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# Flag Waving as Visual Argument: 2006 Immigration Demonstrations and Cultural Citizenship

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## FLAG WAVING AS VISUAL ARGUMENT: 2006 IMMIGRATION DEMONSTRATIONS AND CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

Richard D. Pineda and Stacey K. Sowards

*During the 2006 immigration rallies and demonstrations, hundreds of thousands of immigrants and their supporters turned out to protest proposed immigration legislation. Flag waving was a key element of these demonstrations, in which participants employed both the U.S. flag and other national flags, most prominently Mexican flags. In this essay, we examine how flag waving functions as a visual argument that offers possibilities for establishing cultural and national citizenship and creating a visual form of refutation. Specifically, we argue that anti-immigration advocates see foreign flags as visual ideographs that represent recent immigrants' failure to assimilate, immigrants' deviant cultural practices, and failure of law enforcement. Immigrant rights advocates see foreign flags as a visual ideograph that represents cultural pride, unity, and civic participation that creates space for cultural citizenship. These oppositional tensions create a framework for understanding flag waving as a refutative process.* **Key words:** immigration, flag waving, cultural citizenship, visual argument, visual refutation, visual ideograph

From March through May, 2006, massive demonstrations, rallies, and protests regarding immigration debates in Congress and the media occurred in many cities and towns throughout the United States. The first major rally took place on Saturday, March 25, 2006, when an estimated 500,000 people gathered in downtown Los Angeles, in part to express opposition to the Sensenbrenner bill, also known as House Resolution 4377: Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005, passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in December, 2005 (Watanabe & Becerra, March 26, 2006). Ensuing debates in the U.S. Senate over similar immigration control measures also sparked interest in the Los Angeles rally (and subsequent demonstrations as well). Key participants and organizers of one of the largest demonstrations in Los Angeles history included labor leaders, civil rights activists, local media (especially radio DJs), and the Roman Catholic Church, led by the Archbishop of Los Angeles, Cardinal Roger Mahoney (Watanabe & Becerra, March 26, 2006, March 28, 2006). Although other events, scheduled for March 31 (a holiday in some states celebrating César Chávez's birthday), April 9, April 10, and May 1, had been planned before the Los Angeles rally, the latter was the impetus that drew national attention to the immigration debates and legislation in Congress.

Subsequent rallies also drew large numbers of participants in cities across the nation. On Sunday, April 9, in anticipation of the National Day of Action scheduled for the next day, large crowds turned out in several cities, most notably in Dallas where crowds were estimated at 350,000-500,000 (Miller, 2006). The following day, April 10, rallies in 140 cities drew large crowds. Organizers chose the April 10 date for rallies and vigils because Representatives and Senators had returned to their home states during Congressional recess and would be able to see large turnouts of constituents at the demonstrations (Watanabe, 2006). Finally, coinciding with International Workers' Day, rallies on May 1 were called a "Day Without an Immigrant." Participants were asked to avoid shopping and going to work

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or school, although organizers were divided on whether or not to encourage work stoppages and walkouts in schools, given the controversies that had arisen in previous demonstrations (Archibold, 2006). These rallies occurred in more than 70 cities, drawing crowds as large as 400,000 in Chicago, 300,000–400,000 in Los Angeles, and 75,000 in Denver (“Taking it to the streets,” 2006).

At each of these rallies, demonstrations, and protests, there were numerous speakers, chants, posters, t-shirts, and other verbal statements. However, the groundswell of media attention was driven in large part by visual aspects, particularly flag waving. To avoid incendiary reactions, organizers encouraged people to carry U.S. American flags (Archibold, 2006; Gorman, Miller, & Landsberg, 2006; Watanabe & Becerra, March 28, 2006). While a variety of Latin American and other national flags were present, attention and debate were fueled especially by the presence of Mexican flags. Soto (2006) observes that “the use of a foreign flag in political rallies is not new” (p. B1). Nonetheless, the presence of Mexican flags fueled criticism of the protests, the protestors, and their methods while further obfuscating substantive debate about policy changes (“The good, the bad,” 2006; Page, 2006; Soto, 2006).

In this essay, we argue that flag waving constitutes a visual argument about cultural citizenship that is interpreted differently by different audiences. In what follows, we explore the literature relating to visual argument and then explain how flag waving functions as visual argument for two audiences: immigrant rights advocates and anti-immigration advocates. We conclude with some observations about what flag waving means for cultural citizenship and the study of visual argument. For immigrants, flag waving reflects an interesting tension between embracing cultural heritage and asserting U.S. American identity in establishing cultural citizenship.

### **VISUAL ARGUMENT: AUDIENCE AND REFUTATION**

The idea that images can argue has been controversial. In 1996, David Fleming concluded that images cannot argue because pictures do not offer a claim and supporting reasons and, because an image has no negative, it cannot be opposed. In her study of abortion rhetoric, Condit also contended that, even though some argumentative properties may be present, images do not argue because they are not propositional (cited in DeLuca, 1999, p. 11; Lake & Pickering, 1998, p. 80). Numerous other scholars, however, have explored the role of the visual in argumentation and have shown how images can argue (e.g., Birdsell & Groarke, 1996; Blair, 1996; DeLuca, 1999; Groarke, 2002; Lake & Pickering, 1998; Langsdorf, 1996).

Two special issues of *Argumentation and Advocacy* in 1996 contained several case studies of visual argumentation. Shelley (1996) examined demonstrative and rhetorical modes of visual representation in evolutionary models, contending that both contained elements of visual arguments. The demonstrative mode, in particular, may depict both the premises and conclusion of an argument. Blair (1996) contended that the visual does have a propositional element because images attempt to clarify both claims and reasons. He also argued that images can function as arguments in that they can change our beliefs. Birdsell and Groarke (1996) contended that visual arguments are possible even though they do not adhere to traditional definitions of argument. They emphasized that images draw heavily on three contexts to communicate their arguments: the immediate visual context, the immediate verbal context, and the cultural/historical context.

Audience interpretation is an important aspect of visual argument that is especially relevant to understanding flag waving as argument. In visual arguments, audiences must interpret the image they see enthymematically (Barbatsis, 1996; Finnegan, 2001; Lancioni, 1996). For example, Gretchen Barbatsis (1996) argued that, in political advertisements, the camera, substituting for the viewer's eyes, creates a framework in which the audience sees the story or narrative as its own. Delicath and DeLuca's (2003) work on image events also demonstrates the importance of audience interpretation (also see DeLuca, 1999). Environmental groups such as Earth First! have conveyed arguments about environmental protection, such as tree sitting and other staged events, that are mostly, if not entirely, visual. Delicath and DeLuca contend that these image events open arenas for public participation, employ images that claim and refute, and shift responsibility to the audience to construct an argument based on what they see. Particularly in the case of flag waving, visual argument is powerful because the absence of verbal representation opens the contextual space in which the argument is situated. Freed from the rigid context of the verbal, visual arguments invite more fluid participation and interpretation. This quality facilitates diverse voices in the flag waving debate: Multiple perspectives can coexist, legitimized by different responses to the argument.

The compelling theory of the *visual ideograph* explains how audiences interpret what they see in a visual image. McGee (1980) argued that the *ideograph* is an ordinary, abstract term that calls for collective commitment and creates a powerful guide for behavior. Edwards and Winkler (1997) extend this concept to images, examining reappropriations of Joe Rosenthal's photograph of the flag-raising on Iwo Jima. They contend that this "parodied image constitutes an instance of depictive rhetoric that functions ideographically" (p. 290). The flag represents "American ideals of liberty, equality, and democracy" for audiences who understand the cultural context of Iwo Jima, especially from a U.S. American point of view (p. 291). Demo (2005) also has pointed to the powerful imagery of the U.S. flag in immigration debates. Similarly, Cloud (2004) demonstrates how, through an ideograph of "the clash of civilizations," photographs of Afghan women come to represent U.S. American patriotism, democracy, and liberty. "Photographic images," Cloud notes, "are marked by metonymy, the reduction of complex situations into simpler visual abstractions" (p. 289). In the war on terrorism, media in the United States have constructed a binary between "us" and Other that scapegoats the latter.

This visual construction of "us" versus the Other provides a framework for understanding the negative in visual argument. As noted previously, several scholars have noted that a major problem in conceptualizing visual argument is its lack of a negative. Lake and Pickering's (1998) study of abortion films did not argue that visual imagery contains a negative, but they nonetheless show how visual arguments can perform the negative function of refutation. Kenneth Burke (1968) contends that humans are the inventor of the negative, which can be found nowhere in nature. The idea that the negative might be found in the contextual meaning that visual images have for various audiences merits further investigation. Visual images may perform a function of the negative by constructing binary oppositions. For example, in Cloud's (2004) analysis, the negative constitutes an opposition between U.S. Americans and the Taliban/Afghan people. Media coverage of the war on terror visually opposes us and Other, exoticizing, romanticizing, marginalizing, and criticizing difference. The mentality that one is either for us/U.S. or against us/U.S., so common in contemporary U.S. American politics, is thus depicted.

Immigration debates and protests are framed in ways both similar and different. For millions living in the United States, citizenship may be a matter of legal status; yet, many undocumented workers may be said to have attained cultural, if not legal, citizenship. Palczewski's (2005) work on the construction of gender in anti-woman suffrage postcards offers a framework for understanding the visual construction of cultural citizenship. She demonstrates how "iconic images can be used to maintain the social control power of verbal ideographs" (p. 387). Images of women wearing men's clothing and doing men's work, and vice versa, reinforce the verbal ideographs that control understanding of gender roles. Similarly, LaWare (1998) investigates the possibilities of reconstituting Chicana/o communities and cultural identities through murals that depict cultural pride and history.

We argue that flag waving is a visual argument through which immigrants and their supporters express cultural citizenship, civic virtue, and democratic participation. The flags represent pride and remembrance, unity, and participatory civic virtue. As resentment of and backlash against foreign flags has risen, immigrants and their supporters strategically have extended the premise of their argument by deploying U.S. flags as well. Flag waving also can function negatively, generating opposing sides and offering forms of refutation. For example, anti-immigration advocates have argued that one is either American or NOT, speaks English or does NOT, and should wave the U.S. flag and NOT another country's.

Anchored in the same fundamental assertions of pride, unity, and civic virtue, the visual rebuttal reflects immigrants' attempts to establish cultural citizenship. Sparked by a sense of exclusion and fear of being scapegoated by anti-immigration forces, pro-immigration rallies are expressive spaces that enable protestors to showcase their cultural citizenship. Such participatory actions are important at a time when many feel left out of the democratic process. Immigrants and their supporters seek not to subvert the system by opposing it but, rather, to practice the democratic principles of expression that are celebrated and protected in the United States. This view of cultural citizenship both opposes anti-immigration advocates' strictly legal definition of citizenship and complements other U.S. American definitions, such as the melting pot and salad bowl metaphors. For many pro-immigrant advocates, the claim to cultural citizenship refutes opposing claims about their legal status while buttressing historical arguments that the United States is a nation of immigrants. Audiences on both sides of the immigration debate apparently have difficulty accepting that simultaneous allegiance to U.S. American and other national or cultural identities is possible.

### FLAG WAVING AS VISUAL IDEOGRAPH/ARGUMENT

Several factors distinguish recent protests from earlier demonstrations in which foreign flags have played a major role. First, as Scanlon (2005) explains, in the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world an ever-present U.S. flag symbolizes a kind of patriotism that demands "conformity of values rather than vigorous discussion of ideas" (p. 181). In such circumstances, the mere presence of a foreign flag can be read as antithetical to the visual ideograph of the U.S. American flag and to the verbal ideograph of patriotism. Second, the recent waves of protests and rallies have been tremendous in size and scope, with many participants carrying flags of all kinds. Finally, media coverage has heightened the public's sensitivity to the protests. Several observers of the first wave of rallies commented on the importance of visual space and the impact of flags on that space (Badie, 2006; Kim, 2006; Kim & Brennan, 2006; Skelton, 2006; Talev, 2006). The *Omaha World-Herald*, for example, observed that flags engender "starkly different perspectives" and asserted: "No matter what stance one takes on

immigration issues, the remarkable power of a flag to amplify passions, positively or negatively, cannot be denied" ("The power of symbols," 2006, p. 6B). Opponents of immigration, immigration control and border enforcement advocates, immigrant rights advocates, and recent immigrants who may or may not be legal citizens have adopted these starkly different perspectives. We focus on immigrant rights supporters who participated in the 2006 protests and advocates who opposed both immigration and foreign flag waving.

### *Immigrant Rights: Flag Waving as Cultural Pride, Unity, and Participation*

For immigrants and their supporters, waving foreign flags represented a strategic, argumentative choice to advocate cultural pride, unity, and civic virtue. The most contested visual image at protests and rallies was the Mexican flag but also prevalent were the flags of many other nations, including the United States, Cuba, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Korea, and the Philippines (Chavez, 2006; Eagan 2006; Gonzales, 2006; Kim, 2006; Kim & Brennan, 2006; "The politics of protest," 2006; Vigil, 2006). This is significant because the complexity and diversity of immigrants' national origins have been misunderstood: Anti-immigration advocates have fixated on the visual cue of Mexican flags, simplistically reducing all immigrants and immigration issues to Mexican ones.

Immigrants and their supporters have rallied around foreign flags as an expression of pride in their distinctive heritages. Such use of flags certainly is not new (Soto, 2006). Flags often serve as "markers of ethnic identity" in national celebrations such as St. Patrick's Day, Cinco de Mayo, and Columbus Day; yet rarely are Irish, Mexican, or Italian flags criticized in these contexts (Korber, Rosenhall, & Chavez, 2006, p. A1). Page (2006) argues that the immigrants' message patriotically celebrates both their national heritage and pride in the United States; backlash against the flags confirms that "Americans are so simultaneously proud, yet oddly unsettled by their own diversity" (p. 11A).

Waving a foreign flag is a strong sign of pride in national diversity. The Mexican flag is an especially interesting case because even non-Mexicans often unite under it. Such unification reflects a unique kind of solidarity: "the choice to connect transnationally reflects in part being an outsider; it dilutes the unsettling experience of migration" (King, 2005, p. 146). Communicating civic participation through flag waving and protest falls within the protected expressive space established by the First Amendment. Flag waving essentially argues that true participation in the civic landscape of the United States requires expressions of pride and unity. In this sense, flag waving expresses the felt tension between immigrants' cultural heritages and their feelings about residing in the United States or becoming U.S. citizens. To say, as anti-immigration advocates do, that one is either American or not is to demand that one's cultural heritage be abandoned in order to assimilate into U.S. American mainstream culture. To give up one's cultural heritage, however, is impossible. The desire to wave foreign flags and participate in protests reflects this tension in the meaning of cultural citizenship.

### *Anti-Immigration Response: Flag Waving as Failure to Assimilate and Cultural Deviance*

Anti-immigration advocates argue that the U.S. government must prevent undocumented persons from living and working in the U.S. To these groups, the visual ideograph of foreign flags means three basic things: immigrants' failure to assimilate, the deviance of non-American or noncitizen status, and the failure adequately to control immigration. These meanings explain the backlash against Mexican and other foreign flags. Clearly, flags as

visual ideographs have become part of a larger discourse on immigration and belonging. For example, Huntington (2004) contends: "By 2000, America was in many respects, less a nation than it had been for a century. The Stars and Stripes were at half-mast and other flags flew higher on the flagpole of American identities" (p. 5). Huntington sees a fractured national landscape and fears continued immigration from Mexico in particular.

Critics of immigration often contend that undocumented immigrants are deviant in the sense that they are not U.S. Americans and have different cultural and class-related practices. Immigration opponents in Colorado, for example, "see the flags as a symbol of aggression and evidence . . . that foreigners are taking over the country" (Kim, 2006, p. 6A). Similarly, in a letter to the *Denver Post*, one citizen commented that protests were "just an excuse to go wild" and protestors—"the same kids who cruise . . . on Cinco de Mayo"—were "causing chaos" (Meraz, 2006, p. B6). Flying a foreign flag often contributes to this perception of deviance or cultural difference. The *San Diego Union-Tribune* editorialized: "Latino protestors . . . pushed ethnic pride too far by flying the American flag upside down or underneath the Mexican flag" ("The good, the bad," 2006, p. B8). In some cases, such actions are simply the most visible aspect of a more profound deviance. Another resident of Oregon wrote:

Just look at how many of them marched in protest carrying Mexican flags. I believe most of them want to remain Mexican citizens, yet still take advantage of . . . free health care, free education and food stamps. Enough is enough. Send them back whence they came. (Bean, 2006, p. B7)

Hence, the protests and, in particular, waving the Mexican flag, are seen as "annoying and unpatriotic" ("Your turn," 2006, p. 4H) and revealing cultural "arrogance" (Gorman, 2006, p. A11). In Colorado, one anti-immigration advocate visually refuted a Mexican flag that was raised above a U.S. flag by extending "his middle finger toward the crowd" (Kim & Brennan, 2006, p. 5A); he thought it important "for people who are against immigration to speak out" (qtd. in Kim & Brennan, 2006, p. 5A).

Waving of foreign flags also reinforces the deep-seated anxiety of many anti-immigration advocates that immigrants do not, or will not, assimilate. Assimilation often is framed as a choice and flying the Mexican or other flag is understood, therefore, as a sign that immigrants "aren't really interested in being Americans" (King, 2006, p. 15A). As Badie (2006) contends, the Mexican flag signals "no willingness to learn English and study civics. To assimilate" (p. 3J). The expectation that immigrants should assimilate distinguishes the United States from countries such as Mexico in a way that devalues immigrants' heritages and privileges the U.S.'s position in a hierarchy of nations. A radio producer complains that "if it's a Mexican flag you want to honor then there's a country which honors that flag . . . that's where it ought to be waved" (qtd. in Soto, 2006, p. B1). Similarly, a Colorado legislator calls the waving of the Mexican flag "disrespectful," adding: "We're not Mexico and we don't fly Mexican flags in this country. We fly American flags" (qtd. in Kim, 2006, p. 6A).

Finally, to anti-immigration advocates the presence of foreign flags is a visual reminder of government's failure to control immigration into the United States. Carroll (2006) suggests that protestors' Mexican flags are "concrete symbols" that foment the anti-immigration lobby's fear-mongering (p. 38A). As Demo (2005) notes, many anti-immigration advocates interpret pro-immigration imagery, including flag waving, as threatening national sovereignty. Opposing "special rights" for undocumented immigrants, King (2006) argues that waving a foreign flag shows a lack of respect for "borders and national sovereignty" and demonstrates that laws "hold little meaning" for immigrants (p. 15A). Indeed, some suggest, immigrants purposefully flaunt current laws. One upset reader of the *Baltimore Sun* contends

that undocumented protestors are “daring to take on the United States government” and calls for the return of U.S. military assets from Iraq in order to “promote domestic tranquility” (Taylor, 2006, p. 8A).

### FLAG WAVING AND CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

Cases of flag waving constitute visual arguments, while the heated reactions thereto represent attempts to refute these arguments. In essence, for immigrants who are not legal citizens and perceive that their cultural identities are under attack, waving foreign flags visually exercises civic participation. Flag wavers assert that they are both Mexican (or of another nationality) and American. To critics, however, waving another country's flag demonstrates that the waver is not American. For both immigrant rights and anti-immigration advocates, the U.S. American flag is a visual ideograph relating to citizenship and patriotism. Foreign flags, on the other hand, are interpreted very differently by these two groups. To pro-immigrant advocates, they are a visual ideograph relating to cultural pride, unity, and civic participation; for opponents, they are a visual ideograph relating to separatism, deviance, and the failure to protect our borders. Both groups are centrally concerned with the meaning of *cultural citizenship*.

Immigrants and their supporters visually argue for their inclusion in the national public; celebrating their cultural heritages, they believe, merely follows the example set by other citizens of the United States. Flores and Benmayor (1997) suggest that, for Latina/os, cultivating cultural citizenship encompasses a “broad range of activities” that claim social space (p. 15). Development of such practices often is necessitated by limited space for participation and expression. Pro-immigrant protests and rallies constitute such a space and deploy ideographs that bind the community together while advancing values of civic participation. As McGee (1980) suggests, ideographs can both unite and separate audiences. Waving Mexican and other foreign flags is a potent image of unity and pride even though it alienates other audiences.

Two dimensions of cultural citizenship emerge in the visual arguments of foreign (and particularly Mexican) flag waving. First, flag waving expresses unity in heritage. Krudewagen (2002) discusses unity as a value framework, best symbolized by a national flag, that codifies and unites individuals (p. 682). Gorman (2006) suggests that flag waving does not express loyalty to a foreign power but, rather, to unity with fellow immigrants (p. A11). This dimension of cultural citizenship is particularly important in the face of growing opposition and attempts to exclude immigrants regardless of legal status. Cecilia Munoz, vice president of the National Council of La Raza, argues that foreign flags are “not an expression of nationalism . . . it's an expression of connection and solidarity because this debate has become about the United States-Mexico border” (qtd. in Kim, 2006, p. 6A). The presence of other national flags is a strong sign of pride in national diversity while the Mexican flag is an important rallying symbol even for those of other national heritages.

The second dimension of cultural citizenship is pride. Discussing the visual impact of Mexican flags in Denver, Kim (2006) posits that immigrants expressed dual convictions, that is, both unity and pride (p. 6A). Pride is an important element of cultural citizenship that presumes American ideals. The Bill of Rights enshrines and protects freedom of expression. Those who wave Mexican and other foreign flags are advocating these ideals visually with their actions. A 16-year-old woman in Sacramento, California, noted, “I'm proud to be Mexicana” (qtd. in Körber, Rosenhall, & Chavez, 2006, p. A1) while an 18-year-old Los



Angeles protestor, wearing a Mexican flag on his head, explained, "It's my pride . . . It's my roots . . . I want to express it" (qtd. in Gorman, 2006, p. A11). Gorman (2006) reports that many young citizens who walked out of Los Angeles area schools during the last week of March, 2006, waved Mexican flags as an expression of pride in their heritage (p. A11). Similarly, Kalson (2006) argues that immigrants and their supporters' use of foreign flags recognizes the diverse historical identities of immigrants to the United States (p. H3).

In argumentative exchanges, arguments emerge and are refuted; sometimes initial arguments are revised in order to address counterarguments. Once criticism of Mexican flag waving mounted, rather than concede their civic participation and expressive space, protestors, including many Spanish-language media personalities, encouraged supporters to wave U.S. flags at future events (Gorman, 2006; Korber, Rosenhall, & Chavez, 2006). The effect was most notable at protests and rallies on April 10: Acknowledging that flags are the "language of American politics," this revised strategy was visual proof that "the demonstrators were as American as apple pie" (Krauthammer, 2006, p. 13). Adopting U.S. flags was very much a strategic adaptation designed to "improve the image of immigrants" (Soto, 2006, p. B1). One of the most poignant examples of this effort occurred in Sacramento, where two brothers, Mexican immigrants, waved U.S. flags to honor their United States-born children; one brother added, "Aquí estamos y no vamos [We are here and we are not leaving]" (qtd. in Korber, Rosenhall, & Chavez, 2006, p. A1).

Ultimately, cultural citizenship mediates the tension between cultural heritage and U.S. American identity that many immigrants experience in the United States. Gloria Anzaldúa (1998) explains how *mestiza* consciousness mediates these competing demands for cultural allegiance:

The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good the bad the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. (p. 629)

Anzaldúa's discussion of *nepantla*, or "torn between ways," also addresses the tensions relating to cultural identity and citizenship. Immigrant protesters feel strongly allied to both their national origin and the U.S. The anti-immigration response, however, strives to dictate that immigrants must choose one or the other, but not both. In a sense, waving *both* U.S. and foreign flags symbolizes the immigrants' attempt to choose both allegiances: By waving the U.S. flag they embrace American cultural citizenship but, by protesting, they also demand rights for themselves and/or other immigrants. Furthermore, protest demonstrates adherence to American values regarding freedom of expression, but this particular act of free expression also reflects immigrants' allegiance to their cultural heritages.

## CONCLUSION

The deployment of Mexican and other foreign flags at the immigration protests and rallies held from March through May, 2006, advances a potent visual argument about civic virtue and cultural citizenship. The flags argue for immigrants' rights and cultural identity while also expressing pride. This argument can be thought of as unfolding in three stages. The first stage comprised the initial rally in Los Angeles in late March, in which participants waved various national flags in acknowledgment of their backgrounds and celebration of the power

of civic participation. The initial wave of opposition to the rallies, and to the display of foreign flags, constitutes the second stage. The final stage of the argument is the adaptive process of rebuttal. Beginning in mid-April, protesters replaced their foreign flags with U.S. flags to signify their allegiance to U.S. cultural values and principles. Visually, rallies shifted significantly, from a profusion of colors and emblems to a more consistent red, white and blue. Critics have been vocal in assessing these actions and generating counterarguments. As Palczewski (2005) notes, visual ideographs have more power than verbal ones. In essence, flag waving has focused debates on immigration in ways that verbal argument has not.

The argumentative clash between visual ideographs is an important and understudied dimension of visual argument. Often the primary visual argument exists in its own space and time, with counterarguments emerging subsequently. The case of flag waving suggests the power of visual argument to advance beyond initial premises and open a second level of debate. Through a process of negation, the U.S. flag negates, or takes precedence over, other national flags. This process is hortatory; as Burke (1968) explains, "The negative begins not as a resource of definition or information, but as a command, as 'Don't'" (p. 10). The command implied in the flag waving controversy is "Don't wave that Mexican flag!" Those who choose to negate this command by flying another nation's flag create another kind of negative, or binary opposite, between "us/U.S." and "them." Legal citizenship is associated with the U.S. flag whereas illegal status is associated with foreign flags. Constant use of terms such as *illegal*, *undocumented*, and *illegitimate* to describe Mexico, the Mexican flag, and Mexican culture (and others) perpetuates a category of the inferior Other. In the context of immigration protests and rallies, foreign flags, as visual ideographs, portray the negativity associated with perceptions of failure to assimilate and cultural deviance.

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