WHAT COMIC BOOKS AND POLITICAL CARTOONS REVEAL ABOUT MEXICAN HISTORY

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History and popular culture have played off one another for centuries. While comic books might certainly seem to be a low-class form of entertainment, lacking the authority of a history textbook, they nonetheless allow the readers to engage in history as they have otherwise never experienced it. Rather than reading descriptions of what happened when the Spanish landed in Mexico, one may read *The Cartoon History of the Modern World* or *Exploring the Americas* to see clothing of the time-period as well as how some of the historical characters may have felt. By using comic books and political cartoons, one can study historical views alongside societal ones. Since comic books and political cartoons generally reflect the time period in which they were written, these sources may serve as benchmarks to gauge societal opinions and views of history.

Although many people do not consider comic books as a viable, historical resource, they nonetheless present information relevant to the topic. Unlike textbooks, comic books are “accessible to even the poorest sectors of society” because comic books use a “combination of images and words, their colloquial language, and their simple language.”1 By using common language and imagery that intertwines with the text, comic books present their own interpretation of history. The word for comic books in Mexico is *historietas* and, to non-Spanish speakers, looks similar to the word history.2 However, the true meaning is found by looking closer at the context of comic books, a quick glance reveals stories of love, adventure, violence and power. When examining the images and dialogue, a deeper understanding of historical events and, more specifically, public opinion, unfolds.

Perhaps due to the flashy façade of comic books, little attention has been directed to the actual context of these sources. The lack of analysis of the images used in media and entertainment formats is based on the fact that “the United States’ image [in Mexico] is largely a United States product.”3 Since the United States is the creator of its own image in other countries, there would be little self-critical analysis. John H. Coatsworth noticed that what is seriously lacking, “of course, are studies of the impressions and opinions created among Mexicans by these United States’ sources.”4 By turning a critical eye to printed material of comic books and political cartoons that were created by United States’ companies and cartoonists, but involve Mexico, this research could help fill a void in this field of knowledge.

While comic books may not constitute a viable substitute for history textbooks, comic books do provide a way to supplement the information in the texts and present it in a fashion that may be engaging to readers. There are several com-
ic books that may be used with varying degrees of helpfulness to history students. Some, like *The Cartoon History of the Modern World* and *Exploring the Americas*, are relatively accurate in their historical content and would be best used to introduce younger readers to the sensitive information given about Mexican history. The truth about the numerous deaths of indigenous peoples is discussed in a relatively serious manner and is not sugar-coated. Others, like *Days Missing* and *X-Men Forever: The Secret History of the Sentinels*, utilize familiar historical images and stories, merely rebranding them to create the comic books.

When it comes to engaging young readers about history, *The Cartoon History of the Modern World* fits the bill. This book is a world history textbook, but instead of pages and pages of text, it is arranged in comic book form. In the book’s first 48 pages, it examines the history of the indigenous people of Central America and the emergence of the Spanish in the western hemisphere. Some aspects of the book are quite accurate, as it describes how certain groups offered blood sacrifices to their god; others are off the mark, such as the passage in the book that describes the Spanish as reincarnations of gods. Taking into account the juvenile-inspired depiction of the historical events, it becomes relatively clear that the author is striving toward a more well-rounded portrayal of history than what some readers may have otherwise received.

Towards the end of the Mexican history section of this book, *The Cartoon History of the Modern World* debates some theoretical explanations given by past historians. One panel shows Jared Diamond, a historian/biologist, sharing a bed with a sneezing pig to visualize how his theory of Spanish “conquest” succeeded in the New World. Another panel shows three scholars talking about how they liked the idea that disease was the main cause of the demise of the indigenous people and “our ancestors hardly shot or stabbed or starved more than a few million.” While *The Cartoon History of the Modern World* may not always portray either the indigenous people or the Spanish in a positive light, these panels show how historians tend to sugar-coat the past so that ancestors’ dignities are preserved along with the conquerors’ right to the land. By having the historians speak to each other about the actual events in the past, *The Cartoon History of the Modern World* shows readers to look at all the facts and develop an honest opinion about the events that transpired.

Although it does not relate back to any one historical event, the section dealing with the Spanish conquistadors in the New World and the indigenous people who lived there ends with a question for readers: “Can History Judge?” The author writes that history is “supposed to report stories, to seek causes and effects, to assess, weigh, analyze” the events that transpired. However, the author acknowledges that there are several compelling questions to ask oneself when reading history. For example, the idea that “we [contemporary readers] can judge their [the past’s societies] time too…and try to make our own time more reasonable and humane, and less bigoted by comparison.” *The Cartoon History of the Modern World* is just one side to the story of Mexican history. But, by reading several other sources, be it other textbooks, primary documents, films or novels, perhaps exposure to various opinions on these events will help others understand Mexican history.

*Exploring the Americas* is an amusing take on history as the author seems to imply a foolish Christopher Columbus and sympathize with the indigenous
perspective. At one point, Christopher Columbus says, “My name is Columbus. Do you know the way to Ohio? Never mind. How about gold? Silk? Spices? Chopsticks?”11 These sentences conveys the sentiment that Columbus did not know how to travel to China by traveling west from Spain and is focused on the material goods that he would find at those ports. The idea that Columbus is naïve to believe that he found China is expressed when he greets the “Indians” by saying, “Indians! These are the Indies off the coast of CHINA, right??”12 Readers are shown how ludicrous Columbus’ statements are by stressing the word “China” to show how far off course Columbus was from his desired destination. Of course, this comic book is written with younger children in mind. Since some students might be taught the myth that Columbus was a brilliant man who recognized that the Earth was round before the rest of the world did, the exaggerated dialogue stresses the foolishness of Columbus to correct viewer’s erroneous perceptions of Columbus in a humorous way.

One of the best images and dialogue found in Exploring the Americas comes from a chained Indian who tells an enraged conquistador, “Huh! Spanish guys have killed 100,000 of us ‘Indians’ in three years.”13 This statement was both shocking and hopeful in this comic book. Unlike the other comics used for this project, this one was designed specifically for a younger audience, most likely elementary aged children. As such, this statement that “100,000 Indians [have been killed] in three years” is surprising because most students are taught only the sugar-coated version of the ‘conquest’ of Mexico. Therefore, this blunt statement would provoke the students to have a discussion on what is the ‘correct’ version of history.

While Exploring the Americas has a sympathetic tone towards the indigenous people, Days Missing does the reverse, and focuses on the power of the Spanish. Days Missing tells the story of a time-traveler who wants to save the indigenous people of Mexico from devastation from the Spanish conquistadors. The time-traveling protagonist sabotages the Spanish ships in his quest to save the indigenous people and ends up talking to Hernando Cortez. Despite the time-traveler’s attempts to save the indigenous people, the events in the comic book end up occurring just like they do in history textbooks.

The imagery in Days Missing is striking when compared to The Cartoon History of the Modern World. Released three years after The Cartoon History of the Modern World, Days Missing rejects showing the indigenous population in the humanized way of its predecessors. Instead, Days Missing seems to draw inspiration from 2012, released around the same time as the comic book, or Apocalypto, released in 2006. Both of these films and the comic book portray the indigenous peoples as savage, barbarians who were inherently inferior to the Spanish. In Days Missing, the Aztecs are shown prowling in the jungle, covered in tattoos, wearing only loincloths and appearing to be complete savages.14 This portrayal of the Aztecs is not accurate because Aztec warriors would have dressed according to their military unit and prowess; such as representing an eagle or jaguar.

Along with negative images towards the Aztec society, Days Missing also perpetuates the myth that the Aztecs believed that Hernando Cortez was a reincarnation of Quetzalcoatl, one of the Aztec’s numerous gods. Towards the end of the comic book, the Aztec ruler, presumably Montezuma, asks a messenger, “Are they the creature the Gods have announced? Do they have hair on their faces, do they shine in the sun, and do they ride tall, ugly monsters?”15 The messenger replies
with, “They do, Your Highness. They are the prophecy.” The ruler responds with, “Then the end of our world is near.” Although the proposition that the Aztecs believed the Spanish were divine beings has since been proved to be a Spanish theme developed to support their conquering of the indigenous people as what the Aztecs called the Spanish “teules” does translate to “gods” but is “more ambiguous than that.” Days Missing seems to ignore this and eschews historical evidence to fit into the context of the comic book. By doing so, the Aztecs are shown to be superstitious, never sending spies to keep an eye on Cortez so that Montezuma would be aware of the Spanish’s actions.

While Days Missing contains historical information, it represents an attractive façade to the ugly truth. The Spanish were not perceived as divine messengers, nor were the Aztecs as barbaric as they were made out to be. Due to the darkness of this piece, this source would serve as a way for older students to examine how comic books, as well as conventional literature, affect public opinion on various topics. Since the Aztecs are portrayed as superstitious barbarians, the Spanish are therefore elevated and the Spanish quest for domination in Latin America is validated.

Out of all the comic books used to examine their historical relevance, X-Men Forever: The Secret History of the Sentinels, is the one that uses historical images in the loosest sense possible. While this comic book does not directly discuss the armor-clad conquistadors, it does show the Sentinels—a group of mutant exterminating robots—laying waste to an indigenous-looking village in an undisclosed South American area. Even though Sentinels are fictionalized, they bear a strong resemblance to the Spanish conquistadors and the “conquest” of Mexico. In one panel, the Sentinels are shown surrounding a native village in the middle of a South American jungle, and the Sentinels literally tower over the village and general area. In another, the Sentinels are shown incinerating South Americans. The Spanish conquistadors never shot energy bolts from their eyes or hands, but the damage done by the Sentinels and conquistadors is comparable. The Sentinels mercilessly eliminate all who are identified as mutants, just like the Spanish destroyed the majority of the indigenous population through disease and violence.

All of the comic books thus far lend their stories to understanding history better. The Cartoon History of the Modern World and Exploring the Americas show a more well-rounded view of history for younger students that can stimulate their minds to engage in conversation about how what they knew and what they just learned interact. Days Missing and X-Men Forever: The Secret History of the Sentinels take images of conquest and recreate them so that their readers will be exposed to familiar ideas and make connections of how these stories tie into the historic past. While all of these sources can help readers get an overall feel for past events in Mexican history, they work best when examined with other sources, such as textbooks.

Aside from retelling Mexican historical events to supplement textbooks, comic books can also take elements from cultural stories to educate a new generation. Marvel Comics, the publisher of Thor, and DC Comics, the publisher of Aztek and Wonder Woman, each published multiple issues that contained elements of the Aztec religion within them. DC Comic’s Superman Annual #12 and Marvel Comic’s Last Defenders also looked at the battle between good and evil as seen through the
Aztec religion. Thor, Aztek and Wonder Woman contain rather accurate depictions of the Aztec gods Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca, respectively. Superman Annual #12 and Last Defenders take great creative liberty as they recreate Quetzalcoatl for their story. While these comic books are not as historically accurate as the comic books already discussed, they still present information that can be used to examine history and the contemporary viewpoint presented in them.

Quetzalcoatl was an important god for the Aztecs. He was one of the creator gods and, by European mythology standards, a combination of Apollo, the Greek God of light, music and medicine, and Prometheus, one of the Titans who stole fire from the Greek gods to give to mankind. But even this description is lacking and only relates Quetzalcoatl back to a conqueror’s viewpoint. Quetzalcoatl was also “Lord of the Morning Star;” one of his symbols was the planet Venus and he “represented healing, magical herbs, beauty and poetry.” He was also “Lord of the Winds” and “Lord of Life.”

Along with these, Quetzalcoatl’s name is a combination from the Nahua word quetzalli (precious green feather) and coatl (serpent).

This is why Quetzalcoatl is also known as the Feathered Serpent god and is represented with green, yellow, white and red colors. The quetzal bird, which refers back to quetzalli, has green, yellow and red feathers and the white is representative of “the quadripartite Tezcatlipoca” and is merely a part of a larger concept of god.

The complexity of the Aztec gods stemmed from the multifaceted view the Aztecs held in regards to the nature of life. This combination of opposing imagery formed from the quetzalli and coatl also represents Quetzalcoatl’s duality. The bird symbolizes heaven at the same time the serpent represents earth. This collaboration was intentional, showing how Quetzalcoatl can be destructive, like the serpent, as well as fertile and orderly as the heavens, or the bird.

Therefore, Quetzalcoatl’s portrayal of the Feathered Serpent god represents the chaotic but orderly way of the universe, while also showing the inherent good and evil between himself and Tezcatlipoca. Nonetheless, along with the duality that describes Quetzalcoatl comes the belief that Quetzalcoatl was “to be reborn during each period of history, but with a different face.”

This dualistic quality is key to this research: every time Quetzalcoatl is referenced in a comic book, he never looks the same as he did previously, while his appearances in comic books show how he is reborn into the population’s mindset with each creation.

The October 1982 issue of Marvel Comic’s Thor arguably contains one the earliest American comic book representation of Quetzalcoatl. In this issue, Thor, the Norse god of lightening, calls upon other gods of sun, lightening and thunder, who serve as protectors of mankind, to help him stop a god-eating monster that the underworld gods have unwittingly released. Along with the more well-known Greek Apollo and Egyptian Horus, Thor also calls upon lesser known gods such as the Pueblo Indians’ Tawa, Africa’s Shango, Hindus’ Indra and the Aztec’s Quetzalcoatl. Each of the defending gods are introduced and Quetzalcoatl has a caption box that reads “Quetzalcoatl. ‘Feathered Serpent’ of the Aztecs, his solar disk thrust forth defiantly.”

The creators of this comic book incorporated arrows to look like sunbeams stemming forth from Quetzalcoatl’s headdress and his costume is made up entirely of yellow and green—two colors that were definitive of Quetzalcoatl.

Quetzalcoatl is shown to be a defender as he saves Tawa from the god-eater’s grasp. However, it is ultimately Thor who saves the day and rescues
all of his fallen hero gods, including Quetzalcoatl. Even though Quetzalcoatl does not save the day by himself, this is mostly due to the fact that this is Thor’s comic book series, making Thor the one who is destined to be the savior.

DC Comic’s _Aztek_ is one of the most engaging pieces that works with the imagery and theological tradition of Quetzalcoatl. The cover for the first issue, released in August 1996, ran with the tagline “A Hero for the New Millennium… if he lives that long!” The story follows the adventures of a member of Q Foundation, a group who works to prevent the second-coming of Tezcatlipoca, the sworn enemy of Quetzalcoatl, as he tries to find his place in Vanity, a fictional city located somewhere in the United States. This new Quetzalcoatl wears a suit that allows its wearer to “fly,” “have super-strength,” and access four-dimensional energy. This suit has white body armor, green gloves and outer-underpants, and yellow-gold accessories—including a five-star pointed helmet. Much like the Aztec interpretation of Quetzalcoatl, the _Aztek_ interpretation utilizes three of the four important colors as well as including a helmet that represents a rising star.

While Marvel Comics heavily draws its influence of Aztek from Aztec mythology, Marvel Comics makes the hero a blonde, chiseled white male. By having a white male hero, instead of one of indigenous descent, Marvel Comics lost the opportunity to recreate Aztec history, instead choosing to rewrite history and make it their own. Perhaps one of the best examples of how the population misunderstands Mesoamerican history takes place between three journalists who are trying to determine a codename for Vanity’s newest superhero. One of the journalists says “He looks like an Inca, not an Aztec. How many times do I have to repeat myself here?” However, this journalist is overruled by his colleague who, based on the technology used in his suit, thinks that “Aztec” with a “k” would be the best codename for the new superhero. Thus, Aztek was born. The dialogue in this scene seems to imply that the general population has no idea how to differentiate between the ancient civilizations that existed in Central to South America.

Looking at Aztek’s personality found in the _Aztek_ comic books, the creators shied away from Quetzalcoatl’s creator side and instead focused on him as a cultural hero. Following the continued belief in Quetzalcoatl’s divided nature, his personality is split depending on the literary traditions. Typically, Quetzalcoatl’s creator side, the one “in which he participated in the creation and destruction of the cosmos and moved the wind,” is usually referenced in “ancient oral traditions.” In this case, Marvel Comics utilized Quetzalcoatl’s “culture hero side,” which is associated with Quetzalcoatl’s legitimizing “emerging states and provided a morally upright governance model” and first appeared in “oral tradition,” but has quickly been adopted by literary models that picks up and expands on the themes found in the oral tradition. Therefore, most of the comic books examined that deal with Quetzalcoatl usually use the culture hero aspect of the god.

While _Aztek_ shows the cultural hero side of Quetzalcoatl, Marvel Comic’s _Last Defenders_ issues one and two examines the Feathered Serpent aspect of Quetzalcoatl. The first issue begins with a rag-tag group of superheroes called the Defenders, who need to stop “The Sons of the Serpent,” an “extremely xenophobic hate group” that is “basically the Klan in snake outfits.” While the Sons of Serpent’s goal is not clear, some of the members talk about how they are willing to take their new “organic weaponry” to Mexico, allowing it to be “the first step in fixing the immigration nightmare.” Unfortunately for both the Defenders
and the Sons of the Serpent, the Sons of Serpent’s ritual to bring about their new organic weapon misfires and Quetzalcoatl is unleashed to destroy New Jersey. Unlike the Aztec’s Feathered Serpent Quetzalcoatl, who was a defender for the Aztec people, the Last Defenders’ interpretation of the Feathered Serpent god is more akin to a winged Godzilla monster. While this imagery seems extremely ill-informed, it is not the first time this image of Quetzalcoatl as a monster has been displayed. In 1982, a film called Q was created where “ersatz Aztec religions and rituals become fused with science fiction” to show Quetzalcoatl, in his Feathered Serpent form, attacking New York City from the Chrysler Building. Both Q and the Last Defenders are vehicles to distract viewers from reality, but these forms of entertainment seem to have a deeper meaning: those of Hispanic descent are seen as a threat. In Q, Quetzalcoatl—a symbol to the Aztec, and by association, the Mexican people—is shown destroying one of the United State’s most populated cities. In Last Defenders, Quetzalcoatl rampages about New Jersey despite his original design to destroy the culture it originally came from.

Much like the journalists in Aztek, characters in Last Defenders struggle with how to identify Quetzalcoatl. One of the heroes, Blazing Skull, represents the majority of the population as he struggles with saying the name “Quetzalcoatl.” As the team recounts how they failed to stop the rising of Quetzalcoatl, the Blazing Skull calls the creature “Ol’ Quackenbush.” The ignorant Blazing Skull counterpart is the intelligent She-Hulk. She-Hulk is the one who first identifies Quetzalcoatl after it was raised by the Sons of the Serpent, explaining to her teammates that Quetzalcoatl is a “mythical Aztec snake creature” and corrects Blazing Skull’s mispronunciation. By having both the Blazing Skull and the She-Hulk in this issue, Marvel Comics allows readers, who may be ignorant like the Blazing Skull, to understand what the team is fighting when She-Hulk correct her teammate’s mistakes.

The Feathered Serpent in Last Defenders is colored similarly to an Aztec version found in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis. Both forms of this Feathered Serpent contain red, yellow and green plumage. However, the Aztec’s version is more snake-like in appearance while the Last Defenders’ looks like a winged Tyrannosaurus Rex. The Aztec’s Quetzalcoatl is shown swallowing a victim while Marvel Comic’s design merely destroys buildings. Essentially, the Aztec’s Feathered Serpent is always a god; some divine protector who defends the just and destroys the guilty. The Last Defenders’ Feathered Serpent is a mindless weapon; something that exists only to destroy everything in its path. This complete change in ideological meaning demonstrates that even through the recreated image is similar to the original, current mindset can influence the meaning to mean something completely different than the original.

As briefly mentioned earlier, Tezcatlipoca is the Aztec god of darkness, an evil god. However, there is more to Tezcatlipoca than just that simplification. Tezcatlipoca is known as the lord of the smoking mirror, death, war, trickery and was represented as a jaguar. Out of all of Tezcatlipoca’s elements, it was the mirror that “was the most significant determinant element” and was placed somewhere on his person. This smoking mirror, sometimes also known as an obsidian mirror, relates back to the Aztec belief that everyone walked on the edge of an obsidian blade and even obsidian mirrors are placed on the chests of gods so that the people praying would be praying not only to the god, but also to themselves. Unlike
Quetzalcoatl’s bright colored animal counterpart, Tezcatlipoca could turn himself into a jaguar due to his “close relationship with those felines of the night.” Essentially, everything that is used to describe Quetzalcoatl could, in theory, be used to describe Tezcatlipoca; they are the flip side of the same coin.

Much like Quetzalcoatl, Tezcatlipoca can be identified in artwork due to some key characteristics. Tezcatlipoca has four colors that are representative of him; blue, yellow, red and black. It should be noted that Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca share yellow and red in their color schemes, which could be attributed to their dual nature. Between the remaining two colors, blue and black, black is “undeniably the main characteristic in all descriptions” of Tezcatlipoca. Further, Tezcatlipoca usually has “stripes [that] are painted across his face.” Another bodily detail that relates back to Tezcatlipoca is that he is sometimes shown with a leg made of obsidian, which represents the walking on an obsidian blade and also a sacrifice that Tezcatlipoca gave in creating the world.

Although Tezcatlipoca is a key part of the Aztek comics, he is only seen once in the first ten comics. Tezcatlipoca is shown as a were-jaguar lying on the ground with blood covering the area around him as Quetzalcoatl (or at least a member of the Q Foundation using the Quetzalcoatl suit) had bloody hands. Along with this image of good triumphing over evil, the caption box on that page states “their [Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca’s] next meeting will be called the apocalypse.” Even though Tezcatlipoca is shown in his animal representation, Quetzalcoatl is clearly in the shape of a man wearing a helmet, breastplate, and pants. This imagery seems to show that Quetzalcoatl is the more human, civilized, and righteous god, while Tezcatlipoca is a violent, animalistic creature who deserves to die.

While the imagery presented in Aztek is acceptable as a basic explanation, illustrating the Aztec gods’ battle, it does not take into account the complexity of the gods. Despite his goodness, Quetzalcoatl was also a slave to human desire. At a feast for the gods, Quetzalcoatl drank too much and had sexual relations with one of the goddesses—which in some cases is said to be a female relative and in other a demonic goddess. Filled with shame, Quetzalcoatl banishes himself as a form of penance. Granted, Tezcatlipoca is said to have laced Quetzalcoatl’s drink, but Quetzalcoatl was the one who drank it, or too much of it. Some may accuse Tezcatlipoca of being a cruel trickster, but sometimes his tricks are used to teach a person a lesson. In this case, Tezcatlipoca might have been trying to teach Quetzalcoatl not to drink too much. Even though the gods are assigned opposing descriptions for worship—light or darkness—these gods are not complete opposites. These gods did work together to create the universe and they contain elements of duality within themselves. An otherwise benevolent god like Quetzalcoatl can make unwise choices after consuming too much alcohol and why an otherwise evil god like Tezcatlipoca can create the universe; there are elements of good and evil in both gods, but usually one side dominates the other.

In DC Comic’s Wonder Woman issues 313 to 316, there is no doubt that Tezcatlipoca is evil. Initially traveling to save a fallen comrade, Wonder Woman discovers that Circe—a Greek sorceress who turns men into her animal slaves—is the one responsible. Circe tries to best Wonder Woman, but she is overwhelmed and invokes her lover and the true mastermind: Tezcatlipoca. Though, Tezcatlipoca is shown numerous times in issues 313 and 314 as an obsidian mirror-wearing jag-
uar, it is not until the end of issue 314 that Tezcatlipoca shows himself in his god form. While he lacked an obsidian leg, this version of Tezcatlipoca is shown with the traditional painted stripes on his face and is clothed in red, yellow and blue. The only thing lacking in this depiction is that the only black element found on Tezcatlipoca’s is the obsidian mirror hanging on his chest. For a god who is known by the color black, this omission is an oversight by the comic’s creators.

Along with the jaguar, obsidian mirrors are indispensable to Tezcatlipoca. Besides the obsidian mirror chest plate, obsidian mirrors are seen throughout Tezcatlipoca’s Aztec village. Upon her arrival to Tezcatlipoca’s domain, Wonder Woman finds a “building [that] looks like a temple—adorned with mirrors that tilt towards the sun.” Remembering that “the sun was of central importance to the Aztecs…and the dark mirror seems to be Tezcatlipoca’s trademark,” Wonder Woman deduces that this is where she would find him. Upon entering the temple, Wonder Woman comments that since there are several mirrors that are on the walls and ceilings, she’ll be extremely “lucky to stay in a straight line.” The Aztecs understood Wonder Woman’s sentiments as they thought of it hundreds of years before her; life demanded that everyone walk on the thin edge of an obsidian blade, one slip and the entire balance would be thrown off.

The cover for Wonder Woman issue 315 shows Wonder Woman staring at several distorted versions of herself as they appear in the obsidian mirror. Later, in the same issue, Wonder Woman is shown her deepest desires and fears from an obsidian mirror covered audience chamber. Wonder Woman sees her reflection in a power-hungry version, as a man and even as a scared little girl. Even though Wonder Woman has “locked those thoughts away—so I can never harm those whom I must protect,” the obsidian mirror reveals those repressed aspects that make Wonder Woman the heroine she is. This idea that the obsidian mirror reveals all comes from the pre-Hispanic tradition that the obsidian mirror shows not only the viewer’s reflection, but also whatever is behind the mirror. In this fashion, Wonder Woman sees not only her outward appearance in the mirror but also her numerous internal aspects.

Unlike other interpretations of Tezcatlipoca, such as in the Aztek comics, the Wonder Woman’s portrayal of Tezcatlipoca was more as a conveying trickster instead of a soulless killer. Once Tezcatlipoca revealed his true form to Wonder Woman, he says that his “Aztec worshipers called” him “the Mad God, the Mocker, the Jaguar Lord, the Master of the Smoky Mirror!” The ultimate goal for Tezcatlipoca was not to dominate the world, but to be separated from his mortal host. By destroying Tezcatlipoca’s human host, Wonder Woman unwittingly allowed Tezcatlipoca to return to his god-like form and thus gave him the ability to control the minds of humanity.

All in all, Wonder Woman’s interpretation of Tezcatlipoca is in line with Aztec mythology. However, as he was missing his obsidian leg, lacked the color black and seemed to be more into trickery than evil deeds, Tezcatlipoca was very similar to Marvel Comic’s Loki, the Norse god of trickery that makes frequent appearances in the Thor comic books. In the case of this comic book, DC Comics seems to have been using the same idea of a trickster villain god who creates more confusion than malice instead of creating something totally unique. However, there is no denying that DC Comic’s portrayal found in Wonder Woman 313 to 316 presents a decent representation of this Aztec god.

DC Comic’s Superman Annual #12 represents the continued battle of good
and evil between Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca. Very similar to the plot for the *Last Defenders, Superman Annual #12* revolves around the idea that a group of terrorists want to use pre-Hispanic ideas and beliefs to wreak havoc on their city of choice. The unnamed eco-terrorist group in *Superman Annual #12* is led by a man called Duran who uses an amulet with the symbol for “Ometeotl…God of the Near and Close” to channel the earth’s power through an innocent little girl. The climax of the story comes when Acrata, the Mexican super heroine, translates the amulet to discover how Ometeotl prophesized that a girl would “harness the negative power of the Earth” and that only a “visitor from the stars” would be able to harness the positive energy. Despite the fact that the Mexican superheroes are battling a group in Mexico City and that the eco-terrorists are using Aztec prophecies and artifacts for their deeds, it is the American Superman who saves the day.

The whole concept of harnessing power for either good or evil purposes continues the concept of duality which the Aztecs embraced. However, unlike the usual Tezcatlipoca or Quetzalcoatl to represent the different stances of opposing sides, the writers chose to use Ometeotl—the combination of both Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl—to represent the duality. By using Ometeotl, the writers for this comic book chose to provide readers a new aspect of the Aztec pantheon. However, given how Ometeotl represents the maximum duality of the Aztec gods and is thought to be the Father of the Gods, it would seem to imply that Superman has more power than the rest of the superheroes. Thus, according to the plot of this comic book, Superman has taken a leading role in the power structure of the superhero world, while also assuming the cosmological power of Ometeotl.

Perhaps one of the most ironic items in this comic book was the reference to the Mexican World Trade Center. The comic book, released in 2000, states that “Unlike the United States’ World Trade Center, Mexico’s W.T.C. has never suffered a devastating terrorist assault…until now.” Reading this comic book almost ten years after September 11, 2001, this statement seems to foreshadow just how vulnerable the United State’s World Trade Center was in comparison to Mexico’s. This statement also serves as a reference point as the United States’ World Trade Center building had suffered bombings and other attacks that its Mexican counterpart can only suffer in comic book format. This description also shows how egotistical the American writers were to reference their own World Trade Center building, or that they perhaps thought about providing the American audience with a reference point to situate themselves in Mexico City.

Along with comic books, Mexican history can be traced through political cartoons. While political cartoons are several panels shorter than comic books, political cartoons can still convey powerful imagery about historical events at a given point in time. By examining political cartoons on a certain topic—illegal immigration and drug trafficking, for example—one can understand how public opinions in the United States have shifted, or remained static, over a course of a time. Unlike comic books, political cartoons are created for a more mature demographic as they can be found in several newspapers worldwide.

An extremely polarizing topic in the United States government is the illegal immigration of Mexican citizens to the United States. This topic not only refers to the actual event of immigration from one country to the other, but is also an umbrella term to refer to all of the underlying results which flow from this one event. There are opposing claims concerning how illegal immigrants affect
jobs, government policies and citizenship in the United States, and these conflicts have led to discussion on how to best go about modifying process. Some proposed responses to the illegal immigration issue between the United States and Mexico have ranged dramatically from creating a wall along the United States-Mexican border to the Dream Act. As of this writing, there seems to be no clear direction on how to reconcile this hot-topic issue in the United States. Nonetheless, by following news articles and political cartoons, one can see how public opinion has shifted.

Perhaps one of the largest issues with illegal immigration is how undocumented Mexican immigrants affect the United States’ job market. Some of the political cartoons that were used for this research showed a sympathetic view to the Mexican immigrants’ plight while others accusingly portrayed these same workers as selfish, lazy and irrational beings. This negative feeling towards Mexican immigrants is especially prevalent in border states where the general perception is the immigrants “steal jobs from U.S. citizens of long standing and who overburden the welfare and education systems.” Along with this, there are also many stereotyped images of Mexican Americans including the “disadvantaged immigrants, advantaged immigrants, binational consumers, commuters who cross the border on a regular basis to work, biculturalists, binationalists, and U.S.-born Mexican Americans who live and work on the Mexican side of the border.” Clearly, this wide array of feelings and thoughts concerning illegal immigrant workers in the United States shows that there must be a variety of political cartoons that deal with these ideas. However, it was surprising that one political cartoon presented both sides of these opposing views so as to offer a moderate, uniform presentation of the topic.

There were three political cartoons used in this research to show a sympathetic view to the illegal immigrant workers in the United States. One of the political cartoons shows an illegal immigrant working at a “Taco Bull” cashiers window telling a customer “We illegals only take the jobs American won’t do.” This political cartoon reflects the position that working at a fast food restaurant—like this fictional “Taco Bull”—is beneath the American public, and thus an acceptable form of employment for illegal immigrants. Along with disparaging the American public’s elitist attitude toward certain forms of employment, it denigrates the illegal immigrants willing to take these so-called “undesirable” jobs.

A more recent political cartoon tells the story of an illegal immigrant who was “born in Mexico” and “crossed the border into the United States” where he “took the menial jobs that no one wanted.” This political cartoon depicts how the speaker in the political cartoon came into the United States illegally, worked hard to learn English, provide for his family and become an American citizen. Despite this character’s accomplishments, it ends on the bitter-sweet note that he lost his job after his employer moved to Mexico. This political cartoon demonstrates that even though illegal immigrants work to become citizens of the United States, the same drive for cheap manufactured goods which first drove illegal immigrants to come to the United States to provide cheap labor has now been undermined by American companies working towards the bottom line by moving to Mexico. By creating this political cartoon, the cartoonist was depicting how American consumerism not only affects illegal immigrants’ lives, but the overall condition of American society.

The final political cartoon that shows a sympathetic view on illegal im-
migrant workers is one that was created after Arizona’s state government decided to implement a new policy of asking anyone of Hispanic descent to present proper government paperwork to prove their citizenship. The cartoon shows a Hispanic worker being asked by an Arizona police officer to present the Hispanic worker’s “immigration papers” due to suspicious activities. While this political cartoon does not necessarily say that this Hispanic worker is an illegal immigrant, it suggests that he might be because he asks the police officer if the officer would like to see immigration papers “before or after I finish your lawn.” In this fashion, the political cartoonist is showing how American society holds a double standard as a whole; the society wants cheap labor but despises illegal immigrants. In this way, the cartoon reveals American society to be a greedy nation and illegal immigrants as being exploited.

Along with these political cartoons showing sympathetic views toward the plight of illegal immigrant workers in a greedy, American society, these political cartoons were released from 2009 onward. While the timeframe for these political cartoons are not solely responsible for their message, they can demonstrate that American society is learning that the United States is not a perfect society. These political cartoons correspond best with the X-Men Forever comic book. Together these sources portray an overall image where the “conquering” population—in X-Men Forever the Sentinel robots, and in the political cartoons the American population—is not as benevolent as the general population would be led to believe. These sources allow the readers to see that sometimes the thing that is perceived as good—eliminating the mutant population as the Sentinels were programmed to do, or shunning illegal immigrant workers in the United States—is the exact opposite.

The five political cartoons reviewed here cast an unfavorable light on the illegal immigrant workers in the United States. Most show the illegal immigrant workers to be greedy job-snatchers and some even play on the stereotype that these people cannot speak English. One of the most backhanded political cartoons from this group was one that showed Uncle Sam and Lady Liberty in a restaurant, with Uncle Sam complaining, “Don’t you hate it when the help speaks a foreign language?!” The help in question, a waitress carrying dishes and a waiter, were not speaking broken English but holding a sign “Will we ever get sensible, bipartisan immigration reform?” While Uncle Sam’s response may seem reasonable compared to the help’s unreasonable call for reform, the exact opposite can also be seen. There is no easy way to decide who is right or wrong in this situation as two different readers could see the different views, this political cartoon still shows that there is an unclear policy issue in the United States concerning illegal immigrant workers.

One of the most shocking political cartoons to show anti-illegal immigrant worker feelings in the United States was one that was published in September 2010. In this example, two United States border patrol officers are sitting under a sign that reads “No Jobs” and saying that even though they had previously tried everything (“dogs, helicopters, night vision, towering border fences”), it was this easy sign that did the trick. This simplistic approach to illegal immigrants from Mexico seems to imply that those who come to the United States are only interested in stealing jobs from Americans. However, there is more to this situation than just jobs. Most of the illegal immigrants want to come to the United States to achieve a higher quality of living for themselves and their family. Granted, this is
usually accomplished by first having a job, but jobs are not the sole driving force behind illegal immigrants coming to the United States.

A 2007 political cartoon by Terry C. Wise shows a scheming illegal immigrant worker in the United States. Two Caucasian supervisors are watching some workers and one of the supervisors says, “Sure he’s an illegal…but he’s doing work nobody else wants for the pay. It’s not like he’s after OUR jobs!” The illegal worker in question, overhearing his supervisors, thinks “Not today, gringo…not today.”

Examining only the dialogue in this political cartoon, it shows that while the illegal immigrants are currently only working the most undesirable jobs in the United States; it is only a matter of time before they work on taking over the entire work system and threaten the middle and upper classes. One important element in this political cartoon is the word “gringo.” “Gringo” is a Latin American slang term to refer to “a foreigner, esp. one of U.S. or British descent.” By choosing to use this term, the cartoonist was signaling to the readers, especially in the United States, that they should be wary of the cheap, illegal immigrant workers. It is this cartoonist’s view that the United States’ labor system will soon be swallowed up from the bottom up as these illegal immigrant workers start to move up the ladder in their employment situation.

Along the same line of job-stealing illegal immigrant workers, there was a more emotionally compelling political cartoon about this topic as well. In this political cartoon, a distraught worker stands in front of a U.S. Factory where a sign says “This year’s [Labor Day] picnic will be held in Mexico, where your job went.” Although there is no mention of illegal immigrant workers, this political cartoon shows how Mexico affects the job market in the United States. However, it is important to remember that it was not Mexico who stole away these United States factory jobs, but rather it was the factory’s choice to move. The now jobless United States factory worker is a victim of United States consumerism as the U. S. Factory chose to move their business to Mexico to better their bottom line.

The final political cartoon represents how illegal immigrants steal profits from the United States. This political cartoon shows an illegal immigrant pocketing some apples and placing them in this “Profits” bag as a large hand—U.S. immigration—comes to pick the illegal immigrant. In this portrayal, the illegal immigrant is being shown to pick profits, and thus hurting the bottom line of the country’s economy. To remedy this situation, the U.S. immigration is shown to pick this “bad apple” of illegal immigrants from the picture. Thus, this political cartoon shows that illegal immigrants are detrimental to the economy and should be taken out of the equation.

The most unbiased political cartoon shows how “Big Biz” and “ICE” deal with illegal immigrants in the United States. Two representatives from these two groups are posting “Wanted” signs for the same person, but for different reasons. Big Biz, or big business, is looking for “cheap, disposable labor” “to keep our profits going thru the roof.” The ICE, or Immigration and Customs Enforcement, representative is looking “for immediate deportation” “to keep the help in their proper place.” These two representatives are looking for the same, illegal immigrant worker but for opposing reasons prevalent in the United States. By showing these two representatives and similar looking posters side-by-side, the cartoonist is showing both viewpoints so that readers can make their own choice when presented with two sides of the story.
With the exception of the indigenous people of North America, the majority of the United States’ population has taken advantage of citizenship either through government policies or through being born in the United States. However, a sore topic for some in the United States is how pregnant, illegal immigrants will do everything possible to come into the United States so their child will be born in the United States and obtain benefits through the Fourteenth Amendment, which provides citizenship for the child. Since the new United States citizen could not take care of itself, the mother would be allowed to stay. Given the increase in illegal immigration from Mexico to the United States, the offspring of these illegal citizens is an issue that has been discussed numerous times in political cartoons.

In the fall of 2010, the United States started to hold a new discussion about the children of illegal Mexican immigrants born in the United States. The children in such situations are referred to as “anchor babies” as they “anchor” their mother—and essentially their family—to the United States, their birth country. While some United States citizens feel that these children unfairly allow people to stay in the United States, one political cartoon points out one glaring, hypocritical fact. In this political cartoon, two Native Americans are seen standing in a forest watching a pilgrim couple holding their new baby. One of the Native Americans says, “#@$! Anchor babies!” Essentially, this political cartoon shows that very few of the United States’ population can claim to non-anchor babies. By trying to change the rules of American citizenship through birth, many United States citizens would need to change their own citizen status to illegal.

While the previous political cartoon shows the irony of anchor babies in the United States, another political cartoon took a more aggressive view against those who would complain. This political cartoon shows a Caucasian male in a suit, pointing to a Hispanic family, saying “It’s time to reclaim America from illegal immigrants!” A Native American male stands to the right of the speaker and tells the speaker, “I’ll help you pack.” Much like the cliché of the pot calling the kettle black, so is the Caucasian (unintentionally) calling himself an illegal immigrant as the Native American has the greatest claim to the United States’ citizenship. Thus, the idea of an illegal immigrant is a rather absurd concept because there are very few United States citizens who were legal citizens when the United States was colonized.

A final political cartoon that focuses on the citizenship issue shows that it is not the parents who are punished, but the innocent child. In this political cartoon, a delivery room doctor is shown slapping a recently born baby’s bottom at the same time that a “Dept. Immigration: Anchor Baby Patrol” officer is slapping handcuffs onto the baby’s wrists. This political cartoon seems to claim that law enforcement agencies are going to have to overstep boundaries to get to the next law-breakers, namely those children who were born in the United States. While this might be a minor note, it would appear that the baby in question in this political cartoon seems rather Caucasian. Even though this is a minor acknowledgement, this might have been done to ensure that the political cartoonist was not stereotyping; however this usage would be ironic as this is what the officer would be doing. This political cartoon supports some regulation in regards to the children born to illegal immigrants in the United States, but not to such a satirical depiction as presented here.

Moving away from the sensitive subject of how to manage the citizenship status of anchor babies, there are other disagreements over how to treat illegal
immigrants through United States government policies. In the political cartoons that focus on the perception of government policy towards illegal immigrants, the policies were considered insensitive. Much like other political cartoons, these three researched political cartoons do not assertively discuss their ideas, but imply them. As such, these political cartoons look at some of the absurd ideas that take place in regards to how government policy affects illegal immigrants.

One of the first political cartoons examined is very reminiscent of Dr. Seuss’ *Horton Hears a Who*. In this political cartoon, the Republican-dominated Congress—represented by the party’s elephant—is holding a dandelion titled “Immigration Reform” and is shown thinking that “I [the Congressional elephant] swear I can almost hear something.” Unlike Dr. Seuss’ story, the Whos who lived on the dandelion’s dust speck are replaced with a large group of Hispanic people surrounding the elephant saying “We are here! We are here! We are here!” Unlike Dr. Seuss’ Horton, who was the only one to realize that their was a city on the dust speck due to his elephant-sized ears, this Congressional elephant seems to be the only one who does not realize that the Hispanics—or “Whos”—exist. This political cartoon shows that the Republican congress was unaware of how a large part of the United States was in favor of immigration reform.

Perhaps one of the most tongue-in-cheek critiques of government policy included how the Statue of Liberty’s inscription was used against her. In this political cartoon, the Statue of Liberty is in a police office where one of the supervisors, seated in a judge’s podium, asks the Statue of Liberty “Conspiring to harbor felons, eh?” Where the Statue of Liberty’s inscription once inspired comfort and hope for the “tired,” “poor” and “wretched refuse” who longed for a new life, this same inscription seems like a confession for having welcomed illegal immigrants to enter the United States. Where once the United States was willing to increase its citizenship by welcoming all those who felt unsafe in their native country, the United States now seems to be back-pedaling by trying to maintain its current number of citizens at the same relative composition and total. By trying to limit who can enter the United States, the United States is retreating from those ideals which made it a great country.

The final political cartoon contrasts the daily routine between an illegal immigrant worker and a United States citizen. In this example, the illegal worker’s life is narrated in each gritty, difficult detail. Instead of the stereotype perception that the illegal immigrant is a lazy, job stealer, the narrative discusses the inhuman lifestyle that he is forced to endure so that his family can have a chance for a better life. On the flip side, the United States citizen is portrayed as having the easy life as he “woke up, found marker pen, made sign.” In this way, it is not the illegal immigrant worker who is shown as the negative representative of the United States, but the United States citizen. This portrayal of these workers being “courageous, hardworking individuals who sacrifice for their families” is typical of Mexico. Therefore, this illegal immigrant worker is shown to be trying to achieve the American Dream of providing a better life for his family while the United States citizen is working on squelching any and all possibilities of that dream.

So, if the United States seems incapable of creating an acceptable immigration policy that all can agree on, the solution should reside outside of Congress. It is this thinking that has led some citizens in the United States to take a very physical way to stop illegal Mexican immigrants: building a wall along the United
State-Mexican border. Five political cartoons examine this solution. Some show the futility of having a wall, while others show it to be a waste of resources, and still another shows it to be a menace. Regardless of their feelings on this topic, these political cartoons discuss how the United States should interact with Mexico.

One political cartoon showed the futility of building a wall that would separate Mexico from the United States. In this political cartoon, there is a booth on the Mexican side of the border offering “Maps to USA.” Even though the United States side has a large “U.S.A. Keep Out” sign, there are smaller booths offering “Free Lemonade,” “Free Education,” “Jobs,” and “Free Health Care.” The only thing separating these two countries is a chain-link, barb-wired fence that has a hole at the bottom of a fence. The cartoon implies that despite the large “Keep Out” sign to designate the United States, the country does little to discourage the illegal immigrants from coming to the country. By offering jobs, free education and (apparently) free health care to all comers, the United States makes this country an appealing place that rewards its residents—both legal and illegal—with these offers.

Two political cartoons showed the futility of building a wall as it would lead to a lack of resources and thus a waste of time. One political cartoon shows workers constructing a “20-foot tall border fence” to separate the United States and Mexico as one man puts on the finishing touches to his “21-foot ladder rentals” sign. A wall—regardless of its height—might slow down illegal immigration but not completely stop it. Those who are determined to come to the United States would do everything they can to make it possible, including getting a ladder that is one inch higher than the wall.

The other political cartoon shows how creating the wall would be hypocritical. The main contractor asks Uncle Sam, “Can you get me some huddled masses yearning to bust their humps for five bucks an hour?” The irony of this question is more dramatic when understanding that the questioner is working on construction of the border wall. Looking at all of this information, it would seem highly unlikely that the contractor would be able to get the workers he needed solely from the United States, because many Americans would see the job as beneath them. However, illegal immigrants might be willing to snap up this undesirable job because it is a job. Thus, the contractor might have to rely on illegal immigrant workers to create a wall to keep others just like them out of the United States.

One of the sharpest critics of the wall was a political cartoon that showed a mound of skulls. The mound of skulls was stacked in such a way that they formed a wall where the United States flag was stacked at the top. While this mound of skulls could be used to represent a number of topics ranging anywhere from those who died during wars to those who died as the United States expanded, it can also be used to show those illegal immigrants who died while coming to the United States. When looking at the illegal immigrant point of view, any wall built to separate the United States from Mexico would result in more harm than good as the number of deaths that resulted on their journey will create a wall.

Some critics of the United States-Mexican border wall see the creation of this wall as a reincarnated form of the wall that separated East and West Germany. This imagery is represented in a political cartoon where a big nose Uncle Sam peers over a brick wall to Mexico. While such a wall might cut back on the num-
ber of illegal immigrants from Mexico coming into the United States, its presence would seem to be ominous. Some might see the wall as a protective structure, while others might see it as an oppressive symbol. This political cartoon definitely seems to take the stand that this wall would be an oppressive one.

The public opinion regarding this topic is indeed mixed. Accordingly, by tracking opinions on this subject through political cartoons, one can see how public opinion shifts over time. However, perhaps given the current state of the United States’ economy, the idea of creating a wall along the United States-Mexican border may no longer be cost-effective. Therefore, political cartoons may start shifting away from ones concerning a wall to other proposals concerning how to deal with illegal immigrants, such as the Dream Act.

In December 2010, there was a vote in the United States’ Senate on a new response to illegal immigration in the United States: the Dream Act. Had the Dream Act been approved, it would have qualified “undocumented youth” to “be eligible for a 6 year long conditional path to citizenship that requires completion of a college degree or two years of military service.”

While this Dream Act would not affect illegal immigrant parents, the children that were born in the United States by these illegal immigrants—who have no ties to their ancestral home—would have a chance to legitimize their citizenship is a relatively recent proposal. Because the Dream Act is so new, there have not been many political cartoons created on this subject. However, on December 21, 2010, political cartoonist Tony Auth decided to create one about this issue. In this political cartoon, a family of “exponential Hispanic growth” runs into a Republican elephant who had just thrown away a copy of the Dream Act and announce “We’re the Spirits of Christmas yet to come, Señor!” This political cartoon argues that the Scrooge-like Republicans might suffer in future elections from a future, powerful voting demographic. Perhaps future researchers will examine political cartoons starting with this one to see how public opinion went from Tony Auth’s pro-Dream Act to either those who supported or opposed the Dream Act.

Given the number of political cartoons discussed thus far, it is hard to even dream that there could be more, but there are. The political cartoons discussed in this paper provide a mere glimpse at some of the topics that political cartoonists have discussed based on—at the time of their creation—current events. Keeping in mind that the news is one industry that is constantly growing and updating with new stories, political cartoons are going to continue examining what was printed between the cover and last pages. Examining the current news environment, it is a safe bet that more political cartoons discussing the United States’ feelings in regards to illegal immigration and the growing Hispanic vote is going to be used quite often in the upcoming years.

Along with illegal immigration, drugs in Mexican culture have been a source of fodder for United States political cartoons. There seemed to be an increase in drug and Mexican related political cartoons starting in early 2009. Around this time period, there was an increase in drug-related violence that was spilling over the Mexican border and into the United States. By examining nine political cartoons from 2009 to 2010, one can see how both the United States and Mexico are responsible for this drug problem.

The first political cartoon to be discussed in this set appeared in February 2009. In this political cartoon, a very buff and intimidating man wearing a shirt
that reads “Drug Cartels” is playing with a piñata labeled “Mexico.” Unlike the typical image of candy falling out from the piñata, this piñata is shown leaking skulls. As such, instead of providing treats to Mexico, the drug cartels are shown to be ripping the country apart at the seams and causing numerous deaths. This political cartoon represents the atrocities that are associated with the drug cartels and the negative affect they have on Mexico.

Another political cartoon around this time period shows how interlocked the United States and Mexico are in the matter of drug wars. On the left hand side of this political cartoon are “USA Users” doing a lot of “shooting up,” as in shooting up with heroin, while the opposite side shows a man holding smoking guns and labeled as “Mexican Drug Cartels.” In this way, the political cartoonist is showing that until the United States controls its drug users, the Mexican drug cartels will not be stopped. Therefore, while the Mexican drug cartels are indeed a problem as they shoot and kill people, the United States drug users are a stimulus for this problem because they use the products of the Mexican drug cartels.

This mutual responsibility is shown in another political cartoon where Uncle Sam and a Mexican representative stand on either side of a broken fence. On the United States’ side is “drug demand” and on the Mexican side is the “drug supply.” Even though the United States and Mexico should share the responsibility for repairing this broken fence, both think that “He [the person on the other side] needs to fix his fence....” Much like the previous political cartoon that examines the relationship between the drug demand and supply between the United States and Mexico, this political cartoon shows that there is a apparent connection, even if the government officials do not recognize it. The answer to this problem is not to build a wall, but for the United States to end their drug demand and for Mexico to stop supplying it.

Even though there appears to be equal responsibility for both Mexico and the United States, it seems that the United States is also contributing something to this drug problem: weapons. In this United States-created political cartoon, a dump truck that sports the United States flag on its door is shown dumping its supply of guns and weapons into Mexico. Even though some citizens of the United States feel like they are the ones that need to build a wall to stop the flow of drugs, the sentiment in this political cartoon is that it is Mexico that needs to build a wall to stop the importation of weapons from the United States. Despite the mutual responsibility, this political cartoon implies that the United States needs to do more to stop the problem.

The intensity that this drug problem has created in Mexico is shown in another political cartoon. In this cartoon, two “Mexican police” officers are shown shooting while other bullets whizz past them. Despite the gunfire around them, one of the police officers asks his partner “Where are you going for vacation this year, Pedro?” and his partner answers, “Oh, someplace peaceful...maybe Baghdad, Rwanda, Afghanistan....” Given the extreme violence that occurs in Baghdad and Afghanistan, the idea that someone would want to vacation there is mind-boggling. However, this exaggerated response prompts the United States audience to fully understand what their Mexican neighbors have to deal with when it comes to drug gangs.

One of the best political cartoons that discusses the drug issue in Mexico turns towards Aztec imagery to get its message across. In this example, “Drugs”—
portrayed as an Aztec priest—raises a knife and is poised to sacrifice “Mexico.” One thing that was noticeable is that while this image seems to draw from traditional imagery of how Aztec priests sacrificed victims on a stone altar at their temple to appease their gods, there is a considerable pigment distinction between the priest (Drugs) and the victim (Mexico). The priest (Drugs) is of darker skin coloring while the victim (Mexico) seems rather Caucasian-looking. While this difference in skin tones could be attributed this political cartoon’s black-and-white format, it is still important to look at this difference. Another possible reasoning for this skin tone difference is that this pale Mexico represents either the United States interest in Mexico or to create sympathy to the stereotypical Caucasian, United States citizen with their Mexican counterparts. Regardless of this intended tone, this political cartoon perpetuates the idea that the Aztec senselessly sacrificed victims much like how drugs senselessly destroy lives.

Unlike the majority of political cartoons used in this research, the following political cartoon is the only one that was published in a Mexican paper. In this political cartoon, Uncle Sam is shown snorting cocaine and is thinking “Están locos si pensan que no voy a meter mis narices en el tema del naco Mexicano” or roughly translated as “They are crazy if they think I am not going to put my nose in the issue of Mexican drug traffickers.” By exploring this example, it would appear that Mexico views the United States as having a large nose that should not be putting itself into Mexican politics because the United States has a drug addiction. Therefore, the United States as a whole are shown to be incapable of helping with the issue of drug trafficking based upon the large number of drug users in the United States.

Mexico is shown to be a victim where the drug violence affects everyone. In one political cartoon, the Mexican flag is shown but the eagle that usually stands proud on its cactus is shown shot and bleeding. By showing the Mexican flag shot up and the eagle dead the political cartoonist is arguing that the drug violence affects and hurts everyone. The United States equivalent would be if Uncle Sam, the Statue or Liberty or the bald eagle were shown dead from a gunshot wound.

In the final political cartoon that demonstrates the drug trafficking issues in Mexico, the artist plays on “El Grito,” or the traditional Independence Day yell. The outline of Mexico is shown to be crying out “Help!” While “El Grito” is usually a celebratory yell in honor of Mexico’s Independence, this political cartoon indicates that since there is a large amount of violence resulting from drugs, “El Grito” should be changed to one of fear. Thus, Mexico is not portrayed as a vicious drug cartel member ready to gun down Mexican or United States citizens, but as a victim of this activity which needs assistance.

Each of these political cartoons provides small dots that viewers can connect to form a larger image. While seemingly insignificant at first, they—like comic books—show how “crucial [it is] to understand how the United States public ‘sees’ Mexico.” These sources are not merely examples of concepts “ingrained in the American psyche,” they demonstrate how the idea of “Anglo superiority” is now “drawn upon for parody” and plays on the news coverage to portray events in a quick, humorous way. But, as with any analysis, the context of where the political cartoons and comic books come from must be considered when analyzing their sources, namely historical events and policies between Mexico and the United States.
When looking at relatively modern history of Mexico, the start of influence in comic books and political cartoon can be traced to issues that began in the 1960s. In the 1960s, the unemployment rates in Mexican cities “rose to 40 percent.” While this problem directly affected Mexico, the United States was also “concerned about the potential political instability and social problems created by the situation.” To alleviate any and all related problems, Mexico and the United States created the Border Industrialization Program, also known as *maquiladora*, which would “permit American companies to build assembly plants in Mexico employing cheap Mexican labor.” While this situation helped to resolve the unemployment issue in Mexico, it also set the stage for the issue between illegal immigrant workers in the United States as well of Mexican citizens “stealing” jobs when American companies relocate to Mexico. This also laid the foundation for comic books to incorporate Mexico in their creations.

After the initiation of *maquiladoras*, the 1970s brought Mexico into the world’s energy scene. Mexico was especially important to the United States as the United States was making “the energy problem” “an area of top national priority” as Mexico is a source of energy through its production of oil. Given the importance Mexico would have to the United States, it would make sense how Quetzalcoatl would be shown as an important character in the 1982 issue of *Thor*. In general, the United States would need to be in Mexico’s favor so that the United States would be able to receive energy from Mexico.

The 1980s brought out another side for Mexico, much like how Tezcatlipoca is another side of Quetzalcoatl. After being well-loved in the United States for as a source of oil, in 1982, it became extremely clear that “Mexico’s inability to pay its debt could have a profound impact on the US and international financial system.” This financially difficult situation led the United States to revise its policies in Central America during this time period. Due to the financial situation, Quetzalcoatl could no longer be a partner with Thor, but a juvenile sidekick that needed to be watched.

To make things worse, 1985 brought more woes for the Mexican-United States relationship, including drug trafficking. While Mexico’s financial status worried the United States, the issue of drug trafficking became the main focus for the United States. These issues seemed to replicate the Aztec’s love for duality as Mexico had been “the source of a high-priority problem” as well as “a potential solution as well.” Mexico was both a friend and an enemy, and was thus examined from both sides of this image. This complication could explain why the 1984 issues of *Wonder Woman* chose to look at Tezcatlipoca in a negative light a mere two years after *Thor* had hailed Quetzalcoatl’s valor. The *Wonder Woman* comic books show how public opinion towards Mexico shifted to unfavorable in the eyes of the United States.

With the changing situations occurring in the real world, comic books also showed signs of the new decades. While *Wonder Woman* and *Thor* demonstrated racial diversity in their comic books by having Tezcatlipoca, Quetzalcoatl and other sun gods, respectively, this is also in line with how DC and Marvel Comics were starting to create “psychologically complex characters: racial, gender, ethnic, and sexual concerns entered into the mainstream fray.” In this way, comic books created in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States
were not only favoring the country’s international neighbors but also the diverse culture of the United States. Essentially, the comic book universe was starting to become as realistic as the readers’.

After the attention Mexico had received from its energy production, financial troubles and drug trafficking during the early and mid 1980s, the United States’ media coverage declined towards the end of the 1980s. The news coverage after 1987 “declined in volume and moderated in tone” compared to prior years. This could be attributed to “Latin America’s emerging self-confidence” which is represented by the fact that an “eight-nation Latin American summit” was held in November of that year without “Washington’s blessing.” Instead of relying on other countries’ support, Mexico and other Latin American countries were telling the world’s “superpowers to ‘leave us in peace.’” As Latin America worked on making their region an independent area, the United States shifted its attention elsewhere. Not only was the news coverage void of Mexican stories, so were comic books without Mexican-influenced stories as the last one published was Wonder Woman #316 in 1984 and the next comic book to really discuss Mexico would not be published until Aztek: The Ultimate Man #1 in 1996. This relationship shows that when the news does not cover Mexico, the comic book industry does not either.

Perhaps one of the most important years in the 1990s in regards to public opinion in both the United States and Mexico was 1991. In 1991, the “five-hundredth anniversary, or quincentenary” honoring Christopher Columbus’s so-called discovery of the Americas was held. This celebration angered some indigenous groups in both Mexico and the United States as they felt that Columbus should not be honored for discovering their homeland. Likewise, the history taught about this subject was usually skewed in such a way that the indigenous people were barbarized, while Columbus was honored. After the outcry over this celebration, historians began to reexamine the history that they had written and been taught to truly understand the full story. While looking back at comic books created with this new research feeling in mind, Bentley Boyd’s Exploring the Americas, released in 2007, works to fix the flawed thinking associated with history.

1994 was a year of special note as the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, was signed. The NAFTA agreement was signed between Mexico, Canada and the United States and was created to increase trade and thus the economy of those involved. The United States and Canada seemed to have the better end of the deal as Zapatista revolts began in “the Chiapas region of Mexico” later that same year. The Zapatista revolts were conducted as the group felt that Mexico was short-sighted in signing the NAFTA agreement because Mexico received fewer benefits when compared to Canada and the United States. Four years later, the United States’ presidential elections would focus almost all of its attention on Mexico—with the exception of “the Central American crisis.” After being essentially overlooked, Mexico was starting to become an area of interest in the United States due to the NAFTA agreement.

This feeling of the United States overseeing Mexican affairs and its well being, such as the NAFTA agreement, could be a reason why Superman Annual #12, published in 2000, contained the story line that it did. As the United States
began reexamining the importance of their southern neighbor, Superman was helping out three Mexican superheroes. Superman stepping and helping the Mexican superheroes save the day is similar to the United States stepping up and helping Mexico fulfill economic goals. This parallel imagery between real-life examples and those found in comic books seems to show the American public ready to help take care of Mexico for the benefit of the United States.

As the first decade after 2000 recently drew to a close, it may still be too early to understand all of the historical events that shaped comic books. However, while examining political cartoons and their accompanying news stories, there appears to be an increase in drug violence that is reminiscent of the 1980s. Along with this, Mexican immigrants were severely criticized (or praised) for the jobs that they are said to steal (or accept) from United States citizens. While also taking into consideration other cultural creations, namely movies, Mexico was shown to have been filled with savage people from films like 2012 or Apocalypto. This insensitive portrayal has been done before and has also been known to be reversed.

Much like history, comic books are also dictated by their own historical events and time periods. Similar to how students in world history classes need to have a grasp on how past events shaped current ones, by the 1970s, the Marvel Comics company was publishing comics that “had a past, present and future” which required “fans [to] have knowledge of hundred of years of events to completely appreciate the Marvel universe and its continuity-based realism.”130 This was not done at the whim of the comic book creators, but proved to be a necessity as Marvel Comics “claimed that its comic books were traditionally realistic by reflecting the world in which the creators and readers lived.”131 In this way, history was not only merely recorded and shaped the real world but also the fictional characters in Marvel Universe. This shows how intertwined history and pop culture can be.

Since history, comic books and political cartoons have been teaching historical events and retelling stories from the past for well over thirty years, it is clear that this trend will continue. This changing bond can be seen as “blatantly racist and derogatory minority stereotypes” are no longer the norm in cartoons published in newspapers and how these minority characters have grown from being on the “receiving end of physical and verbal abuse” to powerful characters that can save the world.132 Where history is said to repeat itself, so do the names like Quetzalcoatl—once frequently used to invoke power, only to be forgotten—reappear with new life in “artistic, literary, and even social applications.”133 Nothing about history is truly forgotten, it only sleeps until it is rediscovered for a new generation.

Out of all the sources examined in this research, it is safe to assume that while comic books and political cartoons are not always the most authoritative sources, they nonetheless provide invaluable information. These resources are created not to retell indisputable events for future generations, but to entertain and, particularly with political cartoons, stimulate thought. In this simple gesture of entertainment and fun these resources show the United States’ true feelings in regard to Mexico. When the news between these two countries is calm, comic books show Mexico, Mexican superheroes and cultural icons in a pleasant light. Likewise, political cartoons focus on other, more
pressing issues. However, when the news becomes tense and the countries’ relationship is strained, the opposite occurs. History textbooks present facts, but these sources reveal the shifting nature that makes up public opinion. Accordingly, comic books and political cartoons can show how the general public of the United States responds to changes of government policies concerning Mexico.
Notes


2. Ibid, 168.


4. Ibid, 11.


6. See Figure #1.

7. See Figure #2.

8. See Figure #3.

9. See Figure #3.

10. See Figure #3.

11. See Figure #4.

12. See Figure #5.

13. See Figure #6.

14. See Figure #7.

15. See Figure #8.

16. See Figure #8.

17. See Figure #8.


19. See Figure #9.

20. See Figure #10.


25. Ibid, 1.


27. See Figure #11.a.

28. See Figure #11.b.

29. See Figure #12.

30. Mark Millar (w), Grant Morrison (w), N. Steven Harris (p), and Keith Champagne (i). “JLA Presents: Aztek The Ultimate Man.” *Aztek The Ultimate Man #1-10* (Aug 1996 – May 1997), DC Comics, 12.

31. See Figure #12.

32. Ibid, 51.


34. Ibid, 223.

35. Casey Joe (w), Keith Giffen (w), Jim Muniz (p), and Cam Smith (i). “Destiny Falls.” The Last Defenders #1 (May 2008), Marvel Publishing, INC, 13.

36. See Figure #13.


38. Casey Joe (w), Keith Giffen (w), Jim Muniz (p), and Cam Smith (i). “The Breaks.” The Last Defenders #2 (June 2008), Marvel Publishing, INC, 6.

39. See Figure #14.

40. See Figure #15.

41. See Figure #16.


47. Olivier, *Mockeries and Metamorphoses of an Aztec God*, 49.

48. Ibid, 49.

49. See Figure #17.

50. See Figure #17.


52. See Figure #18.

53. See Figure #19.

54. See Figure #20.

55. See Figure #20.

56. See Figure #21.

57. See Figure #22.

58. See Figure #23.

59. See Figure #23.

60. See Figure #23.

61. Dan Miskin (w), Don Heck (artist), Nansi Hoolahan (colorist), “The Nature of
the Beast!” Wonder Woman #314 (April 1984), DC Comics, Inc, 13-14.

62. See Figure #24.

63. See Figure #25.

64. See Figure #26.


66. Francisco Hachenbeck (w), Oscar Pinto (w), Carlo Barberi (p), Marlo Alquiza (i), and Juan Vlasco (i) “Whispers of the Earth.” Superman Annual #12 (August 2000), DC Comics, 5.


70. See Figure #27.

71. See Figure #28.

72. See Figure #29.

73. See Figure #29.

74. See Figure #30.

75. See Figure #30.

76. See Figure #31.

77. See Figure #32.

78. See Figure #32.


80. See Figure #33.
81. See Figure #34.
82. See Figure #35.
83. See Figure #35.
84. See Figure #36.
85. See Figure #37.
86. See Figure #37.
87. See Figure #38.
88. See Figure #39.
89. See Figure #39.
90. See Figure #40.
91. See Figure #40.
92. See Figure #41.
94. See Figure #42.
95. See Figure #42.
96. See Figure #43.
97. See Figure #44.
98. See Figure #45.
99. See Figure #46.
101. See Figure #47.
102. See Figure #48.
103. See Figure #49.
104. See Figure #50.

105. See Figure #50.

106. See Figure #51.

107. See Figure #52.

108. See Figure #52.

109. See Figure #53.

110. See Figure #54.

111. See Figure #55.

112. See Figure #56.


114. Ibid, 112.


117. Ibid, 33.


119. Ibid, 8.


121. Coatsworth, 7.


123. Coatsworth, 66.

125. Ibid, 56.


127. Ibid, xi.

128. Ibid, xi.

129. Coatsworth, 4.


131. Pustz, 52.


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ONE HISTORIAN/BIOLOGIST, JARED DIAMOND, BLAMES GUNS, GERMS, AND STEEL: THAT IS, MORE EFFECTIVE WEAPONS, ARMOR, AND TECHNOLOGY, PLUS OUTLANDISH DISEASES.

EUROPEANS, ASIANS, AND AFRICANS RESISTED ILLNESS BETTER BECAUSE THEY LIVED WITH ANIMALS WHOSE DISEASES THEY SHARED...

K'CHEESE!
Historians like the idea that disease caused most Native deaths!

Gosh, our ancestors didn’t mean to kill so many!

Yes, they hardly shot or stabbed or starved more than a few million!

I feel strangely relieved...

Figure 2
How do we come to terms with what happened in Mexico? History is supposed to report stories; to seek causes and effects; to assess, weigh, analyze... but can history judge? Decide for yourself... But I ask you, how else can we react to wholesale murder, oppression, and the destruction of a civilization's cultural masterpieces? Maybe we can say the destroyers were a product of their time... But then, maybe we can judge their time too... and try to make our own time more reasonable and humane, and less bigoted, by comparison.

Dang, man! Lighten up! What's done is done!

Yeah! What choo gon' do? Put us in jail? We already dead!

By the way, in today's Mexico, Cortés is the villain of the story, and Guatemozin, the last defender of Tenochtitlán, is the hero!
Figure 4

Figure 5
Figure 12
Figure 13

Figure 14
Figure 15

Figure 16
Figure 17
...its smoky surface reflecting an image...

NO! The Earth is not yet scourged!

it need not come to pass!

...an image that cannot be denied!

do not make me see!

The Jaguar's only answer is a snarl!

...as an obsidian mirror flares and grows larger --larger...

She's gone! Swallowed by that black mirror--

More! More than cat--and more than man am I!
Figure 19

Figure 20
Figure 24

Figure 25
(THE GOD OMETEOTL PROPHESIED THAT WHILE A YOUNG GIRL WOULD ONE DAY HARNESS THE NEGATIVE POWER OF THE EARTH, A VISITOR FROM THE STARS WOULD SERVE AS THE VESSEL FOR ITS POSITIVE ENERGY.)

("A VISITOR FROM THE STARS"? I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND.)

(COULD THAT MEAN STARMAN? OR PERHAPS AN ALIEN, LIKE MARTIAN MANHUNTER OR...?)

Figure 26
"I WAS BORN IN MEXICO. I GROW UP POOR AND, WHEN I WAS OLD ENOUGH TO WORK, THERE WERE NO JOBS FOR ME..."

"SO I CROSSED THE BORDER INTO THE UNITED STATES. I TOOK THE MENIAL JOBS THAT NO ONE WANTED. I WENT TO SCHOOL... I LEARNED ENGLISH..."

"I GOT MARRIED. I GOT A GOOD JOB AT A MANUFACTURING PLANT. SOON, I WAS MAKING ENOUGH MONEY TO SUPPORT A FAMILY..."

"I BECAME AN AMERICAN CITIZEN. I VOTED. I PAID TAXES. I BOUGHT A NICE CAR AND A HOUSE. I WAS LIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM..."

"UNTIL TODAY. TODAY I LOST MY JOB BECAUSE THEY'RE CLOSING THE FACTORY WHERE I WORK..."

"...AND THEY'RE MOVING IT TO MEXICO!"

Figure 28
Figure 31

Figure 32
Figure 37

Figure 38
Kissed sleeping wife and children, not knowing when he would see them again. Walked for days in the sweltering desert; swam across a river under cover of dark, traveled north in back of sweltering tractor-trailer, dropped in a strange place where he shares a room with twelve others like him, so he can work his fingers to the bone for slightly better than nothing, which is sent back to his sleeping wife and children, so they can have a better life than he does.

Figure 41

Woke up, found marker pen, made sign.

GO HOME, ILLEGAL

Figure 42
Figure 51

Mexico Now At War With Drug Gangs

WHERE ARE YOU GOING FOR VACATION THIS YEAR, PEDRO?

OH, SOMEPLACE PEACEFUL... MAYBE BAGHDAD, RWANDA, AFGHANISTAN...

Figure 52
ESTAN LOCOS SI PIENSAN QUE NO VOY A METER MIS NARICES EN EL TEMA DEL NARCO MEXICANO.