that’s	- The Telegram	- Seals eat too much fish, are a threat to fisheries, and should be culled.

	<p>Threat ----- Comparison to other 'pests'</p>	<p>Put dent in fisheries [as subjects] ----- Kill off Cull [as objects]</p>	<p>putting a tremendous dent in the fish food resource" "Kill seals off the coast" "Puts a cod-eating show" ----- - Destructive impact of seals on fisheries</p>	<p>- Sealing industry - Provincial officials and experts</p>	<p>- Other animals are massively culled, yet the public focus is on seals.</p>
Well-managed wildlife	<p>Annual seal quota Allowing a quota of Population estimated Population survey Dozens of seals ----- - Stating the numbers in comparison with the 1970s - Quoting authority sources</p>	<p>Allowed to take Estimated [at more than] Meet [quota]</p>	<p>"Harp seal population is estimated at more than 5.5 million" "There are about 5.6 million seals off Canada, up from 1.5 million in the 1970s" "Yeah, that's a lot of counting [counting the seals on aerial photos]" ----- - Managing the seal herd</p>	<p>- Federal and provincial officials and experts</p>	<p>- Seal population is abundant and increasing - Seal population is being carefully watched and controlled</p>
Food	<p>Flipper pie Seal flippers Traditional food Ringed seal Grey seal Haute cuisine</p>	<p>Snack on (seal meat) [as objects]</p>	<p>"Seal meat is no different than any other animal" "Ringed seal is the tastiest of them all" ----- - Normalcy of seal meat consumption - Seal being 'haute cuisine'</p>	<p>The Telegram Members of Parliament</p>	<p>- Seal meat is just like any other meat</p>

Victims	Bloodied seal pups Still alive Senselessly slaughtered	Killed Clubbed Skinned Slaughtered	“Clubbed and skinned while still alive” “Senseless slaughter of millions of seals” ----- - Inhumane hunt	- IFAW - Humane Society International (HSI) - Experts	- Seal hunt opponents perpetuate the claims that seals are killed inhumanely for their own benefit - Sealing experts claim the seal hunt is humane
Marketed cuteness	Cute Cuddly Danger Enormous asset Cover	Perceived as (cute and cuddly)	“Seals are cute and cuddly, therefore [they are] an enormous asset in fundraising” “‘Inhumane’ argument has always been a cover” ----- - Exploitation of the wrongful perception of seals (i.e., wild animals) as cute pets by the anti-sealing movement - Dangers lurking in the wrongful perception of wildlife as pets	The Telegram	- Wild animals are perceived as cute pets - Anti-sealing activists exploit the perceived cuteness of seals

Figure 2. Frame matrix summary - *The Globe and Mail*

Objects of framing: seals

Framed as	Main framing devices			Main framing devices
	Rhetorical structures		Thematic structures	
	Key lexemes, catchphrases, metaphors, references	Verbs + object / Grammatical features	Key propositions / Main themes and/or sub-themes	
			Syntactic structures	Summary of main implicit and/or explicit statements
			Placement/ Sources (who speaks or quoted)	

Commodity	Seal products Animals Pelts Skin Sealskin Meat Value Fur Harvest Haul Bulk Decline Humane Well-regulated Sustainable ----- Quoting authority sources	Kill Fish Trade Sell Hunt Harvest Gut Fetch ----- Use of the passive voice	“The landed value of the seals was about \$16-million in 2005” “Seal pelts that fetched \$105 in 2006 fetch only \$15 today” “Should the EU choose to adopt a seal products trade ban that does not contain an acceptable derogation for humanely harvested seal products, Canada will defend its rights and interests” “Canada goes to great lengths to ensure a humane, well-regulated and sustainable seal hunt” ----- - Downturn in the seal market and its repercussions - Humaneness of the seal hunt - Harvest of animals in European countries	- Globe & Mail - Sealing industry - Federal government	- Seals are an important branch of the economy that is now in decline -Canadian seal hunt is lawful, sustainable and humane - Gruesome-looking hunt is in reality a quick and painless death -Seals are humanely and sustainably harvested - Other countries harvest animals for fur and it is commonly accepted
Victims	Little animals Dead seals Graphic Bloody image Frightened seal Bludgeoned seal pups ----- Quoting authority sources	Clubbed Skinned Frightened Bludgeoned Killed Bleeding ----- Passive voice	“They strike these little animals” “They can’t escape” ”Young seals being clubbed and skinned on blood-spattered ice” Canadian hunters clubbing seals and dragging their bleeding carcasses across the ice “Bludgeoned in front of their mothers” ----- - Inhumane hunt	- Celebrities - Federal government	- Seal hunt opponents claim that seal pups are killed inhumanely - Government executives assure that seals are hunted humanely
Food	Seal heart Raw meat Delicious	Sliced Cut up Eaten raw [as objects]	“Our gal cuts out their hearts out and eats them raw” ”Caviar of northern aboriginal cuisine”	Globe & Mail	- Seal is an important traditional food in the North - Seal is delicious, it is haute cuisine

	<p>Haute seal cuisine Seal paté Seal pepperoni Seal tartar</p>	<p>----- Passive voice</p>	<p>”The seal is our life, the seal is our way of life” ----- - Cultural significance of the seal meat for Inuit - Governor General Michaëlle Jean’s seal feast in Nunavut - Seal being ‘haute cuisine’</p>		
<p>Well-managed wildlife</p>	<p>Seal population Size of the kill Quota Advice of the scientists Herd ----- - Stating the numbers in comparison with the 1970s - Quoting authority sources</p>	<p>Increase Ensure Maintain Monitor</p>	<p>“By contrast, the Canadian seal population is increasing.” “The decision on the size of this year's kill was made with the advice of scientists to ensure the seal population is maintained.” “Canada goes to great lengths to ensure a humane, well-regulated and sustainable seal hunt.” ----- - Managing the seal herd in Canada</p>	<p>Globe & Mail Federal officials and scientists</p>	<p>- Seal population in Canada is abundant and increasing</p>

Marketed cuteness	Cuddly Little Cute White-coat Seal pups Heartstrings	Bite Tug (at the heartstrings)	<p>“When Paul McCartney and his wife showed up in 2006 to embrace a cuddly little white-coat, the creature tried to bite them. Good riddance, I thought.”</p> <p>“Activists still use the pictures of white seal pups, which are very cute, because it tugs at the heartstrings”</p> <p>-----</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exploitation of the wrongful perception of seals (i.e., wild animals) as cute pets by the anti-sealing movement - Dangers lurking in the wrongful perception of wildlife as pets 	Globe & Mail Federal government	- Anti-sealing activists exploit the perceived cuteness of seals
Sentient animals	Sentient Pain Distress Fear Suffering	Experience [suffering] Suffer	<p>”Seals are sentient animals that can experience pain, distress, fear and other forms of suffering”**</p> <p>”As if seals were the only creatures that could suffer”**</p> <p>-----</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sentiency of seals vs. the sentiency of other animals killed for human use 	EU parliament* Globe & Mail**	- Seals are sentient animals, but they are not the only animals that can suffer
Pests	Fish Stocks Cod ----- Juxtaposing seals and fish	Eat Destroy (fish) [as subjects]	<p>”Seals are ferocious fish eaters”</p> <p>”Hunt is needed to protect fish stocks”</p> <p>-----</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Destructive impact of seals on fisheries 	- Globe & Mail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seals destroy fisheries by eating fish in large amounts - Seals’ population has to be kept under control

Fig.3. Frame matrix summary - *The Telegram*

Objects of frame: **sealers**

Framed as	Main framing devices			Main reasoning devices
	Rhetorical structures		Thematic structures	Summary of main implicit and explicit statements
	Key lexemes, catchphrases, metaphors, references	Verbs + object / Grammatical features	Key propositions / Main themes and/or sub-themes	
Men under pressure	Good men Hard-working Sealing for years Fishermen out of hunt Hunters A soft target Need to make a living Men of integrity Good-hearted Generous Friendly	Ply Hunt Harvest Fish Seal Kill off [seals] ----- Persecuted Frustrated Endangered Are out	“Simply plying their trade” “As if they hijacked a plane, not simply killed seals off the north-east coast” “Feds obsessed with them” “They always aim for the head to avoid damaging the pelt” “Nicest people in the world” “All they’re trying to do is make an extra buck to help their families” ----- - Downturn in the seal market and its repercussions - Professional seniority of sealers - Sealers are the targets of persecution	- The Telegram -Sealing industry -Celebrities - Sealers are simple working men, vulnerable because of the instability of their industry - Sealers are good people - Sealers are persecuted for no serious reason

Seafaring heroes	Lost sealers Hard men to keep down Courageous Tough	Survive Cannot be claimed Are to be admired	“Freezing ocean can’t claim them” ----- - Personal stories of sealers	The Telegram	- Sealers are men of unbreakable character - Sealers are heroic
Newfoundlanders	New Canadians down east Bad publicity Swilers [sealers] Eastern Canadians Income from sealing ----- Juxtaposition: Newfoundlanders and the rest of Canadians	Derive Branded	“Federal government quietly prayed that this hideous seal hunt would just go away and die a natural death” “Those despicable Newfoundlanders laughing with pleasurable glee as they skin baby seals alive” ----- - Sealers are the targets of persecution - Sealers are subjects to prejudice	- The Telegram - Sealing industry	- Some Newfoundlanders believe that the sealers are subject to stereotyping in Canada
Violators	Shady sealers Some sealers Profiting from personal permits	Profit Put at risk ----- Sentenced Guilty Charged Cashing in	“Offences committed under the watchful eye of the Humane Society of Animals” “Behavior puts industry at risk, judge says” “The number taken is so small it’s not even funny” ----- - Fair punishment for wrongdoing - Sealers are the targets for persectiion	-Provincial court -The Telegram - Sealing industry	- Some sealers fail to abide by the rules - Those sealers who break the law will receive the punishment - Sealers are persecuted for no serious reason

Fig.4. Frame matrix summary - *The Globe & Mail*

Objects of frame: **sealers**

Framed as	Main framing devices			Main reasoning devices	
	Rhetorical structures		Thematic structures	Summary of main implicit and explicit statements	
	Key lexemes, catchphrases, metaphors, references	Verbs + object / Grammatical features	Key propositions / Main themes and/or sub-themes		
Carriers of cultural practice	Customs Habits Culture [I am] art of the land [Part] of my culture Cultural heritage ----- Juxtaposition to similar cultural practices (e.g., corrida in Spain)	Maintain Preserve Being part of the culture Being [not important]	"We want to maintain our habits and customs" "I'm part of the land and it's part of my culture" "If the seal hunt is "inherently inhumane," as the European parliamentarians say, why do they tolerate bullfights?" ----- - Cultural aspects of the sealing	- Sealers - Members of the Northern communities - Globe & Mail	- Sealers belong to distinct cultural groups with their own habits and customs - European Union expressed double moral standards when they condemned the seal hunt
Seafaring heroes	Men perished Dangerous Canadian sealers	Provide livelihood ----- Perished	"People still feel touched by the incident" "Government defends the rights of Canadian sealers to provide a livelihood for their families through our lawful, sustainable and humane hunt"	Sealers Federal government	Sealers are men of hard and dangerous profession

			----- Personal stories of sealers		
Newfoundlanders	Entrapment Stomachy Newfoundlanders	Did [nothing wrong] Fighting [the case] Entrapped	“Casualty of political decision to escape a backlash from animal-rights groups” “All Ottawa is interested in is proving the guilt of these fishermen” “They didn't figure on a group of stomachy Newfoundlanders” ”Seal hunt and perhaps us as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are not important” ----- - Sealers are subject to bias	- Sealers and their legal representatives - Provincial officials	- According to some Newfoundlanders, sealers are subject to an unjust bias from Canadian government
Violators	Unauthorized weapons Gaffs or a shovel	Using [unauthorized weapons] ----- Fined Prohibited	“Urging sealers to hunt humanely, a Newfoundland judge has fined a sealing captain \$2,000 for using unauthorized weapons during the hunt two years ago.” ----- - Fair punishment for wrongdoing	- Globe & Mail	- A sealer failed to abide by the rules and was punished

Appendix 2. Summary of the analysis of the moral reasoning themes

Fig.5. Object of framing: seals

Frame	Moral reasoning themes		Main moral judgement	Ethical positioning / Points for ethical discussion
	The Telegram	The Globe & Mail		
Commodity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seal harvest has economic significance (n=22); - seals are humanely harvested (n=13); - seal fur is a valuable material: people have the right to wear fur (n=2). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seal harvest has economic significance (n=21); - seals are humanely harvested (n=5); - seal fur is a valuable material: European countries harvest animals for fur as well (n=2). 	The justification of the use of humanely harvested seals for economic gain	<p>Anthropocentric, with bias toward instrumental value of seals.</p> <p><i>Points for ethical discussion:</i> Human use of animals, animal welfare.</p>
Victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-sealing movement claims the seals are killed inhumanely, but the experts / government officials refute these statements (n=4): <li style="padding-left: 20px;">- according to experts, the seal hunt complies with the humane standards (n=4). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-sealing movement claims the seals are killed inhumanely, but the experts / government officials refute these claims (n=10): <li style="padding-left: 20px;">- policy-makers are motivated by concern for the welfare of Canadians (n=4); <li style="padding-left: 20px;">- EU position is hypocritical (n=6). 	The justification of the seal hunt in the light of humane treatment of seals	<p>Anthropocentric.</p> <p><i>Points for ethical discussion:</i> animal welfare</p>
Pests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seals are a serious threat to fisheries (n=5) and have to be culled (n=4): <li style="padding-left: 20px;">- Newfoundlanders try to survive on the scarce amount of fish that is left 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seals are ferocious fish eaters, and therefore have to be kept under control (n=2). 	Seals are a threat and they have to be culled	<p>Anthropocentric.</p> <p><i>Points for ethical discussion:</i> conservation</p>

	in the province (n=2).			
Food	- Seal meat is just like any other meat which is normally eaten by human beings (n=3); - Seal meat is a 'haute cuisine' (n=1)	- Seal meat has a cultural importance in the North (n=6); - Seal meat is 'haute cuisine' (n=1)	Justification of consumption of seals as food.	Anthropocentric, with bias toward instrumental value of seals. <i>Points for ethical discussion:</i> cultural significance, human use of animals
Well-managed wildlife	- Seal population is abundant (n=6): - conservation practices require culling of the herd (n=3)	- Seal population is abundant, well-maintained and sustainably managed (n=4)	Seal population is successfully managed in accordance to conservational practices.	Anthropocentric. <i>Points for ethical discussion:</i> conservation.
Marketed cuteness	- The perception of wild animals as cute pets is exploited by anti-sealing activists (n=2)	- The perception of wild animals as cute pets is exploited by anti-sealing activists (n=2)	Unjustified perception of wildlife	Anthropocentric. <i>Points for ethical discussion:</i> conservation
Sentient animals	-	- Seals are sentient animals, but they are not the only animals that can suffer (n=2).	Banning the killing of seals on the grounds of sentience has to be followed by the ban of killing other sentient animals	Biocentric. <i>Points for ethical discussion:</i> animal welfare, animal rights

Fig. 6. Object of framing: sealers

Frame	Moral reasoning themes		Main moral judgement	Evidence of moral 'othering'
	The Telegram	The Globe & Mail		
Men under pressure	- Sealers are good, working men (n=12) who:	-	Sealers are good men who simply do their work	No

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are unjustly persecuted (n=5) - struggle to keep ends meet (n=4) - do not receive any help from the government (n=3) 			
Carriers of cultural practice	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sealing is a part of a cultural tradition in the North (n=7): - Europeans who criticize seal hunt are hypocritical (n=3) 	Sealers have the right to maintain their cultural practice	No
Seafaring heroes	- Sealers are the seafaring heroes (n=4)	- Sealers are the seafaring heroes (n=2)	Sealers are brave men who do their work	No
Newfoundlanders	- Newfoundland sealers are subjects to prejudice (n=2)	- Newfoundland sealers are subjects to prejudice (n=2)	Newfoundland sealers are subjects to prejudice because of their sealing practices	No – the prejudice is claimed by Newfoundlanders
Violators	- The sealers who violate the law get punished (n=2)	- The sealers who violate the law get punished (n=1)	Sealing is well-regulated, the rules are maintained	No

Appendix 3. The list of the sampled articles

The Globe & Mail

1. [GM02] The Globe and Mail (2009, January 6). Canada to lobby EU not to ban seal products, p. A.6.
2. [GM04] Peritz, I. (2009, January 10). Entrapment or slaughter? Sealers back in court, p.A.4.
3. [GM05] The Globe and Mail (2009, February 7). Sealing captain fined for using illegal weapons, p.A.4.
4. [GM06] The Globe and Mail (2009, February 18). Rights group will try to use Olympics to stop seal hunt, p.A.5.
5. [GM08] Doucette, K. (2009, March 3). EU closer to total ban on Canadian seal products, p. A8.
6. [GM09] Panetta, A. (2009, March 4). Senator gets no support for bid to ban seal hunt, p. A.2.
7. [GM10] Moore, O. (2009, March 11). Putin curbs 'bloody' seal hunt, p.A.2.
8. [GM13] The Globe and Mail (2009, March 16). 100 strip naked in protest against Canadian seal hunt, p.A.11.
9. [GM14] The Globe and Mail (2009, March 17). Halifax bus driver suspended after toy seal clubbed at protest, p.A.5.
10. [GM15] The Globe and Mail (2009, March 18). Russian bans hunting of seal pups, p.A.11.
11. [GM16] The Globe and Mail (2009, March 21). Ottawa raises quota for this year's seal hunt, p.A.7.
12. [GM18] Peritz, I. (2009, March 18). Controversy, sadness mark start of seal hunt, A3
13. [GM19] The Globe and Mail (2009, March 31). Quebec, Newfoundland sealers set to join hunt, p.A.8.
14. [GM20] O'Neill, K. (2009, April 1). Nunavut's birthday sparks debate about future, p.A.3.
15. [GM22] The Globe and Mail (2009, April 9). Bad weather hampers seal hunt in northern Gulf, p.A.7.
16. [GM24] Campbell, C. (2009, May 2). Trade talks expected to survive seal feud, p.A.4.

17. [GM25] Campbell, C.; Taber, J. (2009, May 6). PM in Europe for seal-hunt showdown, p.A.4.
18. [GM27] The Globe and Mail (2009, May 7). Bludgeoning the hunt, p. A16
19. [GM28] Wente, M. (2009, May 7). It's time to hang up the hakapik, p. A17.
20. [GM29] Mickleburgh, R. (2009, May 7). The seal showdown begins as MPs vote to promote hunt's spoils at the Games, p.A.1.
21. [GM30] Saunders, D. (2009, May 16). How Harper's European spring turned sour, p.F.1.
22. [GM31] Gagnon, L. (2009, May 18). European seal hunt hypocrisy, p. A11
23. [GM32] Boesveld, S. (2009, May 27). SEAL HEART / CAVIAR OF THE NORTH, p.L.1.
24. [GM33] Galloway, G. (2009, May 27). Mayor defends Jean's seal-eating habits, p.A.4.
25. [GM34] Wente, M. (2009, May 28). She's our very own Braveheart!, p. A9
26. [GM35] MacGregor, R. (2009, May 28). GG relishing seal heart showed a little grace, p.A.2.
27. [GM36] The Globe and Mail (2009, May 29). Act of courtesy, p. A16
28. [GM37] Perreux, L. (2009, June 5). Haute seal cuisine gets a boost from Jean's nosh, p.A.2.
29. [GM41] Reguly, E. (2009, June 26). It just isn't worth it, p.28.
30. [GM42] Reguly, E. (2009, July 1). The Canadian myth's Roman holiday is nearly done, p.A.8.
31. [GM43] Murphy, R. (2009, July 4). Whining seal hunt twaddle, p.A.19.
32. [GM45] The Globe and Mail (2009, July 27). Canada asks EU to 'reconsider' seal products ban, p.B.3.
33. [GM46] Scoffield, H. (2009, July 27). Ministers press EU to rethink seal ban, p.A.5.
34. [GM47] Campbell, C. (2009, July 28). A \$10-million fight to save \$1-million hunt, p.A.2.
35. [GM48] The Globe and Mail (2009, July 29) Futile trade complaint, p. A14
36. [GM51] Houpt, S. (2009, August 21). 30-SECOND SPOT / DISPATCHES FROM THE WORLD OF MEDIA AND ADVERTISING, p.B.4.

37. [GM60] The Globe and Mail (2009, October 14). Beauty and the beasts, p.A10
38. [GM61] Moore, O. (2009, November 5). Crosbie in and out of sealskin for royal visit to St. John's, p.A.14.
39. [GM63] Wingrove, J. (2009, November 10). Anti-whaling group unveils boat 'like the kind Batman would drive', p.A.2.
40. [GM64] MacGregor, R. (2009, November 19). Reserved, restrained - and rocking with Sid the Kid, p.A.3.
41. [GM65] Mittelstaedt, M. (2009, December 2). Quebec officials dare to speak out against asbestos, p.A.10.
42. [GM66] Leblanc, D. (2009, December 3). With booties and baguettes, Bloc boosts seal hunt, p.A.5.
43. [GM67] Southey, T. (2009, December 12). Our national image? Forget peacekeeping, Mounties and manners. Now it's all about the seal meat, p. F3
44. [GM70] Dueck, L. (2009, December 21). Teen who stared down a polar bear comes home a hero, p.A11
45. [GM71] White, P. (2009, December 26). Ottawa seeks help with seal message, p.A.4.
46. [GM72] Dowbiggin, B. (2009, December 28). TSN flexes its world junior muscle, p.S.5.

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1. [TT01] Beswick, A. (2009, January 14). EU plan could spell trouble for sealers, p. A5.
2. [TT02] The Telegram (2009, January 15). PETA's latest ploy, p. A6.
3. [TT03] Antle, R. (2009, January 17). Focus on 'derogation' in EU seal battle, p. A4.
4. [TT04] Brand, C. (2009, January 22). Canada, Greenland come under fire over seal hunt as EU considers ban, p. A10.
5. [TT05] Wakeham, B. (2009, January 24). The persecution of 101 sealers, p. A.21
6. [TT06] Hayes, C. (2009, February 4). Sealers, activists prepare for hunt, p. A10.
7. [TT07] Gillingham, R. (2009, February 6). Sealers captain sentenced, pp. A1-A2.
8. [TT08] Walsh, P. (2009, February 14). Seal pelt prices expected to drop.

9. [TT09] Antle, R. (2009, March 3). EU seal ban plan moves forward, p. A1.
10. [TT10] Antle, R. (2009, March 3). Anti-sealing amendments to be tabled in Senate, p. A3.
11. [TT11] Robinson, A. (2009, March 16). Sealers face uncertain future.
12. [TT12] Forsey, J. (2009, March 20). First – seals, but it won't end there.
13. [TT14] Roberts, T. (2009, March 27). Sealers unlikely to meet quota, p. A6.
14. [TT15] Hurley, C. (2009, March 27). Out of the hunt, p. A6.
15. [TT16] Antle, R. & Bartlett, D. (2009, March 31). Hedderson meets with EU allies, pp.A1-A2.
16. [TT17] Tutton, M. (2009, April 4). If EU passes ban on seal hunt, Canada to make trade appeal, Day says, p. A13.
17. [TT18] Beswick, A. (2009, April 4). Changes for this year's seal hunt, p.18.
18. [TT19] Thomas, B. (2009, April 14). Season opens with most sealers staying ashore due to poor pelt prices, p.5.
19. [TT20] Jones, B. (2009, April, 17). Forget about seals – what about kangaroos?, p.A6
20. [TT21] McLean, E. (2009, April 18). New monument to honour lost sealers, p. A11.
21. [TT22] The Telegram (2009, April 28). Seal gives dining demonstration, p. A2.
22. [TT23] Walsh, P. (2009, April 24). Solutions for sealing's 'giant problem', p. A3.
23. [TT24] Crawford, T. (2009, April 24). Ex-Beatle tells EU Parliament to let the seals be, p. A10.
24. [TT25] CP (2009, April 20). Anti-sealing ship endangered hunters last year, trial told, p. A8.
25. [TT26] Bartlett, D. (2009, May 5). Seal-ban fight having some success: Hedderson, pp. A1-A2.
26. [TT27] O'Ner, P. (2009, May 5). Hockey legend sticks up for Canadian sealers, p. A9.
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