

CHAPTER 5

THE ROLE OF IDEAS: IDEOLOGY, FRAMING, AND THE MEDIA

A central task of social movement activists is to persuade others of the rightness of their cause. Sympathizers may be enticed into joining the movement, third parties may be won over or at least persuaded to remain neutral, and opponents may even be convinced to meet some or most of the movement's demands. Hence ideology is an important characteristic of social movements, and how social movement activists convey that ideology—called framing—is a crucial part of their strategy. The media is perhaps the most powerful institution in U.S. society for disseminating ideas, and so the practice of framing necessarily entails interacting with the media.

IDEOLOGY

Social movements can be characterized not just by the ideas they promote, but more fully by their **ideology**. An ideology is, roughly, a shared, deeply-held set of beliefs about how society operates. (The term ideology can also be used in a pejorative sense to mean distorted or false ideas—originating in Marx's and Engel's notion of ideology as bourgeois ideas that function to justify class privilege. It is used here in a neutral sense, however.) An ideology may be relatively simply, or complex and sophisticated. Generally, though, an ideology consists of both *descriptive elements* (a picture of what society is like and how it came to be that way) and *values and norms* (notions of what is right or wrong, good or bad) (Oliver and Johnston 2000). Different branches of a social movement may subscribe to different ideologies, as is illustrated in Table 1 using the example of the feminist movement.

Table 1. Varieties of Modern Feminism (from Ferree and Hess 2000)

| | | Means | |
|------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | | <i>personal transformation</i> | <i>sociopolitical change</i> |
| Ends | <i>free individuals</i> | career | liberal |
| | <i>new communities</i> | radical | socialist |

FRAMING

Social movements must effectively communicate their ideas in order to gain support. Typically they strive to convince others that their cause is just, that their tactics are appropriate, and perhaps that others should join the movement. **Framing** refers to the process of shaping one's message so that it captures the attention of, and appeals to, some audience. Framing involves highlighting some part of social reality. The term originated with Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974). Imagine holding up a picture frame—the frame focuses your attention on a particular part of your environment. Furthermore, it involves interpreting and ordering information to construct a coherent “story” that resonates with an individual's experiences and perspectives. In fact, we engage in framing frequently in everyday life. For example, I try to convince my two-year-old daughter to use the potty by emphasizing what a big girl she is when she does—I “frame” the act of using the potty as a grown-up behavior to enhance its appeal to her.

A **collective action frame** is a specific type of frame that is developed by social movement activists to further their goals. Its purpose is to link “individual interests, values, and beliefs [with] SMO activities, goals and ideology” (Snow et al. 1986: 464). The assumption here is that in order to reach people, you need to speak to their experiences and existing beliefs. **Frame alignment** refers to the process by which activists mold their message to reach their target audience (Snow et al. 1986). For example, one way that the pro-life movement appeals to supporters is by framing abortion as morally wrong. This is accomplished in part by referring to the fetus as an “unborn child” or “unborn baby,” terms which are not used in the medical profession, but that evoke our culture's view of children and babies as innocent and deserving of adult protection and love.

The audience for a collective action frame might be movement participants themselves, potential participants, third parties, or opponents. In fact, it is in part through constructing frames together that social movement participants establish a collective identity—a sense of who they are as a group. Creating this “we” that shares a grievance and an intention to take action involves also creating a “they”—defining who the target, or antagonist, is (Gamson 1995).

Core Framing Tasks

Social movement activists face three “core framing tasks” (Snow and Benford 1988).

1. **diagnostic framing.** This involves identifying a problem and its causes. A major task of activists is to draw attention to and emphasize the seriousness of some perceived problem. But furthermore, activists must make attributions as to the cause of the problem. Many social movements employ an *injustice frame* (Gamson et al. 1983) that interprets the actions of some authority as unjust.

Sometimes different branches of the same movement agree on the problem but not on its origins. In the 1980s, different organizations in the nuclear weapons freeze

campaign in Austin, Texas disagreed about whether to focus on the underlying causes of the nuclear arms race (the power of the weapons industry, for example) or on the policies and politicians that fueled the arms race.

2. **prognostic framing.** This highlights a proposed solution to the problem that has been diagnosed, including a strategy for solving the problem. Again, different branches of the same movement may propose different solutions. In the movement against the death penalty in the U.S., some organizations employ litigation to prevent individual executions, while others focus on abolishing the death penalty altogether (Haines 1996).

3. **motivational framing.** The final framing task involves creating a “rationale for action” (Snow and Benford 1988: 202) that pushes people into active participation in the social movement. Social movement participants justify their actions by highlighting the severity of the problem; the urgency of addressing it; the efficacy of doing so through collective action; and the propriety of doing so (Benford 1993). You may notice a dilemma here that activists face. On the one hand, using “crisis messages” to convince people of the severity and urgency of the situation may impel them to take notice. On the other hand, facing a crisis can leave people feeling helpless. Hence it becomes also necessary to promote the idea that something *can* be done (efficacy) and *should* be done (propriety).

Which kinds of frames are most crucial to social movement success? Cress and Snow’s (2000) analysis of fifteen social movement organizations working on behalf of homeless people found that the development of “articulate and coherent” diagnostic and prognostic frames was the most important factor in whether the organizations attained their goals. An example of an inarticulate frame is one that diagnosis the problem as “homelessness” and prognostically blames “the government,” while an articulate frame might focus on “shelter conditions” as the problem and call for “service providers” to correct it (Cress and Snow 2000: 1079).

Framing Devices

At the center of the framing process is the use of symbols that evoke particular images. Most simply, a symbol is something that stands for something else. It can be visual or linguistic. Symbols are particularly effective in eliciting strong emotions, either positive or negative. The following types of framing devices deploy symbols in various ways (Ryan 1991; Gamson 1982).

- **Metaphors** make an analogy or comparison between one thing and another. In galvanizing public support for the first Gulf War, President Bush likened Saddam Hussein to Hitler, perhaps the strongest symbol of evil in the modern world. Martin

Luther King Jr. was a master at the use of metaphor. In his “I Have a Dream” speech, King says, “Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.” Here he emphasizes the depth and urgency of the need for freedom by comparing it with physical thirst. He says, “Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice”—racial segregation is associated with darkness and depth, while racial justice is associated with light and warmth.



The clenched fist was the symbol of the Black Power movement in the 1960s and 1970s.

- **Visual images** are pictures that play up the issue at hand. The campaign to halt economic sanctions against Iraq during the 1990s frequently displayed photos of Iraqi children in its literature as a way to develop sympathy for the Iraqis. The Black Power movement used the symbol of a raised fist to signify its strength and defiance.

- **Catchphrases** are words or phrases that summarize an issue. Bolshevik revolutionaries in Russia in the early 1900s spoke of “Land, bread, peace,” words that reflected the deeply held values of the Russian people. The slogan, “Support our troops: bring them home” was used by peace movement activists during both the Gulf War and the war against Iraq to refute the notion that the antiwar movement does not support U.S. soldiers. In Serbia in 2000, opponents of Milosevic coined the phrase, “He is finished.”

- **Depictions** (stereotypical portrayals) are simplified pictures of issues, events, or people. For example, in its campaign literature the movement against gay rights frequently portrays homosexuals as sexually promiscuous and prone to disease. On the other hand, the movement for gay rights often depicts its opponents as narrow-minded bigots.

- **Exemplars** are past events that are used to draw a lesson that strengthens one’s argument. For the pro-choice movement, the deaths that occurred among women when abortion was illegal are an exemplar meant to warn against efforts to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Frames

Clearly some frames resonate more strongly than others with the target audience. The most effective frames (Snow and Benford 1988):

1. *promote values and beliefs that are central to the audience’s belief system.* If the target audience is

deeply religious, for example, then it is most effective to frame the issue in terms of the audiences' religious beliefs. A branch of the environmental movement that has grown out of evangelical churches promotes the idea that the environment is "God's creation" which humans have the responsibility to care for.

2. *are linked to an appropriate range of values and beliefs* (not too limited but not too wide). A frame that is too limited may be more subject to being dismissed. On the other hand, **frame overextension** can cause problems, as well. Snow and Benford (1988) cite the example of a ballot referendum in California that initially called for not only a freeze on the development of nuclear weapons, but the diversion of funds from nuclear weapons programs to "meet human needs." When polls showed that the referendum would fail, the organizers rewrote it to address only nuclear weapons, and it subsequently was passed.

3. *are empirically credible*. There must be evidence to support claims made. The pro-life movement has sought to frame abortion as detrimental not only to the fetus, but to the pregnant woman, and one way it has done so is to publicize the "fact" that women who have abortions are at greater risk for developing breast cancer. However, the medical evidence here is not credible, and so this frame has had limited effectiveness.

4. *are commensurate with the audience's experiences*. Frames are most effective when they fit with what the audience knows. For example, anti-war organizers in the U.S. are often careful to depict U.S. soldiers not as blood-thirsty warriors, but as young men and women who, typically, joined the armed forces to learn valuable skills and earn money. This is especially important when mobilizing support in working class communities, where most soldiers come from.

5. *resonate with the audience's cultural narratives*. Every cultural group has stories, myths, and folk tales—narratives—that embody its values and beliefs. Effective frames promote ideas and meanings that fit with these narratives. For example, U.S. citizens historically have believed that U.S. military intervention in other countries is motivated solely or primarily by the desire to promote democracy. The U.S. government very effectively frames its foreign policy this way (the military invasion of Iraq was promoted as bringing democracy to the Iraqi people, to give one example). And, this frame is extremely difficult for antiwar activists to counter.

FRAMING AND THE MEDIA

In modern American society, the mass media is the most powerful institution for the dissemination of ideas. (*Mass media* refers to television, newspapers, magazines, radio, books, and perhaps movies that are marketed to "the masses," or ordinary people.) Because of its reach, the mass media is a useful avenue for social movements to get their messages out. This enables them to mobilize participants, validate their cause ("If it's on the news, it must be important."), and enlarge the scope of conflict by drawing in third parties—typically, the public (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993). Media coverage

of a social movement can also provide a psychological boost for activists (Molotch 1979).

Enlarging the scope of conflict is a particularly important function of media coverage. Social movements typically have few resources compared with their opponents, and so it is advantageous to garner the support of people who can bring their influence to bear on behalf of the movement. For example, businesses typically want to be viewed favorably by the public so that people will buy their products and services. One tactic of social movements working against corporate abuses is to produce negative publicity for companies that they are targeting—in short, to embarrass them (Gamson 2004). Organizations within the anti-sweatshop movement have publicized that practice of U.S. corporations like Nike selling products for high prices in the U.S. while paying workers in Asia and other regions extremely little.

The media also needs social movements, however. It needs stories that are dramatic, colorful, involve action, and produce good photo opportunities (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993). Nevertheless, the media has greater power in this equation, because it needs social movements less than vice versa. For one thing, the media has multiple sources of dramatic news stories, while there are relatively fewer media outlets for social movements to court. For another, the mass media has many more resources than social movements do to spread ideas—money, technology, staff. Hence, in order to obtain media coverage, social movements must typically shape their messages and actions to conform to what the media wants.

How the Media Covers Social Movements

What do social movements want from the media? First of all, they want the media to cover their story. Of course, not all social movement activities are covered by the media, which engages in **selection bias** (McCarthy, McPhail and Smith 1996). The media is more likely to focus on movements that address some issue or concern that is already in the public eye due to prior media coverage. It is also more likely to cover larger rallies or demonstrations than smaller ones.

But social movements do not just want to be covered by the media: they seek a particular kind of coverage (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993). This includes:

standing, or stature from being taken seriously.

preferred framing, so that the frame(s) that are conveyed are those that the movement wants put forth. However, news organizations often pay little attention to the issues behind a public protest—they engage in **description bias** by simply reporting what is occurring. For example, news reports about striking workers often focuses on conflicts between them and workers who cross the picket line, to the neglect of the underlying cause of the strike.

movement sympathy, so that the audience feels some sympathy for the group. News

organizations can portray a social movement in unsympathetic ways. For example, the television news coverage of the anti-WTO (World Trade Organization) protest in Seattle in November 1999 focused extensively on the damage to some downtown stores by a very small number of protesters. At the same time, it ignored the mistreatment of protesters by police officers, including the arrest of hundreds of protesters who were doing nothing illegal.

To understand why the media engages in selection bias and description bias, it is necessary to look at how the media operates. First, *organizational factors*--routines and procedures--affect what gets reported and how. Researchers identify "gatekeeper" variables that allow only certain ideas and stories into the news. For example, reporters tend to rely on prominent people, like politicians or business leaders,, rather than ordinary people, as sources of information because they are readily available and their credibility has already been established (Gans 1979). Such individuals are unlikely to be knowledgeable about or sympathetic to social movements. In addition, reporters and media executives themselves tend to come from middle- and upper-class backgrounds and so may be less likely to cover, and cover favorably, social movements of poor and working-class people.

Second, *structural factors*--the size, ownership, and profit making function of mass media organizations--conspire against media coverage of social movements. Media organizations are businesses, designed to make money, and they make money primarily by selling air time or newspaper space to advertisers. Because of their reliance on advertising as a source of revenue, media outlets are typically reluctant to disseminate ideas and information that might anger advertisers or alienate middle- and upper-class audiences, who have the most disposable income. In particular, criticism of corporations, or of capitalism in general, seldom makes the news. For example, the Boston Globe refused to print a paid advertisement by the environmental group Forest Ethics that criticized Staples, an office supply company, for selling paper made from trees cut down in old growth forests ("Boston Globe's Double Standard on Free Speech?"). Owners of media obviously have much control over what gets covered. Executives at Sinclair Broadcasting, which owns sixty-two television stations nationwide, were large contributors to the George Bush's 2004 reelection campaign, and the company required its affiliate stations to air a documentary film critical of presidential candidate John Kerry in October 2004.

The concentration of ownership in the



The ad that the Boston Globe refused to print, critical of Staples.

media may reduce the likelihood of social movements gaining coverage. Just a few large media corporations own the vast majority of television and radio stations, movie production companies, newspapers, and magazines. Hence there is less diversity in coverage and less competition, hence less incentive to seek out new and different news stories (Bagdikian 1990).

Finally, the *dominant ideology* in a society also inhibits the media from expressing certain ideas and encourages the expression of others. A dominant ideology is a set of ideas that explains and justifies the position of the powerful in a society. For example, because of our society's strong belief in individualism, the media is more likely to air the rags-to-riches stories of individuals than the stories of collective efforts by poor people to raise wages or increase social welfare.

Despite these three factors, there are cases in which social movements do succeed in getting the media to cover their issues, and cover them accurately and sympathetically. For example, Local 26 of the Hotel, Restaurant, Institutional Employees, and Bartenders Union in Boston succeeded in winning contracts with some local hotels in 1982 in part because it intentionally and successfully cultivated positive media coverage (Ryan 1991). It did so by framing the issues as ones of dignity and respect for workers; running advertisements in newspapers and on radio; calling in to local talk shows to raise the union's issues; getting one reporter to cover the union's efforts, which led to coverage by others; and organizing rallies.

Another example is a campaign by students at Gallaudet University, a school for the deaf, to persuade the university to hire a deaf president. The campaign, Deaf President Now! (DFN), was positively portrayed in the media, due to several factors (Kensicki 2001).

- Protesters were the main sources used by reporters. The protesters occupied the campus and made themselves available to the news media twenty-four hours a day. In addition, DFN preempted the use of elite sources that opposed the movement by launching the protest quickly—this caught off guard the Board of Trustees (which had just announced the appointment of a nondeaf president), whose members were unprepared to comment to the media. The students' blockade of the campus entrances made it impossible for the administration and trustees to enter, and hence more difficult for the media to locate them for comment.
- DFN organized a number of visible, dramatic events, such as rallies on campus, including one at which the proposed president and the Chair of the Board of Trustees were burned in effigy, and marches to the Capitol.
- Protesters drew parallels between their cause and the Civil Rights movement—for example, by comparing the appointment of a hearing president at Gallaudet to the appointment of a white president at Howard University, a historically black college.
- DFN's opposition did not launch a public relations campaign. At the same time, DFN was able to secure thousands of dollars in donations toward its work.

- DFN cultivated a positive relationship with the media by making their job easier. The students appointed a media coordinator and provided interpreters so reporters could interview deaf students.
- DFN received letters and statements of support from a number of prominent people, and these were cited in news reports.
- In U.S. culture, disabled people are often portrayed as needing and deserving of support, and this may have influenced the media portrayal. In addition, hearing people probably felt little or no threat from the DFN campaign, as its success would not alter their lives in any substantial way.

Alternative Media

Social movements do not always rely on the mass media to publicize their efforts: they also make their own media, sometimes called **alternative media**. During the 1800s in the United States, the labor movement published over 2,000 different periodicals, put out by socialist, communist, anarchist, utopian, and independent labor groups. Following the Civil War, over 1,000 Black magazines and newspapers were started in response to the refusal of white-owned newspapers to print perspectives from the Black community. Suffragist and feminist groups, the abolitionist movement, and conscientious objectors to war all have a long history of producing their own publications (Kessler 1984). Film makers have used their skills to document and dramatize the concerns of social movements. The film “The Silent Scream,” which showed an abortion being performed, was used by the pro-life movement to support its cause. (The film can be seen on the internet at www.silentscream.org.) Social movement activists have produced radio and television programs and, most recently, created web sites, email lists, and blogs.

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Art, in its various forms, has always played an important role in social movements. Music, street theater, murals, and art forms employ both verbal means (words) and nonverbal means (images) to convey ideas and emotions.

Music

Protest songs are ubiquitous at social movement events. Compared to spoken or written words, songs can more easily “challenge, exaggerate, and pretend” without offending audiences (Stewart et al. 2001: 201). In the words of the famous labor singer Joe Hill:

A pamphlet, no matter how good, is never read more than once, but a song is learned by heart and repeated over and over; and I maintain that if a person can put a few cold, common sense facts into a song, and dress them up in a cloak of humor to take the dryness off of them, he will succeed in reaching a great number of workers.

Music can be especially important in social movements of oppressed or powerless people, for whom songs can support the development of a positive identity by describing the group's achievements and telling its history; proclaiming the group's strength and other positive virtues; and counteracting negative stereotypes (Stewart et al. 2001). Protest songs, which originate in or alongside of social movements, can have profound cultural effects, whether or not the movement's political aims are realized (Eyerman and Jamison 1998). Songs can also be a tool for frame bridging; for example, they can establish a group's legitimacy by setting new lyrics set to the tunes of religious or patriotic songs.

The labor movement in the U.S. has a rich history of song. The anthem of the labor movement, "Solidarity Forever," is a staple at labor events (see boxes at the end of this chapter). The International Workers of the World (IWW, or "Wobblies") were particularly known for their singing, and in 1923 the group published "The Little Red Songbook: Songs to Fan the Flames of Discontent" containing a number of labor movement songs (<http://www.angelfire.com/nj3/RonMBaseman/songbk.htm>). (The book is still available from the Labor Heritage Foundation.) One of the most famous social movement songs is "We Shall Overcome," which originated in the southern labor movement in the 1920s and 1930s as "We Will Overcome," then was adapted by the civil rights movement and became its anthem (Stewart et al. 2001). In the 1940s, a group of musicians, including Pete Seeger, organized People's Songs, a group devoted to providing music at demonstrations and mutual support for politically-left musicians (Lieberman 1989).

Visual Art

Mexico has a long tradition of murals painted in public places that depict the culture's history and social issues. During the 1930s, Mexican muralists like Diego Rivera came to the United States to paint murals, and during the Great Depression of the 1930s the government's Works Progress Administration hired unemployed artists to paint murals on government buildings. Rivera was commissioned to paint a mural at the Rockefeller Center in New York City, but its pro-worker images were considered too controversial by its sponsors, who first covered it in canvas and then destroyed it.

The Chicano movement is exemplary in the integration of art into its social change efforts. Poetry, traditional music, dance, painting and murals were all ways to celebrate traditional Mexican culture and strengthen the pride of Mexican-Americans in their cultural heritage. The modern mural movement in the U.S. was launched when twelve artists responded to the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. by painting the "Wall of Respect" on the side of a building in Chicago. Ralph Fasanella is another well known muralist of peoples' history (see his biography at www.bread-and-roses.com/bio.html). Today, one of the best known U.S. muralists is Mike Alewitz. He has been commissioned by groups to create murals of Malcolm X, Harriet Tubman, various labor unions, and the others.



The Wall of Respect in Chicago, painted in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Like mural painting, graffiti is a form of public art, though it uses more text than visual images, and usually created illegally. Graffiti expresses resistance to dominant social institutions, not only through its message but by the very act of illegally painting in public spaces.

Theater

The Bread and Puppet Theater was formed in 1960 by Peter Schumann, a German-born artist and dancer. Participants build huge papier-mache puppets and act out stories of injustice and social change in the streets, during marches, and elsewhere. During the late 1990s, the puppets were a fixture at anti-globalization protests. The theater tours the world. It does not charge for performances and operates on very little money, relying on volunteers and donations. During the farm workers' movement in the 1960s, Teatro Campesino (the Workers' Theater) was founded as a way to dramatize the farm workers' conflict with the growers. Performers put on 10-15 minute skits to persuade farm workers to join the strike, and also to raise funds and to publicize the grape boycott.

Another prominent use of theater by a social movement is "The Vagina Monologues," a play written by Eve Ensler. The play consists of a diverse group of women talking about how they feel about

their vaginas, and why. Their discussions of their childhoods, families, and sexual experiences are alternately humorous and tragic. Ensler’s play has inspired a movement—called “V Day”—of people who perform the play annually on Valentine’s Day and collect money or other donations to combat violence against women (www.vday.org). In 2005 there were over one thousand performances worldwide. In another example, the British Columbia Nurses’ Union created a humorous show entitled, “Hurl, Hemorrhage, Heal--The Nurses' Musical” to inform people about the difficult working conditions nurses faced and their grievances concerning wages, and to gain media coverage (Pratt and Kirby 2003).



One of the puppets created by the Bread and Puppet Theater.

Solidarity Forever

This anthem of the labor movement was written by Ralph Chaplin in 1915. It is sung to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," by Julia Ward Howe. You can listen to the song at <http://unionsong.com/muse/unionsong/u025.html>.

When the Union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run,
There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun.
Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one?
But the Union makes us strong.

Chorus:

Solidarity forever!

Solidarity forever!

Solidarity forever!

For the Union makes us strong.

It is we who plowed the prairies; built the cities where they trade;
Dug the mines and built the workshops; endless miles of railroad laid.
Now we stand outcast and starving, 'midst the wonders we have made;
But the Union makes us strong.

[chorus]

They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn,
But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn.
We can break their haughty power; gain our freedom when we learn
That the Union makes us strong.

[chorus]

In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold;
Greater than the might of armies, magnified a thousand-fold.
We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old.
For the Union makes us strong.

[chorus]

Signs Seen at Demonstrations Opposing the U.S. Military Attack on Iraq in 2003



Pro-Life Slogans and Terminology

Slogans

Abortion Stops a Beating Heart

Abortion is Murder

Abortion Kills Children

Every Life is A Human Life

Life...What A Wonderful Choice

Thank God Your Mom was Pro-Life

Terminology Used by Pro-Life Activists

rescue: a blockade of an abortion clinic with the intent of “rescuing” women and fetuses

deathscort: a pro-choice escort

abortuary, deathmill, mill, deathcamp: an facility where abortions are performed (sounds like “mortuary”)

abortionist: doctor who performs abortions

pro-aborts: pro-choice advocates

unborn child, pre-born child, unborn baby: a fetus or embryo

The Media and the Seattle Protests

From November 30 to December 4, 1999, 50,000 protesters virtually shut down the city of Seattle in protest against the meeting there of the World Trade Organization. Protesters were overwhelming nonviolent, but they were attacked by the police using teargas and clubs. (A few protesters smashed store windows and destroyed newspaper vending machines, but ironically they were not the ones attacked by police.) And yet the media coverage of the protests overwhelmingly painted a picture of violent protesters and embattled policing trying to maintain order. The group FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting), which monitors mainstream reporting on political issues, reported that on the CBS television news, anchor Dan Rather said that "the meeting of the World Trade Organization was thrown into turmoil by violent demonstrations that went on into last night. That brought on today's crackdown [by police]" ("WTO Coverage" 1999). According to a report on CNN, "as tens of thousands marched through downtown Seattle, [a] small group of self-described anarchists smashed windows and vandalized stores. Police responded with rubber bullets and pepper gas."

On the other hand, FAIR reports, eyewitness activists accounts like the following, by nonviolence trainer Matt Guynn, paint a very different picture.

In one scene I witnessed this morning (at 8th Ave and Seneca), police who had been standing behind a blockade line began marching in lock-step toward the line, swinging their batons forward, and when they reached the line they began striking the (nonviolent, seated) protestors repeatedly in the back. Then they ripped off the protestors' gas masks, and sprayed pepper spray at point-blank range into their eyes repeatedly. After spraying, they rubbed the protestors' eyes and pushed their fingers around on their lips to aggravate the effect of the spray. And after all THIS, they began striking them again with batons.... The police then were able to break up the line, and the protestors retreated to the steps of a nearby church for medical assistance ("WTO Coverage" 1999).

A local physician reported:

The police were using concussion grenades. They were... shooting tear gas canisters directly at protestors' faces. They were using rubber bullets. Some of the damage I saw from these rubber bullets took off part of a person's jaw, smashed teeth... There are people who have been... treated for plastic bullet wounds. Lots of tear gas injuries, lots of damage to [the] cornea, lots of damage to the eyes and skin ("WTO Coverage" 1999).

Few in the mainstream press accurately depicted the police actions. An article on the protests in the *Los Angeles Times* was subtitled, "Police Commended for Restraint." The article then went on to report only that Seattle police chief Norm Stamper had praised the "professionalism, restraint and competence" of his officers.