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War for the Seals: The Canadian Seal Controversy and Sociological Warfare

Brian Lowe

Introduction

The annual killing of tens of thousands of Harp seals northeast of Newfoundland (the “Front”) and the Gulf of St. Lawrence (the “Gulf”) (otherwise known as the “Seal Hunt”) in late February and early March has long history and has more recently become a source of significant controversy. Barry (2005) states that French explorer Jacques Cartier observed seal hunting in the Strait of Belle Isle in 1534; native populations had been hunting seals in these areas for a significantly longer period (see Wenzel, 1991). During European colonization, the fur trade, including seal pelts, was a significant economic resource for many in the colonies and in Britain and France. The hunting of seals accelerated during the late eighteenth century with the creation of vessels capable of taking seal hunters to ice floe breeding areas. This led to seal hunting (or “sealing”) becoming a significant employer in Atlantic Canada, with an estimated 400,000 pelts being produced, but then subsequently declining after the seal population was overexploited (Daoust, et. al 2002, p. 687). While Daoust et.al (2002) state that ethical concerns regarding animal welfare with the seal hunt were raised as early as the nineteenth century, the seal hunt became internationally controversial during the 1960s. The release of a film in 1964 (ironically produced to promote the seal hunt or “sealing”) (Lee, 1988, p. 21) sparked international outrage that resulted in legal attempts to curtail or terminate the hunt, direct actions by protesters (including attempts to block sealing vessels), and economic boycotts of both products derived from seals and Canadian products in general. Anti-seal activities led by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) have resulted in significant public attention brought via visual media to the graphic nature of the hunt for seal pups and a 1983 ban by the European Economic Union on “seal pup skins and products,” and a subsequent boycott of Canadian fish sales in Britain and the United States led to a 1987 ban

on the hunting of harp and hooded seal pups (Barry, 2005, p. 2). In the 1990s the seal hunt was expanded for older seals, which has brought both additional defense of the hunt by seal hunters as being necessary for both their livelihood and preserving the dwindling fish populations in Atlantic Canadian waters. Opponents of the seal hunt continue to argue that the hunts are cruel, make marginal economic contributions to the Atlantic Provinces, and are environmentally dubious (including questioning the correlation between growing seal populations and dwindling fish populations). With these two opposing moral points of view, the stage is set for an analysis of how persuasive efforts impact the public imagination.

Seal Hunts and Sociological Warfare

This purpose of this article is not to produce a chronology of the Canadian seal hunt or the subsequent protests that have served to make a once accepted and widespread practice controversial. Instead, the goal of this article is to illustrate how the sustained controversy over the Canadian seal hunt is an example of what will be termed “sociological warfare.” In brief, the premise of “sociological warfare” is a conflict that is intended to alter one or more aspects of the public moral imagination regarding at least one issue, practice, or phenomena. Sociological warfare is distinct from “psychological” or “political” warfare. Lasswell (1958) distinguishes between psychological and political warfare. Psychological warfare at its most elemental refers to the utilization of “*the means of mass communication in order to destroy the enemy’s will to fight*” (Lasswell, in Daugherty & Janowitz, 1958, p. 22; italics in original). Psychological warfare includes typical government propaganda (both visual and written) as well as the “propaganda of the deed”: “a term borrowed from social revolutionaries, which emphasized the importance of assassinating or the taking of emotionally significant cities or the importance of surprise and the cultivation of revolutionary aims against enemy governments” (Lasswell, in Daugherty & Janowitz, 1958, p. 23). Lasswell argues that “political warfare” is a more inclusive term, which “adds the important idea that all instruments of policy need to be properly correlated in the conduct of war” (Lasswell, in Daugherty & Janowitz, 1958, p. 24). These instruments include diplomacy to divide internally and externally to separate an enemy from potential allies, and economic activities intended to weaken an opponent. Whereas the main target of psychological warfare is the “enemy’s will to fight”, the targets of political warfare include “allies, neutrals and the home audience” in support of the war effort (Lasswell, in Daugherty & Janowitz, 1958, p. 24).

These terms are significant because they emphasize the importance of ideological variables within armed conflict between states and they indicate the relative limitations of these concepts in addressing many of the activities of social movements, subcultures, and other non-state actors. While the activities of such actors may resemble psychological warfare in that they are intended to encourage an opponent

to withdraw from a conflict or acquiesce, or political warfare in that they involve attempts to persuade third parties to join forces and/or abandon a former ally or to divest economic resources. However, there are significant limitations to these terms when applied to non-state actors. Firstly, they are not necessarily part of an actual or potential armed conflict (as in the case of the Cold War). Secondly, non-state actors generally lack the communicative, economic, and other resources of states. Thirdly, and most critically, non-state actors tend to have a significant difficulty regarding legitimacy. Unlike political or psychological warfare between states, where much of propaganda is targeted at either encouraging existing behavior (such as soldiers fighting) or emphasizing self-interest (encouraging enemy combatants to surrender or desert a cause depicted as unworthy or unjust), non-state actors (i.e., activists and social movements) must encourage outsiders of the legitimacy of their cause(s), often without the benefit of nationalism or other existing cultural or moral resources. Moreover, specific conflicts between non-state actors and others often are indicative of a much broader clash of world views. For example, a “fur-free Friday” protest by animal rights activist resembles psychological warfare in that the protest may weaken the intentions of both consumers and producers to possess or market fur garments. Such protests also emphasize a central claim of the animal rights movement: the killing of animals for their fur to be used in luxury goods is ethically indefensible. In sum, many non-state actors are advocating ideals and alternative visions of social life that are not paralleled by traditional manifestations of psychological warfare. Such protests and propaganda campaigns are not simply attempts to resolve one specific matter (such as the sale of fur garments) (see Jasper & Nelkin, 1992), but are also advocating an alternative consciousness (Gusfield, 1981) towards many related issues which, if successfully implemented would dramatically alter the social landscape.

Sociological Warfare and Sociological Propaganda

“Sociological warfare” parallels Ellul’s (1965) distinction between political and sociological propaganda, useful because it emphasizes the difference between intentional persuasive campaigns conducted by a specific organization or institution and the more spontaneous integrative sociological propaganda that collectively serves “to unify its members’ behavior according to a pattern, to spread its style of life abroad, and thus to impose itself on other groups...its influence aims much more at an entire style of life than at opinions or even one course of behavior” (Ellul, 1965, pp. 62-63). Ellul’s view of sociological propaganda parallels a functionalist perspective on the creation and maintenance of a unified social world which manifests a common way of life despite its emergence from multiple institutions and social practices.

Over time, sociological propaganda emerges from multiple sources, such as public relations, advertising and governmental bodies, to create “a certain general

conception of society, a particular way of life” that is supported by “propagated behavior and myths, both good and bad. Furthermore, such propaganda becomes increasingly effective when those subjected to it accept its doctrines on what is *good* or *bad*” (Ellul, 1965, p. 65). In short, sociological propaganda transcends persuasive efforts related to concrete behaviors or attitudes, and instead promotes an expansive world view regarding perceptions of the desirable and undesirable. Such an expansive perspective that acts as a rubric for a variety of distinct issues and concerns is critical for Ellul, because he contends that it is the mythic vision, rather than specific data or evidence, which is ultimately persuasive:

[W]hat remains with the individual affected by this propaganda is a perfectly irrational picture, a purely emotional feeling, a myth. The fact is the data, the reasoning—all are forgotten, and only the impression remains. And this is indeed what the propagandist ultimately seeks, for the individual will never begin to act on the basis of facts or engage in purely rational behavior. What makes him act is the emotional pressure, the vision of a future, the myth. The problem is to create an irrational response on the basis of rational and factual elements. (Ellul, 1965, pp. 86-87)

Ellul’s insight is central for sociological warfare because it implies that specific claims, data, or evidence will be unlikely to be as persuasive as compelling narratives and myths. While claims-makers necessarily promote compelling factual evidence in efforts to both shape public opinion and reinforce existing perspectives, Ellul suggests that it will be those claims-makers that can communicate a broader vision alongside compelling evidence that will be more successful in their persuasive projects.

Objectives of This Article

The goal of this article is to examine the controversy over the Canadian Seal Hunt as an episode of sociological warfare, with each group of combatants intent on altering the public moral imagination regarding the status of the hunt. The seal hunt is an excellent case study for sociological warfare because of its highly mediated nature and its inherent ambiguity. Most Canadians live in a corridor between Quebec City, Quebec and London, Ontario and are therefore unlikely to accidentally encounter the seal hunt; international audiences are unlikely to witness the seal hunt unless they intentionally travel to the ice foes where the hunt occurs. Therefore, virtually all information regarding the hunt will emanate either from hunters and government agencies which support the hunt or from anti-hunt activists intent on truncating or eliminating the hunt—fertile grounds for attempts at shaping public perceptions. Moreover, even well intentioned efforts to find neutral or objective ground on the seal hunt is problematic at best. As Lee (1988) argues, the Canadian seal hunt lacks any “mediating third language” with which to discuss the hunt (Lee, 1988, p. 21). A term such as “harvest” characterizes seals as natural resources to be utilized for human purposes, but conceals the violent killings inherent in a

“harvest”; some anti-seal hunt activists contend that “hunt” and “kill” belay the “huge slaughter” that anti-hunt activists perceive as self-evident (Lee, 1988, p. 24). As with other cultural controversies (for example, see Hunter, 1991), the lack of an overtly neutral language will necessarily intensify conflict, especially when the goal of each side is zero sum: moralization. In this discussion of sociological warfare and moralization, *The Ottawa Citizen* was sampled for articles related to the seal hunt. Regulators of the seal hunt and its economic defenders, as well as anti-hunt advocates (such as the IFAW) have a presence in Ottawa, and are therefore more likely to have some sort of hearing in *The Ottawa Citizen*.

Moralization and the Canadian Seal Hunt

A strategic goal of sociological warfare is moralization. Rozin’s (1997) discussion of moralization begins with the premise that “something is in the moral domain if the term *ought* (or *ought not*) applies to it”...and “that if something is in the moral domain for person A, then A is concerned that other people hold and behave according to the position held by A” (Rozin, in Brandt & Rozin, 1997, p. 380). For example, Rozin distinguishes between the “pure moral” vegetarian that “avoid eating meat only because of the moral implications (killing animals, wasting resources, and so on), whereas pure health vegetarians avoid eating meat on the grounds that it is unhealthy” (Rozin, in Brandt & Rozin, 1997, p. 380). Rozin contends that moralization on an individual unit of analysis occurs through “moral piggybacking” (“the extension of an existing moral principle to a new object/activity”) and/or through “moral expansion” (which “involves creation of a new moral domain”)” (Rozin, in Brandt & Rozin, 1997, p. 386). In both cases, moralization occurs through either an *affective route* (based primarily on emotional impact and understandings, such as a person becoming disgusted after viewing a documentary of how animal slaughter is conducted) and/or a *cognitive route* (based primarily on principles, data, or other information, such as exposure to reasoned and principled arguments about why the slaughter of animals is morally indefensible) (Rozin, in Brandt & Rozin, 1997, pp. 385-386). In the case of social directions, moralization may occur either through “moral piggybacking” when a person is either affectively or cognitively persuaded that a current understanding that is held is subsequently applied to another context (such as a person that understands killing animals for fur is immoral comes to perceive that killing animals for sport is also immoral) or through “moral expansion”(such as a person reading Tom Regan’s *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983) and coming to hold the new understanding that animals should not be killed for food or sport).

In terms of social factors that inhibit or encourage moralization, Rozin cites nine categories of “regularities” or conditions that encourage or discourage moralization, which will be divided here into three groups based on the point of sociological focus: *centrality of values and beliefs*, *targeted populations* and *structurally*

conducive or inhibiting societal conditions (Rozin, in Brandt & Rozin, 1997, pp. 391-397). In the case of *centrality of values and beliefs*, these “regularities” focus on beliefs and values as having either causal primacy or significance in successful or unsuccessful moralization. For example, countries that have historically been Protestant are more likely to be favorable grounds for values or beliefs that emphasize the importance of self-control explaining individual and collective benefits or calamities (such as economic prosperity as the product of individual exertion and impoverished populations lacking the appropriate “work ethic” (see Pimpare, 2004). Moreover, these regularities also suggest that attempts at moralization which mesh with previously held values, beliefs, and perceptions are more likely to be successful than those which are qualitatively innovative and/or challenge previously held values, beliefs, and perceptions. *Targeted populations* refers to moralization that is encouraged because moral claims are attached to sympathetic populations (such as children) or conversely to populations which are perceived as dangerous, immoral, or otherwise contaminated (such as nineteenth century immigrant populations in the United States, whose consumption of alcohol was understood as being threatening to longstanding American values and therefore needed to be controlled (see Morone, 2003). Regularities under the rubric of *structurally conducive or inhibiting societal conditions* suggest that moralization is more likely to occur with practices when behavioral changes exert less costs due to larger structural conditions (such as public “No Smoking” prohibitions making quitting smoking more feasible and that cultural and/or societal upheaval make individual or systematic attempts at moralization more likely (such as the advent of “secular morality”) (Rozin, in Brandt & Rozin, 1997, p. 397).

Economics, Cruelty, and Moralization

Rozin’s discussion of moralization is very useful for an analysis of the controversy over the Canadian seal hunt because it is a central strategic goal of sociological warfare. Each group of claims-makers must frame (Snow & Bedford, 1988) the controversy in order to emphasize the moral significance and propriety of their stance, and the untenable moral stance of their opponents. In brief, defenders of the Canadian seal hunt postulate that the hunt provides needed revenue for both the participants and Atlantic Canada, is environmentally sustainable, and is not inherently cruel. Conversely, opponents of the hunt callously disregard the needs of the “sealers” of Atlantic Canada and are irrational and overly emotional when it comes to the defense of animals that are also a sustainable economic resource. Opponents of the hunt contend that it is cruel and of a very limited economic benefit. For hunt opponents, the hunt is a savage anachronism.

Both positions have some empirical support. As noted above, the seal hunt has continued at various levels of intensity for over 400 years, and continues to provide limited economic benefit for both the participants and Atlantic Canada.

Sumner (1983) contends that the “total annual gross income for all participants has varied...from \$3 million to \$5 million (in Canadian dollars), depending largely on pelt prices (Sumner, 1983, p. 111).” The hunt gross income is unequally distributed, with those working on large vessels (over 65 feet) earning between \$2400-\$4800 per participant (and comprising about 4 percent of all “sealers”); smaller vessel sealers (vessels between 35 and 65 feet) earned between \$1300-\$1900 per participant (and comprising about 9 percent of all “sealers”); the landsmen earn the least (between \$230-\$450 per participant) while making up the vast majority of “sealers” (approximately 85 percent) (Sumner, 1983, pp. 111-112). The costs of the hunt are also unequally distributed: according to a 1976 survey (conducted before the EU economic ban) the expenses of the hunt lowered the income of the small vessels by 30 percent and the landsmen by 50 percent. According to Sumner, “[c]ollectively, the small vessels actually operated at a loss” (Sumner, 1983, p. 112). The Canadian government, primarily through the Ministry of Fisheries and Oceans, spends “conservatively at \$1 million per annum” through the regulation of the seal hunt, publishing information regarding the hunt, and maintaining the Ottawa-based center related to the seal hunt. Sumner also suggests that the total annual added value of the seal hunt generated by both the “sealers” and the secondary sectors (that primarily process seal pelts, meat, and blubber) varies between \$5 to \$10 million dollars; specifically in Newfoundland the primary and secondary sector production “constitutes in most years roughly one-half of one percent of the added value of goods-producing industries” (Sumner, 1983, p. 112).

According to the Department of Oceans and Fisheries in their document “Socio-economic Importance of the Seal Hunt”, the seal hunt provides significant sources of income: “In Newfoundland and Labrador at least 7 coastal communities derived between 15% and 35% of their total earned income from sealing” and “[s]ealers state their income from sealing can represent from 25-35% of their total annual income (Socio-economic Importance of the Seal Hunt).” The DFO also states that the seal hunt is very beneficial for “sealing communities” that “do not have many alternative earnings or work options (Socio-economic Importance of the Seal Hunt).” Unlike Sumner (1983), these data are not discussed in terms of distribution of earned income to various participants.

Beyond the ambiguous economic benefits of the seal hunt, the “cruelty question” is of significant concern both to the Canadian government that regulates the seal hunt and anti-hunt activists. Since the first major protests began in the 1960s, films and still images of seal pups being killed by having their skulls crushed were very significant in raising public controversy about the apparent cruelty of seal hunting (and contributed to the European Union banning importation of products produced from hooded and harp seals). Supporters of the hunt have responded that the methods of killing seals, while visually unsettling, are effective in killing seals nearly instantaneously and therefore eliminating the possibility of suffering (and also being equivalent to other forms of dispatching commonly employed on domestic

animals raised for slaughter, such as cows and pigs). Moreover, since the late 1970s, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) has become involved in the assessment of the seal hunt related to animal welfare (and veterinarians were involved in some assessment in the Gulf in the mid 1960s and the Front in the early 1970s) (Daoust, et al, 2002, p. 688). These assessments address whether or not seals are killed “humanely” (meaning that death is caused instantaneously, or nearly so). Daoust, et al (2002) state that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) “has adopted a series of regulations aimed at promoting humane methods of killing seals” including regulating “the minimum and maximum dimensions of both the club and the hakapik, and the minimum caliber of rifle and minimum bullet velocity that can be used (Daoust, et al, 2002, p. 688).” The intent of these regulations is to insure the swift death of hunted seals before they are skinned. Beyond the regulation of slaughter itself, the seal hunt is also observed by both representatives of the CVMA and the IFAW, largely to determine if seals are killed swiftly enough as to conform to the DFO regulations. As two measures of the efficacy of the DFO regulations Daoust, et al (2002) discuss “7 skulls from carcasses of recently killed seals” taken from a 2001 seal hunt and an analysis by Daoust and Crook of “4 of 11 videotapes of the 2001 hunt in the Gulf, taken from helicopters by members of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and submitted on an unsolicited basis to the CVMA’s Animal Welfare Committee” (Daoust, et al, 2002, p. 688). Daoust, et al state that “[t]hese 4 videotapes involved a total of 116 interactions between harp seals and sealers, or 37.4% of a total of 310 such interactions recorded in the 11 videotapes” (Daoust, et al, 2002, p. 688). These tapes suggest that a minority of the videotaped actions may have been violations of DFO regulations:

In the 4 videotapes examined by both parties, members of the IFAW considered that 55 violations pertaining directly to animal welfare issues and involving 39 (33.6%) of 116 seals had occurred. Daoust and Crook agreed with 13 (23.6% of these 55 alleged violations, involving 12 (10.3%) of 116 seals. (Daoust, et al, 2002, p. 690)

The 7 skulls that were collected indicated severe, traumatic, significant damage that was sufficient to cause instant death and therefore kept with DFO regulations.

The evidence supporting the claims of Daoust, et al (2002) that “the large majority of seals taken during this hunt are killed in an acceptably humane manner” (Daoust, et al, 2002, p. 693) remains ambiguous. Daoust, et al (2002) state that “[m]ost hunters recorded on videotapes taken by the IFAW members during the 2001 hunt in the Gulf failed to palpate the skull or check the corneal reflex before proceeding to hook or bleed the seal, or go to another seal” (Daoust, et al, 2002, p. 693), which is necessary to determine that the seals in question are dead and not merely injured and suffering. Moreover, the contents of the 7 of the 11 aforementioned videotapes were not analyzed and discussed, meaning that the majority of the sample discussed by Daoust and Crook (approximately 63 percent

of the total videotaped materials) remains unknown and possibly contains more significant violations of DFO regulations. While Daoust, et al (2002) maintain that “[t]he wide open nature of the habitat where the harp seal hunt occurs has made it particularly amenable to intense scrutiny” (Daoust, et al, 2002, p. 693), Sumner (1983) is more skeptical. While noting that “[f]isheries officers who enforce the regulations are empowered to suspend the license of any sealer observed to be breaking them” and that “according to some observers, 95 percent of all killings are carried out properly”, other observers have stated that “breaches of the regulations are much more common” (Sumner, 1983, p. 115). Sumner also suggests that, despite the “wide open nature of the habitat where the harp seal hunt occurs” that “the hunt is inherently difficult to regulate. A handful of Fisheries officers and authorized observers cannot adequately monitor the activities of thousands of sealers distributed over thousands of square miles of open ice” (Sumner, 1983, p. 115).

Compounding the difficulties inherent in a ratio of the small number of observers related to a much larger number of sealers is the potential for DFO officials to be unduly influenced by their relationships with the sealers. For example, Eisnitz (1997) contends that within the contemporary American slaughterhouse industry (most of which are located in rural areas where the slaughterhouses employ a significant portion of the population), federal regulators are under economic and informal pressures via relationships to others in their community to not be zealous of enforcement of either health and safety or humane slaughter regulations. Atlantic Canada, with its rural populations and weak economy, provides a similar environment within which DFO and CVMA representatives may feel pressured to allow actions that facilitate the seasonal hunt despite their officially cruel nature.

These differences provide a highly conducive environment within which countervailing efforts at moralization to occur. Supporters of the seal hunt may point to discernable economic benefits derived from the hunt and scientific data that indicates that the seal hunt is conducted in a humane manner certified by veterinarians and representatives of the Canadian government. Opponents of the hunt may raise substantive questions about the economic benefits derived from the seal hunt (and the real potential for economic harm caused by international boycotts created by states and non-state actors to the Canadian economy because of the seal hunt) and may point to weak measures and enforcement of humane regulations of the hunt that could fail more rigorous ethical tests. In sum, neither side in the seal hunt controversy can easily fall on scientific or economic data to irrefutably defend its position.

The continuing nature of the seal hunt controversy may also be viewed in terms of Rozin’s three general categories of factors conducive or inhibiting moralization. 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 (Inglehart, 1997)

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 (Jasper, 1997). Related to this, *targeted populations* are also highly significant. As Lee (1988) notes, many in Atlantic Canada are “proudly” unsentimental regarding seal pups and other nonhuman animals; for hunt opponents, the inherent beauty and innocence of the seals in their natural environment make them very sympathetic objects of positive moral concern. (Images and films of the hunt have also been central in presenting the hunt to outsiders and casting much of international public opinion against the hunt). Finally, the *structurally conducive or inhibiting societal conditions* serve to fuel the controversy: for those involved in the seal hunt, economic need, tradition and scientific evidence serve to reinforce the legitimacy of this longstanding practice. Conversely, significant questions regarding the economic utility and ecological sustainability of the seal hunt—along with well-founded concerns about cruelty in the hunt—emerge in a context in a time period when others that utilize nonhuman animals are coming under increasing ethical and legal scrutiny (see Lowe, 2006).

Beyond the defenders and detractors of the seal hunt, the major concern for both sides is shaping the public moral imagination regarding the seal hunt into one of two mutually exclusive visions. The processes by which this struggle occurs will be the focus of the remainder of this article (see Table One: Synthesizing Variables in Moralization). One of the core issues in forging sociological explanations of morality is the “agency-structure question” (for example, see Giddens, 1984): how much of these efforts are the consequence of activities of social actors like moral entrepreneurs, and how much of these endeavors can be attributed to structural and/or societal conditions, such as anomie? In addition to these general parameters, the general cultural and symbolic landscape of the host society is also likely to prove significant in accounting for the relative success or failure of a moralizing effort. Therefore, the variables below have been divided into agency-focused, structurally focused, and culturally focused categories.

Agency-Focused Variables

These are variables that attribute much of moralization to the efforts of groups and/or organizations that have acted in some fashion in order to promote a particular effort at moralization.

Moral entrepreneurs/moral claimsmakers: Who or what are making moral claims? These claims-makers may be involved in perpetuating a moral panic (although they are not necessary; (see Goode & Ben Yehuda (1994)) or a prolonged campaign (for example, see “Technicians in Moral Outrage” in Jackall & Hirota, 2000). Moral entrepreneurs may be institutions or organizations, such as the DFO and IFAW, or they may be individuals.

Resistance of object(s) of fear: To what degree are those targeted by moraliza-

Table One: Synthesizing Variables in Moralization

Intersection with media, legal and political structures

**Primary audience(s)
of panic/crusade**

**Objects of
Fear/Objects of
Compassion**

**Creation of
Narrative**

**Primary Moral
Vocabulary**

Counter-narrative

**Moral Entrepreneurs /
Moral Claimsmakers**

**Resistance by
Object(s) of Fear**

tion able to offer resistance or do third parties offer resistance or counter-examples (Glassner, 1999)?

Structurally-Focused Variables

These are variables dealing primarily with supra-personal conditions and phenomena, like economic activity or patterns of immigration, which may encourage or inhibit attempts at moralization because of the societal stability that they facilitate or erode.

Primary audience(s) of the panic(s): Who or what groups, populations, networks, subcultures, are most likely to accept the moral claims being generated? This category may also consider potential populations that may come to accept claims and/or panic(s).

Status of moralization narrative within the host society: To what degree is the moralization narrative granted legitimacy as legitimate, or is it ridiculed outside of networks of supporters?

Capacity to (re)form moral boundaries: To what degree can the moralization narrative be incorporated within existing moral boundaries?

Culturally Focused Variables

Variables in this category refer to the cultural and symbolic patterns and tendencies within a society, both historical and contemporary, that may serve to encourage or inhibit an attempt at moralization. These variables may be especially noteworthy because, as Rozin notes, the ability for a new idea or claim (such as emphasizing the importance of cleanliness) to be introduced into the host society may be significantly enhanced if it may be attached to another well-established and accepted idea or claim (such as cleanliness being next to godliness).

Capacity for resistance: This category of variables refers to behavior often overlooked in the moral panics literature, namely how a group, subculture, and/or organization has the capacity to resist attempts at either moralizing it or objects, practices, and/or phenomena associated with it. For example, Glantz and Balbach (2000) note that the tobacco industry has been very adept at resisting attempts to moralize either cigarette smoking or itself as anything other than a group of legitimate businesses providing products that adults desired.

Primary object(s) of fear: Who or what is perceived as destructive (and why). For example, Solomon (2005) notes that those who promote American military intervention tend to demonize leaders of countries targeted for invasion as being sexually and religiously depraved and living in luxury.

Primary object(s) of concern/compassion: Who or what is to be protected and why (i.e., what is the nature of the perceived threat?)? Many moral panics are associated with groups or objects associated with the young and/or the future (such as concerns over the impact of music or video games on children).

Activated symbols and meanings: This group of variables is also a significant departure because it recognizes that many attempts at moralization are deliberate attempts to suppress, undermine, or support some type of symbol or meaning. For example, in the above discussion of the Gennerelli head injury laboratory, the ALF deftly undermined the status of the researchers as knowledgeable and skilled scientists and instead portrayed them through their edited research tapes as callous and sloppy.

In the case of the Canadian seal hunt, images of seals being killed has evoked

controversy for decades, and placed hunt defenders in a difficult position. Possibly as a consequence, the DFO has restricted the hunting of seal pups. According to DFO Minister Regan, only the “independent” seals “no longer part of a family unit” may be hunted:

My department has strict conservation measures in place, and is committed to the careful management of all seals to ensure strong, healthy populations in the years to come. The seals hunted are self-reliant, independent animals that must already have molted their white coat before being hunted. They are no longer part of a family unit. Hunting for harp (whitecoat) and hooded (blueback) seal pups is strictly prohibited, as is the trade, sale or barter of the fur of these pups. (Regan, March 17, 2005)

This statement is noteworthy because it simultaneously acknowledges the public appeal of the seal pups while providing rationalizations for killing their less photogenic kin.

Association of Narrative with High Status Persons or Groups

To what degree do legitimate institutions and/or persons accept, reject, or remain neutral towards the moralization campaign? Are moral claims facilitated or inhibited because high status persons or groups support or malign these attempts at moralization? For example, the roles of prominent individuals in the seal hunt controversy. Well-known actors such as Brigitte Bardot, Pamela Anderson, and musicians including Sir Paul McCartney and Morrissey have employed their prominence and status to lend attention and credibility to the seal hunt protests (Pilieci, 2006, p. A6). As noted, the primary contact that the vast majority of Canadians and others have with the seal hunt is through mediated reports and material presented by the advocacy organizations. Therefore, the presence of one or more media noteworthy persons will serve to both bring additional attention to the issues(s) at hand and to potentially lend support to their cause. In the case of Anderson, for example, her participation as grand marshal of the Grey Cup parade in 2005 may serve to bring the messages she espouses to audiences not previously concerned with animal welfare or rights (Pilieci, 2006, p. A6).

For anti-hunt advocates, the danger of high status persons challenging the hunt is that they may be discredited as either ignorant or emotional. For example, in his ethnography of a controversy over using former companion animals surrendered to animal shelters in biomedical experimentation, Groves (1997) notes that animal advocates were deeply concerned with being characterized as being perceived by the public as overly emotional or sentimental because this status could be used to discredit the activists as irrational. Similarly, the participation of high status persons may be attacked as selfish publicity seeking.

High status persons may also make ambiguous contributions through the deployment of controversial language or terms. For example, in a 1997 Ottawa

Citizen Newspaper article, environmentalist Farley Mowat stated: “I don’t think the word holocaust is too strong” in reference to the Canadian seal hunt, also noting: “I do not make a distinction between the massive destruction of any kind of animal whether it is human or non-human” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 1997, p. A4). While Mowat qualified his statement, blaming “government manipulation” for much of the “mass destruction” of the hunt, such terms may anger otherwise sympathetic segments of the public that decry the seal hunt but understand terms such as “holocaust” as overblown and disproportionate.

Intersection with Legal/Political Structures

To what degree do existing structures accept, reject, remain neutral, or offer alternatives to the moralization narrative? Are these claims embraced, modified, or ignored? In the case of the Canadian seal hunt, the DFO holds a monopoly over definitions of “cruel” and “humane” treatment of seals and can increasingly control the presence of protesters and/or observers during the seal hunt. Conversely, anti-seal hunt advocates are limited to their own means of communication, information that they can insert in the press, and to appeal to the DFO regarding allegations of cruelty (wherein the DFO is the ultimate arbiter).

The DFO recognizes that the potential repercussions of negative media coverage may cause difficulties for the seal hunt, and therefore it pursues a strategy of claiming an economically beneficial, necessary, and environmental seal hunt, while attacking seal hunt opponents as overly emotional and consciously manipulative. For example, Minister Geoff Regan’s March 17, 2005 statement “Canada’s Seal Hunt: Beyond the Rhetoric” is noteworthy because it implies that, because that the DFO regulates and enforces the seal hunt, it must be ethically and environmentally sustainable. The seal hunt is defended as traditional and an economic necessity while protesters are framed as irrational and a threat to “Canada’s reputation abroad”:

Like the fishery, the annual seal hunt is an important industry and a time-honoured tradition for people in Canada’s coastal communities. Seals are a valuable natural resource that provide income in remote towns and villages where few other economic opportunities exist.

Unfortunately, this industry and its importance to thousands of Canadians are often misunderstood and clouded by misleading rhetoric and sensational images that tell a selective, biased, and often false story about the seal hunt. The tragic result is that this industry, and the people who rely on it for a living, are undeservedly cast in a negative light by a few powerful organizations putting their own agendas ahead of the truth....

All Canadians need to understand that sealing is a legitimate, sustainable activity based on sound conservation principles. The hunt is conducted in a humane and tightly regulated manner. Canada’s seal population is healthy and abundant. Current estimates put the harp seal herd—the most important seal herd for this industry—in excess of five million animals, nearly triple what it was in the 1970s....

To prevent inhumane treatment, seals are killed quickly and according to strict regulations. Canada's seal-hunting methods have been studied and approved by the Royal Commission on Seals and Sealing, which found that the methods used in the seal hunt compare favourably to those used to hunt other wild animals, and those used to slaughter domestic animals—like cattle and poultry—for human consumption. In 2002, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) issued a *Special Report on Animal Welfare and the Harp Seal Hunt in Atlantic Canada*, which concluded that virtually all harp seals—fully 98 per cent—are killed in a humane manner.

It is especially disturbing that some organizations are seeking to damage a legitimate Canadian activity and Canada's reputation abroad in public-relations campaigns in order to raise money for their organizations.

The sensational images and breathless rhetoric used to criticize this industry amount to a slap in the face to the thousands of families who, through the generations, have made their living from this resource. It is a real disgrace to have such negative light being cast on the Canadian men and women of this industry, and on the many proud coastal communities that rely on the seal hunt for their very survival. Worse, these carefully orchestrated public-relations campaigns twist the facts of the seal hunt for the benefit of a few extremely powerful and well-funded organizations. (Regan, March 17, 2005)

Capacity for Narratives and Counter-Narratives

In media-saturated post-industrial societies, the capacity to couch moralizing efforts within a compelling narrative form cannot be ignored. For example, Cornog (2004) argues that successful American presidential candidates have utilized crafted narratives in pursuit of support from the electorate. A comprehensive narrative for a moralization also allows for the suppression or concealment of discrepancies in data or behavior that may threaten public support and/or alliances. For example, the discourse surrounding “compassionate conservatism” produced by the George W. Bush presidency promoted “people of faith” working in concert towards alleviating societal problems that were not being adequately addressed by state or federal governments. The utility of the term “people of faith” is that it both glosses over doctrinal, ideological, and organizational differences between religious groups in an attempt to build a coalition that will continue to support the domestic initiatives of the George W. Bush administration and also implicitly promote motifs from the “culture wars” of religious groups being at odds from secular ones.

Creation of Narrative

How is the moralized object, practice, or phenomena organized into a coherent narrative that is accepted by (at least portions of) a broader audience? In sum, does the proposed moralized practice (such as banning or labeling video games deemed violent or sexually explicit) integrate itself with a broader worldview or

set of practices (such as banning or limiting the exposure of children to violent or sexually explicit films or magazines)?

Intersection of Narrative with Dominant Moral Resources and Myths of the Host Society

The degree to which the narrative created by the moral entrepreneurs meshes with or contradicts broader themes and symbols within the broader society, making the narrative more or less readily understood. For example, Kean (1998) contends that many Victorian-era supporters of animal protection were also involved with other types of social reforms that were informed by their Protestant Christianity, so that animal protection was part of a composite rather than an aberration for these moral entrepreneurs.

In the case of the anti-hunt advocates, a synthesis of anti-cruelty and environmental moral resources deeply informs the anti-hunt narrative. For example, in a 1999 interview with the *Ottawa Citizen*, the IFAW national director challenged a federal government decision to maintain the seal hunt quota at 275,000:

“I’m not sure whose advice the minister has been heeding, but it isn’t the scientific community’s. This is completely irresponsible,” said IFAW national director Rick Smith. “It’s clear the government has just thrown the science out the window and has learned nothing from the collapse of the cod stocks,” he charged....

In addition to a handful of environmental groups, 22 Canadian scientists—including 11 from Newfoundland’s Memorial University—have asked for the reduction of the size of the hunt to protect the health of the seal herd.

One of those scientists, Dr. David Lavigne, of Guelph, recently co-authored a study of Canada’s hunt management practices between 1996 and 1998. The study, published this fall in the peer-reviewed journal *Conservation Biology*, found that the Canadian and Greenlandic hunts, which prey on the same seal population, exceeded the herd’s ability to replenish its numbers through reproduction.

The scientists estimate that 1.5 to 5.9 times more seals are now being killed than born each year.

“Viewed from this perspective, Canada’s approach to harp seal management between 1996 and 1998 cannot be deemed precautionary or risk averse,” the authors conclude. (Duffy, 1999, p. A9)

The meshing of the overt advocate’s claim with peer-reviewed data generated by apparently disinterested scientists serves to support the environmental basis of the anti-seal narrative.

Another tactic to discredit the seal hunt has been to depict it as “un-Canadian.” Canadians have distinguished themselves from other nations (especially the United States) through its international humanitarian efforts, humane domestic policies, and respect for human rights. In characterizing the seal hunt as antithetical to this imagined national character (see Anderson, 1991) raises the possibility of international embarrassment as another blow against the legitimacy of the seal

hunt. For example, in 2006, British singer Morrissey, in announcing that his tour would not include any Canadian stops, made an analogy between the seal hunt and genocidal activities at his official website: “Constructing of German gas chambers also provided work for someone—this is not a moral or sound reason for allowing suffering....The Canadian Prime Minister says the so-called ‘cull’ is economically and environmentally justified, but this is untrue.” Morrissey also compared Canada to China “as the cruelest and most self-serving nation” (Pilieci, 2006, p.A4)

Intersection of Narrative with Media

What type of media coverage is given to the moralizing narrative, and how transposable is that narrative to media coverage? As Jamieson and Waldman (2003) argue, media coverage necessitates some type of narrative; the question is to what degree is this narrative favorable to moralization. As the above-quoted article, “Unchanged seal quota worries conversationalists” suggests, environmental claims—especially those that can be supported by non-advocates—are easily disseminated into a journalistic narrative that provides credibility for the anti-seal hunt narrative.

In moralization campaigns, the intentions of the creators of media artifacts are not automatically transmitted within the artifacts themselves. As noted, the seal hunt controversy began with a film made to bolster fur consumption. A more recent example of a mediated artifact deployed far from its creator’s intentions is a video featuring the wounded and captured Lieutenant Commander John McCain:

The opening shot of a new video about Sen. John McCain shows a young Navy pilot encased in a giant, clumsy-looking plaster cast. With his one free hand, he smokes a cigarette as he gives a foreigner interviewer his name, rank and serial number.

From that image of McCain, badly injured from a plane crash and captive in a Vietnamese prisoner of war camp, the title flashes over the sound of a gong: Courageous service. Experienced leadership. Bold solutions.

The film will be distributed widely today, available on the front page of the website for the Arizona Republican’s presidential campaign; screened at campaign events in Iowa, South Carolina and New Hampshire; and handed out as DVDs to supporters. In 12 minutes, it sketches the history of McCain’s harrowing experiences during the bombing of an aircraft carrier and as a prisoner of war, drawing comparisons between his courage as a captive pilot and his abilities as a leader. (Sanger-Katz, August 30, 2007)

Presumably McCain’s North Vietnamese captors did not intend to create film that could be utilized to bolster the future Senator’s political campaigns; however, as Sanger-Katz notes this footage allows McCain to emphasize his military and combat experiences. Similarly, cultural artifacts that are intended to promote a specific agenda can be deployed by other moral entrepreneurs in a variety of directions.

The perception of the role of media on the part of agents within moralization

struggles can also play a significant role in the narrative that it ultimately created. For example, in “Animal-rights video used as evidence against sealers,” Prentice (1998) discusses how a four-person television crew “gained permission to accompany the sealers, on condition they would turn off their video cameras when asked to do so” because the sealers “thought they were being videotaped for a U.S. TV program about hunting” (Prentice, 1998, p. A7). The filmmakers were actually agents of the IFAW. This deception created 10 hours of videotape of the 1996 seal hunt that resulted in 17 charges against the sealers featured in the videotape and was characterized by the IFAW Canadian director as “absolute vindication of what we have been saying for years about the cruelty of the hunt” (Prentice, 1998, p. A7). While the fabrication that the IFAW employed to create this videotape could be attacked as deceptive and therefore suspect, Richard Smith, Canadian Director of the IFAW, argued that the sealers knew they could ask the filmmakers to cease filming during the seal hunt “was an indication of the widespread cruelty that occurs during the annual slaughter” (Prentice, 1998, p. A7).

Beyond films and images that are intentionally created to be persuasive, journalists striving for objectivity in reporting the seal hunt are in an ethically delicate situation, as described by photographer Jonathan Hayward in 2005 in an article in *The Ottawa Citizen* that was accompanied by several of his photographs:

The annual Atlantic seal hunt is upon us, and once again we are assailed with images that batter our senses and our sentiments. Their use in conventional media is usually muted: small photos rendered in black and white. On animal rights websites, however, the pictures are vivid, viscous and bolstered by equally graphic video accounts.

The photos accompanying this story, it must be noted, are not the work of a propagandist, but a Newfoundland-born journalist working for The Canadian Press. Printed in colour, they would be not merely disturbing, but sickening. They are, says photographer Jonathan Hayward, an unvarnished representation of one part of the annual harvest of seals for pelts and blubber....

Mr. Hayward is a veteran newsman, based in Ottawa and used to taking photos that can make politicians look good, bad or indifferent by turns from one day to the next. Taking pictures of the seal hunt is different.

“As a photographer, the first thing you want to be is unbiased. You don’t want to be on one side or another, whether you’re on an election campaign or what,” said Mr. Hayward. But all his photos of the seal hunt seem judgmental to him, sensationalistic, despite his best efforts.

“The killing of anything does not look good...The reason I’ve had such a hard time with this story is because no matter what you do, it looks negative,” he said. (Atherton, 2005, p. A1)

Atherton (2005) states that “[t]he harvest on the ice-floes near Prince Edward Island accounts for about 20 per cent of the hunt” where clubs are utilized, and the other 80 percent of the hunt involves rifles “and photos, if anyone bothered to take them, would be far less dramatic” (Atherton, 2005, p. A1). Even if these images are

empirically disproportionate in representing the actual mechanics of seal hunting, they raise significant ethical concerns about objectivity: if images are upsetting to an audience to they be modified (such as shrinking or removing color) or are such efforts themselves a type of bias? Animal rights advocates historically have found significant utility in promoting visuals of animal suffering, complaining that to deliberately suppress or dilute such images would be concealing the reality of animal suffering (especially when the animals themselves cannot verbalize their condition). In the case of the Gennarelli Head Injury clinic at the University of Pennsylvania, Animal Liberation Front (ALF) members compiled a 30 minute video titled “Unnecessary Fuss” from over 60 hours of video tape created by Gennarelli’s experiments involving induced head injuries in baboons that showed numerous violations of the Federal Animal Welfare Act. While these images were defined as shocking, they also documented illegal activities that had occurred in a laboratory that was receiving approximately a million dollars annually from the National Institute of Health. Screenings of “Unnecessary Fuss” on Capitol Hill, along with segments broadcast on the NBC “Nightly News” and reported on in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* became significant resources in the effort to close Gennarelli laboratory (Finsen and Finsen, 1994, pp. 67-71).

Animal rights and environmental advocates are certainly not the only claim-makers to realize the significance of visual images from remote places that are transmitted to potentially sympathetic audiences in the post-industrial world. In one case, Amnesty International has begun the “Eyes on Darfur” campaign in order to continue to bring public scrutiny to the alleged ongoing genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan, as noted by Michele Kelemen of *National Public Radio*:

Using a Web site and satellite cameras, Amnesty International USA plans to track developments in 12 at-risk villages by sending up-to-date images to a Web site.

The human rights organization hopes its “Eyes on Darfur” project will help prevent violence before it happens, and compel computer users worldwide to pressure the country’s president, Omar al-Bashir, to let peacekeepers into the country. (Kelemen, June 6, 2007)

The “Eyes on Darfur” website encourages viewers to “Explore the satellite evidence and detailed on-the-ground information and see with your own eyes what is happening in Darfur” to “Join the global neighborhood watch” and “Act to prevent further attacks by monitoring villages with high risk” (www.eyesondarfur.org/, 2 September 2007). Not only does this easily accessible information allow for those outside of Darfur, an area largely inaccessible to outside inspectors and observers, to become informed, but it deliberately intends to create a compelling moral drama for viewers who are encouraged to be engaged by these images and to therefore become politically engaged on behalf of the villagers featured on the website.

The danger inherent in the utilization of graphic or compelling images carries with it the danger of “compassion fatigue.” Moeller (1999) contends that such images

can bring unrivaled individualized attention to a mass event, such as a humanitarian crisis or the slaughter of animals. Conversely, a plethora of images can also create passivity in audiences because the suffering in question seems overwhelming and unstoppable—which is likely the opposite goal of advocates that present such images. As columnist Jack Payton wrote in the *St. Petersburg Times* in 1991 after a series of publicized humanitarian crises: “Maybe the Kurds, the Bangladeshis, the Ethiopians, and the Mozambicans have finally pushed us into the MEGO, or My Eyes Glaze Over syndrome. Maybe Joseph Stalin was right after all when he said, ‘One death is a tragedy, 1 million deaths is a statistic’” (in Moeller, 1999, p. 36).

Mobilization of Counter-Narrative(s)

Are counter narratives presented which try to undermine the moralization narrative, or offer alternate explanations for the object or activities in question? For example, the attempts of public health advocates beginning in 1964 to create a public problem around smoking was weakened by a tobacco counter-narrative of uncertainty (“we don’t know if tobacco causes health problems”) and individual responsibility (“if there is a connection between smoking and health problems, tobacco companies are not responsible for any health problems subsequently discovered in smokers; individuals choose to smoke and therefore assumed the risk”).

As noted, the images and films produced by anti-hunt advocates have been detrimental to public perceptions of the hunt’s legitimacy. One counter-narrative that has been mobilized is to emphasize the roles of individual seal hunters. A 1928 film, *The Great Artic Seal Hunt* by American Varick Frissell, has been revived through a documentary supported by the Canadian National Film Board. The documentary emphasizes Frissell’s perception of the seal hunters as heroic, providing “a true record of this nation’s heroism against the terror of the ice” as Frissell wrote in 1928. Kennedy (2002) captures some of the imagery Frissell produced of the Newfoundland sealers (with a strongly pro-hunt commentary):

With an artic wind slicing over them from above, and the promise of icy death dancing up from below, the men would spread out over the frozen ocean, over the rolling white wasteland of shifting ice chunks and uncertain footing. Arriving by the thousands for the great annual seal hunt, they were me driven by the desperation of poverty, by their sense of adventure, by their very nature.

They were Newfoundlanders. Going to the ice—“swilling”—was their rite of heroic passage, a stitch in the fabric of their identity.

That is how it was in an earlier age. Seventy and more years ago, the seal hunt was a massive thing, not at all like today’s much-reduced version, victim of decades of animal-rights activism (Kennedy, 2002, p. C8).

Kennedy’s interpretation of Frissell’s film is conveniently uncontested: Frissell was killed 15 March 1931 on Newfoundland’s ice floes while making another film about the sealers. The drama of the screen images and the death of the filmmaker

serve to propel the image of the sealers into historic icons. The antithesis of this icon: animal cruelty, intractable and unaddressed Atlantic Canadian poverty, and the possibility of environmental destruction are ignored.

Another form of counter-narrative is to directly attack the anti-seal advocates as overly emotional and irrational. Alison Beal, Executive director of the Fur Institute of Canada, in a letter published in *The Ottawa Citizen* in 1997, attacked both a prominent musician who deplores the hunt as ignorant and the anti-hunt movement as racist and deceptive:

The International Fund for Animal Welfare continues to attempt to reap the dollars with their new anti-sealing campaign, launched on Oct. 9 in Toronto. Spending vast sums of money in a national newspaper and television campaign, the group has recruited prominent Canadian personalities to back their bogus declarations.

Astonishingly, the stars haven't bothered to verify their sources of information and dutifully spout the nonsense fed to them by IFAW leaders. Even more surprising is their inability to use a little critical thinking about the veracity of the claims.

For instance, Loreena McKennitt expressed her horror that "seals are routinely skinned alive" without wondering for an instant what could possibly motivate someone to do such a thing. Working out at sea, in harsh and dangerous conditions of the Atlantic, is hard enough without complicating already difficult work with senseless and irresponsible cruelty. The allegation is preposterous; its endorsement contemptible....

The real clincher comes in the following racist comment, "We do not oppose subsistence hunting by Inuit people or others, but we believe that the commercial seal hunt is abhorrent and wasteful." In other words, it's quite all right to hunt seals as long as you don't trade, and thus the Inuit and "others" may not participate in local, national or international economies but rather remain economically disadvantaged and dependent on government assistance to meet their needs....

Meanwhile, people in coastal communities continue to lose their livelihoods and their dignity to the lies, propaganda, and emotionalism that this organization purveys to city dwellers who only think they care. (Beal, 1997, p. A14)

This attack (albeit by an interested party) casts the anti-hunt advocates as ill-informed urbanites that are content to leave the Maritime economy in ruins. This strategy also deftly avoids the need to address questions of environmental sustainability or systemic causes of Atlantic Canadian poverty that seal hunting does not resolve.

Conclusion

The above illustration of an ongoing campaign of sociological warfare suggests that, without a significant realignment of influence, the war for the seals appears to be at a stalemate. The seal hunt defenders, while controlling the legal regulation of the hunt and increasingly regulating the contact of anti-hunt advocates with the seal hunt, are unable to contain animal rights sentiments both within and outside Canada that the hunt is cruel and environmentally unsustainable. The seal hunt

defenders are also unlikely to alter European Union policies that would allow more products from the seal hunt to be sold (and therefore making the profits generated by the seal hunt more substantial). Conversely, anti-hunt advocates appear to have virtually no political leverage to curtail or terminate the hunt; the effects of anti-hunt boycotts of Canadian products are ambiguous at best.

As a critical element in sociological warfare, moralization is centrally important to analyzing the activities of the combatants in the seal war. Anti-hunt activists have experienced success in deploying vivid and graphic images of the seal hunt, and have also enjoyed the added testimony of celebrities and scientists in attacking the hunt. Hunt defenders also have the authority of the state, scientific experts and tradition (not insignificant in a society increasingly dominated by multicultural discourse) to bolster the moral standing of the hunt. Furthermore, Atlantic Canada itself may be juxtaposed against the seals as sympathetic and compassionate objects. While moralization in this conflict plays a central role, it does not appear at present that either side has an overwhelming moral gravitas that alone will either terminate the hunt or the protests against it.

While the economic needs and cultural traditions of Atlantic Canada are cited as resources for continuing the seal hunt, the actual economic benefits of the seal hunt to the mass of participants and the surrounding communities is also ambiguous, and an emphasis on the seal hunt may forestall more sustained efforts to address Atlantic Canada's economic difficulties. Each side of combatants has their own, incompatible terminology which serves to calcify divisions and weaken the possibility of any "common ground" being forged between the combatants. Unless structural conditions change, it is unlikely that this impasse will be breached. Growing Russian incursions into Canadian arctic territory may bring more nationalistic sentiment to activities in northern areas, and thus add additional stigma to those who oppose the seal hunt as "anti-Canadian." Conversely, such pressures may encourage the federal government to curtail support for the hunt in favor of funding activities in the Arctic. The current economic prosperity that Canada is experiencing also plays an ambivalent role in the future of this conflict. With more resources generated through tax revenue, there may be additional encouragement to preserve the seal hunt as a Canadian tradition. Conversely, prosperity (especially in western Canada) may erode tolerance for support of a region that is chronically economically anemic. In the final analysis, the moral imagination regarding the seals remains unresolved.

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