WAGING THE SEAL WAR IN THE MEDIA: TOWARD A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MORAL COMMUNICATION

John Alan Lee,
Scarborough College,
University of Toronto

The industry is fighting a "hearts and minds" battle of words ... searching for the media equivalent to a nuclear strike against the anti-fur campaigners." (Canadian fur industry spokesman; Canadian Press, May 3, 1985)

For more than two decades, the "seal war" (Busch, 1985; Henke, 1985) was a spring ritual in Canada. This socio-political conflict over the killing of large numbers of new-born pups ("whitecoats") birthed by Atlantic harp seals on the ice floes, was waged by traditional maritime "sealers" and their fur industry allies on one side, and "conservationists", "environmentalists", and "animal lovers" on the other side. The seal war was from the beginning a moral conflict. By "moral conflict", I mean disagreement about "highly sanctioned rules of conduct believed to be important for the welfare or survival of a social system" (Collins, 1982:38). The "seal war" was waged as actively in the media as on the ice floes, and in 1988 it became exclusively a media war. Confrontations on the ice between sealers and anti-sealers halted when the Canadian government called off the 1988 hunt in an attempt to undermine protest in Europe, where economic boycotts achieved by the anti-sealers have had a disastrous effect on Canadian fur sales. However, the industry has firmly stated its plans to resume seal hunting in the future.

Both sides have acknowledged the crucial role played by the media. Greenpeace, International Fund for Animal Welfare and other anti-hunt groups have repeatedly noted that their tactics were designed to evoke maximum media impact. A press release by the World Society for the Protection of Animals is typical:

Under the slogan "Wearing fur is a moral issue", the World Society ... launched a campaign yesterday ... The association's 360 member organizations in 60 countries will receive posters, camera-ready advertisements and about 30 sample letters that can be sent to newspapers, as well as a video featuring Hollywood celebrities ... (Globe and Mail, 1988a)

Likewise, the seal-hunting industry knows it is engaged in a "a war of words, a modern war with modern weapons [such as] newspapers and TV ..." (industry spokesman,
Toronto Star, 1986a). Seal-hunt supporters, like their anti-hunt opponents, have staged deliberate media events.

The seal war is not merely a topic of academic interest; it is and will remain a matter of severe political confrontation. The protestors have so far proved the better communicators in the conflict, by capturing media attention with a variety of sensational tactics which have evoked outrage and condemnation from the Canadian government. At one point, the minister in charge of sealing allowed himself to be provoked in extremis:

Let's not forget who we are dealing with, we are dealing with blackmailers, with liars, with fanatics, so obviously no rational argument can convince fanatics, people that I would call fascists. (Globe and Mail, 1984a)

The prime task of the moral claimmaker is to arouse "moral sensitivity" about an activity which might otherwise be regarded as no more than a matter of taste or opinion; in this case, whether or not to wear fur coats. Thus communication is at the heart of moral conflict. As Spector and Kitsuse (1977:95) observe, "morality is a way of talking" about a topic. The role of communication in arousing moral response has already engaged my interest in several aspects of Canadian life, ranging from love to homosexuality to RCMP "wrongdoing" (Lee, 1973, 1979, 1981). Having once lived in Newfoundland, I found the seal wars worthy of study because the "barbarian" image of seal-hunters often communicated by the protestors contrasted sharply with my personal knowledge of the island's inhabitants as quiet, kindly rural people.

In the present study, I refer to moral "talk" or "voice" but obviously the study is based on printed materials. The classic technique for analyzing printed "talk" is content analysis. Early proponents claimed it to be an objective method for the study of communications (Budd et al, 1967) but more recent users (Altheide, 1987; Ericson, 1987) have expressed doubts about limitations of the method in achieving a qualitative interpretation, not merely quantitative description, of the communication studied. Critics note in particular the difficulty of content analysis in catching linguistic devices such as irony, satire, euphemism, and most especially, metaphor. I share these doubts, but at the same time believe content analysis can help limit bias in the interpretation of communication. Thus, this paper attempts two tasks: the application of a new version of content analysis designed specifically for moral issues, using examples from the seal hunt, and 2) an argument for the importance of interpretive studies of moral communication as part of the larger study of social conflict, again using the seal hunt for illustrations.

A Brief Historical Background

Hunting for seals for fur, meat and oil, was well established among indigenous peoples (Indians, Inuit), and was quickly taken up by early European settlers in Newfoundland
and the Maritimes (Mowat, 1984). The hunt became a major source of cash for coastal communities. In addition to other seal species, up to 200,000 harp seal pups were killed each year for their beautiful white fur, highly prized in the markets of Europe and America. Then, almost by accident, the seal hunt came to the attention of "environmentalist" organizations. One analyst has even compared their protests to an industry in which competitive organizations such as Greenpeace and IFAW act like any firm, looking for new products, moral causes to maintain their "market share" among supporters of environmentalism (Allen, 1979: 423-28). Allen's provocative analysis emphasizes how difficult it is to remain neutral in moral word-wars, for there is no "mediating third language" in which to "objectively" discuss the competing vocabularies (Gellner, 1970: 24).

Both sides agree on a few of the events: in 1964 a series of television programs was being produced to promote Canadian industries. The sealing industry was chosen as one of the subjects. While cameras rolled, sealers continued their traditional work. Then accounts diverge. Protestors say the hunters repeatedly kicked and clubbed pups, and skinned them alive as they moved about on the ice with insight of their mothers. It is said that sealers laughed and joked while the shrill screams of animals filled the air. (Lust, 1967). The industry side says such activity may have happened but was not typical of hunters, and was greatly exaggerated by sensationalist filming. Whatever the facts, the film producer decided not to distribute, but a Montreal newspaper reporter saw the film privately. Despite alleged threats of legal action by the Department of Fisheries, his editor chose to publish an article, "Murder Island" (Lust, 1967: 56). It was quickly reprinted and embellished by other media including European.

As a result of public interest, the TV film was eventually broadcast, and immediately produced the outcry the Department of Fisheries feared. Anti-hunt expeditions to the ice floes were organized, to attempt to stop the hunt. The federal government responded by creating severe new penalties for anyone interfering with the hunt. The ships and helicopters of the anti-hunters were impounded, and protesters arrested (sometimes after use of tear gas), and imprisoned (Globe and Mail, 1979a; 1981a; 1983a). Blocked at the locale of the hunt itself, the protest organizations escalated their fight with campaigns in Europe and the United States urging a boycott not only of seal furs, but Canadian fish. The latter campaign failed, but, despite urgent Canadian diplomatic efforts, the European Common Market banned harp seal fur (Globe and Mail, 1982a). The Canadian hunt collapsed for lack of markets not only for whitecoats, but any seals, and not only in Maritime communities, but in the Canadian north, where fur sales were a major source of income for native communities (Toronto Star, 1988a).
A Method for the Content Analysis of Moral Communication

According to the conventions of journalism, reporters should not express opinion or bias in the communication of news to their readers. Opinion should be reserved for editorials, feature columns and "opinion pieces." But analysts of communication have long argued the "social construction of news" and "news as ideology." (Ericson, 1987: 87ff; Jensen, 1987; Tuckman, 1978; Wilkins and Patterson, 1987). They have long understood the effect of choosing to report the same individual as a Contra "terrorist" or a Reagan-approved "freedom fighter."

What has not been so widely appreciated (despite the early work of Mills, 1940; and Gerth and Mills, 1954: 123ff) 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. During the 1988 Moscow Summit the media paid much attention to the apparent revision of President Reagan's characterization of the Soviet system as an "evil empire," but the extent to which the media are regularly complicit in the creation and general acceptability of an "imagery of evil" was ignored. As moralizing talk moves toward extremes of commitment, it often excuses exaggerated statements as no more than "noble lies" (Gouldner, 1970: 272).

The extremist tendencies of moralizing talk require that traditionally quantitative methods of content analysis be supplemented by qualitative insight to "format" or "triangulate" the topography of moral enterprise (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 217ff). As a first step toward a more qualitative interpretation, a new form of content analysis was developed by the author with the assistance of Professor Sheldon Ungar (University of Toronto) and Stuart Lee Goldman, M.A. It has been tested over a two-year period on many types of communication, and is illustrated here by the seal hunt, as reported by two Canadian newspapers.

The Toronto-based Globe and Mail (hereafter GAM) styles itself as a "newspaper of record." In November, 1977 it began to make Info Globe available: an on-line computer data base containing the full text of all articles. I used Info Globe to recover all articles which included the search terms: seal-hunt [, er, ers, ing]. Since the focus of the present study is the reporters' coverage, I set aside masthead editorials and letters to the editor for a separate study. This left 32 news articles, from November 1977 to July 1987. These constitute the GAM MAIN SAMPLE.

The text of GAM MAIN SAMPLE articles was analysed for all words or phrases integral to the seal debate. These were designated as keywords (Carney, 1972: 158ff). A few words with low intercoder agreement were excluded, leaving 62 for use in analysis. They are listed in Appendix 1. Then an attention score analysis based on length of article, page position in the newspaper, and usage of the identified keywords, determined that a three month period, January - March 1979, was the peak period of
coverage of the seal hunt in the available nine years of GAM articles. The sample of seven GAM articles in these three months is called the GAM WINDOW.

The Toronto Star (hereafter TORSTAR) is the daily newspaper with the largest circulation in English-speaking Canada. It is not circulated beyond the metropolitan area and is not available on computer, but TORSTAR's widely acknowledged impact on the central Canadian Anglophone population makes it worth analysis. The stupendous task of searching TORSTAR microfilm from 1977 to 1987 was impossible on available funding, but microfilm was searched for all coverage of the seal-hunt during the same three-month period as the GAM WINDOW. The resulting sample, also of seven articles (but of notably shorter average length) is called the TORSTAR WINDOW.

To this point, my methods are orthodox. But in the study of moral keywords, the appropriate unit of analysis proved to be the sentence, rather than a column inch or equivalent. The moral topic of each sentence was identified. This is the "claim dis-coursed" or what the sentence is morally about. (van Dijk, 1977), and is not necessarily the English grammatical subject of the sentence. For example, consider the sentence: The fur industry spokesman said that anti-sealers are not only killing his business but destroying a traditional way of life in Newfoundland. The moral topic of this sentence is not the fur industry (the grammatical subject), but a claim made about the impact of the anti-seal campaign. Claimsmaking topics were divided into categories on the basis of self-proclaimed status: 1) pro-hunt groups and organizations, 2) anti-hunt groups, 3) third parties, such as governments, courts and universities. Obviously reporting of the seal hunt included many sentences in which no moral claim was made, but information about the issue at stake was conveyed, eg. "2,000 seals were killed last week." These were coded issue.

Next and here the method truly innovates on existing content analysis the voice of each statement was coded. The notion of "voice" has been previously suggested only once, to the author's knowledge, in Tuchman (1978: 96), and there, without reference to content analysis, much less analysis of moralizing talk. In my method, "voice" identifies the speaker of the moral topic, ignoring the convention of "quotation signs" because modern media often omit this convention (Ericson, 1987: 105ff). The reporter is often the voice in a news article, but where a statement authored by a reporter clearly attributes the data communicated, as in "The President said today ..." my method codes the voice for this sentence as the President, not the reporter. The attribution ("said today") is treated as equivalent to a set of "quote" signs. Where the reporter is clearly the voice, the sentence is coded "media." Obviously there were numerous borderline cases, requiring a year's testing of rules which eventually resulted in a detailed handbook. Testing continued until an intercoder agreement level of 80% was achieved among three coders.
To summarize, each sentence of content receives two codes: Topic: one of: pro, anti, 3rd; or issue, if no moral claim is stated. Voice: one of: pro, anti, 3rd; or media (ie, reporters, editors). In the discussion below, the "pro" coding was given to the hunter side, and the "anti" code to the protesters. After coding, the keywords in the content were counted by voice. Since a single voicing of a keyword was not considered persuasive, a threshold of three uses was established as a minimum for analysis. (A detailed explanation of the method, including handbook, is available on request from the author).

Results: Voices and Words

Table 1 shows the overall picture of total attention paid (articles, words and location in GAM); and the total number of words (not merely keywords) in the sentences coded to two of the four voices: hunter voice and protestor voice. (The great majority of words were in neither such voice, but that of a reporter).

Table 1: MAIN GAM SAMPLE
Number of articles by page location, total words and frequency in two voices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page #</th>
<th># of articles</th>
<th>total words</th>
<th>Protestor voice</th>
<th>Hunter voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>words</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4416</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1089</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5673</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12+</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3789</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14967</td>
<td>1002</td>
<td>1176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average number of words per article is 468.
The average percentage of words in the protestor voice is 7
The average percentage of words in the hunter voice is 8

At first glance, the GAM achieved the editorial balance desired in a self-styled "newspaper of record." The protestor and hunter voices are given about equal time in the debate (7% to 8%). But for articles published in the most desirable location, the first three pages of the paper (28% of all articles, 30% of all words) the reporters appear to have conveyed to the reader a far greater volume of moral talk by the protesters than the seal-hunters. However, further analysis will prove it rash to conclude that an apparent media victory in the front pages of GAM helps explain the eventual success of the protesters in stopping the seal hunt (at least for 1988).
There were obviously other voices in the debate, such as federal and Newfoundland government officials ("third parties") and the reporters and their editors ("media"). Table 2 focuses on the essence of moral talk, the usage of keywords (listed in Appendix 1) rather than distributions of voice by total number of words. We immediately note that reporters appropriated the greatest portion (54%) of communication of moral keywords to their own voice. This is true, even though all sentences in which other voices are attributed as sources, without quotation signs, have been coded to those other voices, not the media.

Table 2: MAIN GAM SAMPLE
The Globe and Mail Use of 62 keywords by "voice"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>Protestor</th>
<th>Hunter</th>
<th>3rd Party</th>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of uses</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(total = 529)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total used by</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each voice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not every keyword was used at least once by each voice.
Percent rounded.

In the GAM reports of the seal hunt, what we hear is largely the reporter-editor team making moral news. In moral talk, this is especially important because moral claimsmakers are "sides" in a conflict where each 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 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.

We now appear to have conflicting evidence on which side of the debate is receiving a superior construction in the GAM. Table 1 indicated better front-page coverage for the protestor voice, but Table 2 suggests that this coverage was easily drowned out by the reporter voice, which occupied 54% of all time "on the air." Thus it is crucial to know what words the reporters were using: the protestors' moral keywords, or those of the hunters. This is discovered in Table 3.

The use of all moral keywords at or above a threshold of three uses is shown in Table 3, by rank order of frequency. At first it appears that all voices are talking about the same reality: a "hunt" which tops each list. But then realities diverge. In a total of almost 15,000 words (Table 1) the protesters' voices manage to reach through the reporter to the public with only five keywords used at least three times (total of 27 uses). The reporter allows the hunters to speak through him/her with thirteen words
at least three times (total of 65 uses) and the 3rd parties are given almost equal time but with fewer and somewhat different words. As for the reporters themselves, they appropriate for their own voice not only the greatest frequency but the greatest variety of moral key words. (Some of the key words from rank 14 down were also used by the other voices, but less than three times).

In their reports of events around the hunt, GAM reporters/editors have selected quotations from the many public statements made by the protestors, so that the three keywords most often voiced (hunt, seal, and kill) are the same as those most frequently used by the media voice itself (cf Ericson, 1987: 286 on this aspect of reporter behaviour on another topic). "Hunt seal kill" contains, even without grammar, the essence of the seal hunt, but certainly not the essence of the protest against the hunt.

Table 3: MAIN SAMPLE
Comparative Rank order of keywords used at least three times - by four "voices" (frequency in bracket)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Protestor</th>
<th>Hunter</th>
<th>3rd Party</th>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>Hunt (13)</td>
<td>Hunt (12)</td>
<td>Hunt (17)</td>
<td>Hunt (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Seal (5)</td>
<td>Seal (8)</td>
<td>Population (9)</td>
<td>Seal (8)</td>
<td>Seal (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Kill (3)</td>
<td>Seal (8)</td>
<td>Make a living (7)</td>
<td>Grey Seal (7)</td>
<td>Kill (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Barbarians (3)</td>
<td>Make a living (7)</td>
<td>Grey Seal (7)</td>
<td>Seal (18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Pup (3)</td>
<td>not endangered (5)</td>
<td>Kill (6)</td>
<td>Protestor (14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6)</td>
<td>not barbarians (4)</td>
<td>Sealing (5)</td>
<td>Seal Pelts (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7)</td>
<td>Market (4)</td>
<td>Boycott (4)</td>
<td>Harp Seals (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8)</td>
<td>Animal Rights (3)</td>
<td>Creature (3)</td>
<td>Boycott (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9)</td>
<td>Anti-sealer (3)</td>
<td>Whitecoats (3)</td>
<td>Population (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Harp Seals (3)</td>
<td>Sealing (7)</td>
<td>Bounty (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) the Industry (3)</td>
<td>Pup (7)</td>
<td>Sealer (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) Kill (3)</td>
<td>Adolescent Seal (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) traditional hunter (3)</td>
<td>Anti-Hunt (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) Seal herd (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15)</td>
<td>the Industry (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) Take (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17)</td>
<td>Traditional hunter (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18)</td>
<td>Opponent (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19)</td>
<td>Whitecoats (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20)</td>
<td>Harbour Seal (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21)</td>
<td>Club (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22)</td>
<td>Sealing Vessel (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23)</td>
<td>Animal Rights Group (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24)</td>
<td></td>
<td>27 65 62</td>
<td>257</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I was not on the ice when the reporters heard and selected the words of the protestors (nor in the newsroom when editors pencilled out passages from reports) but I do know what the protestors say in their own print and in their own public meetings. Powerful moralizing talk which occurs with high frequency in the protestors' organizational literature, such as "endangering the species, slaughtering, cute, cuddly, helpless seal pups," does not occur in the voice of the protestors as conveyed to readers via the GAM news conduit. Ironically, the argument that the seal is (not) endangered appears in the sealer voice, but the GAM sample failed to communicate the protestors' charge which the hunters are rebutting!

The words conveyed from the mouths of the sealers include a number which are central to the moral talk of the sealers' organizations in justifying the industry (confirmed by their literature): words such as making a living, or maintaining an industry. Only with one keyword are the protestors given voice over the threshold level in condemning the sealers (as barbarians) but the sealers are given equal voice in rejecting this term. The protestors' voices are allowed to condemn the hunt as "killing" but this word has little moral sting, being used at or above the threshold by all other voices, especially the reporters. The protestors get to the threshold with "pup," a significant term, and one not used above the threshold by either sealer or third voices. Its use by reporters is outweighed by seal, grey seal, and harp seal.

Further tabulations not shown here confirmed the above analysis, and emphasized certain features. For example, over half of all the time allowed "on the air" by the protestors' use of moral keywords was devoted to their use of the top five keywords; the remaining 46% usage was scattered among all the other protestor keywords used. But the word "hunt" far overshadows all other protestor keywords and this word, obviously, is the word which the sealers would prefer to use in describing their activity, not, for example, "slaughter." The sealers are given voice to defend the industry and market in which they make a living, but no contrary terminology eg. "endangering the species" reaches us from the voices of the protestors.

A further tabulation, calculating moral keyword usage for all 529 keywords voiced in the sample, confirmed that the above observations were not artifacts of rank order over the threshold. In addition, several types of "cluster analysis" (Axelrod, 1967) of moral keywords were made. Keywords were clustered around 1) the animal being hunted (seal, whitecoat, pup, baby seal), 2) the activity of hunting (sealing, making a living) and 3) the product of the hunt (pelt, fur, whitecoats). This analysis confirmed previous observations. For example, the hunters were given substantial voice to construct the reality of the hunt as simply an industry or way of making a living, a major theme of their official literature, while the protestors were given little voice to construct the hunt as a "cruel and bloody slaughter of baby seals."

Of the 62 keywords identified in the GAM MAIN SAMPLE, a high level (82%) of intercoder agreement identified 49 words which could be classified into some
instrumental relationship with the seal hunt as a traditional social institution. These 49 words were sorted into five classes: 1) words for designating the animal in the system (seal, pup); 2) words for action taken on the animal (hunt, kill); 3) words for those taking the action (sealer, hunter); 4) words for the result produced by the action on the seal (pelt, meat); 5) words for the social organization of the action system (sealing industry). A sixth class identified words for the social actors now opposing this system (protester, anti-sealer).

Analysis of the clustering also confirmed the observations above. For example, the protestors in their own literature prefer the word "pup" and "baby seal", consistent with their projected image of the big-eyed newborn "whitecoat" as a cute and lovable creature. This image cluster is very rarely communicated to GAM readers in the voice of the protestors in the 32 articles over a nine-year period, yet the sealer and reporter voices are allowed to insist that the animal being hunted is not cute.

Likewise, the hunters are given more opportunity to deny in their own voice that a slaughter is going on, than the protestors to assert it. The sealer voice is given more opportunity to assert that the activity seal hunters are involved in, is an environmentally sound way of making a living (an activity to "cull, control or thin out" the excessive seal population) than the protestor voice is allowed to assert that the hunt is environmentally unsound.

Many of the above ironies in voicing might be explained by a hypothesis: the GAM reporters and their editors knew that their readers were already well aware of the protestors' charges because of television coverage of the hunt. The GAM reporters/editors made a more or less deliberate decision to counter this social construction in television with one which described the same events in the key words "hunts" seals kill. This study takes only one small step toward testing this hypothesis: a small comparison with the hunt coverage by a newspaper which has tended toward greater sympathy with "animal lovers" in its weekly columns by Barry Kent MacKay for instance.

A Comparison With the Toronto Star

The Globe and Mail made its editorial position on the seal-hunt protest explicit in an editorial after the final report of the Commission on seal-hunting in 1986:

It is, by now, a matter of mere academic interest that public opinion was turned against seal hunting by irrational argument, misinformation, inconsistent sentimen-
tality ... When this kind of thing picks up momentum, it is unstoppable (Globe and Mail, 1986a).

However, "mere academic interest" would indicate that making moral news, to paraphrase Tuchman (1978) was one of GAM's objectives. History may finally rule, but at present only a moral judgement could say which was "misinformation" or "-
sentimentality", the hunt as cull of overpopulated seal-herds, or as slaughter of an endangered species.

Not surprisingly, considering the 1/36 time ratio of the 3-month TORSTAR WINDOW to the nine-year GAM MAIN SAMPLE and the fact that, as it happened, the articles in the TORSTAR sample are on average shorter, it was found that only 23 of the 62 keywords identified in GAM occurred in the seven articles during the TORSTAR WINDOW. The 23 keywords are found in Appendix 2. The inequalities between TORSTAR and MAIN SAMPLE can be somewhat reduced by using a GAM WINDOW based on the same 3-month window.

Table 4: TORSTAR WINDOW
Number of articles by page location, total words, frequency and voice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page # words</th>
<th># of articles words</th>
<th>total words</th>
<th>Protestor voice words</th>
<th>Hunter voice words</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2536</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average of words per article is 362

It would be wrong to deduce any significant differences in coverage of the seal-hunt "voices" on the basis of limited WINDOW comparisons, but the comparison showed that the protesters' voices were heard more often in TORSTAR than GAM in these three crucial months of peak coverage of the hunt. This certainly suggests the value of further research in comparing newspapers with TV coverage. It was especially interesting, when a rank order analysis was made of the WINDOW period for the two newspapers, that the keyword "slaughter" appears as the third most commonly used keyword in the TORSTAR WINDOW, always in the voice of the protesters. Its nine TORSTAR protester-voice uses in a mere 3-month period exceed the total usage in nine years of GAM coverage. The very least that is demonstrated by this limited comparison is that these newspapers communicated significantly different moral talk to their readers.

Key Words and Metaphors as Steps to Qualitative Interpretation

For at least forty years social linguists have analysed the structure of persuasive language (Jowett and O'Donnell, 1986) while communications specialists have
developed many procedures for analysis of communications content. Over the same period, sociologists have probed the "vocabulary of motives" (Mills, 1940) and the role of "key moral words" (Nisbet, 1953: 7). Meanwhile, moral philosophers have dissected the function of language in moral action (Hare, 1952). Yet these four decades of research have not merged into a systematic analysis of the structure of moralizing talk. Some research has indicated what elements should be combined in a systematic explanation of moralizing talk, as it relates to an activity such as the seal hunt. Examples include Brauner (1986: 160) and Sternberg (1979: 335) on moral metaphors of animals; Cooper (1981: 74ff) on moral commands; Johnson (1978: 533) on metaphors of social conflict. There is not space available here to outline a comprehensive structural analysis of moral talk in the seal hunt, using these earlier works as foundation, but a few brief examples will indicate the direction in which work on an integrated theory should move.

"Baby seal" is a metaphorical symbol. As Turner (1974: 13ff) shows, metaphors play a major role in the social construction of paradigms of reality. "A metaphor has two subjects, principal and subsidiary," and "the metaphor works by applying to the principal subject [certain important and selective] associations of the subsidiary." (ibid: 29). The result is "fusion of two separate realms of experience into one encapsulating image." The power of metaphors in moral communication has been understood since Aesop’s fables and Jesus’ parables, and is well established in social science (Burke, 1950; Mueller, 1973). Metaphors allow moralizers to "mean more than they say" to the morally sensitive (Searle 1979: 93). "He that would hear, let him hear" (The Bible: Matthew 11; Luke 7). Metaphors work as moral communicators by adjusting our emotional distance to a thing or event through language (Scheff, 1977: 487). The importance of emotion in legitimating persuasive communication is already documented (Shields and MacDowell, 1987).

"Seal pup", the traditional Newfoundland designation was already a metaphorical symbol, with certain sentimental associations for pet-lovers but apparently not, when applied to seals. "Baby seal" is a more powerful metaphor. Defenders of the seal hunt such as Janice S. Henke (1986), author of Seal Wars, angrily reject the use of "baby" and its human family image when referring to seals. She describes newborn seal pups as "resembling a thick brood of maggots on the ice" while their parents are "dull-witted, rather stupid creatures." Few in the Canadian public have ever come close to a seal pup. It was the goal of the protestors to reduce emotional distance between the public and the dying whitecoat clubbed on the Gulf ice. Conversely the sealers sought to diminish or "neutralize" the emotional impact. One almost amusing result is a debate about when a newborn seal ceases to be a pup/baby. This is important, because human babies deserve special protection, but teenagers must learn to be independent, and adults are largely on their own. As one newspaper reporter put it:

In a just-begun vocabulary battle over the zoology of harp seals, the two sides are in sharp disagreement over whether younger
seals--under a year old--still being killed in 1984 by legal clubbing and shooting are, in fact, seal pups... If the life cycle of these seals is compared to the development of humans from birth to adulthood, a good propaganda technique but not necessarily a scientific one, the seal hunt protesters clearly win the debate. (Story, 1984).

The Fisheries department likewise rejects the baby metaphor and proposes its own:

...after mother seals have weaned the whitecoats... they fend for themselves. A ragged jacket [2 week old, molting newborn]... is like a 20 year old leaving home, and by the time it reaches a year old, it's been through a couple of jobs and a divorce. (Story, 1984).

The notion that "adult" seals, emotionally distanced from us by job and divorce, are on their own, becomes vital to federal hopes to win public approval of a "cull" of the alleged surplus of grey seals (Humane Society News, 1987).

The importance of euphemisms and their opposite (dysphemisms) in moral communication has had considerable analysis. Mueller (1973: 26ff) provides some striking examples, such as Nazi government orders of September, 1939, that the German press must use the word "courageous" only for German soldiers, "fighter pilot" only for German airmen. The sociology of language (Hertzler, 1965) reminds us that in a moral conflict such as the "seal war," what we choose to call the animal being killed is not a matter of random selection from a thesaurus.

**The Future of Environmental Word Wars**

The conflict over key words and metaphors demonstrates that a qualitative interpretation of media content is at least as important as a quantitative "counting" of word use by means of content analysis. Obviously the participants in the seal war do not believe that a quantity of words will win the media battle for one side or the other. The words in a moral conflict must be morally persuasive, which means capable of arousing moral sensitivity (Rest, 1979). That is why the fur industry is not just looking for "more" words to combat the anti-sealers; it is looking for a qualitatively more powerful counterattack, a "nuclear strike."

The anti-sealers obviously have the same problem: how to find a language of "countervailing force" morally speaking. For example, early in the seal wars the protestors charged that the hunters were "exterminating" an "endangered" species. The word "endangered" is often used today without clarification. Reporters assume that readers will understand what no early 20th century reader would have comprehended: that it is a wild animal which is in danger, not a human confronted by it. As later as the 1971 edition, the Oxford English Dictionary contained only uses of the word "endanger" applied to persons. Neither Webster's nor the Funk and Wagnall dictionary as late as 1976 defined "endangered" in reference to animal species.
A new word, or new meaning for an old word, may become a "key symbol" in everyday communication, with a powerful effect on the conceptualization of the world of experience yet hardly be noticed, much less analysed (Edelman, 1964: 65). Today debates rage through the world, over which are the "endangered" species, and how humans should relate to them. Scientists, government officials, environmentalists, even judges may all claim the power to designate an endangered species. When the hunter side located some scientists willing to deny the charge that the harp seal was endangered by the hunt, Greenpeace reformulated its opposition in terms of moral ecology, calling the annual spring hunt "the largest slaughter of newborn marine animals in the world" (Globe and Mail, 1979). The hunter side counter-attacked with the words "cultural genocide," arguing that the collapse of the fur market in Europe as a result of protestor organization of boycotts, was destroying the livelihood of Indian and Inuit communities (Toronto Star, 1986).

Greenpeace leaders, reeling from the blow of "genocide," decided to end "active campaigning on the fur trading issue for the time being." But Greenpeace affirmed its "opposition to commercial seals hunts and the killing of endangered species for any purpose whatsoever." This sentence curiously links harp seals and endangered species without saying harp seals are among such species. In 1987, Greenpeace modified its policy again, to oppose a government grey seal cull. Seal-hunt activity may or not "endanger" the species but it certainly concludes with numerous dead seals. The words used to describe this result convey varied moral sensitivities ranging from slaughter, clubbing, taking, culling, to merely thinning out. That is why all such words are identified as moral keywords in the content analysis of GAM and TORSTAR. I have shown that all voices in GAM coverage of the hunt are allowed to use "kill," but that word is "not vivid enough" to communicate moral outrage (Enright, 1985: 215). The name for killing has great emotional and therefore moral force for the protestors, especially if supplemented by photographs of burly sealers swinging clubs at the heads of apparently helpless, wide-eyed whitecoats.

Even as this article goes to press, both sides are arming themselves for the next round of the word war. It appears that a key moral word will be "vermin." Many of us have trapped or killed a house rodent but we would hardly call it "slaughter" of mice, which are considered vermin or pests. If seals can be qualified in the same way, killing them is beneficial. The media have already been called upon to lend objective credibility to such definitions:

As television cameras rolled, fishermen with rifles shot eight grey seals in a staged effort to convince Ottawa of the need to kill off 40,000 seals to protect their livelihood ... Atlantic fishermen say the estimated 100,000 seals in the region are pests, devouring millions of fish, infesting cod with worms ... stealing bait ... damaging nets."

Killing these animals is like shooting rats at a dump, said Allan Billiard, executive director of the Eastern Fishermen's Federation.
The federation will sponsor culls until the federal government [acts]... Yesterday's cull was strictly a news media event... " (Globe and Mail, 1986b).

It is now being argued that the seal herds, whether or not they were once endangered, have responded to the decline of seal hunting by "dramatic increases" in population, and are "in danger of getting out of control." It is argued that 1000 seals produce 400 pups a year; if they all reach maturity, each seal can eat a tonne and a half of fish a year. "Fishermen fear that there won't be enough fish to go around." The seals are said to be leaving the water "in droves" to invade private property and block highways. "Fishing groups have called for a massive cull of the herd." (Globe and Mail, 1986c). Like other vermin (especially rats) seals will also be labelled a source of disease "infecting fish with parasites at an alarming rate" (CTV W5: 1988). Meanwhile, the "barbarian" image of the seal-hunter will be neutralized into that of guardian of public welfare: "Fishermen can conduct a cull in a humane and efficient manner. This is no Rambo operation... We are not clubbing pups with table legs." (Globe and Mail, 1986b)

Both sides are looking for ways to expand the word war over seal hunting. Indigenous Survival International, the native pro-hunt coalition, with the aid of the External Affairs Department, has taken the battle to the councils of Europe, to urge that the history of the colonial period not be repeated by destruction of indigenous peoples (Toronto Star, 1988b). The anti-hunt side is urging that carefully worded labels be attached to all furs sold in Europe to remind buyers of the horrors of hunting and trapping (Globe and Mail, 1988). Neither side in the word war has yet found sufficiently powerful words to deliver a "knock-out blow," and the moral issues at stake extend far beyond the seal-hunt. Similar issues, and the same problems of communicating those issues in the voices of the moral claimsmakers have already appeared around other species (wolves: Lee: forthcoming; Australian kangaroos: MacKay, 1986). Similar issues extend beyond animals to other life forms such as trees believed by some to be resources, by others, to be in danger of extinction (Stone, 1974).

Quantitative content analysis and qualitative interpretation of moral keywords may not help to reduce, much less resolve the socio-political battles being waged around important environmental/resource issues, but at least such analysis may help to clarify what the issues are about. Word-warriors often get carried away by their own rhetoric, and lose sight of the legitimate concerns the words originally addressed. Clubs and leghold traps are not alone in breaking bones; words can also hurt us. Future studies in moral communications can have the modest goal of calling for truces during which both sides re-examine their rhetoric. The claimsmakers may discover means to communicate to each other their genuine and often, surprisingly commonly-shared concerns for the peaceful future of the only planet we have to live on.
Note

Funding for this research was provided by the Social Science and Humanities Council of Canada. I am grateful to Professor Sheldon Ungar and to Stuart L. Goldman, MA, for their contributions to the development of new methods used in this study.
Appendix 1: MAIN SAMPLE
Moral keywords in alphabetical order

adolescent seal  extinction  pro-seal-hunt
animal rights  fur  proponent
animal rights group  generations(for)  protect seals
anti-hunt  grey seals  protester
anti-sealer  harbour seals  pup
baby seal  harp seals  resource
balance of nature  harvest  seal
barbarian  herd  seal meat
bloodbath  hunt  seal pelt
bounty  hunter  seal
boycott  industry  sealer
club  kill  sealing
commercial sealhunt  make a living  sealing vessel
conservationist  market  shoot
creatures  mature seal  skin
 cruel  my people  slaughter
 cull  not sport  take (noun)
 cute  numbers (of seals)  thin out
 endanger  opponent  threaten
 environmentalist  population  traditional hunter
                  predator  watchers
                  whitecoat

Appendix 2: Moral Keywords used in TORSTAR WINDOW

adolescent seal  grey seals  seal pelts
animal rights  harp seals  seal
animal rights group  hunt  sealer
anti-hunt  kill  sealing
anti-sealer  make a living  slaughter
boycott  population/numbers  take
club  pro seal hunt  the industry

REFERENCES

Altheide, David (1987) "Ethnographic Content Analysis" Qualitative Sociology, 10: 1, Spring.


Carney, Tom (1972) Content Analysis. University of Manitoba


Globe and Mail (1982) "Group has $2 million to fight seal hunt" Sept. 23.


Globe and Mail (1984b) "Fishermen take aim at homely target" Jan. 5.


Globe and Mail (1986a) "Instead of a seal hunt" (Editorial) July 14.
Globe and Mail (1986b) "Fishermen staging shoot of grey seals to force herd cull" July 26.


Hare, R.M. (1952) The language of morals. Oxford University Press


Lee, John Alan (1981) "Don't use that word 'gay'" Chapter 1, in L. Salter, ed. Communication Studies in Canada. Toronto: Butterworth

Lee, John Alan (forthcoming). "The wolf as mirror to mankind."


Lust, Peter (1967) The last seal pup Montreal Harvest House


Mills, C. Wright (1940) "Situated actions and vocabularies of motive." American Sociological Review 5; reprinted in Power, politics and people; the collected essays of C. Wright Mills, ed. I.L. Horowitz, New York: Ballantine


Stone, C.D. (1974) Should trees have standing? Los Altos, California: Kaufman,


Toronto Star (1988a) "Canadian natives battle to save fur trade." Feb. 20.

Toronto Star (1988b) "U.K. adamant on plan to label fur products with trap warning." May 18.


