



PROJECT MUSE®

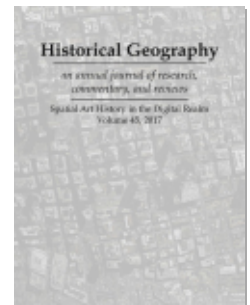
The Conflicting National Narratives of the 1846-1848 North American Invasion of Mexico

Jonathan Bissell

Historical Geography, Volume 45, 2017, pp. 220-251 (Article)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/hgo.2017.0022>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/716038>

The Conflicting National Narratives of the 1846-1848 North American Invasion of Mexico

Jonathan Bissell

Major, United States Army
National Capitol Region

ABSTRACT: The Mexican-American War is seen in vastly different lights from the citizens of Mexico and the United States. Tracing the evolving narrative of this controversial conflict demonstrates the wide differences in contemporary public opinion in both Mexico and the United States and how influential leaders throughout history have successfully shaped the current narrative of the 1846-1848 conflict for their national political purposes.

Introduction

In the heart of Mexico City, Mexico, at the base of the steep Chapultepec Hill, beneath the towering walls of the Chapultepec Castle, is a grand memorial to six young men who gave their lives in the defense of Mexico in a war fought for dubious purposes between Mexico and the United States (US) over 170 years ago. The memorial is a noble structure, with six gleaming white pillars arranged in a large semi-circle, adorned with beautiful black eagles near the top, each capped with a replica of an eternal flame (Figure 1). The grand memorial is known as *la Altar a la Pátria* (the Altar of the Homeland) and the six young men are commonly known as the *los Niños Héroes* (the Boy Heroes). The story behind these boys, whose loss represents many Mexicans' viewpoint of the Mexican-American War, as well as that of the opposing US forces who defeated Mexico, offer contradictory perceptions which have shaped the geographical, cultural, and political landscape of the North American continent over the last two centuries.

The US's inconsistent memory of the war appears to be decidedly different. There is not an actual collective memory of the war per se, other than perhaps, the somewhat vague exception of American frontiersmen Davie Crocket and Jim Bowie dying heroically in defense of the Alamo, in San Antonio, Texas. With its lack of an official US narrative, the memory of the war has been shaped by the military, veterans, and subscribers to "Manifest Destiny" ideology, which is probably best symbolized in melodies. The US Marine Corps has the oldest official hymn of the four services that form the US's Department of Defense. Adopted in 1919, the Marine Corps Hymn has a key phrase, "from the halls of Montezuma..." which proudly references the Marine Corp's attack on Chapultepec, and suggests Marines were gallantly defending the US, as well as implying there was a justified use of military power by the US during the Mexico invasion.¹ The patriotic song "America the Beautiful," written in 1895, also infers God's blessing on American expansionism with its soaring lyrics of "God shed his grace on thee...from sea to shining sea."² The gleaming "alabaster cities" referred to in this inspiring song seem to violently collide with the alabaster pillars which contrive a major part of the Mexican memorial to the slain boys. These two legends succinctly represent the conflicting narratives that have emerged around the



Figure 1. *La Altar a la Patria* (Photo By Kiev.Victor/ Shutterstock 336720209)

confusing nature and legacy of this conflict. Was the US Marine Corps actually celebrating the defeat of Mexican children? Is there more to the story of the Boy Heroes than the Mexican version suggests? These competing examples portray the war through differing interpretations of factual historical events; each narrative has become a key component of the mythologies the political elite and other influential leaders have used to contribute and shape their own versions about the past for their own country's benefit.

The current political discourse that has brought recent international and domestic attention on the bilateral Mexican-American relationship accentuates a need to understand these two countries' historical relationship. The turbulent 2016 US presidential campaign, which included a promise to strengthen border security via a new physical barrier and renegotiate the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), has complicated the bilateral relationship between the neighboring North American states. US President Donald Trump vows to build a "great wall" along the border of the two states, make Mexico pay for it, and bring jobs back to America – ostensibly lost through NAFTA – while simultaneously cracking down on illegal immigration into the US, which is estimated to consist of several million Mexicans alone.³

This current issue is overlaid with another worrying backdrop; the combined US and Mexican war on drugs. This complex bilateral relationship seeks to reduce the amount of illegal drugs that flood into the US, the world's highest consumer of drugs (and growing), that has sent between \$19-29 billion of illicit cash south.⁴ Mexico carries the brunt of this war; more than 200,000 Mexicans have died and more than 28,000 have disappeared in the current ten year war.⁵

Former Mexican Ambassador to the US, Arturo Sarukhan, recently suggested the current tension is jeopardizing the solid bilateral relationship and has opened a profound diplomatic rift between the two states.⁶

Nationalism and patriotism are emotions that are frequently intertwined in the citizenry of modern societies. The political scientist Leon P. Baradat claimed in his 2012 *Political Ideologies* text book that “nationalism is the most powerful political idea of the past 200 years.”⁷ This view contributes to explaining the geopolitical strain that exists between Mexico and the US over time, not only at the international relation’s second level (the state leader level), but also across the first level of individual residents of both nations. In their 1986 book *Thinking in Time*, professors Richard Neustadt and Ernest May addressed the use of history by governing officials in making correct decisions in governance. Their stated goal in publishing the book was to develop “workable procedures to get more history used better” by leading officials.⁸ Neustadt and May used a technique coined “placement,” a method of arranging past events on a time-line, to help explain contemporary issues with history’s pathway leading to the present and helping to explain it.⁹ This theoretically would assist present day leaders in making better decisions for the future. Their model of “seeing time as a stream,” consists of three components; a) recognition that the future has no place to come from but the past, b) recognition that what matters for the future in the present, is the departure from the past, and c) in a continuous comparison from the future – to the present – the past is necessary for effective decision-making contemporarily.¹⁰

This article uses their framework, primarily the first component, to provide an analysis of how widely-divergent perspectives of the complex US-Mexico relationship have expanded, grown, and solidified over time in shaping current views of the lasting effects of the 19th century Mexican-American War. It attempts to understand the efforts, either overtly or subtly, each national government (along with their influential elites) has used to either generate or diffuse enduring narratives about the war. In this light, it tries to discern the how and why these narratives developed over time. Understanding this war and the intentional or unintentional manipulation of its memory by both states over time, illuminates how both the US and Mexican governments and leaders have used obviously differing narratives concerning the Mexican-American War to serve their own self interests.

The US appears to have largely forgotten the war and decentralized the memory of its accounts to support the ideology of American exceptionalism through American values, individualism, and toughness-of-character. Although it does not appear to be an explicit policy choice to do so, forgetting the dubious causes leading up to the war and accepting American exceptionalism validates the US’s westward expansion and serves as the causality for its successes during the conflict. Because of its eventual adaptation of the global promotion of liberalism, democratization, and free trade over the course of its history, the US cannot accept its actions with Mexico in the mid-19th century and the concept of Manifest Destiny without being undeniably hypocritical. Thus, it leaves the narrative open for clarification which has the overall effect of decentralizing the collective memory of the war to its citizenry, historians, and states.

Mexico has arguably centralized its version of the history and promoted a sense of collective victimization. This has stimulated national empathy and provoked a sense of loyalty to the then-emerging Mexican values and culture. Its national messaging is clear and has become solidified and increasingly synchronized over time. Mexico has used the power of its more centralized national government to give it a clear venue for strategic messaging, through a variety of conduits.

Both nations have used these different themes to explain the causation of the war, its results, and its legacy. Both have used these conflicting accounts to encourage patriotism and nationalism while largely discrediting any counter-narratives that have materialized. Both have employed the tactic of selective memory to accentuate favorable myths. What is left is a somewhat

twisted legacy of what actually happened and why. The differing perspectives of this war shape current views on friction points that regularly emerge along the Mexican-American shared 2,000-mile border.

This essay attempts to discern the roles of each nation's contributions in the stream of time by their national leaders, influential elites, and strategic messaging to creating national narratives. The author has chosen five areas for analysis based on their continuous use in the past and present and the availability of existing documentation. These areas include the role(s) of a) heroes, b) nationalism, c) celebrations, monuments, and memorials, d) media, and e) the collective use of these components by influential elites and politicians to effectively shape national narratives for consumption by their constituents.¹¹ The categories chosen for analysis focus primarily on the messaging being distributed (or not distributed) to the citizens of each nation. The acceptance, rejection, consumption, or absorption of each nation's contributions to shaping the narrative by their collective citizenry go well beyond the reach and intent of this paper. With growing populations now approaching about 320,000,000 citizens in the US and over 125,000,000 citizens in Mexico, over the course of 170 years, it would be difficult to accurately capture the changing sentiments of each populace, even with random sampling, or advanced statistical modeling. Hence, this essay makes no claim the collective views are all encompassing. Rather, it simply highlights the differing narratives that have emerged, and offers causality of how this happened.

Background of the Conflict

Following the US's independence from England, the "Founding Fathers" sought to expand their new territory westward into the vast unknown spaces. France's Napoleon Bonaparte regained access to the present day Louisiana area in 1800 with the signing of the Third Treaty of San Ildefonso and then sold the territory to the US in 1803 (the famous Louisiana Purchase), which nearly doubled the land mass of the US.¹² US President Thomas Jefferson commissioned the Corps of Discovery Expedition under the command of Captain Meriwether Lewis and Lieutenant William Clark to explore the West in 1804, which would eventually map the West's territories.¹³ US President John Quincy Adams negotiated a cessation of the Spanish territories in the south-east in the ensuing years.¹⁴ Spain ceded the Floridian territories, in 1819, to the US in return for the US's agreement to give up its claim on the Texas area in the west.

The defeat of the British (twice), along with the acquisitions of huge land masses from France and Spain in 1803 and 1819, led many Americans to begin believing their new style of self-governance was the "wave of the future and the hope for mankind."¹⁵ This feeling would later become known (by a title in a newspaper column written by Democratic politician John L. O'Sullivan) as "Manifest Destiny."¹⁶ Following popular ideologies of the era such as the Methodists' religious Second Great Awakening, Immanuel Kantian Democratic Peace Theory, and the Age of Enlightenment, the Manifest Destiny ideology vividly captured the idea that the US's expansion was justifiable and maybe inevitable. For those who heard these messages from these differing venues of higher education, politics, and faith, it probably seemed to many Americans as well as many Mexican-Texans (*Tejanos*) living in the Texas territory that the US democracy seemed blessed by Providence Himself.

After an eleven-year struggle, Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821, including its northern province of Texas. One of Mexico's national military heroes in this revolutionary conflict was General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna (Figure 2), who would remain a key, albeit divisive, Mexican figure for the next several decades.¹⁷ Following the war, the new nation-state of Mexico was extremely weak. There was a huge political divide between politicians and their differing visions of the future of Mexico; one side calling for a centralist approach with limited executive powers, the *conservadores*, and the other side calling for a decentralized and



Figure 2. Mexican General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna (Illustration by Everett Historical / Shutterstock 252140662)

more secular style of government, the *federalistas*.¹⁸ Santa Anna initially emerged as a *federalista* figure in the coming years, but would frequently vacillate in his own political ideology.

During the same era, the Moses Austin family from Missouri received permission from Mexico to move to the largely unsettled wilderness of Texas.¹⁹ The Mexican government's 1824 National Colonization Law opened the entire nation up to immigration for use as a defensive strategy against the Native Americans and to extend its nation-building plans.²⁰ After Moses died, his son Stephen began to immigrate dozens of colonists into Texas continuing throughout the 1820s. The colonists formally accepted the Mexican stipulation that they conduct their official transactions in Spanish, follow Mexican laws, and practice Catholicism.²¹

Newly independent Mexico fought another war with Spain and banned slavery (1829), passed legislation that outlawed further American settlement (1830), and defeated the French in another war (1838).²² Tensions mounted within Texas however, as Americans continued to move in – their population grew to over 30,000 by 1830 – while concurrently disregarding the Mexican laws and stipulations.²³ Many new arrivals refused to culturally assimilate into Mexico and maintained their American customs, religion, and language.²⁴ In 1830, after the arrest of an American outlaw immigrant living in Texas by Mexican authorities, armed Texan mobs attacked Mexican authorities. Austin traveled to Mexico to meet with Santa Anna (now Mexico's President), in hopes of resolving the predicament.²⁵ Santa Anna arrested Austin (after forcing him to wait for months for an audience) and tightened restrictions on the "Tejanos." When Santa Anna attempted to appease the Texans, and released Austin, his strategy backfired. The Texans revolted and attacked the Mexican authorities.²⁶ This started in Gonzales, Texas, on October 2nd, 1835.²⁷ Austin, frustrated and humiliated, committed to support the Tejanos and his fellow American-born Texans in rebelling against the Mexican government for Texas's independence.

When the Texans captured Goliad in October, 1835 and then San Antonio in December, Santa Anna – although the sitting President of Mexico – formed and personally led an offensive campaign with nearly 4,000 soldiers.²⁸ The Texans claimed their independence on March 2, 1836, modeled after the US's 1775 Declaration of Independence.²⁹ The Battle of the Alamo took place in the same period and the Alamo fell on March 6, 1836, followed by Mexican victories in the Battles of Refugio and Goliad the same month.³⁰ Santa Anna, hardened by years of combat with Spain and the French, ordered all survivors at the Alamo executed, along with many at Refugio and Goliad. Those murdered included the aforementioned US Congressman Davey Crocket and frontiersman James Bowie.

Santa Anna's harshness following the battle was demonstrated in a letter to Mexico's Secretary of War and Navy, in his own writing.³¹ His questionable tactics proved to be disastrous however, as even more Americans flooded into Texas to support their cause. Under the leadership of Sam Houston, the Texans defeated and captured Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto in April, 1836.³² The captured President Santa Anna signed a treaty recognizing Texas's independence from Mexico. The Treaty of Velasco, signed on May 14, 1836, by a captured head of state, was immediately rejected by the Mexican federal government back in Mexico City.³³ Although there was wide support in Mexico for a continuation of the war against the Texans, the "troubled politics and finances" of Mexico, coupled with continuing internal political strife did not support the efforts.³⁴ Mexico, however, refused to recognize the Texans' independence.

Texas inherited huge problems with its 250,000 square miles of newly acquired territory, around 55,000 non-Indian inhabitants, approximately 8,000 slaves, and few financial resources. It struggled with its early independence, including major conflicts with the indigenous peoples of the Apache, Comanche, Kiowa, and Navajo tribes, and grappling with a massive territory that was full of "distrust, hate, and terror" by nearly all of its residents.³⁵ Mexico, while continuing to

struggle to build its young nation, generally viewed the US's goals for Texas with distrust.³⁶ While Texas's independence was not formally recognized by Mexico, and the US was officially neutral, the US was clearly sympathetic toward Texas.³⁷ US President Andrew Jackson looked for a way to peacefully acquire Texas from Mexico, also desiring California.³⁸

Because Texas still had slaves however, it was difficult to secure sufficient US Senate votes to annex it into the US. President John Tyler, who failed to secure a diplomatic deal with Mexico through political efforts, worked hard to get the annexation done in order to expand the US. He found a way to do so, near the end of his term, in January 1845 with a Joint Resolution which passed both US congressional legislatures with a simple majority vote.³⁹ The inauguration speech of US President James K. Polk, on March 4, 1845, directly addressed his perspective that Texas had once been part of the US, desired to be again, and should be in the future.⁴⁰

Mexico, which still did not recognize Texas's independence, was shaken. On May 19, 1845, it formally recognized the independence of Texas "on the condition that Texas agreed not to be annexed by the US." Key to this concession was that disputed boundary issues and negotiations were to be resolved later.⁴¹ The following month the Texan Congress approved a bill agreeing to be annexed by the US.⁴² Mexico reacted by recalling its ambassador to the US and severing diplomatic ties. Mexican President José Joaquín de Herrera issued a proclamation denouncing this US intrusion into Mexico's sovereign territories.⁴³

The new US President, James K. Polk (Figure 3) had successfully run his campaign on American expansionism.⁴⁴ One of Polk's first public speeches enthusiastically supported the annexation of Texas by the previous Tyler administration.⁴⁵ In Mexico, where federalists and conservatives were still vying for power, Herrera was soon overthrown by a revolution in Mexico in mid-December 1845, and his replacement, General Mariano Paredes, exacerbated the situation.⁴⁶ Shortly thereafter Texas's annexation was completed on February 19, 1846.⁴⁷

Polk's administration clung to the Texan's belief that the international border was the Rio Grande River (the Mexicans called it *Rio Bravo*), not the more northern Nueces River that Mexico declared the border.⁴⁸ A small sliver of land between the two was what Mexico based their last national pride upon, and its purchase was the purpose of Slidell's envoy. Mexico had been consistently suspicious of US intentions and Texas's recent annexation, and now a dispute over this border perhaps seemed too much.⁴⁹ The Mexicans felt they had to draw a proverbial "line in the sand," or they would continue to lose vast resources to their northern neighbor.

President Polk ordered General Zach Taylor to occupy positions near the Rio Grande, south of the Nueces River in early 1846.⁵⁰ After General Taylor's troops were attacked near the disputed Texas-Mexico border in April, 1846, President Polk went to the US Congress on May 11, 1846, and asked for war authorization to defend the new state of Texas's border areas, that had been declared since its controversial independence in 1836.⁵¹ Over the next two days the US Congress approved the act and President Polk signed it into law on May 13, 1846.⁵²

The Mexican-American War was fought for the next two years, primarily throughout Mexico. Americans, bolstered by their Manifest Destiny, along with the vivid memories of the executions carried out by General Santa Anna previously against the Texans, generally supported the war, although not completely. Following the war, both nation-states looked for answers to explain the significance of the war and adopted compelling narratives as to how and why the war happened in the years to follow.

The United States' Decentralized Narrative

The US has developed a decentralized version of the war over the nearly 170 years since it concluded. The roles of the US's war heroes, the use of nationalism and Manifest Destiny, its lack of national celebration of the war and the absence of symbols, its depictions through media

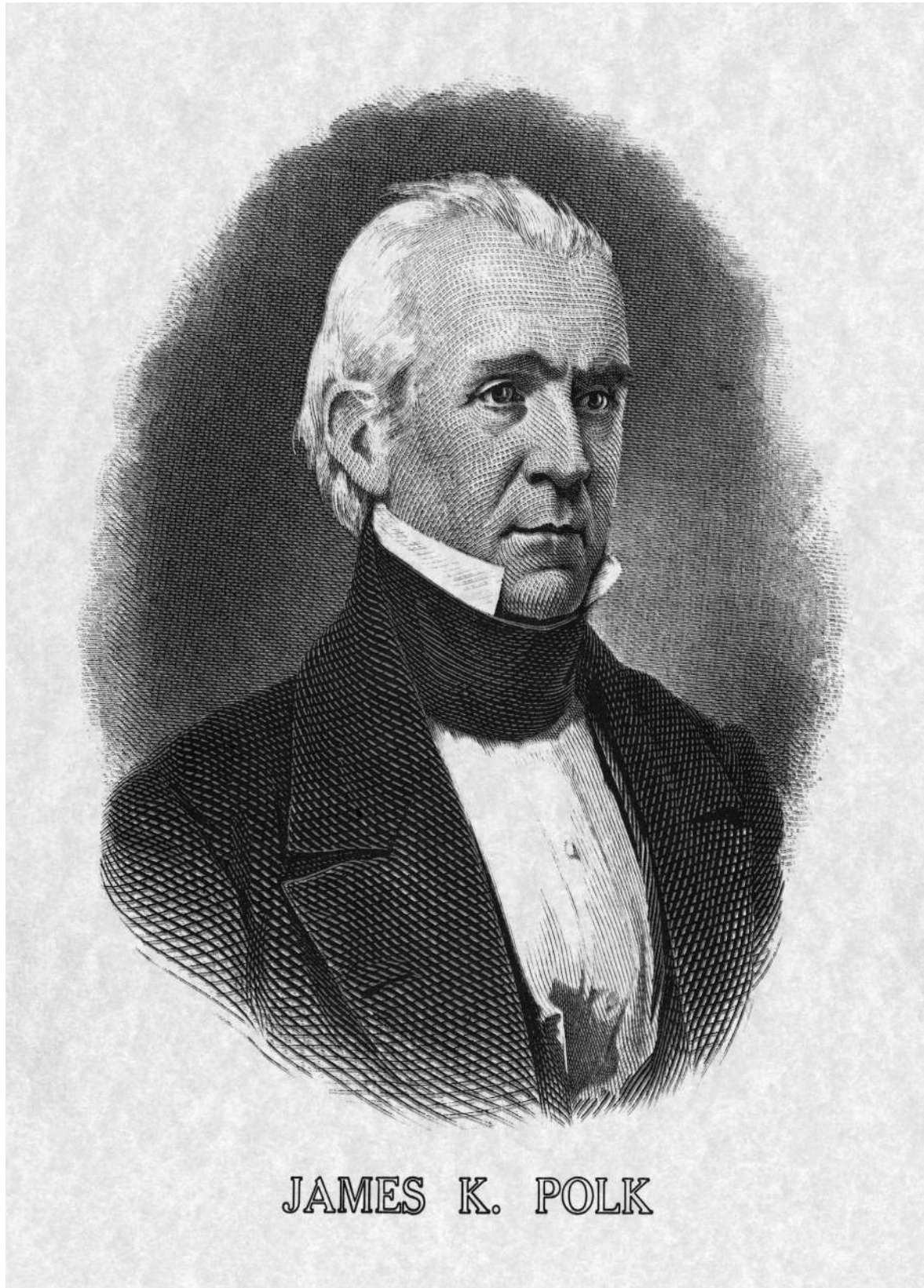


Figure 3. US President James K. Polk (Illustration by Everett Historical / Shutterstock 252132595)

narrative, and the collective use of these elements by influential elites and politicians shaped a diffused national narrative that is far different than the Mexican account. These collective memories, hardened by their intermittent placement in the stream of time, and interrupted by other significant events such as the 1849 Gold Rush, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Indian Wars, ensured their diffused memory left the US's collective memory of the war ambiguous. These post-war major events, each involving huge movements of humanity, sacrifice, loss, and human strife, in addition to the rapid manner in which they unfolded so quickly following the Mexican-American War, probably contributed to the lack of an official narrative or a more centralized version of the Mexican-American War.

Heroes

Following the war, Americans instinctively looked for a national hero to embody their patriotic sentiment, yet had a difficult time finding one. The most obvious choice in the war was General Winfield Scott.⁵³ General Scott, however, did not fit the mold of previous American military heroes such as George Washington, Frederick Von Stueben, or General Andrew Jackson. Due to his outsized ego, overt aristocracy, political aspirations, and a caustic personality, General Scott was a difficult hero to embrace, receiving the derisive nickname of "Old Fuss and Feathers" from his browbeaten subordinates.⁵⁴ Scott had also run for president in 1844 for the Whig Party, sullyng the perception of the purity of his personal motives.⁵⁵ Although he failed to become nominated, his candidacy was noticed by a Democratic Party candidate, James K. Polk (who would eventually become president and Scott's future Commander-in-Chief). This awkward relationship extended into the years ahead, as President Polk was initially reluctant to put Scott in command of the US Army. However, Polk eventually concluded that General Zachary Taylor was not talented enough to bring the war to a swift conclusion and would replace him with General Scott in early 1847.⁵⁶

From this decision, General Scott's legacy would grow. Despite all his personal shortcomings, Scott was indeed an extraordinary commander. He would go on to study both Jomini and Clausewitz in Europe following the war in the 1850s, and understood the importance, well ahead of his time, of a highly-disciplined army which could garner support from the local populace.⁵⁷ This also bade well for him – during the war – in the press in both Mexico and the US, contrary to the Santa Anna-style scorched-earth tactics. His war experience in Mexico was bolstered by the fact he primarily led a professional army of soldiers, while his rival (and eventual next president of the US), General John Taylor, was charged with leading volunteer soldiers with little or no specialized military training.

Other than General Scott, there was a distinct lack of national heroes from the war. Many of the great commanders of the US's Civil War participated in and developed professionally as excellent junior officers during the Mexican-American War, but were not nationally known at the time. With the Civil War looming on the horizon so quickly following the war, it seemed the US veterans of the Mexican-American War were soon forgotten. It was not until 1875 that the Mexican Pension Bill was adopted by the US Congress, through the pragmatic leadership of a veteran named Alexander Kenaday, who spent more than 40 years ensuring the veteran's narrative was formed.⁵⁸ This is telling because it accurately depicts the frenetic nature of the US's internal disputes along with political and economic issues following the Mexican-American War. In order to garner support for the remaining 20,553 veterans in 1875, Kenaday helped shape collective accounts of feeble veterans who had fought nobly against the larger Mexican forces, which had defeated the legendary French army in 1838.⁵⁹ This was largely the legacy of Mexican-American War from the US perspective until after World War II. The lasting effect is a distinct lack of memorable heroes to iconify US efforts.

Nationalism

After the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, and after the details of the US provocation of Mexican forces in the Nueces Strip in 1846 were more widely known throughout the US, many Americans began to rethink the justification for the war. Arguably because of their own parents' and grandparents' revolution with the British the previous century, the incursion of US troops onto foreign soil did not sit well with many in the US populace after the war. Although there was indeed support for defending the Americans living in Texas, as well as a true belief that the Manifest Destiny concept would give America its long sought-after ocean to ocean territory (to be later articulated in the third stanza of the song "America the Beautiful" in 1895), many Americans were not comfortable with the decision to go to war with Mexico over a simple territorial dispute. This land was territory the Mexicans had recently won in their own revolution against the Spanish Empire. Many Americans "supported the troops, but not the war."

Politicians in that era soon learned that a negative position on the war was politically safer than a positive one.⁶⁰ In the relatively new system of democratic governance, of which the US was arguably the world's best fledgling example, these politicians needed to justify their actions to their constituents to retain their positions. They, along with many of their fellow Americans, quickly adapted to support the efforts of the troops, if not the forceful thrust of military force into a neighboring nation's sovereign territory.

Tellingly, although there were numerous celebrations for returning war veterans, these were conducted in towns and villages throughout the nation with no large events, memorials, or monuments constructed to create a national interpretation at the federal and national level. For many reasons, including the festering issue of slavery and the implications that the new territories acquired through the war would have on it, the national election of 1848, and the divisive nature of the war, the commemorations took place locally and were mostly ignored by the federal government and national level politicians.⁶¹ This pattern of decentralization for celebrating war-time victories in the US would continue until after World War I.⁶² Americans did not appear to be comfortable in the expansion of power through secular means. The occupation of the thirteen American colonies by the British was still relatively fresh in their collective memory.

While America gained massive new territories and natural resources because of the war and the annexation of Texas, how Americans themselves chose to remember the war sometimes jarred with their own sense of republicanism and fair play.⁶³ This played out politically beginning immediately in 1848 as Americans began to debate the war's significance. Some imagined the war was a conspiracy to continue the spread of slavery while others simply believed it was the "manifestation of power and nationalism" through democracy's superior form of government, or Manifest Destiny.⁶⁴ While the most obvious of these main lines of thought came to realization within the next few years with the splitting of the Whig Party over the issue of slavery, and the eventual civil war, the mythologizing of the feats of the military and its leaders over the numerically superior Mexican armies supported the Manifest Destiny concept and the sway of a Kantian democratic ideology. Many American writers of that era glowingly depicted the American soldier's fighting abilities and valor. The widespread use of press portrayals of brave American soldiers kindly assisting inferior Mexicans perhaps "helped ease any sense of collective guilt in the US about the occupation of Mexico."⁶⁵

The Mexican-American War was the US's first foreign war, where it raised, trained, and supplied US troops on foreign soil and, despite scornful doubts from military experts in Europe, prevailed rather easily.⁶⁶ Analysts thus concluded that a nation which had such "free political institutions can vanquish a military people governed by military despots."⁶⁷ This interpretation seemed to be validated when less than two weeks after the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe

Hidalgo a proclamation of a French Republic was announced along with the news that the French King had abdicated his throne.⁶⁸ This appeared to give proof to supporters of Manifest Destiny that their ideology was truly appropriate. It also bolstered and supported a national narrative that America was simply destined for greatness. The overall effect of this, coupled with the reunification of the union following the Civil War, was a deep-rooted sense of nationalism.

Symbology

Other than the Sloat Memorial, which currently sits essentially discarded in Monterey, California, few if any monuments or memorials were erected in memory of the Mexican-American War. This seems unusual, given that there were nearly 14,000 US casualties in the war.⁶⁹ The Sloat Memorial, given partial funding by the US federal government, celebrates the capture of Monterey, California in July, 1846 by US Navy Commodore John Drake Sloat (Figure 4).⁷⁰ There is also a US-funded national monument at the site of interment of 750 US servicemen killed in the Mexican-American War, in the National Cemetery in Mexico City, on foreign soil.⁷¹ There were no massive parades when troops returned home in June 1848, however, and President Polk himself is thought to have harbored second thoughts of the amount of territory Mexico had been forced to cede.⁷² The important date of February 2 is remembered contemporarily in the US not for the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, that gave the US roughly one third of its continental territory, but for a rodent in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania which legend says can accurately predict the arrival of spring. In 1848, however, the end of the war created new tensions centered on the debate of the introduction of Texas and the other newly acquired territories into the Union as slave-holding states and territories. The spoils of the war quickly deepened the wounds that would ignite a civil war within the next 15 years. The lack of war memorials is glaring, especially when compared to the countless memorials and monuments that proliferate the Civil War battlefields across the southern US. This lack of honoring those who served left a huge vacancy in the US citizenry's collective memory about the war.

Media

The media also played a significant role in shaping the national narrative of the US's perspective. A narrative that quickly emerged during and after the war was one of the fearless American soldier who protected the hapless Mexican. One of the prevalent correspondents who helped shape this narrative was Thomas Reid. A veteran of the war, Reid's articles (along with many others writing in similar fashion) and their accompanying sketches were popular throughout the US. Reid described the American soldiers as defending against Mexican guerrillas who were represented as "treacherous, brutal, fiercely jealous," and cowardly when confronted by the brave American soldiers.⁷³ In different accounts however, the Mexican soldiers were infrequently characterized as gallant and brave. Still in other's writings, such as those of popular writer Henry William Herbert, the Mexicans were depicted as sub-human; a type of mongrel race.⁷⁴

Remarkably, the depictions of Mexican men and women were completely different. Many of the writers of the era "praised the carefree, sociable, and joyous character" of Mexican women while admiring their copper skin color, participation in the vices of gambling and smoking, and provocative dress.⁷⁵ In these depictions, a common theme emerged: the American soldier who defeated the Mexican on the field of battle did so for the betterment of humanity.⁷⁶ Americans, perhaps confused over the obfuscations of Texas's recent independence, Santa Anna's battlefield technique of assassination at the Battles of the Alamo, Refugio, and Goliad, and the recent annexation of Texas, in an era unconnected by mass transit or communication infrastructure, largely accepted this diffused and uncoordinated narrative. Other issues such as the Gold Rush



Figure 4. The Sloat Memorial, Monterey, California
(Photo by Ken Wolter / Shutterstock 148590674)

of 1849 and the ensuing issues regarding the sundering of the union over slavery took precedence in newspapers. The political elite had no reason to dispute this emerging narrative.

Racism, including in written media, was widespread in this era regarding views of the superiority of the American soldier vis-à-vis the Mexican soldier. It fit neatly into the greater theme of Manifest Destiny and supported a burgeoning national pride within the US of its success and westward expansion. In an era when scientific studies sometimes delineated different races as entirely different species and justified the forced removal of thousands of Native-Americans westward on the Trail of Tears, it was common to envision the spreading of liberty, democracy, and free-markets to “lesser peoples” as a noble deed.⁷⁷ The facilitators of these policies were mostly viewed as heroes.

These views were strengthened by surprising huge demonstrations of local Mexican support after the defeat of each Mexican city during the military campaigns. Inspired by General Scott’s strong disciplinary measures that ensured the invading soldiers treated the Mexicans with respect (a lesson he learned by studying Napoleon’s mistakes), as opposed to General Santa Anna’s detrimental tactics, the native support for the US forces convinced influential people such as Walt Whitman that the war was a “great democratic mission.”⁷⁸ Whitman published a supportive editorial in New York’s Brooklyn Daily Eagle on the same day Polk asked Congress for war authorization calling for a declaration of war.⁷⁹ This type of unquestioning journalism continued for many years, as demonstrated in the publication of Dartmouth history professor Justin H. Smith’s, *The War with Mexico 1846-1848*, in 1919 and its subsequent winning of the Pulitzer Prize, which gave this view sustained legitimacy well into the 20th century.⁸⁰

It was thus the American narrative for the war that emerged, grew, and solidified. Seizing on the Mexican attack against General Taylor’s forces in the Nueces Strip, numerous supportive literature works and war songs were compiled, published, and distributed.⁸¹ The counter views like those espoused by Frederick Douglass and other significant individuals of the era such as Reverend Theodore Parker were all but drowned out. In time, the collective memory of the nation began to think and then remember the war of brave American soldiers fighting against treacherous Mexican soldiers; a classic good versus evil saga. This myth was to live on in the years after the war, as more than 100 of the general officers who led soldiers in the US’s Civil War had each served and enhanced their military skills in the Mexican-American War.⁸² These included notables such as Braxton Bragg, Ulysses S. Grant, Joseph Hooker, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, Robert E. Lee, George McClellan, George Meade, and William T. Sherman.⁸³ Their bravery and courage along with their admirable military skills – still lauded globally – seem to legitimize the military prowess of those fledgling Yankees, and particularly General Scott. Perhaps most frustrating to the Mexican-American War veterans was the anonymity they soon suffered as the US Civil War engulfed their fellow Americans’ attention and memory so quickly after the victorious conclusion of their own war. The media’s collective message of positive reinforcement of US actions seemed to resonate with receptive news consumers, confirming their confirmation biases.

The Effective Use of these Elements in Constructing the US Narrative

US President Polk obviously viewed the war through a supportive lens as well, having addressed the issue and American expansionism in his inaugural address. After the war, he noted that its results had strengthened the US’s “national character abroad.”⁸⁴ Seeing his country and himself as shapers of history in the larger stream of time, Polk believed that the ability of this new democracy to have the national will to prosecute a foreign war with unity, concentration of purpose, and vigor of execution – traits normally reserved for authoritarian governments –

demonstrated its legitimacy.⁸⁵ The dramatic change in the French government was assumed to have happened because of what had just occurred in the Mexican American War.

Following the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the two nations established a boundary commission charged with marking the border. This Joint United States and Mexican Boundary Commission would spend the next seven years marking the boundary, establishing relations with indigenous people, and mapping a territory neither knew well.⁸⁶ The bifurcation of these nations and the political integration of them have been paradoxically intertwined since. Mexican historian Lawrence Douglas Taylor recently claimed "the Mexican government has never forgotten the Mexican population that has lived on the other side of this dividing line..."⁸⁷ Over time, the political alliances of the two neighboring northern American states improved dramatically, but has been marked frequently by "tension and mistrust."⁸⁸ The current tension in the bilateral relationship is not new but simply the latest chapter.

A cornerstone of Mexico's foreign policy over the last 170 years, based on its experience with the US, has been non-interventionism, and it routinely opposes the US's external interventions in international diplomatic forums. The US, for its part, stayed engaged with contentious issues both domestically and increasingly internationally for the next 170 years. Within fifteen years, the US fought a civil war that left little time to contemplate the memory of the Mexican-American War. Following the Civil War, the Indian Wars, the Spanish-American War, and both World Wars, the US recognized the need for a mutually beneficial relationship to keep Soviet Union expansionism and communism out of the Western Hemisphere. It had taken over 100 years, and two completely different narratives had emerged by that point in time. As the Cold War began to heat up, US President Harry Truman understood the need to consolidate hemispheric solidarity against communism. Recognizing the vastly differing interpretations of the war between US and Mexican citizens, Truman visited the memorial to the *Los Niños* heroes at the Chapultepec Castle in 1947 and laid a wreath, stating simply "brave men do not belong to one race or country."⁸⁹ With his very presence and act of humility on behalf of his nation, Truman began to bridge the divide of perceptions that had risen between the US and its largely forgotten war with the resentment that still smoldered in Mexico.

The narratives that had developed over 100 years in the US, through the forums of a supportive media, the effective use of nationalism, and the mitigation of celebrations and memorials, have effectively construed the war as righteous or, even more frequently, it is entirely forgotten. Through this interpretation, the war was arguably sanctioned by a higher power, against a corrupt and disloyal enemy, whose populace welcomed the noble knights from the north with open arms. As hypothesized by John Bodnar in his 1992 book *Remaking America*, these locally and personally produced narratives merged together to create a national narrative in the absence of an official one, which gave them the legitimacy to be "fundamentally true."⁹⁰ The key figures who encouraged these narratives to advance, such as General Scott, President Polk, influential writers such as Reid, Whitman, and Smith, along with the individual accounts from the veterans of the war, seemed to justify the war and the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny. The dissenting viewpoints such as those from Frederick Douglass and Minister Parker leading up to or during the war, or even the political elite following the war, such as Abraham Lincoln, John C. Calhoun, and Ulysses S. Grant, seem to have been lost in the stream of time. By the effective use, or lack of use, of media, nationalism, and the mitigation of traditional symbols, the political elites successfully assuaged or justified the US's actions and effectively erased the lingering doubts that many within the US had over the prosecution of the war. The view from Mexico, predictably, differs greatly.

Mexico's Centralized View

Mexico was shattered after the war. The new nation lay in proverbial rubble; half of what it had successfully taken from Spain and defended against the French was gone. Mexico went through a period of national humiliation after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo – a collective national amnesia.⁹¹ The ink was barely dry on the Treaty when gold was discovered in California in 1848, prompting a gold rush there in 1849. Frustrated, confused, hurt, and angry, Mexico developed a centralized version of the war over time and has used this version in an opposite and mirror-like manner from the way the US uses its decentralized version to explain the war. The apparatuses Mexico used to centralize these views include defining the role(s) of heroes; invoking nationalism through the use of symbology such as celebrations, monuments, holidays, and memorials; effectively using media; and their collective use by the politically influential elites to successfully form a national narrative. It appears through the synthesis of this material that Mexico has been overt in its establishment of the national narrative. Mexico seems to effectively use what psychiatrist Vamik Volkan terms *chosen trauma* to “create a foundation for the society’s development of an exaggerated entitlement ideology...”⁹²

Heroes

Immediately following the war Mexico found fault with its military and political leaders. It found no national heroes, and Santa Anna himself went into exile following the loss of Chapultepec in September 1847.⁹³ In December 1847, fifteen senior Mexican officers met in Santiago de Queretaro to write the history of the war; “*La Guerra de la Intervención Estadounidense*.”⁹⁴ They wrote the history to “benefit from defeat and rally against future threats to (their) nation.”⁹⁵ Although some elites, such as Santa Anna, would write about the war in the years ahead, the officers in Santiago de Queretaro not only blamed the aggressors of the US but also accused their fellow Mexicans of treason.⁹⁶

Santa Anna, although having played a large role in defeating the Spanish in 1821 and again in 1829, defeating the Texan rebels at Goliad and the Alamo in 1836, and the French in 1838, was not the figure Mexicans wanted as a hero. Many Mexicans, both then and now, have and had a love-hate relationship with Santa Anna, who was arguably vain, corrupt, rich, and realistic, while simultaneously cruel, addicted to risk, and charismatic.⁹⁷ He was the president of Mexico eleven times over the course of his eventful life, and pragmatically adopted whatever politics suited his personal needs at a particular point in time. He was both a dictator and a president – a conservative and a federalist. Most of all he was an opportunist. Historians still debate the reasons for his attraction by the Mexican people, but at a time when nationalism had such little meaning, Santa Anna’s decisive actions repeatedly brought him back to national prominence. Despite his political abilities, the Santiago de Queretaro officers had no use for him as a leader worthy of emulation. For the next ten years, Mexico struggled to strengthen its own government, and repeatedly used its forces to quell internal dissent. Its national identity was in turmoil.

The political discord between the federalists and their secular view of decentralized power and the conservatives and their centrist model (some even wanted to retain a monarchy) grew following the war. Prior to the US Civil War, which was fought over slavery and states’ rights, Mexico fought its own bloody civil war from 1858-1861, known as the War of the Reform. Confidence in their nation and military grew with the end of this war, which led directly into another war with the French, and culminated with the defeat of the French again in 1867. After this 1867 French war, several powerful veterans from this most recent conflict (who were also veterans of the Mexican-American War) gathered together to form an association and ask Mexican President Benito Juárez to make national anniversaries of the Battles of Molino del Rey

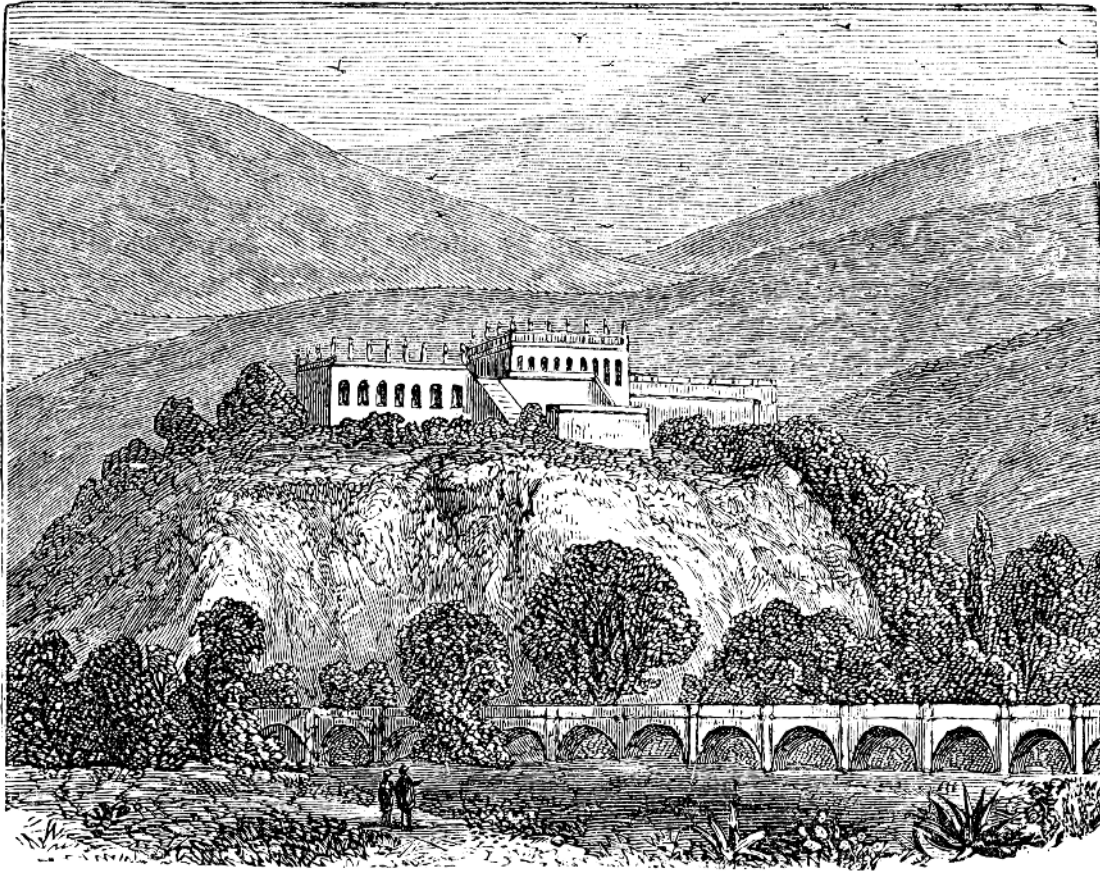


Figure 5. Chapultepec Castle in the late 1800s
(Illustration by Morphart Creation / Shutterstock 76241041)

and Chapultepec.⁹⁸ These veterans were alumni from the same Military College located at the Chapultepec Castle (Figure 5) where approximately 50 cadets had refused an evacuation order and stayed to fight for the final Battle of Mexico City back in 1847, several of whom died or were killed.⁹⁹

It seems the narrative of “los Niños Heroes” was born around this time, in 1867, following the War of the Reform and the defeat of the French in the French Intervention War. Many Mexicans, weary of nearly sixty years of conflict and political strife, were inspired by the defeat of the French, the resolution of the political disagreements of federalism versus conservatism, and were feeling patriotic toward the idea of their nation. Fueled by a sweeping sentiment of nationalism following the defeat of the French, President Juárez made September 13 (the day Chapultepec fell in 1847) a national holiday.

There is little doubt the Boy Heroes existed and died there. There were around fifty cadets that refused to leave despite the American onslaught; history has lost track of how many exactly. The names that have become linked to their sacrifice are Juan Escutia, Francisco Marquez, Agustin Melgar, Fernando Montes de Oca, and Vicente Sudrez. President Juárez personally commemorated what has now turned into an annual event on September 13, 1871.¹⁰⁰ Seven years later, in 1878, the legend grew even stronger. A member of the influential Military College Association declared

that during the battle for Chapultepec, one of the cadets had wrapped himself in the Mexican flag and hurled himself from its steep cliffs, preferring suicide over surrendering his nation's flag, an act of death before dishonor.¹⁰¹

This account may have its roots in events annotated from participants on both sides of the battle; a Mexican Lieutenant Colonel, mortally wounded, had wrapped himself in the Mexican flag. Other accounts relate this action to a Mexican officer named Lieutenant Colonel Margarito Suazo on September 8, 1847 at the Battle of Molino del Rey.¹⁰² It was also well documented that during Battle of Chapultepec several Mexican troops did indeed jump from the cliff in apparent suicides. These suicidal actions were largely deemed to be cowardly at that time.¹⁰³ The name that came to be associated with this modernized narrative was Juan Escutia, a 20-year-old Mexican military cadet. Other accounts have no record of him even attending the academy. Perhaps by modifying, manipulating, or at least accentuating the history, Mexico could take this act and modify it into a "feat of bravery and patriotism, regardless of whether the suicide actually happened or not."¹⁰⁴ For Mexico, "history [was] about remembering the past, but it [was] also about choosing [what] to forget."¹⁰⁵ This use of a centralized version of selective memory is similar in the manner of the US's decentralized version of the war and the obfuscation of the Battle of the Alamo. The collective memory over this event has been bolstered by the holiday and an actual mural in Chapultepec Castle itself, painted 120 years after the event ostensibly took place. The memory is encouraged by the holiday and the related symbols, which would be proliferated over the next 150 years. These memories continue to grow across Mexico. A different version of the Boy Heroes memorial was dedicated in 2000, in the border city of Juarez, near Texas.¹⁰⁶ Another version of the la Altar a la Pátria was also built near Arizona, in Nogales, Mexico, in recent years. Local politicians also commemorate the fallen cadets annually, in September, successfully nationalizing the narrative.¹⁰⁷ The Mexicans thus have nationally-known heroes, who are celebrated and memorialized as victims, their youth discernibly emphasized, for the same war and battles the US seems to no longer remember.

Nationalism

Mexico needed a cause; a national point to rally around after the second French War. It suffered from a *lack* of nationalism in its first few decades. Additionally, it lacked the internal debate the US's first thirteen colonies had, prior to their Revolutionary War. After its successful fight for independence from Spain, Mexico had inherited a massive territory of approximately 1,179,000 square miles.¹⁰⁸ Simultaneously to the external conflicts fought with the Spanish, Texans, Americans, and French, there was raging political turmoil within Mexico over the future model of governance for the nation. On one side were the *federalistas*, or *puros*, who desired a break from all vestiges of traditionalism, including the influence of Catholicism and economic and political privileges. On the other side were the *conservativos* and *moderados*, who disagreed with the *puros*, on the form of government, the role of the church, and even the type of government.¹⁰⁹ These disagreements and the violence that was associated with them affected, in real time, governing decisions that took place in the new nation. The pragmatic Santa Anna, for example, as Mexico's president in 1833, set out to eradicate all vestiges of federalism. When the opposition to this seemed forceful, he threw his political weight in with the opposition and issued a manifesto condemning the eradication program, bolstering the federalists. He issued a decree reducing the size of militia in subordinate states in May, 1835, and when the Zacatecas governor disobeyed it, he marched the federal forces there and crushed the dissent.¹¹⁰

Although the government of President Valentín Gómez Farías tried valiantly to stabilize Mexico in the 1830s, it struggled and eventually failed, arguably because of the war with the

US, the country's fiscal issues, Santa Anna's character issues, the refusal of the conservatives and moderates to cooperate, the Catholic church's lack of patriotism (successfully exploited by General Scott), and his own *puro* members' ties to the urban poor.¹¹¹ The frequency of changes of power in Mexico, in that era, were simply overwhelming as well. Those vying for power could often not even agree on where to locate Mexico's national capital in those first years.¹¹² Depending on one's perspective of who was a legitimate president, between Mexican Independence and the War of the Reform, there were around seventy changes of executive power in only thirty-five years. It was not until the presidency of Benito Juárez in 1867 and then Porfirio Díaz in 1876, that a true type of political stability would actually emerge in Mexico.

Another – yet intricately related – issue was the large number of indigenous peoples living in the Mexican territory. Mexico's population upon its independence consisted of 40 to 60 percent Indians, around 20 percent Spanish *mestizos* (mixed ancestry), with the remaining a mix of creoles (American-born people from European descent) and African Americans. Mexico didn't have laws similar to the US that delineated its people by race; they were all Mexicans.¹¹³ Mexico's first leader Augustine de Iturbide issued a forward-thinking proclamation, the Plan de Iguala, in February 1821, which explained his vision for equality and racial harmony for the new nation of Mexico.¹¹⁴ In that same era, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act of 1830.¹¹⁵ The two countries' approaches to this issue were widely divergent, and it took the US a civil war to eventually arrive to the same conclusion. Mexico had also lost hundreds of thousands of its citizens to its war of independence, did not have the same favorable geography as the US with navigable rivers, fertile soil and plains, and the internal political turmoil contributed to incessant strife and instability within the country.¹¹⁶

These issues came to fruition in 1844 and 1845. Mexicans living in the northern parts of Mexico and the new Republic of Texas had “labored in vain” for nearly fifteen years to convince the Mexican government that persistent Indian raiding on Mexicans and Tejanos was a national crisis. The launching of several campaigns in 1844 and 1845 by the Comanche and Kiowas into northern Mexico and Texas, and the repeated lack of the Mexican government to commit resources to assist their citizens, both before and after the independence of Texas (the reader will recall Mexico had not yet accepted the Texans' independence) helped solidify the Texans, including the Tejanos, to vote for annexation into the US.¹¹⁷ These raids were also part of the Indians' larger strategy to push back on expansion into their native lands. They were habitually ruthless at the tactical level, but also perilous at the strategic level. One of Mexico's key interior ministers of the era observed that Mexico was “menaced...by two grave dangers: the invasion of the adventurers, and the depredations of barbarous tribes.”¹¹⁸ The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo seemed to make things even worse for Mexico. Still going through political mayhem, it appeared the Indians (Apaches in particular) increased their attacks on Mexicans, then would escape back across the border into the US for security.¹¹⁹

The Treaty of Mesilla, or Gadsden Purchase of 1853, gave even more territory to the US and directly led to the War of Reform, while further staining the already soiled reputation of Santa Anna.¹²⁰ It became an obvious *need* for national leaders to rally Mexico's citizens around a common cause. Started by President Juárez, on the heels of the victory over France, a continued surge in nationalistic sentiment was picked up by his predecessor, Porfirio Díaz. Díaz's successors would follow suit. Their motivations were similar. Although there were overtures made by US presidents Harry Truman and Bill Clinton, who laid wreaths at the Chapultepec Memorial, and subtle admissions of wrongdoing by Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Gerald Ford throughout the 20th century, many present day Mexicans still view the US in much the same fashion they have since 1878. From many contemporary Mexicans' viewpoint, it seems as if their country

was invaded by the greedy and merciless Yankees at a time when it was struggling to gain its own national identity, surrounded by hostile foreign powers, and with a raging insurgency in its borders. When barely out of their own revolution for independence from Spain, the US had invaded and plundered their new nation, robbing Mexico of many of its natural resources, and slaying its young men. A strong sense of nationalism represents the innocence and patriotism of the oppressed Mexicans in the face of the northern aggressors. Mexico has effectively used the Mexican-American War as its *chosen trauma* to build a national identity.

Symbology

Realizing the power of nationalism, Juárez's successor, Porfirio Díaz, began a multi-year campaign of "erecting patriotic memorials in the capital that nurtured nationalistic myths stressing obedience and sacrifice."¹²¹ President Díaz was able to use these commemorations and memorials to serve as a "safe outlet for popular anxiety" while he consolidated power, increased economic cooperation with the US, and used US foreign direct investment to build Mexico's infrastructure and industrial sectors.¹²² Díaz probably understood that what was later articulated by Nuetstadt – recognition of what matters for the future in the present, is the departure from the past – was a good place to face Mexico's turbulent past. The use of patriotism, celebrated by figures the entire nation could get behind, could bind the nation together. Patriotism is a fundamental and essential phenomenon of nationalism – a feeling of commitment to an institution, in this case to the nation of Mexico.¹²³

Díaz recognized that "feeling part of something...can be comforting," and used these memorials and monuments as a way of constructing and solidifying a national Mexican identity.¹²⁴ He modified the national day of mourning and stretched it into a week-long affair – from September 8 through September 16. He used the Chapultepec Castle as the Presidential Palace and began to officiate at the annual "quasi-religious" Feast of Our Lady of Covadonga, thus "conflating the sacred and the civic" and strengthening the national myth.¹²⁵

This recipe for success has been repeated frequently over the course of the last 130 years. The September 13 national holiday started in 1871. A monument to Benito Juárez was dedicated in 1911. National Flag Day was established in 1937. The Chapultepec Castle became a national shrine over time and was officially opened as a museum in 1944.¹²⁶ The remains of the six young men who have come to represent those who died, ostensibly between the ages of twelve and twenty-one, were found, excavated, and interred in 1947, the same year that US President Truman laid a wreath at their interment site. The memorial described at the beginning of this essay, inscribed to los Niños Heroes at its base, was established in 1952, 105 years after the battle was fought. Famous Mexican artist Gabriel Flores painted the mural of los Niños Heroes on the ceiling of Chapultepec Castle in 1967, 120 years after the battle.¹²⁷ Several streets in Mexico City bear their name, to include a Metro Station that opened in 1970.¹²⁸ Mexico also has numerous other memorials and monuments dedicated to their other wars and conflicts, including their independence from Spain, the War of Reform, and their Mexican Revolution of 1910. But it is their celebration of the Martyrs of Chapultepec, embodied in the six seemingly innocent young men, that appears to give all Mexicans a common bond and centralizes their collective memory of the war. Mexico's federal Department of Education's fifth-grade text book from the 2016-2017 school year even briefly mentions the boy heroes, solidifying the myth that is told in the murals, monuments, celebrations, and street names, with formalized education descriptions imparted to impressionable young Mexican children.¹²⁹ This differs dramatically from fifth-grade education models in the US where each state decides on their own curriculum, in a decentralized manner. The effective use of these symbols, helped solidify and build a national narrative to create the nationalism that was needed for amalgamating and strengthening the nation.

Media

The Mexican media has proliferated this narrative over time, especially given its ties to the national holidays and the dedication and annual commemoration of the national memorials. However, during the years leading up to, during and after the war, the media was engaged in the political turmoil that engulfed the rest of Mexico. Immediately following the war, the Mexican military officers used the media to blame their dysfunctional national leadership for failing to negotiate with US Presidents Jackson and Taylor prior to Polk's election. The developing consensus for these narratives seem to have had a common theme. The deceitful North Americans had invaded and robbed their once-peaceful nation bringing crime, anarchy, and fear with them.¹³⁰ In reality, for the reasons mentioned previously, Mexico was scarcely 25 years old when the war started and had not yet "established a suitable framework of political and economic institutions."¹³¹ Mexican military recruitment had consisted of capturing indigenous Indians, where only an estimated one-in-ten had ever seen a firearm, and one-in-hundred had ever fired one.¹³² In a nation that had seven million inhabitants, few identified as Mexican; national identity was a new concept at the time.¹³³

The newspapers at the time appear to reflect the opinions of the consumers that bought them. Newspapers such as *La Voz del Pueblo* reflected the internal political reality on the ground, however, in many similar newspapers, correspondents were unable to keep their editorial political views of supporting federalism out of their reporting.¹³⁴ Several newspapers and journalists supported the line in the sand drawn by Herrera in regards to the Nueces Strip.¹³⁵ Letters from the era, reflected the disbelief that the Americans – these "vicious volunteers, without discipline, without subordination, without experience in the management of arms" – had defeated the Mexican military.¹³⁶ Also influential in creating the account following the war was the medium of letters. A well-known 1883 book written by Jose Marla Roa Barcena, *Memories of the North American Invasion 1846-1848*, probably drove the continuation of solidifying the narrative by the post-Diaz presidencies. Roa Barcena concluded in his book that "Mexico's racial inferiority, its weak social and political organization, conscripted soldiers, poor armaments, and Mexican liberalism" all were key components that explained the loss.¹³⁷ This was not the narrative any effective national leader would be expected to disseminate to his or her citizenry. Thus, the mythologizing continued along without this narrative.

The Effective Use of these Elements in Constructing the Mexican Narrative

Mexican politicians in the post-French Intervention era, grasped the importance of strengthening patriotism, creating or setting a national historical narrative, and vindicating the historical issues Mexico had by encouraging the expansion of the story of the cadets over the next 100 years, and mitigating the failures their nation had in its infancy. The parallels this has with the US's decentralized model, and its failure to acknowledge the history is captivating. The complex nature of the consequences of the war did not, however, neatly divide the nations into two. There were more than 100,000 Mexicans living on the US side of the border following the signing of Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. This was bolstered by former Mexican citizens who lived beyond the Mexican borders in the new territory of the US and the fact that they still had deep familial bonds that stretched back, deep into Mexico.

President Diaz continued the national narrative started by President Juarez to axiomatically bind his nation together, with the use of the media to proliferate his vision, and the effective use of celebrations, monuments, and symbols, all which were used to create a stronger sense of nationalism. Diaz was a "pro-development statesman" who believed Mexico's advancement into the modern era needed to be aided by foreign capital.¹³⁸ His vision was not completely fulfilled, however, as the violent Mexican Revolution of 1910 hindered the complete vision from coming to

full fruition. Border town Americans and Mexicans, who had enjoyed over sixty years of relative freedom in cross-border movement, began to pull away from each other, as the “roaring” 1920s’ approached. Mexicans began to cross the border permanently with more frequency encouraged by industrialization and new labor markets in the US.¹³⁹ While each citizen of Mexico has differing opinions and perspectives, over the course of time, and perhaps because of many years of loose border restrictions, family ties across the border and through history, and an admiration for US institutions and the success it has had, the majority of Mexicans seem to generally view the US with a unique mixture of both admiration and rejection.¹⁴⁰ Their version of the Mexican-American War is blatantly different from those on the US side of the border, however.

The Mexican-American War’s Legacy

The war ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.¹⁴¹ This treaty rendered the US more than 500,000 square miles of land and encompasses the current states of Arizona, California, parts of Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Wyoming, along with Texas.¹⁴² The Mexicans were soundly defeated in nearly every battle, although they often outnumbered the Americans by a three-to-one ratio.

Mexico suffered a humiliating defeat after being so successful against the more experienced and professional armies of Spain and France. It ultimately adopted a tone of persecution to explain its losses. The US chose to largely ignore the war while moving on with its own disputatious internal affairs such as slavery and an eventual civil war. When it did pause to give the war thought, figures such as Santa Anna and his battlefield carnages seem to give it sufficient reasons to have waged the war. The same war was fought, but the widely varying narratives about its meaning, why it was fought, and what it meant to the US and Mexican citizens, became increasingly different and contradictory through the stream of time.

The legacy of the Mexican-American War is thus mixed. Mexico feels, justifiably it appears, that it was taken advantage of at a time of great national weakness. The narrative that the US swooped down and seized sovereign territory certainly has played and continues to play well to Mexican citizens, who search for an explanation for their decisive defeat and the loss of their northern lands. The gold rush of 1849 along with the resultant wealth it gave Americans, and the unification of the US by the completion of the transcontinental railway in 1869 did little to counter this narrative. Little is spoken of the Mexicans’ incapacity to govern their northern territories, or the internal political strife that marked their independence. Most of the reason the Mexican government allowed the Austin-led Americans to begin to settle in Texas in 1821 was the inability of its newly-formed institutions to govern this remote wilderness, infamous for its brutal attacks by indigenous tribes on Mexican settlers.

The continued expansionism and interventionism exhibited by the US in the Spanish-American War of 1898, again started by dubious means, along with two major incursions into Mexico in the early 20th century, seemed to substantiate the common Mexican’s viewpoint. Mexicans seem to be validated in their claims of US imperialism. Further “meddling” in Central and South America with the creation of Panama, the role of the US with the United Fruit Company in Guatemala, and the US’s seemingly hypocritical support for oppressive dictators, not only during the Cold War, but also in the early 20th century, fueled Mexican suspicions and arguably justifies their claims. It is almost certain that every populist Latin-American leader from Cuba’s Fidel Castro, Argentina’s Che Guevara, Chile’s Salvador Allende, Venezuela’s Hugo Chavez to Bolivia’s Evo Morales studied the Mexican-American War and that it helped shape their anti-US ideologies.

The US, on the other hand, seems to prefer to forget the war. This is not a contemporary mindset. In the years following the war, many of its key national figures spoke out against the war. These included Abraham Lincoln, Robert E. Lee, and Ulysses S. Grant.¹⁴³ Tellingly, there are no memorials commemorating the war on the US's National Mall, and the first major war memorial, the Sloat Memorial in Monterey, California, was not constructed until 1910.¹⁴⁴ The turbulent time immediately following the Mexican-American War leading up to the US Civil War, the Civil War itself, the Reconstruction Era, and the Indian Wars kept the US busy for several decades with its own domestic affairs, keeping it out of major world events such as the Berlin Conference of 1884, where sub-Saharan Africa was divided up for natural resource exploitation.

The US went on to become a dominant world power upon its entry into World War I. It appears the fighting spirit of the US soldier, though once ridiculed by the European elite, continued to gain notoriety in that war as it does even today; exalted in contemporary works such as Bing West's 2008 book, *The Strongest Tribe*. Sociologists study this phenomenon to attempt to understand it, perhaps supporting the hypothesis that military forces under strong democracies fight harder than those under other forms of government. The US's form of democracy, born out of trial and error with a strong Constitution that has been amended only 27 times, is arguably (at least initially), a more stable form of governance than Mexico's was (at least in that era), which languished under authoritarian-style regimes until 1910, and even afterwards under single party rule for the next seven decades. This perspective, of course, does not take into account the ten-year period the US had after their war with the British and the adaptation of the US Constitution.

Mexico had little of the same grace period to stabilize their own government and work through the problematic issues new democracies seem to always incur after being freed from the vestiges of colonialism. The wars with Spain in 1829, the Texans in 1836, and the French in 1838, along with their own political infighting and disorder, left them unstable by the dawn of the war in 1846, the Treaty of Mesilla in 1853, the War of Reform in 1858, and the French Intervention War of 1861.

Contemporary Mexicans continue to migrate to the US for economic opportunities, both for businesses and for individuals, legally and illegally, and the poor continue to be disenfranchised by the powerful. Remittances and other financial support mechanisms flood back to Mexico from the US at a rate of over \$23 billion a year and they grow by an estimated 5% annually.¹⁴⁵ The drug trade flourishes with its own billions of illicit revenue. With recent US unemployment rates high and the loss of domestic manufacturing jobs to both free trade and capital mobility, and the movement of industry to places with cheaper labor rates, these remittances and economic losses unquestionably fueled the rise of protectionism and nationalism within the US electorate in 2016. The financial transfers and influx of jobs into Mexico from the US also explain the contemporary Mexican government's desire for loose border controls. The sad deaths of thousands of Mexican casualties in the drug war (where the US consumer is demanding the product) complicates the issues.

The irony from both perspectives is sometimes striking. As Americans in 2017 complain about the negative consequences of illegal immigration, they seem largely unaware of the original Texans' illegal immigration into Mexico. Mexicans, who argue this point effectively, seem blissfully unaware of the magnitude in the differences of raw numbers in illegal migrants: roughly 30,000 Texans lived there in the 1840s (quasi-illegally) compared to the millions living illegally in the US in 2017. Americans are sometimes shocked at the bitter resentment that infrequently surfaces at international forums or large sporting events where Mexicans sometimes hurl horrific insults at Americans.¹⁴⁶ Indeed it seems, arguably because there is no fixed national narrative from the US, the Mexican-American War was fought because Santa Anna invaded Texas and attacked the

Alamo, massacring its survivors. (Mexicans are hard-pressed to defend Santa Anna from these charges – he *was* and *is* widely reviled by his own nation.) The US then counter-attacked, led by small-town American military men. Along the way these courageous American soldiers saved lovely Mexican women from their cruel Mexican men.

Mexicans generally see it much differently. While normally uninformed of their numerical advantage and the thousands of soldiers who fought against US forces under the command General Scott at Chapultepec, their mythology of the Boy Heroes and especially Cadet Escutia has come to embody the innocence of their nation at the hands of the northern imperialist, without taking into account they lacked a national identity at the time.¹⁴⁷ History may have been completely different if their brash president had not been captured on the battlefield in Texas in 1836 or if one of their presidents had been willing to negotiate a solution to the subsequent Texas issue, regarding the land of the Nueces Strip, an almost worthless piece of arid land.

As in most sharp-edged disagreements, the truth almost certainly lies somewhere in the middle. Mexico's Army was unquestionably harsh when it fought in Texas, which contributed to the Texans' rebellion and their eventual independence. The US certainly coveted the Mexican territories and – at least partially – used the excuse of these brutalities to launch the war. In the end, what is left is the Mexicans blaming the US for many of their current domestic problems, while the US has chosen to forget the war, content with its massive territory gains, free of European influence and finally secure from “sea to shining sea.”

Modern-day issues between the two nations include disagreements on the equality of water distribution – the Rocky Mountains watersheds provide water resources to Arizona, California, and New Mexico – which slows to a small stream as it enters Mexico via the Colorado River, and now the re-opening of the issues of border security and a possible re-negotiation of the NAFTA. Other issues include immigration disputes, foreign investment limitations, and the violent illicit-trafficking of narcotics north to hungry narcotic-consumption markets and the dangerous return of illegal firearms and bulk cash south. However, there are more issues that the two states have in common than in discord. NAFTA has raised the standard of living for citizens on both sides, familial links are strong despite the border, and the highly acclaimed security-based Merida Initiative has exposed countless criminal networks in both countries.

Outside of the current rise in tensions in 2017, recent leaders from the two nations have endeavored to modify the accounts. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1990, US President George H. W. Bush and Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari attempted greater economic cooperation.¹⁴⁸ This post-Cold War relationship was solidified with President Clinton's visit to the Chapultepec Memorial in 1997, much like Truman's visit fifty years earlier, to celebrate the Boy Heroes. As part of the change in the US narrative, it established and opened the Palo Alto National Park in 2004. Guests can read about Manifest Destiny along with more impartial data on disputed borders, Texas's independence and annexation, and the political instability of the Mexican government in this balanced approach.¹⁴⁹ In 2004, the Smithsonian's Museum of American History pronounced “America went to war to gain territory from Mexico and expand the nation's boundary,” which may seem revisionist history to many, but is difficult to refute, based on factual evidence as depicted in this essay.¹⁵⁰

Mexico, for its part, unveiled a website from its National Historic Studies Institute of the Revolution of Mexico titled “For the Honor of Mexico” in 2009.¹⁵¹ In this government-sponsored forum the director asks “Did the Boy Heroes Actually Live?”¹⁵² The propagation of communication technology and wide availability of information has spawned many questions from a new generation of Mexicans questioning if the *Boy Heroes* legend is even legitimate.¹⁵³ It is perhaps at these recent points in time that one can clearly discern that the trajectories of the myths

of the Mexican-American War have not only intersected and changed, but also that the future is vague for sustaining the traditional stories. Indeed, *"memory is not only selective, it is malleable."*¹⁵⁴

With economic benefits at stake for both nations, recent past leaders have turned the page and reduced blame by examining the facts, establishing commonalities, and forging stronger ties for the future. The current issues surrounding immigration, border security, and the heated rhetoric involved is disconcerting perhaps, but not new in its roots. Even the idea for the proposed wall that is causing so much current strife in the bilateral relationship is not new. The issue of illegal smuggling in the early 20th century made border security an issue 100 years ago. Going back to the 1940s and 1950s the construction of border fences to mitigate human and illicit trafficking has been a constant issue. Leaving out the economic costs and human emotions, border fence construction in the past thirty years has possibly led to a decrease in the apprehension of illegal immigrants in the US, dropping from 1,072,018 in 2006 to 858,722 in 2007.¹⁵⁵ The larger issues of the human factors involved, and how we have arrived at this current place from the past, elude those on both sides of the border. Fences and walls have the added effect of creating their own symbolism, be they signs of strength or weakness mostly depends on one's perspective.

Conclusion

This essay explained the varying perspectives on the Mexican-American War, how they were shaped, and how both the US and Mexican governments built these conflicting narratives through selective memory to serve their own causes. At first ecstatic over its gains and the fulfillment of its Manifest Destiny, the US has since tried to forget the war and decentralized its accounts, subtly encouraging the ideology of American exceptionalism through American values, individualism, and toughness-of-character to explain its successful westward expansion. Mexico, on the other hand, centralized its version of the history and promoted a sense of collective maltreatment, to construct a national character and strengthen its citizens sense of national identity. This has encouraged national empathy and provoked a sense of loyalty to traditional Mexican values and culture. It has also, unsurprisingly, assisted several of Mexico's autocratic leaders retain their power on and off over the last 170 years.

When Leon Baradat explained that nationalism is the most powerful political idea of the past 200 years, he also went further to explain that it is exclusivist in nature and that it demands each individual give loyalty to only one nation state.¹⁵⁶ In order to do so, the invoking of a national honor, a reminder of a nation's self-interest, following traditions, and honoring its fallen heroes is vital, and doing so clearly explains the differing perception and narratives of a war.¹⁵⁷ Humanity constantly searches for a greater meaning in its losses as well as its victories. It seems *"we edit our memories over the years...to make our own roles more attractive and important."*¹⁵⁸ This selective editing explains how the divergent views of this conflict, so relevant in 2017, came into being slowly, throughout the course of history. As the future unfolds itself into the present, mankind looks to its own memory of the past to explain the present and help it find a meaningful path forward into an unknown future, accentuating its own self-interests in the process. The Mexican-American War, with its conflicting perceptions and contradictory narratives, is an excellent case study of how and why this occurs. The challenge remains – what will our national leaders do with this information in an era that seems to be another key turning point for the bilateral relationship in the stream of history's time? Understanding how we arrived here is the first step in determining the way forward.

NOTES

1. United States Marine Corps, Human Resources and Organization Management. "What is the Marine Corps Hymn?" <http://www.hqmc.marines.mil/hrom/NewEmployees/AbouttheMarineCorps/Hymn.aspx> (Accessed 15 July 2017).
2. Lynn Sherr, *America the Beautiful: The Stirring True Story Behind Our Nation's Favorite Song* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), 61.
3. David Jackson and Gregory Korte, *Trump Speaks by Phone to Mexican President after Meeting Canceled*, USA Today, 27 January, 2017, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2017/01/27/trump-speaks-mexico-president-after-meeting-cancelled/97139096/> (Accessed 15 July 2017); Julia Edwards Ainsley, *Trump Moves Ahead with Wall, Puts Stamp on US Immigration*, Security Policy, Reuters, 26 January, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-immigration-idUSKBN1591HP> (Accessed 15 July 2017).
4. Nina Lakhani and Erubiel Tirado, *Mexico's War on Drugs: What it has Achieved and how is the US Involved*, 08 December, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2016/dec/08/mexico-war-on-drugs-cost-achievements-us-billions>, (Accessed 05 July 2017).
5. Ibid.
6. Arturo Sarukhan, *The US-Mexico Relationship is Dangerously on the Edge*, The Washington Post, 31 January, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2017/01/31/the-u-s-mexico-relationship-is-dangerously-on-the-edge/?utm_term=.4cc53daa68f6, (Accessed 15 July 2017).
7. Leon P. Baradat, *Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impact*. 11th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2012), 48.
8. Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* (New York: Free Press, 1986), xii.
9. Ibid, xix.
10. Ibid, 251.
11. Much has been written about the Mexican-American War. Because of the close proximity of the conflict, the wide availability of original documentation, and the thorough analysis of the war, much of the data encapsulated into this essay is not new. This contribution seeks to reveal the way the existing historical documentation and its analysis, widely accepted by both sides of the conflict, along with the encouragement of mythology, have left widely divergent perspectives about the war's causality and its meaning.
12. Ernesto Chávez, *The Treaty between the United States and the French Republic, The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 46; Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World*, fourth ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 20.
13. David Stephen Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Manifest Destiny*, Greenwood Guides to Historic Events, 1500-1900 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003), 121.
14. Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World*, fourth ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 20.
15. K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848*, The Wars of the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 2.
16. Ernesto Chávez, *Annexation*, United States Democratic Review, July-August 1845, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 35.
17. Ernesto Chávez, *Agustin de Iturbide, Plan de Iguala*, 24 February, 1821, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.:

- Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 38; Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World*, fourth ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 21.
18. Christopher B. Conway, ed., *The U.S.-Mexican War: A Binational Reader* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2010), xix.
19. Dean B. Mahin, *Olive Branch and Sword: The United States and Mexico, 1845-1848*. (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 1997), 18.
20. Ernesto Chávez, Mexican Government – National Colonization Law, 18 August, 1824, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 47.
21. Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World*, fourth ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 21.
22. Ibid.; Dean B. Mahin, *Olive Branch and Sword: The United States and Mexico, 1845-1848* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 1997), 20.
23. William Ransom Hogan, *Fred H. and Ella Mae Moore Texas History Reprint Series*, vol. 22, *The Texas Republic: a Social and Economic History* (Austin Tex.: Texas State Historical Association, 2007), 3.
24. David Stephen Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Manifest Destiny*, Greenwood Guides to Historic Events, 1500-1900 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003), 99; Ernesto Chávez, Conditions for African Americans in Mexican Texas, Letter from Benjamin Lundy, 1833, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 56.
25. David Stephen Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Manifest Destiny*, Greenwood Guides to Historic Events, 1500-1900 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003), 99.
26. Ibid, 100.
27. Timothy J. Henderson, *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States*, pbk. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 92.
28. Ibid, 94; David Stephen Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Manifest Destiny*, Greenwood Guides to Historic Events, 1500-1900 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003), 102.
29. Christopher B. Conway, ed., The Texas Declaration of Independence, March 2nd, 1836, *The U.S.-Mexican War: A Binational Reader* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2010), 16.
30. David Stephen Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Manifest Destiny*, Greenwood Guides to Historic Events, 1500-1900 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003), 104.
31. Christopher B. Conway, ed., Antonio Lopez-de Santa Anna's Proclamation of the Fall of the Alamo, Letter, March 6th, 1836, *The U.S.-Mexican War: A Binational Reader* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2010), 16.
32. Dean B. Mahin, *Olive Branch and Sword: The United States and Mexico, 1845-1848*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 1997, 21; Timothy J. Henderson, *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States*, pbk. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 94.
33. Christopher B. Conway, ed., The Treaty of Velasco, May 14th, 1836, *The U.S.-Mexican War: A Binational Reader* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2010), 25; Dean B. Mahin, *Olive Branch and Sword: The United States and Mexico, 1845-1848*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 1997, 21.
34. Christopher B. Conway, ed., Manifesto of the Mexican Congress, 1836, *The U.S.-Mexican War: A Binational Reader* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2010), 28.
35. Timothy J. Henderson, *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States*, pbk. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 120; Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War*, The Lamar Series in Western History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), xv.

36. Ernesto Chávez, Newspaper Article Criticizing US Interests in Texas, *El Mosquito Mexicano*, 14 June, 1826, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 62.
37. Christopher B. Conway, ed., General Jose Tornel y Mendivil on the Texas Declaration of Independence, 1837, *The U.S.-Mexican War: A Binational Reader* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2010), 30.
38. Dean B. Mahin, *Olive Branch and Sword: The United States and Mexico, 1845-1848*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 1997, 26; David Stephen Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Manifest Destiny*, Greenwood Guides to Historic Events, 1500-1900 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003), 112.
39. United States Capital Archives. "The Annexation of Texas." <http://www.visitthecapitol.gov/exhibition-hall/archives/images/2321?detail-image-node=2326>. (Accessed 15 July 2017).
40. Christopher B. Conway, ed., President James K. Polk's Inaugural Address, 04 March, 1836, *The U.S.-Mexican War: A Binational Reader* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2010), 42.
41. Ibid.
42. Timothy J. Henderson, *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States*, pbk. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 146.
43. José Joaquín de Herrera, "Proclamación, 04 junio, 1845." Descendants of Mexican War Veterans. <http://www.dmwv.org/mexwar/documents/herrera.htm>. (Accessed 15 July 2017).
44. Otis A. Singletary, *The Mexican War* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 8.
45. James Polk, "The President's Annual Message." Miles National Register, Volume XIX, No. 14., 06 December, 1845. Public Broadcasting Service. http://www.pbs.org/kera/usmexicanwar/resources/primary_source_window/posters3_large.html (Accessed 15 July 2017).
46. Otis A. Singletary, *The Mexican War* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 11.
47. Timothy J. Henderson, *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States*, pbk. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 147.
48. Ibid, 148.
49. Rachel St John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border*, America in the World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 18.
50. Timothy J. Henderson, *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States*, pbk. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 154.
51. Ibid.; James Polk, "President of the United States at Washington, D.C., Address to the Congress of the United States, 11 May 1846." Descendants of Mexican War Veterans. <http://www.dmwv.org/mexwar/documents/polk.htm>. (Accessed 15 July 2017).
52. The Congressional Globe. "An Act Providing for the Prosecution of an Existing War between the United States and the Republic of Mexico." The Library of Congress. 11 May, 1846. <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llcg&fileName=016/llcg016.db&recNum=842>. (Accessed 15 July 2017).
53. K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848*, The Wars of the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 395.
54. Timothy D. Johnson, *Winfield Scott: The Quest for Military Glory*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 153.
55. Ibid, 146.

56. David Stephen Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Manifest Destiny*, Greenwood Guides to Historic Events, 1500-1900 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003), 153.
57. Timothy D. Johnson, *Winfield Scott: The Quest for Military Glory*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 169.
58. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 60.
59. Ibid, 72.
60. K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848*, The Wars of the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 396.
61. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 30.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid, 10.
64. Ibid, 12.
65. Ibid, 13.
66. Ibid, 170.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid, 171.
69. Ernesto Chávez, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 179.
70. Kevin Howe, *Patching up 'Big Bird': Presidio of Monterey's Sloat Monument in need of repairs*, The Monterey Herald, 23 February, 2011, <http://www.montereyherald.com/article/ZZ/20110223/NEWS/110228919>, (Accessed 15 July 2017).
71. *Honoring Our War Veterans*, US-Mexican War Monuments and Memorials, Descendants of Mexican War Veterans, <http://www.dmwv.org/honoring/monmem.htm> (Accessed 15 July, 2017).
72. Ernesto Chávez, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 179.
73. Robert Walter Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 193.
74. Ernesto Chávez, Pierre the Partisan: A Tale of the Mexican Marches, 1848, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 95.
75. Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 128.
76. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 14.
77. David Stephen Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Manifest Destiny*, Greenwood Guides to Historic Events, 1500-1900 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003), 147.
78. Richard V. Francaviglia and Douglas W. Richmond, eds., *Dueling Eagles: Reinterpreting the U.S.-Mexican War, 1846-1848* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2000), 165,
79. Ernesto Chávez, War with Mexico, Editorial in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle Newspaper, by Walt Whitman, 11 May, 1846, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 82.

80. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 126.
81. Ernesto Chávez, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 32.
82. K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848*, The Wars of the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 395.
83. Ibid, 395.
84. Robert Walter Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezuma: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 309.
85. Ibid.
86. Rachel St John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border*, America in the World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 18.
87. José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.s.-Mexico Borderlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 98.
88. Ernesto Chávez, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 187.
89. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 162.
90. John E. Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 17.
91. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 42.
92. Matthew Bernard Levinger, *Conflict Analysis: Understanding Causes, Unlocking Solutions*, Academy Guides / United States Institute of Peace (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2013), 123,124.
93. Ernesto Chávez, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 171.
94. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 41.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid, 42.
97. Ernesto Chávez, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 77.
98. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 81.
99. Ibid.
100. México Cultura Colectiva, , *La verdadera mentira de los ni "tan" niños ni "tan" héroes*, 05 September, 2014, <http://culturacolectiva.com/la-verdadera-mentira-de-los-ni-tan-ninos-ni-tan-heroes/> (Accessed 15 July 2017).
101. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 87.

102. Christopher B. Conway, ed., *The U.S.-Mexican War: A Binational Reader* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2010), 127.
103. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 89.
104. Ibid, 88.
105. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 113.
106. Instituto Municipal de Investigacion y Planeacion, Monumentos, Placas, y Propiedades, Catalogo de Obras con Valor Historico y/o Arquitectonico, <http://www.imip.org.mx/Beta/pdu2016/Anexos/CatalogodeObrasValorHistorico/001.pdf>, page 115, (Accessed 17 July, 2017).
107. Nuevodia Nogales, Conmemoran a Niños Héroes, <http://www.nuevodia.com.mx/Nota.aspx?p=18195>, 14 Septiembre, 2016, (Accessed 17 July 2017).
108. Pedro Santoni, *Mexicans at Arms: Puro Federalists and the Politics of War, 1845-1848* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1996), 10.
109. Ibid, 3.
110. Ibid, 11.
111. Pedro Santoni, *Mexicans at Arms: Puro Federalists and the Politics of War, 1845-1848* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1996), 232.
112. Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War*, The Lamar Series in Western History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 24.
113. Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War*, The Lamar Series in Western History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 23.
114. Ernesto Chávez, Plan de Iguala, by Augustin de Iturbide, 24 February, 1821 *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 38.
115. Ibid, 42.
116. Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War*, The Lamar Series in Western History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 24.
117. Ibid, 214.
118. Karl Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 59.
119. Ibid, 63.
120. Ibid, 67.
121. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 84.
122. Ibid, 92.
123. Leon P. Baradat, *Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impact*. 11th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2012), 63.
124. Margaret MacMillan, *Dangerous Games: The Uses and Abuses of History*, U.S. ed., Modern Library Chronicles Book (New York: Modern Library, 2009), 58.
125. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 86.

126. Gobierno de Mexico, Museo Nacional de Historia, http://www.mnh.inah.gob.mx/historia/hist_historicos.html, (Accessed 15 July 2017).
127. The author personally visited the Chapultepec Castle and Mexico City in 2013 and saw much of what is described here first hand. The realization of the vastly differing perspectives of Mexicans and Americans on the war, prompted his research into this essay.
128. *The Oldest and Most Trusted Online Guide to Mexico, Los Ninos Heroes – The Mexican American War of 1847*, MexOnline.com, <http://www.mexonline.com/history-ninosheroes.htm> (Accessed 15 July 2017).
129. Aurelio Nuno Mayer, Secretario de Educacion Publica, *Historia, Quito Grado* (Impreso en Mexcio, 2017-2017), 30.
130. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 45.
131. Gene M. Brack, *Mexico Views Manifest Destiny, 1821-1846: An Essay On the Origins of the Mexican War* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), 171.
132. Ibid, 172.
133. Ibid.
134. Pedro Santoni, *Mexicans at Arms: Puro Federalists and the Politics of War, 1845-1848* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1996), 41.
135. Ernesto Chávez, *The U.S. War with Mexico: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 145.
136. Ibid.
137. Christopher B. Conway, ed., *The U.S.-Mexican War: A Binational Reader* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2010), 93.
138. Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 59.
139. Ibid, 177.
140. Cecil Robinson, ed., *The View from Chapultepec: Mexican Writers On the Mexican-American War* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 152.
141. United States National Archives. "The Treaty of Guadalupe." <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/guadalupe-hidalgo/> (Accessed 15 July 2017).
142. Christopher B. Conway, ed., *The U.S.-Mexican War: A Binational Reader* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2010), 127.
143. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 59.
144. Ibid, 110.
145. The World Bank, Migration and Development Brief, Migration and Remittances Unit, 19 April, 2013. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1288990760745/MigrationDevelopmentBrief20.pdf> (Accessed 15 July 2017).
146. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 236.
147. Joseph Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*. (New York City, New York. Avalon Publishing Group, 2007), 371.

148. Michael Van Wagenen, *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S. Mexican War*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 239.
149. Ibid, 234.
150. Ibid, 236.
151. Ibid, 244.
152. Ibid.
153. Masiosare, Quien invento Juan Escutia?, domingo 13 de septiembre de 1998, Blog, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1998/09/13/mas-cuauhtemoc42.html>, (Accessed 15 July 2017); Jim Tuck, *Mexico's Niños Heroes ("heroic children"): reality or myth...* Mexconnect, 09 October, 2008, <http://www.mexconnect.com/articles/313-mexico-s-ni%C3%B1os-heroes-heroic-children-reality-or-myth>, (Accessed 15 July 2017).
154. Margaret MacMillan, *Dangerous Games: The Uses and Abuses of History*, U.S. ed., Modern Library Chronicles Book (New York: Modern Library, 2009, 2008), 45.
155. Rachel St John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border*, America in the World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 202-205.
156. Ibid, 61.
157. Ibid.
158. Ibid, 46.