

# Interpreting Visual Evidence

## Media Representations of Globalization

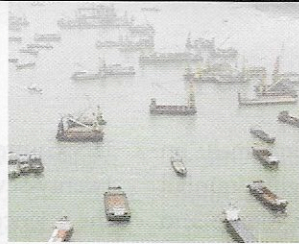
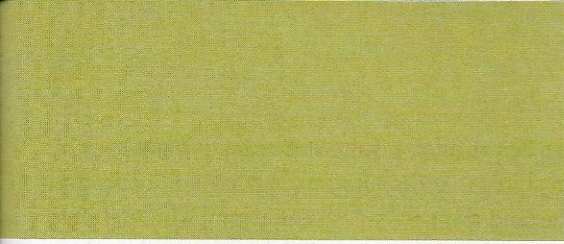
**B**ecause the historical developments collectively known as *globalization* are so complex and the local effects of these developments have often been considered mere disruptions of well-entrenched habits or ways of life, debates about globalization are particularly open to manipulation through the presentation of charged imagery. Since the end of the Cold War, provocative images that capture certain aspects of the world's new interconnectedness—and the accompanying need for new kinds of boundaries—have become ubiquitous in the media. The movement of peoples and goods are variously defined as necessary to maintain standards of living or a threat to local jobs and local production. Globalization is defended as good for the economy, the consumer, and competition, but it is also blamed for hurting workers, destroying local cultures, and eroding long-standing definitions of national identity.

The images here illustrate essential aspects of globalization. Image A shows ships waiting to be loaded and unloaded at one of the largest container terminals in the world, in Hong Kong, where most Chinese shipping comes through this

terminal. Image B shows family members in Mexicali, Mexico, separated by the border fence between the United States and Mexico. In the twentieth century, Mexicali grew to be a city of 1.5 million people, in large part on the prosperity



A. Cargo ships in Kowloon Bay, Hong Kong, 2002.



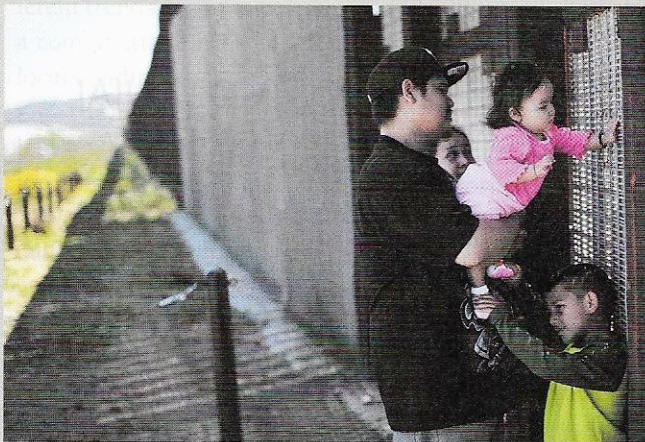
generated by sending field workers across the border to the United States. Image C shows a Labor Day protester (medical mask is a reference to the SARS epidemic) at a demonstration in the Philippine capital, Manila, in which globalization was blamed for amendments to the labor code favorable to employers, such as a ban on strikes, and antiterrorist measures that were perceived to be an infringement on personal liberties.

### *Questions for Analysis*

1. Image A is typical of images emphasizing the economic consequences of globalization. Does globalization appear to be a force that is subject to human control in this image? How do such images shape perceptions of China's place in the global economy?
2. Compare image A with image B. Is there a connection between the

accelerating flows of money and goods and restrictions on the movements of people?

3. In image C, the woman's medical mask names globalization as the enemy of Filipino workers. Who is the target of this protest? What does this say about the local conflict over the conditions of labor in the Philippines?



B. Mexican family members talk through border fence in Mexicali, Mexico, 2003.



C. Filipino protester on Labor Day in Manila, Philippines, 2003.