

OUR SISTER REPUBLIC: CREATING MEXICO IN THE MINDS OF THE AMERICAN
PUBLIC AND THE ROLE OF THE PRESS

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Our Sister Republic: Creating Mexico in the Minds of the American Public and the Role of the Press

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ABSTRACT

During the Mexican War, Americans radically transformed their ideas about Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. The Mexican War offered itself up as the first of such interactions between the neighboring republics. The Mexican during the War was met largely with criticism from the American public, a criticism aided by the work of the press. While a vast majority of the presses disparaged the Mexican populace on a variety of subjects, not all papers denigrated the Mexicans as some inferior population in need of assistance from the United States in order to survive and reach a proper level of civilization. Papers such as the Catholic and abolitionist presses sought to portray the Mexican in a more positive light. Analysis of these spheres of influence of the various presses offers up a genesis of the Mexican within the American imagination.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....iii

CHAPTER 1. PRELUDE TO CONFLICT: TEXAS, THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO.....1

CHAPTER 2. POLARIZING FIGURES: MEXICANS IN THE MINDS OF DEMOCRATS AND WHIGS 12

CHAPTER 3. THE TWO MEXICOS: IMAGES OF MEXICO IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH.....34

CHAPTER 4. AMERICAN TRANSFORMATION: THE MEXICAN IN THE MINDS OF REFORMERS71

CHAPTER 5. THE MEXICAN IMAGE CODIFIED: THE TREATY OF GUADALUPE-HIDALGO90

BIBLIOGRAPHY95

CHAPTER 1. PRELUDE TO CONFLICT: TEXAS, THE UNITED STATES, AND MEXICO

Mexicans and Mexican-Americans have journeyed a great distance in mainstream American racial thought from the 1820s to the present. For an American history defined largely by the existence of black and white racial dichotomies, Mexicans have been the perpetual gray in the schema.¹ Legally they have been considered white, but they more often than not received treatment as racial others by white, American society. The birth of the Mexican people came in the 1820s when they had won their freedom from Spain's control and thus were no longer grouped under the banner of Spain. These neighbors to the south of the United States were a relatively unknown entity prior to the Texas Revolution. Were they the "mongrel race" that the United States feared or did they contain vestigial elements of Spanish ancestry?² The inability for the whole of Mexico to suppress the Texas revolutionaries led to a questioning of their character by the American public. Racial scientists in the 1830s sought to understand the character of the American people and how they had been so successful compared to nations like Mexico which seemed to be wrought with failures and instability.³ From this point in the 1830s, the character of the Mexican in the American imagination began its evolution to the present, vacillating between racial others and a part of the mass of "white" Americans.

The rise of Anglo-Saxonism in the United States seemed to have reached its apex during the 1840s. These views seemed to find validation after the victory of the United States over Mexico.⁴ It was a combination of belief in racial superiority along with a belief in exceptionalism and providence that led to such a racialized society in the United States. Anglo-

¹ Laura E Gomez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican-American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 4.

² Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 211.

³ Thomas R. Hietela, *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 177.

⁴ Jaime Javier Rodriguez, *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 8.

Saxonism during the 1830s and the 1840s came to be a term associated with the good in American society, and the Anglo-Saxon was often the foil for the “lesser” people such as African-Americans, newly arrived immigrants, or Native Americans.⁵ Anglo-Saxonism entailed a belief in the innate superiority of those of descent from the various civilized races in western Europe, whether that entailed Anglo-Saxons or one of the Germanic races such as the Teutons. Racial science flourished in Europe and in the United States as phrenologists and ethnologists alike sought to find scientific proof and a rationale for such superiority over lesser races.⁶ The term “Anglo-Saxonism” is not just some post-facto name given to this racial ideology. The term itself had been introduced slowly into the political rhetoric in the 1830s and, by the time of the Mexican War, was a common term to be utilized by opponents and proponents alike.⁷ Anglo-Saxonism fueled the cause of expansion, as some came to believe that the Anglo-Saxon spirit could provide territories devoid of such influence with an uplift that would benefit all. To politicians, acts of expansion were not acts of greed, but acts of mercy, saving inferior and weak people from being placed under control of a nation less sympathetic than the United States.⁸ Thus, the term Anglo-Saxonism within this work will represent this belief in an innate superiority of the “American people” as defined by mainstream, white society during this time and will refer to the idea that the imposition of Anglo-Saxon institutions and people into an area previously devoid of these could radically improve the social, economic, and political character of the region. This work will then attempt to explore the ways in which newspapers portrayed Mexicans during the Mexican War.

⁵ Horsman, 4.

⁶ Ibid., 141.

⁷ Ibid., 209.

⁸ Hietela, 211.

The transportation revolution of the 1810s and 1820s opened up a booming newspaper business that grabbed the minds of the American populace. Many of the newspapers that began in the 1800s were merely instruments for political parties. By 1822, there were more people reading newspapers in the U.S. than any other country.⁹ Newspapers started off with local bases of support, but as transportation improved, the reading audience of newspapers grew, and around 1830, nationally distributed newspapers had arrived. The sweeping political changes that occurred during the 1820s were strengthened by the concurrence of the major shifts in transportation and communication. Ever since the presidency of Thomas Jefferson, the political electorate had been increasing as property qualifications were lowered. When the Whig party formed in 1834, key framers of Whig ideology were keenly aware of the power of newspapers to gain control over the electorate. The power of newspapers opened up a new degree of political participation, and the 1840 election would prove to be the high point of political participation and highlight the importance of political newspapers.

The 1840 election represented a number of the growing changes in American society during this era. The power of newspapers was showcased to full effect as Martin Van Buren and the Democrats utilized it to deliver the first official party platform in the U.S. At the same time, the power of newspapers to create a persona for a president was in full effect on the Whigs side of the election. William Henry Harrison had received early criticism during the election process for his age. A Democratic newspaper writer stated that Harrison was not qualified for the position of president and that the nation should “give him a barrel of hard cider, and settle a pension of two thousand a year on him, and my word for it, he will sit the remainder of his days in his log cabin.”¹⁰ The Whigs gravitated to this idea of the log cabin as a symbol of popular

⁹ Howe, 227.

¹⁰ Ibid., 574.

appeal and launched the so-called “Log Cabin” campaign. The imagery of the barrels of ciders and the log cabin became central to the public’s identification with Harrison as it depicted him as a more common man in his lifestyle than the lifestyle he actually lived. While the parties campaigned, the Whigs were able to capitalize on the continued failing of the U.S. economy after the Panic of 1837 to trounce the re-election dreams of Martin Van Buren.

The Panic of 1837 proved to be the first panic in the history of the United States that brought with it a fierce political debate on which politicians were to blame. The Panic of 1819 did not sink the political aspirations of James Monroe in his re-election bid in the 1820 election. The Panic of 1819 represented a new occurrence for the U.S. republic. Unlike the Panic of 1837, there was no consensus on who was to blame for the economic turmoil the U.S. entered, and thus, Monroe was able to secure a re-election in 1820.¹¹ But when the Panic of 1837 hit, the Whigs utilized this moment to champion their soft money economics policy and highlighted the weaknesses of the hard money economics policy of the Jacksonians. Martin Van Buren took the brunt of the blame, as Whigs mockingly referred to him as “Martin Van Ruin.” The Whigs had noticed the effectiveness of such attacks in the state elections prior to the 1840 presidential elections. Whig politicians had more and more success at the state level, and this success would take them into office during the 1840 election. The power of newspaper and the control over information that party newspapers had can be highlighted by the great voter turnout of the election. As the Mexican War approached, while technological developments continued to speed up the speed of information, the political purposes for many of the newspapers did not drastically change during this time period.

The power of the printed press in inspiring the American populace can also be seen in the expansionistic fervor that arose in the U.S. in the 1840s under the cloak of “Manifest Destiny.”

¹¹ Wilentz, 216.

The expansionistic drive found its best articulation in John O'Sullivan, who, in his article entitled "Annexation" for *The Democratic Review*, coined the term Manifest Destiny in 1845. To O'Sullivan, it was the divine right of the U.S. to expand from sea to sea, and by doing so the U.S. could spread its progressive ideas on governance and society to the lesser peoples that inhabited the continent. This concept of a Manifest Destiny helped reignite the nation's drive for empire to levels not seen since the time of Jefferson. While Jefferson's idea of an American empire was not as overtly filled with ideas of Anglo-Saxonism, there still was a great deal of similarity between Jefferson's ideas and Manifest Destiny. Under Jefferson's plan, all those included in the empire would be free of political degeneration, while under the new banner of Manifest Destiny, those included would be protected from cultural and social degeneration.¹² While Jefferson merely wanted to institute a republican system of government into the West, proponents of Manifest Destiny saw the West as a block of clay to be molded politically, socially, and economically. This idea of acquiring additional territory proved receptive to many elements in society. While many did not buy the rhetoric of America's divine destiny to acquire the land from coast to coast, many land speculators bought into the increased business that could come about with an increase in territory to acquire. The power of the media to bring to the fore an idea of Manifest Destiny placed the Democrats and Whigs on opposite sides of an issue that would become the focus of much of the politics of the 1840s. The newspaper had slowly entrenched itself within the minds of many Americans in the 1830s, and by the 1840s was a significant source of worldviews for its readers. Thus, this development allows newspapers to be a sufficient source for understanding the rhetoric being espoused by vehicles of mass distribution during the Mexican War.

¹² Howe, 703.

The main argument of this paper is broken down along different groupings of newspapers, with some chapters focusing on the political newspapers around the nation at this time and others on the newspapers of major social movements. Specifically, the second chapter seeks to analyze the political breakdown of Mexican imagery between the Whigs and Democrats. The two papers chosen for this section are representative of the ideologies of the two parties during the 1840s. The *Democratic Review*, as mentioned before, coined the phrase “Manifest Destiny,” that would be used to define the reasons behind U.S. hegemony in the 19th century. Conversely, the *American Whig Review* came to be the strongest voice of the Whig Party by the 1840s. The third chapter follows a very similar pattern, but additionally incorporates the various ways in which sectionalism affects the various newspapers’ understanding of the Mexican people throughout the war. An analysis of sectional newspapers with more regional bases of readers, important issues related to the Mexican War emerge, such as the attempted inclusion of the Wilmot Proviso. The fourth chapter seeks to distance itself from the mainstream media and analyze how the various social trends and moral reformist political newspapers understood the Mexican and the Mexican state. The 1840s witnessed a great deal of transformation religiously, socially, and politically. The temperance and abolitionist movements grew out of the Second Great Awakening, which brought with it a proliferation of religious newspapers. The religious press offers itself up as a microcosm of the political press. While many of the mainstream and Protestant newspapers pointed to the Catholic identity of Mexico as a prominent detractor to their character, the minority Catholic press sought to portray Catholicism in a positive light and heralded it as the source for political stability in the future for Mexico.

The construction of race as found in the newspapers represents what historian David Brion Davis claimed that “concepts of race influence perception, including self-perception.”¹³ For Davis then, it is the ability of the majority to dehumanize the racial others in society that proves the most damaging, as by dehumanizing the racial others, the bulk of society cannot empathize with them.¹⁴ No better organ existed at this time than the mainstream press for the widespread dissemination of views. This idea that race was a means of both perception and self-perception coupled with the attacks on Mexicans by the majority press indicates the intended goals of depriving future Mexican-Americans of rights in the sought after territory. In regard to analyzing the printed media, the printed media at this time requires analyzing the ever changing nature of certain words found repeatedly within the print media, in this case, Mexicans. Davis refers to this type of analysis as a study of “general cultural patterns” with an emphasis on understanding the views of a relatively small group, in this case publishers, and the implicit effects on majority culture.¹⁵ This idea of the minority controlling to some degree the views of the larger public drives the discussion on the shaping of race during the 1840s, especially for the Mexican people. Even before the onset of War, most Americans believed Mexicans were inferior based only on the brief interaction with a segment of the Mexican population along the borderlands.¹⁶ Other scholars have noted that ethnocentrism has defined the American expression of the Mexican character.¹⁷

Overall, much of the Democratic press and even certain Whig newspapers believed that the Mexican state and the Mexican citizens were inferior. The manner in which the newspapers

¹³ David Brion Davis, “Constructing Race: A Reflection,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 54: 1, January 1997, 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁵ David Brion Davis, “Some Recent Directions in American Cultural History,” *The American Historical Review*, 73:3, February, 1968.

¹⁶ David J. Weber, “Scarce More than Apes,” *Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 150.

¹⁷ Arnold de Leon, *They Called Them Greasers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), xi.

arrived at and constructed this conclusion differs however. In the South, the newspapers focused on Mexican honor and manhood as a foil for the true honor of the South. Protestant newspapers saw the anti-democratic tendencies of Catholicism shining through in Mexico and only through conversion could the Mexicans be saved from a future of degeneracy. Democratic newspapers gravitated toward the concept of Manifest Destiny. For them, it was inherent, God-given characteristics that had led to Anglo-Saxon ascendancy throughout the world. For these newspapers, a natural racial hierarchy existed which favored Anglo-Saxons and placed them near the top. It was the goal of those on top of the hierarchy to spread their civilizing tendencies to the racial others, or, at the very least, to take control of the land being held by these others in the world in order to best make use of the resources present. Even some newspapers had bought into the nativism and racial science of the age and discredited Mexicans as people unable to be assimilated due to vast racial differences between Mexicans and Anglo-Saxon people. The few newspapers that depicted the Mexican people as semi-civilized or close to equal to the Anglo-Saxons generally provided more evidence and presented their evidence as contradictory to the characterization found in presses denigrating Mexican citizens. These newspapers sought not to disparage the entirety of Mexico and the Mexican people; but rather, they sought to highlight the areas of Mexico that were indeed corrupt and worthy of the ire of Americans. Thus, for many of these papers, the military leaders of Mexico came under the most criticism as they believed that it was the rule by military leaders that had placed Mexico in such a precarious position. For many Americans, the image of Mexico that most received was one of inferiority to that of the Anglo-Saxon populace of the United States. They were inept proprietors of valuable lands that should belong to the United States if the lands were to be utilized to their full potential. While this mainstream narrative fit well within the expansionistic ideology of the president during the

war, James K. Polk, the counter-narrative sought to uphold journalistic integrity over nationalistic pride and aggrandizement. These minority presses realized they faced an overwhelming mass of disagreement from other presses and they sought to provide more complete and factually based descriptions of the Mexican War in ways that attempted to bypass nationalistic pride. As the war came to a conclusion, Americans did not have a universal image of Mexicans. A minority of Americans viewed the Mexican people as relative equals of Anglo Saxons. However, the vast majority of the press depicted the Mexican people as inferior and the manner in which the press arrived and depicted the Mexican people as inferior varied throughout the nation, as some viewed the Mexican people as inferior based only on their racial identity, some on their religious beliefs, and others on the degree of honor in Mexico.

The issue of Texas annexation had been a major one in the United States since Texas had won its independence from Mexican in 1836. While many Americans favored immediate annexation of Texas, Andrew Jackson saw Texas as a potential political problem for his hand-picked successor Martin Van Buren and for the nation as a whole.¹⁸ When it became clear during the 1844 election that the issue of expansion would determine the winner, lame-duck President John Tyler saw the results as a referenda on the issue of Texas annexation and approved the resolution by Congress to annex Texas in the last few days of his presidency.¹⁹ With Texas now a part of the United States, a lingering issue from the Texas Revolution remained. The Velasco Agreement had seemingly brought a *de facto* conclusion to hostilities between the Republic of Texas and Mexico.²⁰ However, an issue that had not been addressed was the boundary between Texas and Mexico. In the Velasco Agreement, Texas had claimed that the boundary between Texas and Mexico was the Rio Grande and not the Nueces River as

¹⁸ Otis A. Singletary, *The Mexican War* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), 19.

¹⁹ Paul Foos, *A short, offhand, killing affair* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 7.

²⁰ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 667.

Mexico understood the boundary to be. However, there were procedural as well as technical concerns with this agreement. The Velasco Agreement had been signed by Santa Anna under duress as he had been forced to sign the treaty after he had been captured after the Battle of San Jacinto. For Santa Anna, in return for the Americans allowing him to live after the battle, Mexico would allow Texas to be independent. When the treaty reached the Mexican government, it was denounced immediately.²¹ But even if the document had been a legitimate treaty, there were still some facts about the agreement that were never properly fleshed out. Mexico had a reasonable belief in the boundary residing at the Nueces River as no Texas settlement or military position had ever been established between the Nueces and the Rio Grande. Thus, when the United States now came under control of Texas, it too shared the assumption that the Rio Grande was the boundary between the U.S. and Mexico. The U.S. sent delegates to Mexico in attempts not only to clear up the issue of the boundary with Mexico, but also in attempts to purchase Mexican landholdings in the present day American Southwest.

When the issue seemed to have run out of peaceful, diplomatic solutions, President Polk sought to assert U.S. control of the disputed territory between the U.S. and Mexico. Polk had organized the Army of Occupation under General Zachary Taylor. The first mission for this army was to assert U.S. control over the land between the Nueces and Rio Grande.²² When Taylor's army arrived in the disputed zone, it met no resistance at first. However, the presence of Taylor's army in the dispute territory brought with it a backlash from the Mexican forces that had been assembled near the boundary as well. Taylor's army sought to blockade a part of the Rio Grande and thus cut off Mexico's access to supplies from the north. Under commonly accepted wartime practices in this period, blockading a river in an attempt to cut off supplies or

²¹ Ibid., 669.

²² Ibid., 744.

information to a foreign city was considered an act of war. Mexican General Arista for Mexico believed if he attacked Taylor's position, he could end the conflict quickly and easily, and his forces were successful in killing a number of Taylor's troops north of the Rio Grande in April of 1846.²³ When Polk heard the news of the hostilities between Taylor's army and the army of Mexico, he utilized this seeming attack to help push through his expansionistic agenda.²⁴ Polk had understood that a victory over Mexico would bring with it vast territorial concessions from Mexico. What Polk had lacked throughout much of 1845 was a motive for going to war with Mexico. With the seeming first attack coming from Mexico and within the assumed U.S. territory, Polk was able to rally support for war. When Polk sought to declare war, he did not do so in a manner similar to other presidents. While Congress reserves the right to declare war, for Polk the situation seemed different. Mexico had already attacked the U.S. army and, in his understanding, invaded U.S. soil in the process. Thus, when Polk sent this information to Congress, he did not ask for their approval in declaring war, rather he wanted Congress to admit that a state of war already existed between Mexico and the U.S. In taking this action against Mexico, many scholars point to Polk as being the first real Commander-in-Chief of the American armed forces.²⁵ Though Congress approved the measure to move toward war, Polk's tactics along with his expansionistic fervor which preceded it led to the war being called "Mr. Polk's War."²⁶

²³ Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 254.

²⁴ David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973), 395.

²⁵ Walter R. Borneman, *Polk: The Man Who Transformed the Presidency and America* (New York: Random House Publishing, 2008), 209.

²⁶ Singletary, 23.

CHAPTER 2. POLARIZING FIGURES: MEXICANS IN THE MINDS OF DEMOCRATS AND WHIGS

With the declaration of war now formal, the U.S. army called forth for volunteers to swell the ranks of the so-called “Army of Occupation.”²⁷ While initial volunteers mainly came from the South, the North would soon pick up as its share of the volunteers shortly after the war had commenced. Volunteers from the North would not cease to match those of the South until the war started to sour in the minds of many in the North. The first official battle of the war highlighted a glaring disparity between the two forces. At Palo Alto, General Zachary Taylor met a contingent of the Mexican army. While outnumbered, Taylor utilized his more advanced artillery to devastate the ranks of the Mexican army from afar. The technological advantage that the U.S. held did not merely include the use of heavy artillery. The U.S. also utilized guns of higher accuracy and durability than those used by the Mexican army, and with the more complete training in these technologies, U.S. soldiers held a definitive advantage in all areas of battlefield combat.²⁸ The disparities were also evident at the economic level. The U.S. had twice the population as Mexico during the 1840s, and the Mexican economy was heavily indebted to other nations.²⁹ The press would take these systemic differences between the two countries and utilize them as evidence for the political rhetoric they espoused. For the Whigs, these differences meant that the U.S. had acted out of sheer arrogance and greed in order to make territorial gains at the cost of the weaker Mexico. The Democrats on the other hand saw these differences as originating from the bottom up. The inadequacy and innate inferiority of the Mexican population had created a country of degenerates that were in need of a new power to stabilize the country. The Democrats believed that the U.S. represented this force that could not

²⁷ Howe, 744.

²⁸ Ibid., 745.

²⁹ Ibid., 746.

only save Mexico from the dredges into which it had fallen, but lift up the Mexican populace in a manner similar to how the Romans civilized parts of Europe.³⁰ Thus, during the Mexican War, Democrats justified the war against Mexico by degenerating Mexicans and Mexican civilization, while Whigs manifested a multiplicity of views on Mexico and Mexicans that reflected the internal divisions over the merits of the war.

The U.S. believed a three-pronged strategy would prove to be the most efficient means of crushing Mexican resistance to the U.S. forces. The first of the forces would be commanded by General Taylor and would focus on northern Mexico, where the Mexican hero and general Santa Anna had stationed much of his troops. The second aspect of the strategy would have General Winfield Scott landing in Vera Cruz and marching toward Mexico City. This march would seem very reminiscent of the march that Hernan Cortez took when he sought to conquer the Aztecs in 1518. The U.S. would gravitate toward this repeat of a past military march and herald themselves as the new conquistadors. The last part of the strategy would take place away from the Mexican core and feature Lieutenant Colonel John C. Fremont marching to take hold of California. California represented the crown jewel for the acquisition of the Southwest for Democratic President James K. Polk. Polk specifically listed New Mexico and California as key areas to bring under U.S. influence during his presidency.³¹ Polk had expected this to be but a brief war. The drastic advantages the U.S. had technologically, economically, and even politically seemed too much for Mexico to overcome. Mexico's control over California and New Mexico had always been comparatively weak, and thus these territories appeared ripe for the picking to Polk. However, there existed one problem for the Polk administration as the war commenced.

³⁰ Justin H. Smith, *The War with Mexico*, v. 2 (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1919), 322.

³¹ Wilentz, 603.

War heroes were popular icons and symbols for political parties in antebellum America. While war heroes held little political power over the presidency after George Washington, the rise of Andrew Jackson ignited a political fervor that rallied masses to the Democratic Party. The Whigs too recognized the power of war heroes as political figures, as the popular catch phrase for the election of 1840 stated “Tippecanoe and Tyler too.” This slogan heralded candidate General William Henry Harrison as the hero of the battle of Tippecanoe for his victory over the Shawnee prophet Tenskatawa in 1811. This tactic found great success against then incumbent president Martin Van Buren, though the Panic of 1837 did not aid in his bid for re-election. As the election of 1848 loomed in the mind of Polk, he recognized a glaring difference between Whigs and Democrats in the standing army. The majority of officers in the army were composed of Whigs or those with political leanings in line with Whig thought. Polk realized that a tidy end to the war would validate his expansionist policy, but at the same time, military victories also increased the likelihood that the Whigs would discover a new William Henry Harrison. Polk believed that both Taylor and Scott could become Whig rivals, so in order to combat the Whig presence in the army, Polk appointed thirteen generals during the course of the war. All the generals that Polk appointed were Democrats, an attempt to create a war hero for the Democratic side and stem the influence of Taylor and Scott.³² The ability of the press in the 1840s to get their constituents to buy into their rhetoric and gravitate toward a particular person as witnessed by the 1840 election highlighted the increased dangers of popularizing a Whig general during the War. With these expanding means of communications and the increased flow of information, the power of the press rose to new heights during the 1840s, and both political parties had recognized the power of the press well before the Mexican War had started. As the war progressed, both parties utilized party affiliated newspapers in order to both draw voters to

³² Howe, 750.

their cause and to shape rhetoric in a way to portray the Mexican War in a way that fit within their respective ideology. Newspapers had been integral parts of the political process since the political and technological developments of the 1820s and 1830s.

The election of 1824 represented a shift in American politics that brought with it an emphasis on democracy defined by almost unanimous white, male suffrage. Andrew Jackson's unpredictable success served notice to the Democratic Party that mass appeal would be the key to political supremacy in the future. The 1828 election had the highest voter turnout up until that time, and the overwhelming success of Jackson in the election brought the concept of popular sovereignty into full effect at the national stage. Jackson's dedication to the idea of popular sovereignty and mass appeal caused a split amongst the then single Democratic Party. Those politicians against what they deemed Jackson's quasi-democracy hoped to uplift the American populace so they could be active participants in the political process, and from these politicians the oppositionist Whig party was born.³³

The Democrats largely backed the idea of Manifest Destiny, considering its origination was from a Jacksonian newspaper in New York, but the Whigs were more reluctant to take the level of control the Democrats sought to exert over the entire continent. The Whigs proved more reserved in their imperial dreams. The Whigs may not have wanted the level of absolute control that the Democrats sought, but the Whigs would have been foolish to ignore the economic boon economic hegemony of the regions held by Mexico could bring to the country as a whole. For the Democrats, their aims were best laid out by the inaugural address of James Polk in 1845. His goals during his presidency were explicit, and he was able to carry out all of them during his one term in office. Polk wanted his administration to acquire Oregon from Great Britain, acquire

³³ Wilentz, 483.

New Mexico and California from Mexico, reduce the tariff, and establish a permanent treasury.³⁴ Polk understood the responsibilities he undertook as the expansionist candidate of the 1844 election, and thus he utilized the power of the press to his political advantage in the situation with both Oregon and Mexico.

Polk's policy of expansionism had to appeal to both the northern factions of his party as well as the southern factions. For the southern faction, the acquisition of territory from Mexico proved to be the key to appeasement, but for the northerners, the acquisition of Oregon from Great Britain proved to be the key to uniting the Democratic Party on a patriotic and expansionistic level. The northern Democrats wanted a conclusion to the Oregon question, with a hope that most of Oregon would enter the U.S. domain with little incident. Polk publically espoused a policy of uncompromising aggression in the negotiations with Britain, but at the same time, Polk was very willing to compromise with Britain privately in order to bring a conclusion to the Oregon question. Conversely, with Mexico, Polk took a very compromising approach toward the Mexican administration publicly, yet in actuality, was very uncompromising in responding to the list of grievances Mexico noted to the U.S. These approaches united the party at the onset of the war. By peacefully coming to terms with the acquisition of Oregon, Polk ensured that Great Britain would not come to the aid of Mexico during the Mexican War.³⁵ Also, Polk proved much more willing to compromise with Great Britain than with Mexico. California held far much more value than the extended boundary of Oregon that would reach up in to British Columbia that he initially pushed for in negotiations. By acquiring the Oregon territory with little international backlash, Polk hoped to do the same with Mexico. The main extent of the backlash for his actions toward Mexico came not from Great Britain or another

³⁴ Ibid., 708.

³⁵ Ibid., 717.

European power; rather it came from the Whig party which found Polk's actions questionable. While the Whigs struggled to critique the actions of a Democratic president, the Democrats utilized the war and its continued battlefield successes to confirm the need of the United States to acquire and control lands in the American Southwest so as to make better use of the resources present there.³⁶

The Democratic Review became the voice of the expansionist Democratic Party in the 1840s thanks to the work of John O'Sullivan, who coined the phrase "Manifest Destiny" for *The Democratic Review*. Before the start of the Mexican War, the Democrats believed that only through the maintenance of a racial hierarchy could national harmony be maintained in the United States. Abolitionists thus were seen as the threat to American solidarity at the start of the Mexican War.³⁷ The Mexican War was sparked by the inability of the Mexican government to effectively control both the Texans and their native populations, chief among them the Comanche.³⁸ This notion came to the fore in Article XI of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which stated that since Mexico could not control its indigenous populations, the United States had to exert control over the region.³⁹ Democrats claimed that territories that had become "disintegrated from [Mexico's] main bulk [should be] converted into a separate state."⁴⁰ The thought behind this statement was that Mexico's claim of treaties setting up a formal boundary between the U.S. and itself were not permanent, and that the inability to control areas under its governance meant that those inhabiting those lands could act independently of Mexico. The Democratic ideology of the 1830s as it related to indigenous populations espoused the idea that a

³⁶ Hietela, 195.

³⁷ "The Abolitionists." *The Democratic Review*, 16:79, January, 1845, Making of America Periodical Database, 4.

³⁸ "The Mexican Question." *The Democratic Review*, 16:83, May, 1845, Making of America Periodical Database, 420.

³⁹ DeLay, 297.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

civilized nation should be able to control its native populations. The Indian Removal Act sought to not only clear the land for white settlement, it also contained within it the racial hierarchy that the Democrats sought to prop society upon. For the Democrats, a country must be ruled by a white, Anglo-Saxon population if the country is to be considered civilized. Thus, in order to best defend their actions in Mexico, the Democrats sought to discredit the Mexican citizenry by noting their “inferiority” and mentioning the positive impact of Anglo-Saxon dominance on the American Southwest. While this focus proved convincing to many Democrats, the Democratic message throughout the course of the war lacked a consistent, political explanation for the reasons and causes of the war. For the Democratic cause, support for the war rested on their ability to denigrate the Mexican populace in comparison to that of the Anglo-Saxon character of the United States.

Before the Democrats could focus their energy on the reasons for the war at the social level, they had to make clear the Democratic intentions of the war with Mexico as it pertained to the national political sphere, even if this opened themselves up to critiques from the Whigs. Whigs’ complaints about the war as a Southern plot were hard to ignore. While the Democrats claimed that the U.S. had shown “generous forbearance” toward the actions taken by Mexico, they failed to discredit any of the grievances Mexico had with the U.S., merely slighting the list as “ridiculous”.⁴¹ The justness of the war could not be doubted according to the Democrats. The Democrats believed that surely an unjust war would have had some prominent statesmen arise to defend the Mexican nation, though the Democrats claimed that none had championed the cause of Mexico.⁴² But even if a politician did attempt to defend Mexico from the U.S. invasion, the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² “The Mexican War: Its Origins, its Justice, its Consequences,” *The Democratic Review*, 22:115, January, 1848, Making of America Periodical Database, 2.

Democrats equally claimed that such an action was unpatriotic.⁴³ For those fearing the war only sought to empower the South on the national political stage, confusion arose with the differing stories the Democrats presented. On one hand, the Democrats stated that the war was not about national aggrandizement and that in no way was the inclusion of Texas and other territory a pro-slavery policy. However, it was also explicitly stated that the territories to be acquired from Mexico were to be made into slave states, as the Southwest was better suited for slavery.⁴⁴ Thus, the Democrats created uncertainty about the true intentions of the war. While the war was a product of the pro-expansionist president James Polk, they claimed in certain articles to be against territorial gain. However, it was Polk's expansionistic policy that garnered him the nomination originally from the Democrats. The inconsistency arises when the Democrats made claims about certain regions of the country being more suitable for slavery, at times claiming the system fit naturally more in the South and the West, and thus it would be wrong to prohibit the practice in the territory. These inconsistencies would later open up discussion on the true nature of the war, but in the 1840s, the focus of the war for the Democrats was not on the political maneuverings of the Democratic Party; rather the party focused on how and why the U.S. should pursue a policy of Manifest Destiny.

By discrediting the Mexican citizenry, the Democrats hoped to show that the acquisition of territory that was assumed to follow the war was a natural cession of territory from a lesser power to a greater power. Democrats hearkened back to the Roman Empire to support how this process was mutually beneficial, highlighting how Rome had civilized most of Europe. To the Democrats, the acquisition of territory formerly belonging to Mexico would also provide more

⁴³ "The Mexican Question," 419.

⁴⁴ "The Wilmot Proviso," *The Democratic Review*, 23:123, September, 1848, Making of America Periodical Database, 221.

progress to the people living there than would have been possible under Mexican rule.⁴⁵ The movement westwards of American citizens brought the added benefit of “industry [which] has raised from the land of its tributary streams, forming the germ of great commerce, which in a few short years will find whitening the Pacific with its canvass.”⁴⁶ Contained also in this is the idea that the settlers would purify the racial makeup of the West. The “Mexican” race was not what many in the 19th century would call pure. Democrats proclaimed that Mexicans possessed “mixed and confused blood.”⁴⁷ The problem of the mixing of blood in the case of the Mexicans came not from the Spanish ancestry, but the indigenous ancestry. While the indigenous racial mixing played a factor in the discrimination toward the Mexican populace, Democrats still did not hold the Spanish in very high regard as a people. They seemed to find a problem in the Spanish people as all former imperial possessions throughout the Americas had been on a course of “degeneration.”⁴⁸ The inadequacy of the Mexican people, according to the Democrats, led to ineffective governance of the territory. Areas outside the core of Mexico, like California, could not be effectively governed. The acquisition of territory raised questions for the Democrats. Acquiring Mexican territory brought with it the Mexican populace living in areas such as New Mexico and Texas. Thus a new problem arose for the Democrats. As the prospects of annexation came closer to fruition, the Democrats had to decide the political status of the Mexican populace it would be inheriting in the Southwest. Democrats opted to exclude Mexicans from the American political realm by questioning their ability to operate within a republic.

⁴⁵ “The War,” *The Democratic Review*, 20:104, February, 1847, Making of America Periodical Database, 99.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ “Annexation,” *The Democratic Review*, 16:85, July-August, 1845. Making of America Periodical Database, 7.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

The inability of the Mexican population to effectively govern their territory brought with it questions about the Mexican citizenry's ability to adequately take on the responsibilities as voters in the American republic. The Democrats focused on the inability of Mexican citizens to make knowledgeable choices as part of the reason to exclude them from the voting process.⁴⁹ For the Democrats, giving any degree of power to Mexicans to self-govern was a grave misstep. The inability of the Mexican people to contain the Comanche had sealed their fate in the racial hierarchy of 1840s America. The Mexican people were a people to be governed, not a people to govern.⁵⁰ However, this idea that the Mexican people needed to be governed did not speak to why the U.S. had claims to the territory. To respond to questions over their motives, Democrats championed the U.S. as a beacon of regeneration for the entire continent. Democrats hoped that by focusing on the regenerative effects of U.S. control of Mexican territory they could effectively stifle any international critiques made about the war.

Democrats sought to create the image of the U.S. as the guiding light for other countries to turn to when attempting to reach a higher degree of civilization. The Democrats crafted the notion that it has always been the duty of great countries to look after and nurture lesser countries.⁵¹ Simple contact with an Anglo-Saxon culture brought with it rapid improvement in character according to the Democrats.⁵² Effective U.S. control over the region brought with it even greater rewards for the people inhabiting the territory. The U.S. brought with it industry, and industry proved to be the gateway to progress.⁵³ The U.S. tried to reach out to the international community in order to plead its case for the benefits of U.S. annexation of Mexican

⁴⁹ "Territorial Aggrandizement," *The Democratic Review*, 16:88, October, 1845. Making of America Periodical Database, 245.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "Administration of Indian Affairs," *The Democratic Review*, 18:95, May, 1846, Making of America Periodical Database, 334.

⁵² "Annexation," 9.

⁵³ "Administration of Indian Affairs, 334."

land. Democrats cited famous Latin American independence leaders like Simon Bolivar to prove that it was the goal of all former colonies of Spain to enter in to the orbit of U.S. control.⁵⁴

While many revolutions in Latin America looked to the U.S. as its model for independence, there was little to imply that they sought acquisition by the U.S. As the war progressed, the rhetoric of the Democratic Party did not change. In fact, it grew bolder in its assertions of U.S. dominance over Mexico.

The success of the U.S. military in reaching Mexico City with relative ease gave validation to the claims made by the Democratic Party. The reason for the success, to the Democrats, was clear. *The Democratic Review* claimed that “race is the key to much that seems obscure in the history of nations.”⁵⁵ For the U.S., their success came from the “Celt, and Roman, and Teutonic, and Norman blood which made them more apt for progress.”⁵⁶ This blunt statement of Anglo-Saxonism highlighted the American supremacist ideology that brought forth the concept of Manifest Destiny. Mexican armies posed little threat to the U.S. as very few people residing in Mexico possessed the European ancestry necessary to foment a respectable opposition. With the invasion by the U.S. well underway, the situation in Mexico devolved into uncertainty. A few radical Democrats believed that with Mexico in disarray, all of Mexico would be appropriate for the taking. There existed no pure and progressive institution in all of Mexico. The Democrats noted that even the Catholic Church could no longer provide any form of stability as it had long since given away its moral obligation for the seat of political power, and the church hierarchy had since become corrupted.⁵⁷ It was the belief amongst the Democrats

⁵⁴ “English and French Intervention,” *The Democratic Review*, 18:93, March 1846, Making of America Periodical Database, 163.

⁵⁵ “Mexico,” *The Democratic Review*, 18:96, June, 1846, Making of America Periodical Database, 434.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ “Mexico: The Church and Peace,” *The Democratic Review*, 21:110, August, 1847, Making of America Periodical Database, 95.

that there needed to be a strong, civilized, stable authority to control the Mexican populace.⁵⁸

The two most logical sources of this stemmed from a European monarchy or annexation by the U.S.⁵⁹ Democrats. believed that only through control by a civilized nation could Mexico rise up from the ranks of the uncivilized. As the United States detested the monarchical systems of Europe, annexation appeared to be the answer to the question over the future of Mexico. The U.S. longed for control over Mexico. With the seeming regenerative power of U.S. culture and the ability to stabilize a country slowly descending in to anarchy, the move toward all Mexico seemed logical. However, the U.S. did not have wholly benevolent reasons for wanting control of Mexico. The economic boon that Mexico could provide to the U.S. was an aspect the Democrats could not gloss over in social regenerative language.

The territory acquired for the U.S. was not the important issue, rather the acquisition of valuable territory proved to be the prerequisite for annexation. The Democrats identified both a social and material value that Mexico could bring to the U.S. The natural resources in Mexico could be put to better use by the U.S., according to the Democrats, thanks to the propensity of the U.S. toward commerce, a propensity Mexico lacked.⁶⁰ For the U.S., access to Mexico's resources would provide an overall improvement economically, and thus, the Democrats believed that if such economic gain could be had, a greater power would naturally use the resources of the lesser power, similar to the way in which a slave and master interacted.⁶¹ The other value provided by Mexico was a vast amount of land that was of relatively little use to the United States. While this seems counter-intuitive to the U.S. criteria for annexation, the land

⁵⁸ Robert W. Johannsen, *To the Halls of Montezuma: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 33.

⁵⁹ "Mexico," 438.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 441.

⁶¹ "Slaves and Slavery," *The Democratic Review*, 19:100, October, 1846, Making of America Periodical Database, 244.

offered itself as a valuable release valve for the South. While the Democratic Party had not wholly become the party of the South, it did have Southern leanings. The Democratic Party still retained some philosophies that Thomas Jefferson made popular, such as the idea of using the lands in the West as a place to relegate its unwanted groups in society. In the mid 1840s, abolition was not yet an idea that could rend the nation. Thus, if abolition were to come about, since many Democrats believed there could be no peaceful coexistence of ex-slaves and former masters, the Democrats hoped that some of the territory acquired from Mexico could be used as a place to discharge former slaves.⁶² The view of race as it related to Mexicans for the Democrats never was in doubt throughout the course of the war. What had been in doubt were the purely political reasons behind the war. The Democrats explanations often proved inconsistent, at times claiming the war was not a move to empower the South politically, while at the same time attempting to assert the natural tendency of the Southwest toward the slave labor system. These causes fell by the wayside, as the Democrats believed that the Mexican citizenry became in more need of U.S. intervention as the war progressed given the continued descent into anarchy in Mexico. The power of Manifest Destiny had been realized in the success of the U.S. in Mexico. The only question that remained for the Democrats would be the exact amount of land gained from the war. While these ideas were being debated amongst Democratic circles, the Whigs struggled to find a consistent voice to express their dissent with the actions of Polk and his administration.

Polk's identification with expansionist policy kept the eyes of the Whigs on his actions in the Southwest. The nature in which hostilities commenced between the U.S. and Mexico, and the way in which Polk went about declaring war with Mexico offered itself up to initial critique from the Whig press over the Constitutionality of his actions. The Whigs utilized this beginning

⁶² "Annexation," 7.

of hostilities as their way to bring forth the Whig stance about the war with Mexico. From this political discussion of the nature of the war with Mexico, the Whigs then began to offer up their policy about the racial others in society, along with the position that Anglo-Americans held in the U.S.

The American Whig Review became a central voice for the Whig Party during the Mexican War. Many scholars of this period point to *The American Whig Review* as the best representation the political and social evolutions of the Whig party from the 1830s.⁶³ Before the official declaration of war, *The American Whig Review* sought to define the Whig stance toward annexation, and at the same time, offer up a glimpse of the paternalistic ideology that defined their relationship with racial others. The crux of the Whig argument against the war came from the Whig ideology concerning outbreaks of war. The Whigs believed that “no war can be justifiable which is not [...] defensive.”⁶⁴ However, there seemed to be a logical flaw in this understanding as Polk had gone to war only after the attack on American troops in the disputed zone between the Nueces and Rio Grande. To counteract this critique, the Whigs believed that the true boundary between Texas and Mexico resided at the Nueces River, as neither Texas nor the United States had ever established a military outpost beyond the Nueces River, an area where a number of Mexican military outposts existed. Not only did the Whigs criticize the manner in which the administration fabricated a defensive reasoning for war, the Whigs criticized the manner in which the war came to be. Under the Constitution, Congress holds the power to declare war; however President Polk merely asked that the Senate recognize a state of war existed, seemingly bypassing the presidential bounds of his power.⁶⁵

⁶³ Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 210.

⁶⁴ “Will There Be War with Mexico?” *The American Whig Review*, 3:2, September, 1845, Making of America Periodical Database 221.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 223.

Much of the critique of the war came against the Polk administration and the debate over the legality and constitutionality of his actions. To the Whigs, Polk represented a grave threat to the concept of a republic the U.S. had hoped to foster since the writing of the Constitution. When Polk believed it would be necessary to take the war to the Mexican populace, the Whigs were abhorred by the actions the president was making the republic take.⁶⁶ The Whigs, however, did not try to portray Mexico as an innocent bystander in the way of Polk's expansionist aspirations. The Whigs noted that the U.S. citizens suffered greatly during the early years of the Mexican republic; however, these injustices were being redressed by the Paredes government in Mexico, an effort unfortunately stunted by the economic downturn in the 1840s in Mexico.⁶⁷ The war did not only represent an internal matter, it also posed problems internationally based on the European backlash to the war efforts of the U.S.

The war with Mexico did not receive positive press coverage in Europe, a fact that the Whigs were more than happy to exploit to point out the "immorality" of U.S. actions in Mexico.⁶⁸ The Whigs worried that this idea of Manifest Destiny would destroy the character of the U.S. throughout the world by creating a nation driven by lust for territory above all else. The problem stemmed from both President Polk and the manner in which the citizens offered themselves up as willing participants in the U.S. efforts along the frontier. The Whigs believed that Polk had gone beyond "any serious dream of any Anglo-American land robber of previous times."⁶⁹ The expansionistic policies of Polk had already been displayed in Oregon with his deceptive politicking with the British. In fact, Whigs claimed the Mexican War was the 54'40"

⁶⁶ "Our Relations with Mexico," *The American Whig Review*, 6:3, July, 1846, Making of America Periodical Database, 2.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁸ "Mr. Slidell's Mission to Mexico," *The American Whig Review*, 5:4, April, 1847, Making of American Periodical Database, 325.

⁶⁹ "The Whigs and the War," *The American Whig Review*, 6:4, October, 1847, Making of American Periodical Database, 334.

of the Southwest.⁷⁰ However, the views of Polk and his ambitions during his term in office did not account for all the actions during the Mexican War. The power of an idea like Manifest Destiny instilled a great deal of Anglo-Saxon pride amongst the American populace. However, this pride proved to be excessive in many regards, and the Whigs feared, if left unchecked, Anglo-Saxonism as defined by Manifest Destiny would lead to the erosion of all the racial others in North America.⁷¹ By this, Whigs feared that the Democrats' stressed importance of Anglo-Saxon identity would fundamentally undermine the prospects of other races on the continent. The political critique of the war rested heavily on the idea that the Mexican War was unjust and that Polk had overstepped his bounds as president for the sake of territorial ambition. The Whigs did not emphasize the racial factors involved in the Mexican War as much as the Democratic press, yet, the Whig press still contained much of the racial ideology the Whig party espoused.

While the Whigs came to be seen by many as more egalitarian in their stances on other races, throughout their politicking, the actions of the Whigs, and especially the Whig newspapers, contained traces of Anglo-Saxonism. In their critique of the war, the Whigs believed that it was the "Anglo-Norman" identity of the U.S. that led the U.S. down the path of conquest.⁷² Thus, the Whigs believed there was an inherent superiority in those of Anglo-Norman descent. In addition to the Whigs beliefs in the character of the U.S., the Whigs believed that Mexico was not a nation fit for U.S. aggression. To them, a war with Mexico was nothing more than an "easy conquest" to help bolster the power of the growing "Southern Empire."⁷³ This idea of an easy conquest stemmed from views about the honor of the Mexican citizenry, an honor that was lacking amongst the Mexican citizenry according to the Whigs.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 335.

⁷¹ Ibid., 338.

⁷² "Will There Be War with Mexico?", 225.

⁷³ Ibid., 227.

Reports coming out about the Mexican citizenry before the Mexican War helped the Whigs establish in the minds of the American citizens who exactly their foe was during the war. Americans reported that when in the presence of Mexicans, they needed to be on their guard as the Mexican soldiers always seemed suspicious. In the minds of many Americans, Mexicans were the evil foil for the United States to play off of during the war.⁷⁴ Many soldiers who worked alongside Mexicans claimed that the Mexican soldier proved to be lacking in ability compared to U.S. soldiers. The Comanche in the American Southwest proved to be more than a formidable foe than the Mexican soldiers. The inability of Mexico to suppress the “threat” of the Comanche proved to be illuminating for the U.S. in regard to the power of Mexico. U.S. soldiers commented on this same sentiment, noting that Mexican soldiers frequently took credit for the doings of the U.S. soldiers in regards to dealing with Comanche raids.⁷⁵ While there was some similarities between the South’s concept of honor and Mexico’s stressed importance of manhood, many of the soldiers believed that the Mexicans made these claims based on deceitful actions and unsubstantiated boasts, thus reflecting the inferiority of their character.⁷⁶ At the start of the war the Whigs provided a critique of the racial others in the American Southwest. However, the newspapers seemed to find trouble in presenting to its readers a coherent image of Mexico and its citizens as the newspaper’s descriptions seemed to criticize the Mexicans as inferior at some points, while praising the Mexican state as a world power in different areas.

The inability of the Whig party to formulate a consistent, clear image of Mexico for its readers created a sense of confusion amongst the readers compared to the relatively clear image painted by the Democrats. The reason for this grappling with the idea of whether Mexico was

⁷⁴ Rodriguez, 17.

⁷⁵ Charles Winterfield, “Adventures on the Frontiers of Texas and Mexico.” *The American Whig Review*, 4:2, October 1845, Making of America Periodical Database, 380.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 381.

indeed civilized or not came from the Whig belief on what made a country civilized. To the Whigs, it was Christianity that made a country civilized. The relationship between Whigs and Catholicism was not consistent throughout the entirety of its ranks, and thus the Whig party vacillated between the Catholic identity of Mexico being a mark of a civilized and an uncivilized people. Still, the idea of Christian nations going to war seemed to be a disturbing circumstance for the Whigs, and thus this led to the belief that Mexico was on the level of other powers in Europe.⁷⁷ However, there were also doubts over the abilities of the Mexican army. The Whigs claimed that it would require a five to one ratio in order for the Mexican army to pose a threat to the U.S.⁷⁸ When discussing the reason for this lopsided comparison, the Whigs looked to the power of religion in inspiring the actions of the U.S. along the frontier.⁷⁹ Implicit in this statement was the idea of Protestantism providing empowerment to the U.S. soldiers, while Catholicism seemed to be lacking in its ability to galvanize the Mexican citizenry. Thus, even on the issue of religion and its relation to civilization, the Whigs were unable to come to a definitive conclusion, citing Mexico's Christian character as a reason not to go to war, but noting Mexico's Catholic identity as a reason for the U.S. success during combat. The inability to provide a clear image of Mexico in their narrative of the Mexican War proved troubling as the election of 1848 loomed. Thus, it would not be on a largely ideological platform that the Whigs would launch their campaign, rather this turn of events forced the Whigs to opt for a candidate of mass appeal to secure the presidency. The Whigs eventually came to a conclusion of how to portray Mexico after a candidate had been chosen for the election of 1848. In the end, the Whigs favored a view of Mexico as inferior to the United States and a belief in the natural inferiority of Mexico.

⁷⁷ "The War with Mexico," *The American Whig Review*, 6:3, June 1846, Making of American Periodical Database, 571.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 572.

⁷⁹ "The Anglo-Saxon Race," *The American Whig Review*, 7:1, January 1848, Making of America Periodical Database, 29.

General Zachary Taylor became the man on whom the Whigs pinned the presidential hopes for the election of 1848. A distinguished war hero during the Mexican War, he hoped to arrest the minds of the people as William Henry Harrison had in the 1840 election. The Whigs noted that his bravery and integrity were above reproach, claiming that a person would sooner see Taylor retreat from a Mexican army than go against the will of the people.⁸⁰ This description of Taylor seemed to speak to his character; it also spoke to the idea that retreating from a Mexican army was a mark of failure. The Whigs avoided critiques that choosing a war hero meant they had supported the war by noting the loyalty of Taylor as a soldier. The Whigs emphasized that as president he would be against wars of aggression and wars for the sake of conquest only.⁸¹ While the Whigs seemed to turn toward the idea that the Mexicans were in some ways inferior, they retreated away from notions of superiority in many ways toward the native populations. The Comanches at the start of the War were the “Arabs of the West.”⁸² This concept of “Arabs of the West” fit along with the idea of Christian identity being a prerequisite for being civilized. However, the Whigs toward the end of the war backed away from this stance when noting the calculated farming techniques of native populations in the newly acquired territories. The Whigs did not deem the native populations in California as civilized as Anglo-Saxons, rather they believed that further investigation of their cultures was necessary in order to make an accurate judgment of their character.⁸³ The picture of Mexico and racial others in society had experienced drastic change in Whig ideology throughout the course of the war. Mexicans had been distrusted at the start of war, were both civilized and inferior toward the

⁸⁰ “The Nomination: General Taylor.” *The American Whig Review*, 8:1, July, 1848, Making of America Periodical Database, 2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸² “Will There be War with Mexico?,” 228.

⁸³ “New Mexico and California.” *The American Whig Review*, 8:5, November, 1848. Making of America Periodical Database, 505.

middle of the war, and, by the election of 1848, Mexicans were once again inferior in the minds of the Whigs. Others, like Native Americans, became more acceptable to the Whig audience. While the Comanche had left the Whigs with a sour taste of Native American culture in the Southwest, the ingenuity of tribes in New Mexico and California redefined the manner in which the Whigs would assess Native Americans. While there was a great degree of variation over the war in regard to racial others for the Whigs, the Democrats did not alter their racial ideology as it related to the Mexican War, rather their images of Mexicans just evolved and found verification during the course of the war.

Going into the election of 1848, the main point of disagreement between the Democrats and the Whigs was the status of the lands to be acquired from Mexico. The Whigs held firm to a policy of “No Territory” originally, espoused originally by Henry Clay, in order to avoid any possible backlash from what they viewed as a war of aggression. Unfortunately, this platform, along with Clay’s nomination for the Whigs, was short lived as the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo’s signing, which brought a conclusion to the war and added a great deal of territory from the Southwest to the U.S. domain, making the policy stance obsolete. From this point, some Whigs adopted a policy of Free Soil. The concept of Free Soil held that future lands acquired by the U.S. should be devoid of slavery. This policy, however, did not espouse racial equality, rather it was part of a bigger program of free labor.⁸⁴ Free Soil had within it the implication that the new territory would be reserved for white settlers only. While the Whigs clamored to find a policy about the future of the disputed territory from the Mexican War, the Democrats merely followed the policy they held at the start of the war. There was some dissent however from northern Democrats over the status of slavery in the newly acquired territories.

⁸⁴ Jonathan H Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery and the Politics of Free Soil, 1824-1854* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina press, 2004), 14.

While most Southern Democrats held on to the idea that the Southwest was naturally inclined toward the institution of slavery, there was some murmurings during the war about a different approach to slavery and expansion amongst northern Democrats. The key figure in this discussion was David Wilmot, a Democratic representative from Pennsylvania. In 1846, Wilmot offered up what has come to be known as the Wilmot Proviso, in which he stated that after the war had come to an end, any territories acquired by the U.S. would be devoid of slavery. While his proviso found traction in the House of Representatives, it was filibustered in the Senate. Southern Democrats could not ignore entirely the policies proposed by northern Democrats, many of whom were loyal followers of Martin Van Buren, and thus they had to strike a middle ground.⁸⁵ Lewis Cass established this middle ground when he coined the phrase “popular sovereignty” to describe the Democrat’s policy toward the newly acquired territories. According to Cass, slavery could be legal in the newly acquired territories until a point in time arose that the legislature would vote on the status of slavery. With these policies platforms established, the parties worked to find the proper candidate to enforce them.

The results of the election seemed to vindicate the Whig’s decision to place Taylor as their candidate. Taylor was able to acquire more electoral votes in both the North and the South compared to Cass. For Polk, the results of the election realized his fear about who was waging the war in Mexico. His war was largely successful, and all of his policy aims had been accomplished during the course of his presidency. However, it was also his war that brought Zachary Taylor’s name to a position of prominence and led to his election in 1848. It was his popularity as a war hero that allowed Taylor to carry key states in the Deep South. The election of 1848 highlighted the power of the Mexican War at the political stage. It had empowered the Whigs to select Taylor in order to cross sectional lines on a war that proved to be a sectional

⁸⁵ Ibid., 129.

issue. Clay's adherence to a policy of No Territory had partially cost him the nomination after the passing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The trends for these policies had been on full display through the political newspapers during the Mexican War.

The Democratic newspapers had focused on the reasons for the U.S. success during the war, a success that empowered Whig generals as national icons, while the Whig newspapers were originally cautious of the war, but adhered to the war hero image when Taylor won the nomination. The Democrats' rhetoric on the inferiority of the Mexican populace spurred on concepts such as Manifest Destiny and allowed policies like No Territory to fall by the wayside. While the Whigs too were critical of the Mexican populace in a more subtle manner, they were also critical of the war's origins and the aspirations of the Polk administration. These critiques and the subtle mentions of white, racial superiority, the policy of Free Soil proved to be a natural extension of the Whig's understanding of the Mexican populace during the war. The biggest difference between the two parties came in the consistency of their viewpoints. The Democrats' stance toward Mexico varied very little from the start of hostilities to the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. While a section of northern Democrats arose during the course of the war to question the existence of slavery for the new territories, there was never a doubt about the addition of new land after the war. For the Whigs, their biggest problem arose with trying to provide a coherent image of Mexico and Mexicans. While critiques of the Mexican citizenry were seldom direct during the Mexican War, Whigs eventually had to opt for such tactics when Taylor won the nomination. Extolling the virtues and character of Taylor came at the expense of the Mexican citizenry, a tactic they viewed viable given his popularity in both the North and the South.

CHAPTER 3. THE TWO MEXICOS: IMAGES OF MEXICO IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH

Just as the political sections of the country jockeyed for control over the fate of the territories to be added, newspapers across the United States fought to showcase what they deemed the correct telling of the Mexican War. The role of the press during the Mexican War varied drastically in the North and South. Outside of New Orleans, the press in the South played a smaller role in shaping the image of Mexico for its readers based on many of the presses' history of disparaging the Mexican population prior to the Mexican War.⁸⁶ The *New York Herald*, the *Washington Union*, and the *New Orleans Picayune* contained the most detailed coverage of the Mexican War. The *Herald* proved to be one of the few papers in the North to have more than one correspondent near the warzone, The *Union* was considered by many to be the organ of the Polk administration and thus had access to the latest intelligence from the War, and the *Picayune* proved to be the central hub for news surrounding the Mexican War.⁸⁷ New Orleans fielded more correspondents than any other newspaper during the Mexican War, and almost every newspaper in the United States received their day to day accounts of the Mexican War from *The Picayune*. But these newspapers would provide a skewed view of the Mexican War, as these three major contributors to the public knowledge of the Mexican War all held varying degrees of Democratic leanings. Horace Greeley's *New York Herald* and the *Boston Daily Advertiser* (the largest newspaper in Boston) sought to provide to other major markets a different take on the affairs in Mexico. Likewise, the *Charleston Courier* represented the heart of newspapers in the South, and at the same time, it offered up its own take on the Mexican War.

⁸⁶ Mitchel Roth, "Journalism and the U.S-Mexican War," *Dueling Eagles: Reinterpreting the U.S.-Mexican War, 1846-1848*, edited by Richard V. Francaviglia and Douglas W. Richmond (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2000), 115.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 104-105.

As the Mexican War started to wind down, the negotiations over peace reflected sectional strife over the War between the North, South, and West. The main issue at hand was the status of the lands in the present day American Southwest. While initial discussions centered on whether or not territory from Mexico should be ceded to the United States, the discussion eventually shifted to the role of slavery in the newly acquired territories. On this issue, sectional alignment more so than political affiliation determined a politician's stance toward the issue.⁸⁸ Northern Democrats and Whigs alike viewed the idea of extending slavery in to the new territories as legitimizing the claims of the South about the inclination of the Southwest toward slavery. Conversely, Southern Whigs and Democrats made historical connections to conflicts over slavery in the 1830s between Texas and Mexico to assert that the new territories would be open to slavery given their geographic location south of the Missouri Compromise Line.⁸⁹ The West more often than not followed a line of reasoning similar to that of the South. Thus, as the war came to an end, and discussion over the future of the disputed Mexican territories became the central focus in Washington, the different sections of the United States sought to assert their case about the role slavery should play. The North favored an approach that would deny access to slavery in the Southwest, or at worst, put the issue of slavery in the new territories to a later vote by a state legislature. The South and most of the West believed that the federal government had no power to restrict slavery in the territories to be acquired during the Mexican War, and Southern politicians vehemently defended the necessity of slavery to maintain the sectional balance in the nation. In making these claims, the description of Mexicans played a central role in justifying the claims. The North indicated that though the Mexican people were an inferior people, they had at least the civility to acknowledge the barbarity of slavery when they abolished

⁸⁸ Hietela, 3.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 214.

it from their territories in 1828. The South on the other hand blatantly disagreed. It was the Mexican's lack of an entrepreneurial spirit and inefficient use of both human and mechanical capital that had led to the degeneration of Mexican society, a degeneration that could have been solved if an economic system similar to that of the South were instated in former territories.

The sectional tension present toward the end of the war was not a new manifestation, the growing sectional conflict had been growing since the late 1820s, and the 1840s provided a war from which the sectional conflict would boil over in to the 1850s. The core dispute between the two sections rested on two main issues: the power of the state and slavery. The former represented the first true break between the North and the South, and the latter became the vehicle in which the former was expressed by the South. The intermingling of the ideas of states' rights and slavery came about due to the conflict in South Carolina over the Tariff of Abominations. The Tariff represented to South an end to the free trade system in which they profited so heavily from. Not only this, the South took exception to the idea that the North's burgeoning business and manufacturing sectors were growing at the expense of the South's. Thus, in South Carolina, politicians began to latch on to the idea of the states being able to nullify federal laws they viewed as unconstitutional, a view that stemmed from founding fathers such as James Madison and Thomas Jefferson. These two ideas came together when John C. Calhoun and other South Carolina radicals asserted that the use of a tariff for protecting business, and not raising revenues, was not only unconstitutional, but it was a direct assault on the slave labor system.⁹⁰ For planters in South Carolina, the attacks seemed to flow logically. The tariff reduced the market demand for cotton and rice, and thus the sellers and their capital was devalued. For many of the big plantation owners, over half their capital was tied up in human

⁹⁰ Howe., 403.

capital, or slaves.⁹¹ The crisis over nullification would not destroy the idea of states' rights and slavery being connected, but it would highlight that the rhetoric of South Carolina did not reflect the whole of the South, as the move toward nullification did not receive widespread support in the South.⁹² However, this did mark a transition in which politicians in the South conducted affairs. The increased expansion of the country opened up more potential conflict over the issue of slavery, and the Mexican War proved to be an event that would lead the U.S. toward the path of Civil War.

The ability of James K. Polk to balance the expansion of the United States between the territorial wants of the North and the wants of the South helped secure his election in 1844. It was these two different, yet similar expansion drives that drove the gap between the North and the South further apart. Polk never claimed that Texas would be reserved for slavery; instead, he asserted during his campaign that the expansionist thrusts of the United States, when justified, would receive the protection of the U.S. government.⁹³ This view appealed to both the North and the South. For Northerners, this meant that Polk would defend the claims of the U.S. in the Oregon Territory.⁹⁴ However, there was some apprehension over Polk's sincerity as his policy concerned the Oregon Territory. Polk combated this uncertainty and stymied fears that he was a proponent of a growing slave empire, an idea that stemmed from Polk's roots as a former slave owner in Tennessee, by aggressively negotiating for Oregon. This doubt made Polk adopt a different style of diplomacy for Oregon and Mexico. For Oregon, Polk assumed a hard-line stance of 54' 40" or Fight! to publicly display his convictions to his political stances. In private, Polk proved to be more conciliatory with Great Britain. In regard to Mexico, Polk took a

⁹¹ James L. Huston, "Property Rights in Slavery and the Coming of the Civil War," *The Journal of Southern History* 65:2 (May 1999), 254.

⁹² Bernard DeVoto, *The Year of Decision: 1846* (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 2000), 12.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 702.

⁹⁴ Hietela, 134.

completely opposite stance. While he seemed to go to war with Mexico only out of defense of the nation, he had understood that the best way to settle the land claims in the Southwest would be to “conquer a peace.”⁹⁵ As the war shifted in to complete U.S. control, the issue that Polk did not address during his campaign came to be the central point of apprehension between the North and the South as the negotiations over peace commenced.

Breaking down the various political presses by sections allows a more unique analysis than that provided by more nationally distributed newspapers. The *Union* and the *Courier* came to be the two strongest voices for the South during the Mexican War. The *New Orleans Picayune* offers a unique example of how the war was portrayed in the South. New Orleans was the source of news as it pertained to the Mexican War. However, the *Picayune* does not follow the exact same trajectory as that of other papers in the South. New York will offer itself up as a peculiar case given the prominence of two newspapers so diametrically opposed to one another. The *Herald* and the *Tribune* both offered drastically different tales of the Mexican War, and thus these two papers reflected the divided nature of New York’s political climate. Finally, the Northeast will be represented by the *Daily Advertiser*, a paper which for the better part of the 19th century worked on monopolizing the newspaper business in Boston. The common threads that these newspapers deal with are the rights of the United States to both Texas and northern Mexico, the state of Mexican society during the war, and the role of the United States in the future of Mexican territory. To aid in the discussion on the rights of the United States to additional territory, a comparison of the newspaper’s stance toward Oregon and toward Texas will help highlight differences in expansionistic policies.

⁹⁵ Pletcher, 602.

The South

The *Washington Union* and the *Charleston Courier* presented themselves as the most dominant voices of the South during the Mexican War. The *Union*, edited by Thomas Ritchie, was considered by the rest of the country to be Polk's personal "organ" for transmitting news. The paper itself did not even begin publications until May of 1845. Given this distinction and its Democratic leanings, the *Union* offered itself up as a main distributor of the news to local papers in the South. The *Courier* did receive a bulk of its news from the *Union*, but it also received news from other papers as well as its own sources in New Orleans, thus allowing for a different take on the Mexican War. While these papers do vary in some respects, for the most part, these two papers present a unified Southern approach to understanding the Mexicans. The Mexicans needed to have their territory taken from them due to their corruption and improper use of Mexico's resources, and as the war progressed, the inferiority that these two newspapers preached added different dimensions to their criticisms, such as noting the Mexicans want for violence. Annexation to these papers was an inevitability, and one that could not happen as quickly as they wanted. Like the *Democratic Review*, the views of papers in the South intensified their claims of inferiority of the Mexican state and populace as the War progressed, given that the victories to the newspapers represented vindication for their claims of Anglo-Saxon superiority prior to the War.

The annexation of Texas first gave insight on to how the South viewed Mexico, and the South almost unanimous believed that Mexico could not be trusted. The two papers described the Mexican government as "faithless" and its politicking done in regard to the annexation of Texas was filled with "perfidy and bad faith."⁹⁶ The main aspect that led to such a corrupt

⁹⁶ "Mexico no. 2," *Washington Union*, 1:9, May 10, 1845, 35.

government was due to what they deemed the “tyranny of Santa Anna.”⁹⁷ Texas, Oregon, all these territories would feature better administration under the United States according to many in the South. But Oregon did not receive the importance that northern newspapers placed upon it; rather a bulk of the newspaper featured the annexation of Texas, and later the annexation of Mexican territory. As the nation moved closer to war with Mexico, the rationale for going to war with Mexico differed slightly between the *Courier* and the *Union*.

For the *Union*, the line of reasoning for going to war differed little from the Democratic rationale of it being a defensive war, but the *Courier* added a different element to the mix: race war. South Carolina’s view on race had always been seen as the most radical of the slave societies in the United States. Part of this radicalism stemmed from the political make up of state government in South Carolina. The coastal plantation owners controlled one entire house of the state legislature, which gave them increased access to political power.⁹⁸ Combined with influential politicians such as John C. Calhoun and Robert Hayne, South Carolina moved to defend slavery (given that their state had the highest percentage of slaves compared to the general population) as rigidly as possible since the late 1820s.⁹⁹ The fear for the people in South Carolina was that Mexicans were going to attempt to create a race war amongst the slave population in the South to detract from the fulfillment of the annexation of Texas. The *Courier* claimed the “yellow Machiavellis of Mexico should grin with satisfaction at the prospect that the hordes of renegade blacks were soon to be set in concert with them plotting and consummating scenes of war and carnage.”¹⁰⁰ The Mexicans had declared any “Anglo-American” institution an enemy of the Mexican state, and thus must be eradicated. This idea that the Mexicans were

⁹⁷ “Affairs of Mexico,” *Charleston Courier*, 43:12,877, January 7, 1845, 2.

⁹⁸ Howe, 401.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 402.

¹⁰⁰ “Later from Texas,” *Charleston Courier*, 43:13,032, July 14, 1845, 2.

either working with slaves or working to instigate slaves to violence kindled some of the greatest fears of many people in South Carolina. For the reason of trying to start a race war, and no attempt by the government to punish these transgresses, the writers of the *Courier* hoped to make an example of Mexico. As formal combat was about to begin, there was little doubt in the minds of the *Courier* and the *Union* that the United States would be triumphant. The reasons for the U.S. triumph rested in certain innate qualities of Anglo Saxons according to these papers.

The idea that the United States was destined to control the entire continent was held by many in the South. This “Manifest Destiny” of the Anglo-Saxons could also be attributed to the blessings Anglo-Saxons believed they had received as a people compared to other races. The *Union* boldly declared as the War began that “every principle of civilization and every attribute of divine power fight on our side.”¹⁰¹ Not only did God favor the American nation, God did not bestow courage or any other beneficial quality to the Mexican populace. Writers for the *Union* claimed that non-Anglo-Saxon races were “satellites destined by Providence to revolve in orbit of these three stars of the New World.”¹⁰² Thus, the Mexican citizenry was destined to serve as second class actors in the coming of the American system, and their lack of courage could do little to halt this inevitability. “The enemy, who has been reported as in readiness to dispute the march of Gen. Taylor’s army, seems to have entirely disappeared on his approach” claimed the *Courier*.¹⁰³ Society in the Carolinas and the society of Mexico could not have been more different according to the *Courier*. While the *Courier* mockingly referred to the fact that in Mexico, statements abounded that “Mexicans know no fear,” they were quick to disparage those remarks and instead lift up their own term to define what true honor looked like: “Carolina

¹⁰¹ “The Call of Crisis,” *Washington Union*, 2:9, May 11, 1846, 1.

¹⁰² “A New Plan of Pacification and Alliance between the U.S. and Mexico,” *Washington Union*, 2: 267, March 12, 1847, 3.

¹⁰³ “Later from Mexico and Texas,” *Charleston Courier*, 44:13,253, April 14, 1846, 2.

chivalry.”¹⁰⁴ “Carolina chivalry” came to represent a person who fought for what they believed in and fought with all their conviction in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, while Mexicans were noted to retreat from a fight when the tides turned against them. While both the *Courier* and the *Union* agreed on the innate differences between Mexicans and Anglo-Saxons, the *Courier* further pressed that mismanagement of natural resources led the United States to take control of areas in Mexico in order to more effectively utilize said resources.

The inefficient use of resources by Mexico stunned the writers of the *Courier*, as the Mexicans were not only improperly managing the precious ores found in Mexico, they were also letting lands fit for cash crops be used for nothing more than subsistence agriculture. In an article published about the future of Mexico in 1846, the first line of the article read “The Gold and silver mines of Mexico continue to produce an immense amount of ore.”¹⁰⁵ From this premise, the article expanded by noting the potential of the mines if they were controlled by “an industrious and enterprising people.” For the *Courier*, Mexicans lacked the necessary faculties to make use of the gold and silver present within its boundaries. The lands, thus, should fall under control of the United States. The abundance of rich resources such as precious ores led the *Courier* to claim that “our war with Mexico is the commencement of a new era in the history of the Anglo-Saxon people.”¹⁰⁶ Not only would the natural resources provide a great boon to the U.S. economy, the agricultural gains could be tremendous as well for the slave plantation system given the weather seeming favorable to the production of cotton in certain areas of the Mexican Cession.¹⁰⁷ While the *Union* refrained from mentioning too much about the want of resources in its goals for the annexation of further territory, it did back up claimants like that of the *Courier*.

¹⁰⁴ “America Victorious in Mexico,” *Charleston Courier*, 45:13,709, October 6, 1847, 2.

¹⁰⁵ “Speculations upon the Future of Mexico,” *Charleston Courier*, 44:13,350, August 6, 1846, 2.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ “From Texas,” *Charleston Courier*, 43:13,105, October 15, 1845, 2.

Throughout the war, the actions of the Mexicans toward the United States, according to the *Union*, the “world will see the injustice of demanding the South to concede they have no portion of territory obtained.”¹⁰⁸ Thus, the *Courier* noted the South’s impulse toward the lands Mexico held before 1845 and the better uses they could be put to, while the *Union* merely fought for the right of the South to make such claims. Both these ideas asserted that the Mexican way of running both an economy and a society were seriously flawed, and had led to an improper allocation and utilization of resources within its borders. In order to remedy the situation, the United States needed to transfer its “Anglo-Saxon” institutions and character for entrepreneurial behavior in to the former Mexican lands in order to best harness the potential of the land. While the two papers fought to explain why the post-war map should be shifted in favor of the United States, the image that these two papers left of Mexico left nothing to be desired as they both polished their image of Mexicans as inferior throughout the final stages of war and its resolution.

The prospects of Mexico looked dim as the conflict came to a close; what little hope there was for Mexico rested in the hands of the Anglo-Saxon conquerors. Mexico’s hope for improvement rested not internally, but externally through integration with the Anglo-Saxon people. Mexico would remain “semi-civilized” until such a time that the “present race is ousted, or, by intermixed, with a better blood.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, the innate qualities of Mexican citizens, with their “mixed’ blood could not raise up Mexico from its present condition, unless the reins of power shifted to a better suited people such as the Anglo-Saxons, or there was intermarriage to integrate Anglo-Saxon blood into Mexican society. While this may seem counterintuitive, and include the idea of tainting the blood of Anglo-Saxons, claims existed about the scant traces of Gothic-related blood in at least a portion of the Mexican citizens, and it was this trace amount

¹⁰⁸ “The Prosecution of War,” *Washington Union*, 2:218, January 11, 1847, 3.

¹⁰⁹ “Mexicans were in the habit of propitiating the evil spirits,” *Washington Union*, 4:9, May 11, 1848, 3.

that would prove the rationale behind some of the intermarriage.¹¹⁰ The imagery that papers like the *Courier* created painted a picture of how the U.S. was the only hope for the Mexican populace. Surveying a battlefield, a reporter described the remains of a Mexican palace used as a defensive position as a “gloomy monument of Mexican servility and imbecility [but] the flag of the “Stars and Stripes” waves over it.”¹¹¹ With this picture, there was hope that the American people would relieve the Mexican lands of the dreary nature they were destined to inhabit. These images by these two papers hoped to describe a Mexico so in need of help that annexation of Mexico would prove to be a necessity. The disagreements would then begin from how much territory would need to be annexed by the U.S. Some like the editors of the *Courier* and Calhoun argued only for taking of lands devoid of Mexican citizenry, while some in the *Union* and other Democrats hoped to incorporate as much territory as possible, some even going as far as to propose all of Mexico being annexed.

The image of the Mexican citizenry had not wavered from the start of the war for the readers of the *Courier*. They were the inept keepers of natural resources before the conflict had begun, and as the conflict intensified, they were seen as a people lacking in every characteristic necessary to be a civilized people. The only thing that truly changed was the paper’s portrayal of Anglo-Saxon charity. While the beginning of the War, the papers merely claimed that they wished to see the resources of Mexico put to better use or threats of an potential race war instigated by Mexico, as the war dragged on and came to a conclusion, the press started to talk about the hope of rehabilitating the people of Mexico through the introduction of Anglo-Saxon control and possible annexation. When the issue of annexation became the issue for Democrats, the issue fragmented members of the party. Some claimed that the whole of Mexico should be

¹¹⁰ Horsman, 241.

¹¹¹ “Later from Mexico,” *Charleston Courier*, 45:13,583, May 11, 1847, 2.

taken, while some like Calhoun felt some reservation at the thought of adding a great deal of what they deemed “confused blood” to the American populace. But underpinning all their discussion was the idea that it was the right of the superior races to rule over the inferior races in some fashion.¹¹²

New Orleans: The News Hub

This Mexican War in many ways was a war of the West. It was fighting for the expansion of the United States along its southwestern borders. New Orleans in particular took advantage of its geographic location along the Mississippi to become the definitive news source on the Mexican War.¹¹³ The *New Orleans Picayune* became the official news source for many of the other papers in the United States. The *Picayune* employed more field reporters than any other paper in the United States. Edited by F.A. Lunden and George Wilkins Kendall, Lunden did the bulk of the editing for the *Picayune* as Kendall was the most prominent field reporter for the *Picayune* during the Mexican War. Given their position as the source of the nation’s news about the Mexican War, the *Picayune* presented a less extreme version of events than did the South. Prior to the War, the *Picayune* believed there was hope for Mexico to redeem itself, with the aid of foreign powers such as the United States, but this view shifted drastically after the fall of President Herrera from power, and resulted in the *Picayune* following a similar model to that of the *Union*, but pressed further the point about how the expansion of the United States and annexation of parts of Mexico would benefit the country as a whole and the Mexicans as well. Also, uniquely among the *Picayune*, the paper retold and reprinted articles of Mexican newspapers, and concluded that the Mexican press was merely a puppet of the corrupt government officials.

¹¹² Horsman, 240.

¹¹³ Roth, 105.

Prior to the annexation of Texas, the government of President Herrera offered hope to the editors of the *Picayune* about the potential for Mexico to rise in to the ranks of the civilized countries of the world. Jose Joaquin de Herrera began his second term as president of Mexico in December of 1844, but he only lasted over a year in office due to being seen as too conciliatory given the rise of anti-American sentiment in Mexico. During this time, the *Picayune* painted him as a potential savior for Mexico since they believed “Herrera [was] dictated by real humanity and patriotism.”¹¹⁴ More importantly than his character, his foreign policy meshed well with that of the United States. They believed that the “humane designs of [Herrera’s] government and its willingness to listen to the representation of foreign powers” would allow Mexico to rise up from its present condition.¹¹⁵ Thus, the *Picayune* worked to showcase Mexico as a country on the mend. While the past governments, especially those of Santa Anna, had been keep Mexico in a state of semi-civilization, Herrera’s government’s seemingly pro-U.S. stance offered up hope about the regeneration of the Mexican state. As the issue of Texas annexation passed through Congress, the true test of Herrera’s government came to pass. The *Picayune* hoped that “if Mexico can consolidate and keep together her present confederacy, without looking this side of the Rio Grande, she will do well.”¹¹⁶ Imbedded within this statement was the idea that conflict could become possible as the *Picayune* did not doubt that the boundary between the U.S. and Mexico had been the same boundary between Texas and Mexico, the Rio Grande, not the Nueces River. However, the honeymoon period for Herrera’s government would not last long in the minds of the editors for the *Picayune*. The annexation of Texas incited elements in Mexican society to re-emerge, such as Santa Anna. This created chaos and pressure on the Herrera government, and forced the Mexican government to become less favorable to American

¹¹⁴ “From Mexico,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 8:304, January 14, 1845, 2.

¹¹⁵ “Mexican Affairs,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 8:305, January 15, 1845, 2.

¹¹⁶ “Late from Mexico,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 9:32, March 8, 1845, 2.

influence in the region. This change in policy led the *Picayune* to cease its pro-Herrera rhetoric and instead adopt a rhetoric about political corruption abounding on all levels of Mexican government.

The annexation of Texas proved to be the breaking point for the Herrera government, and thus it became the turning point in the detailing of Mexican government for the writers of the *Picayune* as well. No longer was the Herrera government full of “humanity and patriotism,” rather it was now full of political corruption brought on by the seedy politicians who sought to take advantage of the Mexican populace. The editors of the *Picayune* were astonished to see that Mexico seemed to be preparing for war. To them, “Mexico [...] [doesn’t] appear in any manner competent” to declare war on the United States.¹¹⁷ Not only did the *Picayune* believe the Mexican state was in such flux that they could not muster up significant force to confront the United States, they believed that the war’s intentions reflected an inherent dishonesty amongst the major political elements in Mexico. They believed these political actors “would not hesitate a moment about plunging the country in a war [...] for the sake of the opportunity it would afford to slip some of the money [...] into their own pockets.”¹¹⁸ The *Picayune* hoped to foster an image of the Mexican politician as not only being incompetent, but also greedy in ambition. Thus, the *Picayune* believed that it was not the actual people that caused the War that were being punished, rather the general populace of Mexico was suffering due to the actions of its political leaders. Even as troops moved closer to the Rio Grande and prepared to take up defensive positions against the Army of Occupation, there was little to shake the minds of the editors of the *Picayune* about the chances Mexico had against the American army. Upon witnessing the camps of Mexican soldiers, the *Picayune* claimed they consisted of “ill-clothed, half-fed, without

¹¹⁷ “Later and Important from Mexico,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 9:191, September 7, 1845, 2.

¹¹⁸ “News from Mexico,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 9:160, August 1, 1845, 2.

discipline, unexercised, and poorly commanded” troops.¹¹⁹ As 1845 came to a close, the thought of a war with Mexico seemed preposterous given the lack of an army comparable to General Taylor’s and a mismanagement of government and political corruption that sapped the country of potential effective leadership during the potential crisis. War, however, would soon arrive, and the rationale for such a war mirrored that of the *Union* with claims of utilizing resources to a greater degree and finally receiving compensation for Mexican debts.

The U.S. claimed that it had gone to war partially to seek compensation for over 5 million dollars worth of Mexican debt that, the U.S. claimed, Mexico had no intention of paying off. The *Picayune* believed that the U.S. had a right to seek compensation through land acquisition from Mexico. By refusing to pay back its debt to the United States, Mexico seemed to the *Picayune*, to attack the standing of the United States in the world. They claimed that “had [American] demands been held by citizens of France or England, they would have long ago have been satisfied and secured.”¹²⁰ Thus, the press emphasized that the claims and grievances of the united States did not hold the weight in Mexico as would countries in western Europe. The *Picayune* believed the forbearance had gone far enough in concern to Mexico as, for the United States, “it has ceased to be either magnanimous or merciful to respect the imbecility of the Mexican government.”¹²¹ But while the loans provided a political reason for the war with Mexico, there existed social and economic reasons tied in with beliefs in Mexico’s economic backwardness and the power of Manifest Destiny. As the prospects of war loomed, the *Picayune* discouraged readers from looking upon this conflict with doubt as “we ought to rejoice, as the vast and fertile plains of that country must pass into [American] possession.”¹²² Thus, like the

¹¹⁹ “Mexican Items,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 9:219, October 10, 1845, 2.

¹²⁰ “Claims upon Mexico,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 9:200, September 18, 1845, 2.

¹²¹ “Mexican and American Affairs,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 10:10, February 5, 1846, 2.

¹²² “Mexican Items.”

Union, the lands of Mexico represented untapped potential, that the Anglo-Saxon way could put to full effect. But this victory did not just benefit the agricultural community of the United States, the *Picayune* tried to represent most of Mexico as a friend of the United States, and a people waiting patiently for annexation. “All the Mexicans, save the military, would welcome the “Star Spangled Banner,”” rang the *Picayune* as they tried to establish that the Mexican War would be short-lived given the propensity of most of the Mexicans to prefer the orderly and efficient government of the U.S. compared to the tyranny they had experienced under the constant stream of corrupt leaders.¹²³ However, this delusion about the wide-spread acceptance that the soldiers would receive proved short-lived, and with this delusion crushed, the *Picayune* entered a brief period in which the character of the Mexican citizens came under heavy criticism.

Santa Anna’s popular and polarizing presence in Mexico worried the editors of the *Picayune*, and as the people of Mexico seemed to gravitate toward Santa Anna, the press moved toward denigrating the Mexican populace in a similar manner to the way they had done with Santa Anna. The biggest fear for the *Picayune* was if Santa Anna returned to Mexico and used his polarizing nature to rally Mexicans to his cause, and unfortunately this came true when Santa Anna reneged on a promise to the U.S. government to bring about a peaceful end to the war for letting him pass by their blockade to return to Mexico.¹²⁴ This move upset the *Picayune*, who in the past described Santa Anna as having a “career stained with peculation, extortion, tyranny, and bloodshed.”¹²⁵ When the decision was made, they reminded their readers that Santa Anna was a man of pure deception, or as they put it “he is a monster of duplicity, and his affect reluctance to assume the reins of power at once and openly may be a subterfuge” to break the

¹²³ “Later from Tabasco,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 10:157, July 28, 1846, 2.

¹²⁴ Otis A. Singletary, *The Mexican War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960) 27.

¹²⁵ “The Fate of Santa Anna,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 9:89, May 8, 1845, 2.

promises made to the United States.¹²⁶ As support for Santa Anna continued to flow from the Mexican people, and a new army had been formed to combat General Taylor, the *Picayune* turned its attention to not just disparaging Santa Anna, but the whole of Mexico as well. The people of Mexico were no longer the people that opened their arms to the United States, they were stubborn, half-civilized people that needed to be taught a lesson. In order to bring about a resolution with Mexico, the U.S. must recognize “the impossibility of having a good understanding with Mexico before giving her a sound drubbing.”¹²⁷ However, this attack on the Mexican citizens in general was short lived. The *Picayune* did as few other newspapers did during this period, they partially reversed the nature in which they had been characterizing the Mexican citizens during the War.

On November 5, 1846, the *Picayune* ran an article that served as the turning point in their description of Mexican citizens. Entitled “Later from Mexico,” the article examined how the *Picayune* had been unfair in its characterization of Mexican citizens and that the Mexican populace deserved more credit across the United States. They identified what they considered a problem for the United States during the war, their “national weakness—an overweening vanity and self-esteem.”¹²⁸ Likewise, in regard to the Mexican people, they believed that “every step in the progress of the war increased the respect which we should feel for their military qualities.”¹²⁹ The resilience of the Mexican army in the face of overwhelming American victories proved to be a point in which the Mexican army should be honored. The article concluded with a hope for the *Picayune* going forward. “We sincerely hope that we have now been taught to avoid the fatal

¹²⁶ “More on the Mexican News,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 10:200, September 16, 1846, 2.

¹²⁷ “The Mexican War,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 10:86, May 5, 1846, 2.

¹²⁸ “Later from Mexico,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 10:243, November 5, 1846, 2.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

error of despising our foe.”¹³⁰ While this did not mean that the *Picayune* would shift its attention to more pro-Mexican viewpoints, it did mean that the attacks on the character of Mexican citizens and the Mexican political system would be less severe going forward.

The attacks on the Mexican citizenry largely ceased following the printing of the aforementioned article in late 1846, and instead, the *Picayune* sought to highlight the valor and the achievements of the U.S. soldiers. At the Battle of Cerro Gordo, the *Picayune* described the end of the battle as “at the moment when the energy of the heroic Anglo-Saxon valor of our men have surmounted their defenses.”¹³¹ The only attacks that the *Picayune* leveled against the Mexicans was against their militaristic leaders. The *Picayune* hoped that war would continued until the “whole, sincere, Mexican federalists race of military tyrants [would be] exterminated.”¹³² While the *Picayune* left its readers with a hopeful view on the future of Mexico, it did note that there existed many destabilizing elements in the country still such as rogue groups of bandit and highwaymen that have gone unchecked. While this narrative had dealt with the Mexican populace, the *Picayune* had unique access to much of the Mexican press during the time of the war, which allowed it to offer its own critique in the manner in which the Mexican press, especially in Mexico City, was used.

The Mexican press offered glimpses of why the U.S. had to go to war and at the same time offered insights on to why the war with the United States lingered as long as it did. The *Picayune* was one of the few newspapers that sought out fluent speakers of Spanish to add to its core of writers.¹³³ The *Picayune* analyzed the contents of the Mexican press to determine in early 1846 that the state of Mexico was in no condition to oppose Texas annexation. The editors

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ “Battle of Cerro Gordo,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 11:84, May 2, 1847, 2.

¹³² “From the City of Mexico,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 11:92, May 12, 1847, 2.

¹³³ Roth, 113.

of the *Picayune* noted that it was commonplace to look through a Mexican paper and see “a report of some robbery or other, committed almost in the face of the public authorities.”¹³⁴

While this painted the scene that Mexico was a lawless land, the hope of U.S. intervention did not manifest itself through the Mexican press, a fact that seemed to anger the writers of the *Picayune*. In analyzing Mexican papers, the *Picayune* was astounded to read articles and not see despair, but rather “bitter animosity and hostility characterize every expression of Mexican opinion.”¹³⁵ While the coverage of the Mexican press was absent at times, it did show how the Mexican press reflected the feelings and condition of Mexico. Its newspapers lined with stories of crimes indicated that the state of Mexico in early 1846 was one of lawlessness. However, the press did not give in to the American pressure, and instead showed resiliency in the face of U.S. victories. The press became one of the instruments to keep morale up during the time of war, a morale that would prove to be the key to the *Picayune* changing its opinion on the Mexican citizens.

The *Picayune* offered a very similar starting trajectory to that of its Southern counterparts. It denounced the instability of the Mexican system and noted how the lands they occupied could be put to better use by the efficient American system. It described the Mexicans as imbeciles and in need of a good “drubbing” in order to knock some sense in to them. However, unlike the Southern papers, the *Picayune* departed from this rhetorical style as it noted that the Mexico’s continued resistance to the United States was not some mark of shame or dishonor, but of strong character. While Mexicans were not heralded as equal to Anglo-Saxons, neither were they put to such disgrace as the *Union* and the *Courier* did. Mexicans may not have been the equals to Anglo-Saxons, but they seemed to be strong in their convictions to a cause,

¹³⁴ “From Vera Cruz,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 9:301, January 14, 1846, 2.

¹³⁵ “Mexican Intelligence,” *New Orleans Picayune*, 10:231, October 22, 1846, 2.

and the *Picayune* held out hope that with the elimination of the military leaders that had controlled Mexico for so long, that the Mexican populace could be placed on the road to civilization. Throughout the whole of this change, the *Picayune* made great use of its geographic location to access the Mexican press when possible, and this allowed them to construct the Mexican press as both a reflection of Mexican society and a tool of the Mexican government in keeping the spirits of its people strong in the face of adversity. The *Picayune* accepted its role as the center of news for the Mexican War by thoroughly analyzing the situation with Mexico on a relatively apolitical basis, given the fact that they came to realize the errors of denigrating the Mexican citizens at the cost of journalistic integrity.

The Curious Case of New York

New York offered a different experience in regard to describing the Mexican citizens thanks to having two newspapers which expressed drastically different viewpoints. The *New York Herald* and *New York Daily Tribune* had established themselves by the 1840s as two of the most prominent newspapers in New York, the former of which had a circulation upwards of 40,000 by the end of the Mexican War. These two papers offered insights to two drastically different political factions. The *Herald* edited by James Gordon Bennett followed in the footsteps of the Van Buren wing of the Democratic party and pushed an agenda of imperialism in its discourse. Conversely, the *Tribune* edited by Horace Greeley, served as the base for New York Whigs like William H. Seward.¹³⁶ Comparing these two highlights a similar confusion found in New York at this time as to just who the Mexican people are compared to the Anglo-Saxons. The *Tribune* highlighted the positive elements of Mexican society, and for the most part, avoided critiquing the Mexican system outside of mentioning the faults of some of its leaders, while the *Herald* exuded one of the more radical forms of imperialism found in the

¹³⁶ Howe, 577, 678.

press, and did so by denigrating Mexicans while at the same time heralding Anglo-Saxons as the true masters of the continent.

The two newspapers manifested opposing approaches to the situation with Mexico as it involved Texas; the *Tribune* fought strongly against the annexation of Texas and the possibility of future annexation in the Southwest while the *Herald* believed that the annexation of territory in the Southwest was nothing more than divine destiny. The *Tribune* echoed the sentiments of many when they fought against the annexation of Texas and the border dispute with Mexico. They claimed that those actions represented nothing more than Southern ambition and not national desire. They claimed that the “annexation of Texas is to be driven through the House [thanks to] the ultra slave faction” and that the whole point of such annexation is the “securing of slavery is boldly avowed to be the main object of annexation.”¹³⁷ Meanwhile, their counterpart in the *Herald* believed that the annexation of Texas was a divine necessity, described as “a second step in the great movement of the Anglo-Saxon race on the continent, and will open the way for future generations to carry out the idea started by Alexander Hamilton in 1787 [...] he talked of squinting towards South America.”¹³⁸ While for the *Tribune*, annexation proved nothing more than the want of a small group of influential plantation owners, the *Herald* saw Texas as the gateway in to the future imperial aspirations in Central and South America. Oregon did not offer any faltering viewpoints from these two papers as the *Herald* hoped for “quick and immediate occupation” of Oregon given Britain’s weak bargaining position in their minds, while the *Tribune* saw Oregon as nothing more than a superfluous addition to the United States claiming “England does not need Oregon, neither do we need it.”¹³⁹ Given these two stances on

¹³⁷ “The Texas Compromise,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 4:250, January 25, 1845, 2.

¹³⁸ “Crisis of the Texas Question,” *New York Herald*, 11:27, January 28, 1845, 2.

¹³⁹ “Oregon and the United States,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 4:276, February 25, 1845, 2; “Our foreign relations – Texas and Oregon,” *New York Herald*, 11:45, February 15, 1845, 2.

annexation, the views they created of Mexican citizens in their papers followed a similar model to that of the rhetoric of annexation. The *Herald* emphasized the innate inferiority of Mexicans while the *Tribune* tried to show the Mexican citizenry as nothing more than a people in need of indirect assistance by the United States prior to the war.

The *Herald* and the *Tribune* held two competing views on the best ways for the United States to aid Mexico with its economic stagnation and how the Mexican people fit within the racialized order of the United States. The *Tribune* believed that indirect aid could benefit Mexico. Investment could prove helpful as Mexico was in need of industrial development. When Mexico moved to close off trade with the United States, this act confused the *Tribune*. “Non-intercourse with us [...] would be simply annoying to us, and would accomplish little for Mexico.”¹⁴⁰ Conversely, the *Herald* believed that the fall of Mexico from power was a foregone conclusion. The hopes of Mexico retaining control of all its territories seemed slim given that most of the populace was comprised of a “mongrel race.” Mexico could only be saved by facing the reality that “Anglo-Saxon energy and Anglo-Saxon will, are in the ascendant, and so must ever continue.”¹⁴¹ Thus, the *Herald* concluded that it was fate for the eventual takeover of Mexico by the United States. With these differing ideologies in place, the two papers worked to construct the Mexican character in the minds of their readers as the war commenced.

The two papers had different beliefs about which elements in Mexican society were deemed inferior, while the *Tribune* believed that the inferiority merely rested in certain government officials, the *Herald* did not hold back in labeling all Mexicans as unreliable, greedy, and violent entities in need of defeat in military battles. The epitaphs the *Herald* placed on the Mexican citizens were numerous. They were “ignorant, vindictive, and misled,” as well

¹⁴⁰ “The Attitude of Mexico,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 5:36, June 13, 1845, 2.

¹⁴¹ “The News from Texas,” *New York Herald*, 11:180, July 2, 1845, 2.

as full of a “violent spirit” that had led the country down the path to total destruction.¹⁴² These qualities made for an ill-suited republic. In order for Mexico to withstand its current predicament, it must recognize the fact the “the bastard republic of Mexico appears to be in the last stages of decline, it is a mere skeleton of a nation, and can only be restored to health by the Anglo-Saxon race.”¹⁴³ This imagery of Mexico as a sick person in need of treatment came to be a prominent image for the *Herald*, and these images of Mexico in such a downtrodden condition would continue as the war progressed. The *Herald* left Mexico with two options: it would either be “anarchy or annexation.”¹⁴⁴ The *Tribune* immediately took issue with the manner in which the *Herald* described the Mexicans. “*The Herald* can never lose sight of its cardinal maxim that all mankind are villains.¹⁴⁵” To the writers of the *Tribune*, the *Herald* had been unfair in its treatment of the Mexicans. At worst, the actions of the Mexicans were no better than that of the Americans along the Rio Grande. At best, the Mexicans had acted at times more civil in its negotiations with the U.S. than the U.S. had toward Mexico. While certain leaders had attempted to harness anti-U.S. sentiment, the *Tribune* did not appreciate that leaders were acting “in utter desperation to rush into a forceful conflict” just for the sake of public support.¹⁴⁶ While government officials were merely seeking support, the officials were at least open in the manner in which conflict would begin. During the initial skirmishes near the Rio Grande, the *Tribune* took issue in the manner in which hostilities erupted. “Mexico hesitated, inquired, remonstrated, forbore, and at least gave formal notice that if our aggressive measures were persisted in, she would consider war.”¹⁴⁷ The *Tribune* sought to describe the Mexican government, if not

¹⁴² “Our Relations with Mexico,” *New York Herald*, 11:204, August 16, 1845, 2; “War with Mexico –Another Step,” *New York Herald*, 11:209, August 21, 1845, 2.

¹⁴³ “News from Mexico and Oregon,” *New York Herald*, 11:246, September 17, 1845, 2.

¹⁴⁴ “Monarchy in Mexico,” *New York Herald*, 12:88, March 30, 1846, 2.

¹⁴⁵ “War and Politics,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 5:187, November 14, 1845, 2.

¹⁴⁶ “Our Relations with Mexico,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 5:254, February 2, 1846, 2.

¹⁴⁷ “Our Country, Right or Wrong,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 6:28, May 12, 1846, 2.

efficient, at least considerate and following in the civilized manner of negotiations. While the *Herald* believed this war held only positive benefits, the *Tribune* resisted from giving any positives from the loss of life, as the paper itself proved to be against all wars that were not defensive. Instead of denigrating Mexican citizens, the *Tribune* felt pity for the condition of their lives in the current situation.

As hostilities commenced, the rhetoric of the two newspapers wavered very little in regard to the tone of their writings; however the *Herald* at least admitted for a brief moment in time that maybe they had underestimated the power of the Mexican people and the pedestal on which they had placed the Anglo-Saxon race. Prior to the Battle of Palo Alto, the prospects for an American victory did not rest on the military planning or merits of its commanding officers. The position General Taylor selected proved to be a precarious one, and the U.S. victory at Palo Alto merely added to the growing popularity of General Taylor. However, before victory had been assured, the prospects of a Mexican victory at Palo Alto shook the foundations of the beliefs of the *Herald*. The easy conquest they had predicted seemed to be a complete miscalculation as news of troop positioning reached the *Herald*. Upon receiving this news, the vanity to which the *Picayune* spoke of as America's greatest weakness cropped up in their articles. "What will European nations and particularly England think of us after such an exhibition of weakness?"¹⁴⁸ The *Herald* scrambled to rationalize the present situation with Mexico. They rationalized this potential threat in two ways: by placing the blame of General Taylor's troop movements on the national government and by briefly bestowing praise upon Mexico. For the *Herald*, it seemed obvious that the "imbecility and folly of the government" led to General Taylor being placed in such a precarious position.¹⁴⁹ With war now seemingly

¹⁴⁸ "The News from Mexican War at Last!," *New York Herald*, 12:129, May 10, 1846, 2.

¹⁴⁹ "The War with Mexico," *New York Herald*, 12:130, May 11, 1846, 2.

inevitable, the war would take place not between the American republic and the “bastard republic” of Mexico, rather it would be “the two greatest republics in the world [...] at war.”¹⁵⁰ This brief interlude from the *Herald*'s rhetoric lasted a mere four days, but it marked the only departure from its imperialistic rhetoric in the entire war. Less than a month after the formal declaration of war, the war did not commence due to the “imbecility” of the government, rather they described the beginning of the war as being “most brilliant opened.”¹⁵¹ This revisionist approach to the start of the war marked a return to the traditional rhetoric of the *Herald*, and once again placed the *Herald* and the *Tribune* on opposite ends of the spectrum on describing the Mexican citizenry.

The *Tribune* believed that the United States should not be attempting to vilify the Mexican citizens, instead they should realize the position of Mexico's citizens during the War and sympathize with them, while the *Herald* believed that nothing Mexico had shown was deserving of pity in any degree and that the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons were rectifying the wrongs in Mexico. While other newspapers remarked about the poor condition of the Mexican soldiers, they used that to describe the inferiority of the Mexican army. For the *Tribune*, the ragged nature of the army highlighted the hardships of the Mexican citizens. “We think not or care not that when an army begins to starve, the people must have starved already.”¹⁵² The manner in which the U.S. responded to the hardships of Mexico showed not the superiority of Anglo-Saxons, rather it highlighted their brutality. The *Tribune* questioned why Americans should “shed the blood of Mexicans because their impoverished, misgoverned, oppressed country cannot pay us what she owes.” They further question “would it be worthwhile to

¹⁵⁰ “War Proceedings,” *New York Herald*, 12:133, May 14, 1846, 1.

¹⁵¹ “The War with Mexico,” *New York Herald*, 12:157, June 8, 1846, 2.

¹⁵² “Christianity and War,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 6:45, June 1, 1846, 2.

exterminate any other people in order to have [these Anglo-Saxons] expand and multiply.”¹⁵³ Thus, the *Herald* believed that Anglo-Saxons and concepts of Anglo-Saxonism had no better right to expand and multiply as any of the other races, specifically the Mexican people in the circumstances of the time. For the *Herald*, the Mexicans fell further in to ill-repute in their eyes. Not only did they lack the qualities of honesty and reliability, the *Herald* went on to express the divine order of how countries should interact while at the same time depriving the Mexican citizens of their manhood by openly questioning it in their press. The ordering of society was being put in the right place according to the *Herald*, as during the current age, as the more “civilized” countries seemed “predestined to draw gradually within the circle of their own domain the control of the less advanced territories.”¹⁵⁴ While repeatedly informing its readers about how the world should be ordered by the great powers, the *Herald* further attacked another staple of Mexican honor by questioning their manhood. Anecdotal stories offered up the perfect medium for which the *Herald* to show the utter lack of any manhood by the Mexican people. The *Herald* told the tale of a woman staying at an American encampment set up across the river of a Mexican army, who begged “if the General would give [me] a good strong pair of tongs, [I] would wade that river and whip every scoundrel.”¹⁵⁵ Not only was it a woman who could seemingly easily defeat the Mexican army, it was a woman armed with merely what she could grab, thus creating this image of the Mexican army as lacking any sort of manhood and placing them in the eyes of the readers, as below that of even women in society. These two papers fought for the proper treatment and imagination of the Mexican citizenry in the minds of New Yorkers. While the *Tribune* pleaded for signs of sympathy for an oppressed people that were

¹⁵³ “Who urge on the War?,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 6:52, June 9, 1846, 2.

¹⁵⁴ “The Progress of Civilization – The Wars of the Great Powers of the Earth,” *New York Herald*, 12:268, October 6, 1846, 2.

¹⁵⁵ “The Mexican War,” *New York Herald*, 12:201, July 21, 1846, 1.

living under harsh conditions, the *Herald* reminded its reader about the proper ordering of society, and at the same time took jabs at traditional elements of Mexican honor by questioning their manhood. As the war came to close, these two papers continued their divergence in the descriptions of the future of Mexico.

The end of the war revealed several facts to the two different newspapers, the *Tribune* believed that Mexico had every right as a people to continue to exist, and to continue to exist independently of the United States, while the *Herald* believed the results of the war vindicated their stance that the Mexicans were in position to be in control of any amount of territory. The *Tribune* believed the end of the war could not arrive quickly enough. The War had proven nothing for the *Tribune*; in fact, the continuance of the War seemed to do nothing for the Mexican people but cause then needless harm. “Let us not make our superiority the reason of her further misery” implored the *Tribune*.¹⁵⁶ The supremacy of the Anglo-Saxons came under severe criticism when the temporary government in New Mexico was overthrown. This overthrow highlighted that the Mexican people were not some weak people; they were a strong, independent people who were proud of their identity as Mexicans. “Can any man pretend hereafter to doubt that nine tenths, probably ninety-nine hundredths of the people of New Mexico choose to be Mexicans and loath the supremacy of the United States?”¹⁵⁷ As the treaty between the two countries became more of a reality, the *Tribune* hoped that the Mexicans would be recognized as an independent people, and not be denigrated because the United States inspired such hatred of themselves. As shown in New Mexico, the *Tribune* highlighted that the people of Mexico “choose to be Mexicans, and ought to be allowed to be.”¹⁵⁸ *The Herald*, on the other hand, believed that the war had been a proving ground for many of the racial theories that

¹⁵⁶ “Oregon and the Mexican War,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 6:238, January 12, 1847, 2.

¹⁵⁷ “The Carnage of Santa Fe,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 6:298, March 19, 1847, 2.

¹⁵⁸ “The Hope of Peace,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 7:190, November 18, 1847, 2.

had permeated from before the war. “The war as sufficiently revealed to the world that the singularly mixed race inhabiting the Mexican territory have not [...] had any existence as a nation.”¹⁵⁹ The issue of annexation then cropped up. The *Herald* originally believed that most if not all of Mexico should be taken, but rationalized the course taken by the federal government with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo by stating that the inferiority of the Mexican people might be more powerful than the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons. “Perhaps it is better that we should swallow [Mexico] by separate and distinct mouthful, for fear it might injure our own digestive organs.”¹⁶⁰ These two papers created two lasting images of Mexico for the people of New York. The *Herald* maintained that only through annexation could the Mexican people be saved, while the *Tribune* noted that the Mexican people were a very proud people and had freely chosen to remain Mexican, rather than buy in to the rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon superiority and the benefits of annexation.

These two papers highlighted the political split that appeared in New York during the 1840s. Martin Van Buren’s faction in the Democratic party still exerted significant power, while the growing Whig factions would eventually be converted to bases for Republican support by the mid 1850s. These two papers thus crafted two largely different narratives about the Mexican War. The *Tribune* expressed throughout its entire run during the Mexican War that the people of Mexico were fiercely independent people, and the conditions under which they lived were due to no fault of their own, rather the fault of the leaders that had governed unwisely. The *Herald* completely disagreed with those sentiments, believing in a racialized order of society with the Anglo-Saxons in control of the lesser races of the world. Despite a brief period in which the *Herald* doubted their own rhetoric, Mexican inferiority and Mexico’s future inferiority were a

¹⁵⁹ “The War with Mexico – The Mission of the United States of the North,” *New York Herald*, 13:163, June 16, 1847, 2.

¹⁶⁰ “The Treaty Ratified – Peace with Mexico At Last,” *New York Herald*, 5036, March 12, 1848, 2.

fact if the United States did not intervene and exert its influence over the territory. Thus, these two papers created two different Mexicos, one its readers should feel sympathy for as it was being oppressed both by its own governments and the greedy ambition of the United States, while the other Mexico was one of deprivation and inferiority brought on the natural tendencies of the “mixed blood” of its people.

New England

The *Boston Daily Advertiser* spent much of its time in the 19th century consolidating other newspapers in Boston in attempts to become the definitive news source in Boston. It succeeded in incorporating the *Boston Patriot* and *Boston Gazette* in to the *Advertiser*. Edward Everett Hale served as editor for this Whig paper during the time of the Mexican War. The role of Mexicans and the views on expansion drastically shifted between 1845 and 1848. The *Advertiser* believed it was within the right of the United States to take both Texas and Oregon, but it shied away from taking any portion of Mexico after the war. Also, Mexico and the Mexican state were seen to be semi-civilized, but as the war concluded and peace talks began, the *Advertiser* portrayed Mexicans as unworthy as being a part of U.S. society, and they did this in an attempt to dissuade politicians from incorporating them in to the United States. The growing field of phrenology, or study of the brain to determine differences in races, came to affect the *Advertiser*'s view on Mexicans, as the paper features articles on the subject quite frequently, and the movement toward phrenology as a legitimate science had taken off in the 1820s and 1830s in the United States.¹⁶¹ The *Advertiser* reflected a great portion of northern Whig ideology with its opposition to the expansion of the United States after the War, but it did place more emphasis on race given its commitment to the expansion of the field of phrenology through exposure in its newspaper.

¹⁶¹ Horsman, 57.

The *Advertiser* believed that both Oregon and Texas rightfully belonged to the United States, and showed little difference in addressing the two cases. For Texas, the editors believed that Texas was “an integral portion of the American Union.”¹⁶² For Oregon, they sounded a very similar rhetoric, claiming that the claim by the United States to Oregon was without question.¹⁶³ Unlike the *Tribune*, the *Advertiser* saw no problem with the expansion of the United States as long as the fighting had already been taken care of in the case of Texas, or the territory could be acquired with little problem through peaceful negotiations as with the Oregon territory. While this expansion proved to be acceptable, the possibility of expansion in to Mexico would bring with it too many problems to be deemed acceptable by the people of New England.

Further expansion of the United States in to Mexico struck the *Advertiser* as potentially dangerous due to the character of the Mexican population. But the character of the Mexican populace was not the only concern. Before the War had even started, the *Advertiser* expressed concern that the power of the West would grow too powerful in relation to the rest of the country if expansion continued unabated.¹⁶⁴ While this cause began before the course of the war, the ideology that dominated at the end of the war was the belief that the Mexican populace would prove detrimental to the character of the United States. The *Advertiser* showed its true belief on the character of the Mexican citizenry in its rationale for not wanting territory from Mexico. They claimed that “We want none of [Mexico]. We cannot hold you as a colony, you need only read our newspaper to see that we despise you as a sister. We have territory enough, and we feel our people are a great deal better, wise, and stronger than yours.”¹⁶⁵ This idea reflected the problem with Mexico, while some support was necessary, it should not be long term. Whigs

¹⁶² “Is Texas a Part of the United States?” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 66:20, July 24, 1845, 2.

¹⁶³ “The Oregon Question,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 65:95, April 23, 1845, 2.

¹⁶⁴ “Annexation of Texas” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 65:41, February 17, 1845, 2.

¹⁶⁵ “The Objects of War,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 70:24, July 29, 1847, 2.

believed that any attempts to incorporate the bulk of Mexico could potentially spell the end of the republican form of government as the inclusion of Mexico would bring with it enhanced presidential powers, militarism, and many feared corruption would abound.¹⁶⁶ While the *Advertiser* believed the Mexicans were unfit to enter in to the domain of the United States, they believed that the United States could provide Mexico with at least some temporary stability through the use of the army in Mexico. General Scott seemed up to the task of enforcing martial law in the state of Mexico until such a time that the Mexican populace could take control of their own country. In late 1847, Scott was “making preparations [...] for retaining military possession of the country, which has already been conquered.”¹⁶⁷ As soon as acquiring Mexican territory had become a possibility, the *Advertiser* feared that “desire [was outrunning] performance” in regard to the want to include Mexican citizens at the cost of American political character.¹⁶⁸ But what caused this great change in the perception of Mexicans throughout the course of war? In Boston, the *Advertiser* went from a generally optimistic view on expansion to a pure hatred for the thought of expanding in to Mexico. The role of phrenology in convincing the American populace about the inferiority of the Mexican people played a substantial part, as well as the actions of the political elite in Mexico, which led to anarchy and confusion in the Mexican state, both of which made the Whigs believe that not even proper education could make Mexicans capable actors in the American political system.¹⁶⁹ Race increasingly played a more significant role in the thinking of the *Advertiser* as the War progressed.

Before hostilities commenced, the *Advertiser* did not see Mexico as some potential blight on the map of the United States. Even the day to day running of the Mexican government at the

¹⁶⁶ Horsman, 238.

¹⁶⁷ “Peace with Mexico,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 70: 135, December 13, 2.

¹⁶⁸ “Bloodless Achievement,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 67: 114, May 14, 1846, 2.

¹⁶⁹ Horsman, 238.

beginning of 1845 seemed to be in a right state, as they claimed that the “country seems tranquil.”¹⁷⁰ However, the opinion started to turn on Mexico when Paredes came in to office. He was immediately deemed by the *Advertiser* as a threat to the character of the Mexican people, believing that Paredes was willing to “compromise the honor and dignity of the nation” for his own personal gain.¹⁷¹ While Paredes did not inspire confidence in the United States about the power of the Mexican people, the Mexican army did. As General Taylor moved toward Palo Alto, he found himself in a precarious position as it seemed the Mexican army had a definitive advantage if a battle were to ensue. The *Advertiser* even believed that in the current position, General Taylor’s army will “[fall] into the power of the enemy.”¹⁷² However, despite the disadvantage on paper, General Taylor proved victorious at Palo Alto and began his advance further in to Mexico. But that victory alone did not convince the *Advertiser* that the U.S. was inherently destined to conquer all of Mexico. In fact, they espoused an opinion quite the opposite. They stated that they were “surprised to find many parties assuming that the victories at the Rio Grande prove the utter inability of the Mexicans to contend with the United States troops.”¹⁷³ In fact, for the better part of the early stages of the War, the *Advertiser* firmly defended Mexico against the United States, claiming they were merely fighting a defensive battle at this point. The reason this “War” had started, rested on the actions of Polk. It was the “impudence, indiscretion, and mismanagement of our own “Executive”” that led the U.S. down the road of war.¹⁷⁴ As 1846 came to a close, and 1847 loomed, the *Advertiser* began to show a different side of Mexico. No longer was Mexico and Mexicans almost equals to Americans, but rather, now they were seen as inferior as losses on the battlefield started to pile up. Subsequent

¹⁷⁰ “From Mexico,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 65:93, April 21, 1845, 2.

¹⁷¹ “The Late Revolution in Mexico,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 67:37, February 12, 1846, 1.

¹⁷² “The News from the Army,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 67:112, May 12, 1846, 2.

¹⁷³ “War Between Mexico and the United States,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 68:5, July 6, 1846, 2.

¹⁷⁴ “The Mexican War,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 68:1, July 1, 1846, 1.

threats of attacks by the Mexican army were not met with such trepidation as the original Mexican army as Palo Alto was seen, rather the battle groups were seen as “not of a very imposing or formidable character.”¹⁷⁵ The evolution of inferiority had begun in 1846, when the government of Paredes came under criticism, and continued as the U.S. began to win battle after battle, finally leading to a complete dismissal of the Mexican army as a legitimate enemy. From this, and in to 1847, flowed the language that would tarnish the Mexican people as inferior and so completely unlike the United States that they did not warrant inclusion in to the republic.

The *Advertiser* spent the better part of 1847 trying to prove that the Mexican populace was unfit for the American system, and they did so by noting the systemic and social inequalities that pervaded Mexican society. The United States in the 1830s and the 1840s prided itself on the progress it had made through commercialization and industrialization. Thus, comparisons of the two economies revealed two countries heading in different directions. The *Advertiser* claimed that “The Mexican nation is not commercial, it is not agricultural, it is not manufacturing, it is not mechanical, it is not literary, not religious in any sense.”¹⁷⁶ For the United States, there only existed two options to overcome the obstacle Mexico had in possible assimilation. “The Destiny of the Indian character is to be overcome only by killing him, or teaching him.”¹⁷⁷ While these two options stood at the opposite ends of the diplomatic spectrum, the rest of the 1847 brought little hope to the possibility of teaching being the solution to erasing the “Indian character” from Mexico. The hope of Mexico gradually fell as fighting intensified despite Mexico City being the last major city under Mexican control. As the siege of Mexico City was just about to begin, the *Advertiser* held that Mexicans in a similar regard to that of African-Americans. The only condition in which the United States should admit Mexicans to the Union, according to the

¹⁷⁵ “From Mexico,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 68:54, September 1, 1846, 2.

¹⁷⁶ “Howe Shall We Conquer a Peace?” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 69:3, January 4, 1847, 2.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Advertiser, was on a similar level as that of freemen.¹⁷⁸ After the fall of Mexico City and the beginning of peaceful negotiations, the resounding note that the *Advertiser* left with its readers was one of despair in regard to the condition of Mexico and the Mexican populace. “Mexicans have nothing to hope, from being relieved from the presence of a disciplined army, and they therefore prefer the security which results from martial law, under a foreign power, to anarchy which would reign.”¹⁷⁹ Thus, the limited prospects that the *Advertiser* bestowed upon the Mexicans faded away as the fighting ceased and the move to negotiations commenced. This coincided with a movement in the United States that they should only incorporate only parts of Mexico relatively devoid of Mexican citizens, an idea espoused by Polk’s Secretary of State James Buchanan.¹⁸⁰ No longer was there potential for the Mexicans to join the ranks of Western societies, rather, the *Advertiser* relegated their attempts at civilizing a failure, and noted an eventual return to semi-barbarous behavior.

The *Advertiser*’s view of Mexican citizens and their country slowly eroded over the course of the war. While they were described as relative equals both before and during the early stages of the war, the mounting victories of the Army of Occupation brought with it a criticism of both the Mexican government and army. Originally, the *Advertiser* focused its attacks on the inferiority of the Mexican fighting force in the face of such a well-trained army, and on the corrupt manner of Mexican politics. However, as the fighting did not cease despite the continued U.S. success, the *Advertiser* became worried over the prospects of annexation of more of Mexican territory. Both in attempts to dissuade its readers from supporting the move and due to its background in supporting both phrenology and ethnology, the Mexican populace came under more and more scrutiny as the war waned. They were no longer the equals that had the

¹⁷⁸ “The Objects of War.”

¹⁷⁹ “The Conduct of War,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 71:19, January 22, 1848,2.

¹⁸⁰ Horsman, 240.

prospects of besting General Taylor at Palo Alto, rather they were no better than the freemen living in the United States, and they were compared unfavorably to the success of the United States in regards to their economy, leading the *Advertiser* to conclude that the Mexican people were without hope, and could not offer any benefit if annexed by the United States.

Conclusion

The fighting in Mexico was an intense struggle waged on two fronts. General Taylor's Army of Occupation fought in northern Mexico against the armies of Santa Anna, while General Scott made his march from the sea by the way of Vera Cruz. The march to Mexico City by Scott had to pass by Cerro Gordo, one of the last major lines of defenses to the Mexican capital. The Mexican artillery situated a thousand feet higher than the American troops proved to be a great obstacle for the army in April of 1847.¹⁸¹ Thanks to the work of Robert E. Lee, the U.S. Army was able to attack Cerro Gordo from both the front and the rear when Lee discovered a route that avoided the major roads leading to the site of battle. This battle marked the last stand of the Mexican army in many respects. While the Mexican army lost importance after this defeat, the Mexican people slowed the advance of Scott toward Mexico City as guerilla assaults continually threatened Scott's supply line.¹⁸² By September of the same year, Scott was on the doorstep to Mexico City and looked poised to take the capital through any measures. However, after a brief period of bombardment and capture of a few defensive positions, Santa Anna and his remaining army believed that retreat would benefit the historical legacy of the capital more than fighting in its streets, and thus he retreated north to Guadalupe-Hidalgo.¹⁸³ While the Mexican people resisted the imposition of General Scott as the new, be it, temporary leader of Mexico, Scott eventually imposed order and began the nine month long occupation of Mexico City. With their

¹⁸¹ Howe, 783.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 784.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 789.

capital occupied by an American general and Santa Anna thrown from grace, the remaining members of the Mexican government looked toward negotiations as a means to bring about the end of the war.

The conflict with Mexico had not only aroused a great deal of differing opinions in Mexico, it also created an abundance of such opinions in the American press. Different areas of the country relied on different newspapers to tell the story of the Mexican War. Each newspaper approached the discussion of the Mexican citizens in a different manner. Papers in the South believed that the Mexican War represented a validation for the racialized societies in which they headed in the South. The annexation of Texas and additional territories held by Mexico after the war represented the most efficient use of the lands acquired, for the Mexican people lacked certain qualities in the newly commercial age to make proper use of the land and its resources. New Orleans proved to be the central hub of information for the Mexican War. The city of New Orleans rose to prominence in the realm of the press by dispatching the most correspondents in to Mexico, and facilitating their findings to almost every major newspaper in the country. Papers like the *Picayune* benefitted from this greatly given the fact that their proximity to Texas and location on the Mississippi made them an important cog in the recent revolutions in communications. Their narratives seemed to follow that of the South during the early courses of the war. They waged the same battle and created the same image of Mexico as inefficient proprietors of lands better suited in American hands. Unlike the papers in the South, the *Picayune* believed it had acted unfairly in its position as a newspaper when it was used to denigrate the people of Mexico. Instead of searching for reasons for Mexican inferiority in the defeats of Mexico, the *Picayune* believed that Mexicans should at least be given respect for the resiliency they had shown in the face of overwhelming, militaristic odds. The Northeast

represented the old vestiges of Federalist thought and the new base of Whig support in the 1840s. The *Advertiser* backed the scientific findings in the fields of phrenology and ethnology in their papers, and this slightly distorted the image of Mexican people. The press did indeed find inferiority of Mexican people, in fact, the *Advertiser* concluded that the inferiority of the Mexican populace was so great that it was incompatible with the American system, and they vehemently opposed the annexation of any territory that would add a significant portion of Mexicans to the American population. New York represented one of the few areas in the country that not only had two newspapers that appealed to mass audiences, but two newspapers that differed drastically in the images of Mexicans they sought to portray. The *Herald* harnessed the energies of Manifest Destiny to push its imperialistic agenda in its newspapers by noting that racial order needed to be maintained even in international affairs, while the *Tribune* believed that the Mexicans deserved to be respected as an independent people and should not be vilified, rather they Mexicans deserved pity due to the harsh circumstances surrounding their existence under previously corrupt and mismanaged government and economies. All these newspapers highlighted how sectional alignment drastically altered the perceptions of the war. The South and the West had an increased interest in the potential of the Southwest, and they paid special attention to the war on issues such as slavery. The North on the other hand, with the exception of the *Herald*, believed that the Mexican people, though they may be determined as inferior, were not in such a state that immediate annexation would prove to be the only recourse for salvaging the Mexican state.

CHAPTER 4. AMERICAN TRANSFORMATION: THE MEXICAN IN THE MINDS OF REFORMERS

The end of the hostilities with Mexico moved closer to being official when Polk dispatched Nicholas Trist to Scott's army in Mexico City to negotiate a peace.. He was tasked with negotiating the acquisition of "Alta California and New Mexico in addition to the Rio Grande boundary for Texas."¹⁸⁴ While his initial attempts to broker a treaty for peace proved unsuccessful, it did strengthen Polk's resolve.¹⁸⁵ As the United States still dealt with guerilla attacks throughout the Mexican countryside, Polk believed that these actions and the further costs of maintaining the U.S. army necessitated the acquisition of more territory from Mexico. Polk sought to recall Trist in order to better inform him on the terms of the treaty. Polk stressed that pieces of northern Mexico should be acquired while all of California should also fall into possession of the United States.¹⁸⁶ With this knowledge in hand, Trist informed the Mexican delegation that a refusal of Trist's terms would result in harsher penalties being sought. Although disobeying the orders of President Polk, Trist's actions led to the final resolution of conflict in Mexico. Thus, in an attempt to end the war, Trist was able to send to Polk the peace agreement that would become the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

Before the Mexican War had begun, the United States had gone through a period of social transformation. Moral issues came to the forefront during the early 19th century due to the Second Great Awakening. In response to the seeming distancing of government from Christianity, leaders in various religious sects hoped to re-inject morality back into American

¹⁸⁴ Howe, 801.

¹⁸⁵ Singletary, 159.

¹⁸⁶ Wilentz, 611.

society.¹⁸⁷ One of the areas that had plagued mankind according to some was the power of alcohol. Reformers like Lyman Beecher latched onto their “gospel of temperance” in the early 1820s started to transform the consumption of alcohol into a moral issue.¹⁸⁸ The temperance movement relied heavily on the media to help spread its message on the evils that could be brought on by the consumption of strong spirits. While many religious movements backed the cause of temperance, they also attempted to spread and recruit new members by creating a religious revival in the United States. A chief proponent in achieving revivals was Charles Grandison Finney. Finney had tried to inform both the preachers of various sects of Christianity and the people who attended his revivals that the grace of God was not something bestowed upon someone, rather it was something that a person had to attain for themselves through a personal commitment and decision to be a Christian.¹⁸⁹ These revivals and the spread of Christian education helped American religion rebound from the seeming decline during the early years of Republic. Different sects started to tailor their messages based on their constituents. For example, the Catholic Church became one of the few churches to directly reach out to the newly arrived immigrant community.¹⁹⁰ Like moral and social reform movements, certain political movements incorporated moral positions into their political rhetoric. A rising movement in the 1820s and 1830s, abolitionism became a very polarizing issue for the United States. Abolitionists in favor of immediate abolition, people like William Lloyd Garrison, represented a threat to Southern society. Garrison described himself as “an apostle of radical Christian liberty.”¹⁹¹ The threat of abolitionism rose to such lengths that President Andrew Jackson had to

¹⁸⁷ Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 31.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁸⁹ Howe, 172.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁹¹ Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 216

institute a gag order on the mail system for abolitionist mailings sent to the South.¹⁹² But as the 1840s continued on, the movement gained more momentum as writings and speeches from ex-slaves such as Frederick Douglass gave a more personal testament to the true nature of slavery in the South. Douglass wanted to be a prominent member of the abolitionist movement, but he did not want to become merely a symbol of the abolitionist movement, and this led his drive to establish his own newspaper.¹⁹³ While never a truly mass movement, the abolitionist movement found itself intersected with other moral and social issues such as temperance and women's rights. These transformations fronted social issues such as Indian Removal, temperance, and abolition. As the Mexican War began, the various newspapers associated with these movements saw another brewing moral issue developing given the rise of the Wilmot Proviso and the discussion that flowed about the role that Mexicans could play in the future of the American republic.

While the various moral reform movements sought to purify the nation from within, the rise of nativism brought with it attempts to exclude influences from abroad. The Irish Potato Famine of 1845 started a trend of increased immigration from Ireland. These new Irish immigrants were largely Catholic, and their arrival sparked anxiety about the future of the laboring people in America. Nativism was a combination of fear over increased competition for wages, stereotyping of newly arrived immigrants, and a distrust of the Roman Catholic faith.¹⁹⁴ This anxiety over the increased immigrant of non-Protestants created the idea that immigration was a threat to the stability both economically and politically of the United States. Eventually, many who subscribed to this ideology would coalesce during the 1850s and form the Know Nothing Party. The nativist sentiment found throughout the United States in response to

¹⁹² Howe, 512.

¹⁹³ Mayer, 373

¹⁹⁴ Howe, 826.

immigration was reflected by many in the press during the Mexican War. There were certain characteristics of the Mexican people, even amongst those that were against the war, that led them to be incompatible with the American system, and in response to this, those presses did not support the annexation of Mexico.

The press of the various social movements and religious denominations offered up a different view of Mexicans than those found in the more politically driven press. While many of the Protestant religious newspapers held a line of reasoning similar to that of the Democratic party concerning Mexicans, the Catholic press rose to the defense of the Mexicans as they believed that the Catholic identity of Mexico was not some mark of shame, rather it was their identity as Catholics and the Catholic institutions in Mexico that could be the saving grace from the demagogues that were in control.¹⁹⁵ Likewise, the various social movements such as abolitionism sought to show that the attacks on Mexicans were unfounded, and that all of humanity was equal and deserving of fair treatment. The newspapers of social movements brought with them a relatively radical view of the racial other in Mexico. Rather than treat them as distinctive people, these newspapers emphasized the equality of different races. These papers clashed even with Whig newspapers that condemned the gross denigration of the Mexican citizens, as even many Whig newspapers displayed a sort of paternalism regarding the Mexicans as a people.¹⁹⁶ These newspapers offer a different approach to many of the antebellum social movements. While abolitionist movements focused most of their energy on attempts to achieve gains for African Americans in bondage, their role in fostering racial equality and acceptance of others such as Mexicans cannot be overlooked when attempting to understand the worldview of men like William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass.

¹⁹⁵ DeVoto, 9.

¹⁹⁶ Hietela, 164.

Although criticized by the editor of *The Liberator*, William Lloyd Garrison, for being relatively silent during the Mexican War, the religious press did indeed speak out on the matter of Mexicans and the Mexican War. While much of the religious press throughout the nation condemned Mexico and its Catholic identity, the Catholic press became one of the most prolific religious newspapers in regard to the distribution of information about the Mexican War. Given the fact that the Catholic press was fighting against the surging tides of nativism, the Catholic press believed it needed to take a stand and defend not only the Catholic identity of Mexicans, but also the place for Catholicism within the American republic. Religious newspapers throughout the U.S. largely criticized the Mexicans for their Catholic identity, however the Catholic press addressed the issue of Mexican identity and Catholicism to a greater degree than that of its other Christian press counterparts.

Many of the religious newspapers, be they Baptist, Presbyterian, or otherwise, believed that part of the degenerate nature of Mexicans rested in their Catholic identity. Many of the religious newspapers also believed that the conquest of Mexico, like the annexation of Texas, was nothing more than the “natural conclusion” to the events taking place in the Southwest.¹⁹⁷ But the support of concepts such as Manifest Destiny did not encapsulate the true understanding of Mexicans for these religious newspapers. In order to make sense out of their Catholic neighbors, the religious press sought to attribute the degenerate nature of Mexicans and their incompatibility with a system of democracy to the Catholic faith.

The Protestant press sought to portray the Mexicans as nothing more than slaves under their current, religious system. To accomplish this task, the religious press sought to highlight all the factors of Catholicism that led Mexico down its path of inferiority. Due to the long commitment to Catholicism, the religious press claimed that “the great mass of the people are

¹⁹⁷ “The Annexation of Texas,” *Alabama Baptist*, 3:5, March 15, 1845, 19.

little more enlightened than were their ancestors in the time of Montezuma.”¹⁹⁸ The reason for this lack of development and civilization came from the Catholic faith, which papers like the Philadelphia based *Christian Observer*, claimed as the “religion of the Romish Hierarchy has never yielded a harvest of intelligence and manly virtue.”¹⁹⁹ But there existed a potential cure for this condition of the Mexicans. While the Catholic faith left a road block on the path to civilization for Mexico, proper instruction in the Protestant faith could provide the gateway to entering the republic. While many in the religious press supported the war, during the war’s conclusion, they stressed that it was “the Truth, not the sword, gives freedom.”²⁰⁰ Coupled with this concept, the Protestant press hoped to raise money in order to dispense Bibles written in both English and Spanish throughout Mexico. This concept of “Christianizing” harkened back to the early 18th century, where throughout the English colonies, societies formed in attempts to provide Bibles for the literate slave populations in the North American colonies.²⁰¹ The Protestant press hoped to impress upon its readers that not only through conversion to a Christian faith as defined by Protestantism, could the Mexicans be saved both spiritually and politically.

While the Protestant press pointed largely to the Catholic Church in Mexico as a point of degeneracy for Mexico, the Catholic press believed that the Catholic Church held out the last bits of hope for a civilized and stable Mexican state. Newspapers like the *New York Freeman’s Journal and Catholic Register* based out of New York, sought to defend Catholicism from the nativist onslaught it had received not only in the religious press, but also in the mainstream press as well. While the Catholic press did not favor the conquering of Mexico, they did support the annexation of Texas. Like other religious newspapers, they had believed that it was

¹⁹⁸ “Religion and the Mexicans,” *Christian Observer*, 25:28, July 10, 1846, 109.

¹⁹⁹ “Religious Guides of Mexico,” *Christian Observer*, 25:8, February 20, 1846, 29.

²⁰⁰ “The Bible for Mexico,” *Christian Observer*, 26:21, May 21, 1847, 82.

²⁰¹ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 60.

“Providence, in fulfillments of its wise decree [...] has peopled the West from the East.”²⁰² Like many other religious based newspapers such as *The Liberator* or the *North Star*, the Catholic press did not condone acts of violence. They believed that “war at any time, upon any account, with any one, or upon any provocation, is to be deplored.”²⁰³ One reason for their defense of peace was fear over the sanctity of Catholic churches in Mexico from plunder. “we cannot but think [...] that those “certain institutions” no doubt are churches and conveniently which the freebooters of Texas are anxious to plunder.”²⁰⁴ While also worried about the security of the churches in Mexico, the Catholic press expressed worry about the growing nativism in the United States. The press indicated that a doctrine such as nativism went against the ideals of the United States as it provided a “peculiar exclusiveness.”²⁰⁵ These sentiments left unchecked had created an illogical fervor in the United States that had led to war. “We fear that ‘native’ and perhaps *religious* impulses have had a hand in exciting and promoting hostility to the Mexican state.”²⁰⁶ While at one time defending Mexico from the hostile press found predominantly throughout the country, the Catholic press also had to make its claim that the Mexican people were not some inferior population awaiting takeover by the United States.

The Catholic press believed that the mainstream press sought to create an image of Mexicans as inferior so as to increase the support for movements for the annexation of all Mexican territory, the so-called All Mexico movement. However, the Catholic press was a little more skeptical of the wide sweeping claims of Mexican degeneracy than other presses. “For our part, we do not believe our neighbors of Mexico half as bad and worthless as they are

²⁰² “Settlement of the Great West,” *New York Freeman’s and Catholic Register*, 5:41, April 12, 1845, 324.

²⁰³ “War with Mexico,” *New York Freeman’s and Catholic Register*, 6:2, July 12, 1845, 12.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ “Nativism and Puritanism,” *New York Freeman’s and Catholic Register*, 5:43, April 26, 1845, 340.

²⁰⁶ “War with Mexico,” *New York Freeman’s and Catholic Register*.

represented. We do actually think there is some good in Mexico beside gold and silver.”²⁰⁷ The Catholic press not only struck at the heart of the attacks on the Mexican character, they also poked at the idea that many only saw the economic advantages of conquering Mexico with their rhetoric on the non-material value of Mexico. The Catholic press at least entertained the thought the Mexicans were just as civilized as the Anglo-Saxons that controlled racial policy in the United States. “It is a wide mistake to suppose that the balance of [Mexicans] are not as good, as enlightened, and as noble as any other people.”²⁰⁸ Throughout most of its publishing, the Catholic press had to contend with the mainstream press and its accounts of Mexican degeneracy and inferiority. Thus, most of the articles attempt to point out that this action of despising the enemy during conflict was not necessarily an accurate course of action to take by the press. However, the Catholic press did not believe that Mexico was devoid of any corruption or without flaws. Like many Whig papers, the blame for the problems of Mexico came down to those in control of Mexico during the 1840s.

Like the Whig press, Catholic newspapers sought to show that the problems from Mexico stemmed from the control military leaders had over Mexico. The entire Mexican War, some claimed, could be seen as nothing more than the work of a “few military despots” in Mexico.²⁰⁹ The instability that the mainstream press alluded to stemmed not from some innate quality of Mexicans or Catholicism, but rather from the fact that the Mexican government was nothing more than the “temporary appendage of some military chieftain.”²¹⁰ While not condoning a furthering of hostilities, the press did hold out hope that the continuation of the war would help many in America dispel their conceptions about Mexicans. “We think the war will prove that the

²⁰⁷ “Mexican ‘Total Depravity,;’” *New York Freeman’s and Catholic Register* 6:9, August 30, 1845, 69.

²⁰⁸ “Mexico,” *New York Freeman’s and Catholic Register* 6:52, June 26, 1846, 400.

²⁰⁹ “Affairs on the Grande River,” *New York Freeman’s and Catholic Register* 6:45, May 9, 1846, 355.

²¹⁰ “The Campaign,” *New York Freeman’s and Catholic Register*, 7:16, October 17, 1846, 124.

Mexican people have been grievously misrepresented and slandered” claimed the *New York Freeman’s and Catholic Register*.²¹¹ While the presence of military leaders continued the march of Mexico toward being conquered, the Catholic Church represented the last hope for Mexico in the conflict.

The Catholic Church was not the embodiment of all things undemocratic, rather it was the source of stability and source of hope for an end of hostilities in Mexico. While the military leaders of Mexico did not show any sign of relenting their military endeavors, the press believed “there was every reason to hope that, at least the clergy of that country, seeing the ruin that must result from so unequal a contest, would at the earliest opportunity use their influence to bring around a peaceful adjustment of the unhappy difficulties.”²¹² While many in the United States criticized the actions of the Catholic Church, the Catholic press believed that these criticisms came only due to the bias in many Americans’ hearts. “The Crime of the Church of Mexico would be a virtue, if a similar case had occurred in our own country.”²¹³ While many presses left the conflict with Mexico with little hope for the future of Mexicans without the outside aid of a power like the United States, the Catholic press believed that a Mexico devoid of the military leaders that had dominated its young, independent existence would continue to grow and prosper. They believed that the Mexicans “will sure avail [themselves] of all means to avoid an evil so full of calamity” ever again.²¹⁴ Thus, the Catholic press defended the Mexicans as a people just as civilized as Anglo-Saxons, but it found itself stemming the tide of nativist sentiments in the United States, a tide they found more widespread than their liking.

²¹¹ “A Touching Incident – Mexican Piety,” *New York Freeman’s and Catholic Register*, 7:29, January 16, 230.

²¹² “The *Washington Union* and the Sequestration of Church Property in Mexico during the War,” *New York Freeman’s and Catholic Register*, 7:47, May 22, 1847, 372.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ “The Treaty,” *New York Freeman’s and Catholic Register*, 8:51, June 24, 1848, 412.

The biggest challenge the Catholic press faced came from their position as the voice of the minority in the United States. They understood, that while many other Protestant newspapers sought to portray the Mexicans as degenerate due to their religion, the truth on the character of Mexicans rested on their merits, not their racial or religious background. They believed that the entire conflict with Mexico stemmed from “the worst instincts of *theologian odium*.”²¹⁵ While the Catholic press pointed to the military leaders intensifying the hostilities and conflict with the United States, they also pointed to the Catholic Church as a potential source of peace amidst the confusion of the political scene in Mexico. Thus, while a majority of religious newspapers commented on the degeneracy brought about through a commitment of the Catholic faith, the Catholic press responded to mainstream depictions of Mexicans by being more vocal than their Christian counterparts, and noted that the religious affiliation of Mexico should not be a point of derision for the Mexican people.

Connected to the religious press in many ways, the various social movements such as temperance and abolitionism traced their origins to the religious revivals of the early 19th century. Perhaps one of the more popular social movements, the temperance movement sought not to entirely eradicate the consumption of alcohol, rather the temperance movement hoped to change the perception many Americans had about alcohol consumption in order to produce a more moral society. One of the more prominent journals was the *Journal of the American Temperance Union* out of New York. While many in the temperance movement did not condone violence even in the case of war due to fear that wartime conditions increased the chance that intemperance would take hold, they did hold some nativist views about which people were more prone to intemperance. Looking at the world landscape prior to the Mexican War, the *Journal*

²¹⁵ “The Government – The Mexican War – The Catholics and their Kind Advisers of the Political Press,” *New York Freeman’s and Catholic Register*, 7:52, June 26, 1847, 412.

proclaimed that “very few of our native citizens are now found among our drunken poor.”²¹⁶

This statement indicated that the Anglo-Saxons had either through their own actions risen above the conditions of the poor that led to the vice of drinking or had reached a degree of morality in which they had mastered their reliance on alcohol. While they did possess certain nativist leanings, for the most part, the *Journal* sought to critique the U.S. soldiers as much as the Mexican soldiers. The thought of the U.S. providing its soldiers with “spirit rations” led them to proclaim that “nothing produced insubordination, corruption, vice of every character, brutality, and blasphemy, like the distribution of rum rations.”²¹⁷ This idea spoke to the power of alcohol in the minds of those in the temperance movement. Alcohol could change the morally sound Anglo-Saxons into bloodthirsty and ravenous people that could be unleashed on the Mexican people. The stance toward the Mexican people proved contradictory at times due to the temperance movement seemingly trying to balance its nativist leanings with its belief that all humanity should abstain from alcohol in order to better their lives.

The *Journal* manifested alternative views of Mexico throughout the course of the war. The first view coincided with their view about the betterment of humanity, and thus they offered sympathetic and humanizing rhetoric for the Mexican people, but at the same time, they were quick to point out that there was a moral flaw in the Mexican people as they were taken by the vice of alcohol quicker than the Anglo-Saxon soldiers during the War. Looking back at the events of the war and the destruction brought on by the American army as they marched on Mexico City, the *Journal* lamented that “the expenditure of money, the waste of morals, the destruction of life, the suffering to be carried by the wounded and the maimed in to the future

²¹⁶ “Foreign Population,” *Journal of the American Temperance Union*, 9:3, March 1845, 33.

²¹⁷ “Rum and War,” *Journal of the American Temperance Union*, 10:6, June 1846, 88.

years, and the desolation of bereaved families are not within human calculation.”²¹⁸ At the same time they offered sadness and disappointment at what they deemed a needless loss of life, they also made a subtle criticism of the Mexican people by noting their increased likelihood of giving into the vice of alcohol in comparison to others such as the Anglo-Saxons. During the siege of Mexico City, it was noted that the Mexican defenders “became beastly intoxicated, and staggering further into the street, fell powerless and prostrate upon the stony surface.”²¹⁹ This description of the Mexican army falling defenseless to the advances of the American army due to their excessive consumption of alcohol led to their downfall and the eventual loss of territory to the United States. However, the Americans, though less prone to the evils of alcohol, still fell under its influence during the occupation of Mexico City. The *Journal* described the situation as the “Americans remained quiet masters of [Mexico City], the demon gained an ascendancy over the army.”²²⁰ This “demon” that gained “ascendancy” over the American forces was the alcohol provided to them both by the army as part of their rations as well as the alcohol available to them in Mexico City. The *Journal* sought to show that alcohol proved too strong to resist for some people such as the Mexicans, but at the same time, the evils of alcohol could seep into any peoples’ lives and could produce atrocities. The Mexican War may have highlighted some differences in the susceptibility to intemperance in the Mexicans and Anglo-Saxons, but at the same time, the *Journal* sought to show that suffering was a universal concept and those that were victims deserved sympathy regardless of their identification as racial others or enemies during times of war.

While the temperance movement sought to free Americans from the grips of alcohol, abolitionists sought to free slaves from the grips of involuntary servitude. Their presses, perhaps

²¹⁸ “Return of Peace,” *Journal of the American Temperance Union*, 12:7, July 1848, 104.

²¹⁹ “Army in Mexico,” *Journal of the American Temperance Union*, 12:9, September 1848, 132.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

best represented by *The Liberator* edited by William Lloyd Garrison, espoused such ideas as immediate annexation of slavery both domestically and internationally. The motto of *The Liberator* reflected its views on the universality of humanity: “Our Country is the World – Our Countrymen are all Mankind.” Alongside *The Liberator* stood the paper of Frederick Douglass, an ex-slave, in 1848, the *North Star*. Both these papers attempted to establish that the evils of slavery had started overstepping the moral boundaries of the United States and had led them to take actions incompatible with a true democratic republic. For these two papers, the actions taken by the U.S. against Mexico deserved no support. These papers believed that the Mexican government in its dealing with the U.S. had acted at worst the same as the United States in its dealings with Mexico, or at best, in a manner undeserving of U.S. aggression. The Mexicans were the victims of U.S., or more specifically, slave power politics. Thus, these two papers, like the Catholic press, sought to show that the mainstream press had overemphasized the negative actions of the Mexican government and were attempting to create a false image of Mexico as some nation of inferior people awaiting salvation from the American system.

William Lloyd Garrison’s weekly paper *The Liberator* sought to go against the grain of the popular press, much like the Catholic Press, as it attempted to fight against the unfair characterization of the Mexican people during the Mexican War. In fact, Garrison implored his readers to look for actual evidence of Mexican inferiority or Mexican dishonesty. Garrison surmised that a “short investigation will show that if the Mexicans have acted perfidiously toward our government (which I deny) they have done it only in retaliation from our example.”²²¹ In that same article, Garrison critiqued the “established” notion that Protestantism had certain innate advantages over Catholicism when he commented on what the other presses hoped would occur in Mexico. These presses awaited for the time when the U.S. army would

²²¹ “Mexican Perfidy,” *The Liberator*, 16:25, June 19, 1846, 97.

“[eradicate Mexico’s] *barbarous religion* and [bless] that nation with the *pure religion* of the South.”²²² At the same time that this statement attacked the idea of the slave power in the United States leading the U.S. down the path toward war with Mexico, it also poked at the idea present in the Northeast about nativism and the inherent incompatibility of Catholicism with the American economy and political system. Garrison sought to create a Mexico quite unlike any of the other presses. His Mexico was not one awaiting conquest by the Anglo-Saxons, instead, his Mexico was a nation that had the true claim to their own land and only sought to defend themselves against the overt acts of aggression conducted by those that trumpeted the superiority of Anglo-Saxons. While negotiations for peace bogged down due to the resentment many in Mexico held over the occupation of Mexico City and other Mexican cities, *The Liberator* saw this as a natural reaction to the Americans’ presence in Mexico. Though a pacifist, Garrison held little hope for peace with Mexico until such a time that “every hostile foot is removed from the sacred soil of Mexico.”²²³ It was the Anglo-Saxons’ assuredness of their own superiority that had led to such rocky negotiations. Initial reports of failing to achieve a permanent peace, *The Liberator* claimed, stemmed from “that most excellent representation of ‘Anglo-Saxondom.’”²²⁴ The people of Mexico, to the readers of *The Liberator*, were not in need of any assistance in creating a future for Mexico. In fact, Garrison found it to be quite the opposite. He found it absurd that the United States had the ability to even improve the political situation in Mexico. “We who are keeping in chattel slavery one sixth portion of our own country are the people to give [Mexico] liberty?” Garrison questioned.²²⁵ In many ways, Garrison created an image of Mexico that was superior in some regards to that of the United States. Garrison blamed the

²²² Ibid.

²²³ “Spirit of Mexicans,” *The Liberator*, 27:10, April 30, 1847, 70.

²²⁴ “The United States and Mexico,” *The Liberator*, 27:42, October 15, 1847, 166.

²²⁵ “Annexation of Mexico,” *The Liberator*, 28:4, January 28, 1848, 15.

United States for the beginning of duplicitous dealings between the two countries, and he also attributed the multiple failed attempts at negotiating a peace on the U.S. delegation operating from a position of superiority. While his message proved similar in some regards to those of the *Tribune*, his characterization of Santa Anna placed him at odds with most of the wartime press.

Santa Anna had long been considered the major obstacle to the conquest of Mexico. His popularity, noted by his many terms as president of Mexico, had ingrained within society and thus he was the perfect rallying point for Mexico to get behind when he passed through the U.S. blockade after promising to bring about an end to the war. While many in the press, even the Catholic press, pointed to the military leaders such as Santa Anna as sowing the seeds of despotism and barbarity, Santa Anna deserved veneration and was painted as a war hero in a similar nature to that of Zachary Taylor or Winfield Scott. In one article, Garrison described Santa Anna in terms of admiration for his efforts in providing at least some modicum of stability to the Mexican nation. “This Mexican Chief has certain won for himself a high rank in the order of greatness to which he aspires. Few men in history have done as much as he toward rallying the energies of a nation.”²²⁶ In fact, it seemed that Garrison may have held Santa Anna in higher regard to that of the American generals. He noted that the true weakness of the Mexican army came not from some genetically determined defect, but rather from the fact that the Mexican army lacked more officers as talented as Santa Anna.²²⁷ While *The Liberator* operated throughout the course of the entire war, Frederick Douglas’ *North Star* started its publication just as negotiations over the Mexican War began.

Though starting his critique of the Mexican War late in the lifespan of the war, Frederick Douglas’ *North Star* created a similar image of Mexico to that of *The Liberator*. While many

²²⁶ “General Santa Anna,” *The Liberator*, 27:42, October 15, 1847, 166.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

looked at the War as a place for a new generation of leaders to create a reputation for themselves, Douglas held the complete opposite view. The War with Mexico did not contain accolades, rather it led to his questioning of “our American brethren, the children of our race, how long will they continue to disgrace us?”²²⁸ Like Garrison, Douglas believed in the equality of all mankind. The loss of life anywhere was a tragedy to be lamented, not something one should base political careers around. Douglas lamented that “Mexico seems a doomed victim to Anglo-Saxon cupidity and love of dominion” and that the actions taken in Mexico were not some mistake to be learned from, but rather “the slaughter of tens of thousands of the sons and daughters of Mexico have rather given edge, than dulness (sic) to our appetite for fiery conflict and plunder.”²²⁹ While these two presses represented some of the more radical abolitionist papers, their views on the war resonated with many other dissatisfied elements in society such as Catholics and recently arrived immigrants. These papers attempted to evaluate the War with Mexico outside any sort of nationalistic pride or anti-immigration sentiment that gripped the nation during the 1840s. Thus, their images of Mexico existed outside the popular images being portrayed throughout the political presses. *The Liberator* even went as far as to lavish praise upon Santa Anna, one of the biggest targets for newspapers in terms of negative characterization in the press during the War.

Timing proved to be the decisive factor in the ending of hostilities in the Mexican War. Negotiations with Santa Anna had proved fruitless, and only after he resigned and was replaced by a more than willing to compromise Manuel de la Peña y Peña replaced him as head of the Mexican government.²³⁰ At the same time, as the negotiations threatened to last long in to 1848, President Polk faced a limitation on time to negotiate. Before being inaugurated as president,

²²⁸ “The Mexican War,” *North Star*, 1:2, January 7, 1848, 3.

²²⁹ “The War with Mexico,” *North Star*, 1:4, January 21, 1848, 2.

²³⁰ Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 181.

Polk stated that he only wished to serve one term in office, and his sentiments had not changed over the previous four years. Thus, Polk knew that negotiations had to conclude in fear of Whigs resting control of the presidency. Likewise, the support that Polk had for the War had waned and the issue of how much territory to acquire from Mexico had proven divisive. Free Soilers had risen amongst the ranks of the Whig party along with Barnburners in the Democratic Party.²³¹ While the spoils of war as defined by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo did not match the wants of Polk in 1848, they did match his wants at the beginning of the war: the U.S. gained control of New Mexico and California.²³² While 1848 marked the formal end of hostilities with Mexico, the initial period after hostilities had ceased brought with them new difficulties, especially for those Mexicans and Native Americans in New Mexico and California that now answered to the jurisdiction of the United States.

While the political press dominated the rhetoric over Mexicans with the sheer volume of information they output during the Mexican War, other newspapers with deep ties to major movements in America during the 1840s had just as an important role in shaping peoples' views on Mexico. The major religious revivals that took place throughout the early 19th century awakened moral and social reform movements that addressed some of the biggest issues facing the country and society. The temperance movement sought to transform the way in which Americans viewed alcohol and alcohol consumption. Abolitionist groups fought for more political aims, and certain a more divisive issue in regard to slavery. These social movements took advantage of the cheap capital inputs of producing a newspaper to reach out to their members about the relevant news of the day. The Mexican War intersected with all these social movements in various ways. For the religious revivalists, the Catholic identity clashed with the

²³¹ Hietela, 210.

²³² Howe, 808.

nativist thought that developed in response to the increase in Irish immigration. The temperance movement seemed to believe that certain races were more prone to alcoholic consumption than the Anglo-Saxons, and the Mexicans fit within this racial paradigm. For the abolitionists, the Mexican War intersected with a lot of their main concerns. Many editors such as Garrison and Douglas believed that the Mexican War came about due to the unfair influence the slave powers had over the U.S. government. Likewise, the actions of the political press in denigrating the Mexican people provided another example of the undemocratic nature of Anglo-Saxon dominated U.S. society during this time. All these newspapers not only created their own image of Mexico and Mexicans, they also related it directly to the political or social issue they espoused.

The Mexican War brought with it a variety of images of Mexico. While the presses of various social and political movements did not have the mass circulation that a paper such as the *Herald* might have, they still fought for the minds of their readers. The majority of the religious press attempted to paint the Mexican populace as nothing more than slaves to the hierarchical system of Roman Catholicism. They attributed the lack of civilization to the Mexican's faith and attempted to provide potential remedies to the situation through the conversion of Mexicans to a Protestant faith. The Catholic press attempted to fight against the current of anti-Catholic rhetoric in its defense not only of Mexico, but of the Catholic faith as well. The Catholic faith was not the source of destruction for Mexican independence, rather it was to be the salvation of the Mexican people. The Catholic Church represented the last source of stability for Mexico according to the Catholic press. Other movements such as temperance connected to the religious awakenings held views similar to the majority of Christians in the United States. The flaws in the Mexican character became clearer during times of war. They mentioned that the Mexican

army was quicker to succumb to the dangers of alcohol than their American counterparts. The true radicals in fostering an image of Mexico seemingly incompatible with American racial ideology at this time were the abolitionists. Men like Garrison and Douglas not only attacked the actions of the United States in Mexico, they sought to portray Mexico in many ways superior to that of the United States. It was the shady politicking of U.S. diplomats that had fostered perfidy in diplomatic talks between the U.S. and Mexico. Likewise, the people of Mexico did not need to be liberated, especially by a country that had a significant portion of its inhabitants enslaved. Like the Catholic press, abolitionists sought to show that the actions taken by Mexico should not be seen as the works of evil or degenerate people, but rather they should be seen in the light of a people with incredible loyalty to their nation, actions that would receive copious amounts of praise if the actors had resided in the United States and supported the U.S. cause during the War. These presses worked to incorporate the changing nature of the American nation while at the same time managing the changing social tides in the U.S. at this time. Thus, the majority of the religious press and the temperance movement in particular worked to foster an image of Mexico as deficient either due to certain genetic flaws or to their religious affiliations. Conversely, the abolitionist and Catholic press attempted to stem the tide of nationalistic rhetoric regarding depictions of Mexicans and thus urged their readers to reconsider and evaluate the character of Mexicans only on their actions devoid of any personal attachment to the United States and without blindly subscribing to the rhetoric of a particular party and/or movement.

CHAPTER 5. THE MEXICAN IMAGE CODIFIED: THE TREATY OF GUADALUPE-HIDALGO

The end of the war and the negotiations that were conducted reflected the viewpoint many of the presses sought to establish throughout the war: that the Mexican people were inferior and it was their inferiority that partly led to the hostilities between the United States and Mexico. Article XI of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo stated that since Mexico had shown an inability to control the indigenous populations in Mexico and throughout its landholdings in the Southwest, that the United States reserved the right to intervene in Mexico if unchecked, indigenous activities brought about ill-results for Americans in any manner.²³³ The inclusion of this section indicated that the Mexican people did not have the control over their indigenous population in a similar way that the U.S. did. Coming off of the Indian Removal of the 1830s and the Second Seminole War, the United States believed it had finally achieved the level of control of the various Native American tribes within its boundaries that it required in order to best serve the nation as a whole. This idea that a civilized country could control its indigenous populations also led to the characterization of Mexico as inferior and led many in the U.S. to declare that the War would be a short and effortless spectacle.²³⁴ At the same time, the inclusion of a provision such as this would see similar usage in other U.S. dealings with countries in Latin America.

Likewise, the actions of newly arrived U.S. settlers into regions formerly owned by Mexico brought with it hardships for the remaining Mexican population. While the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had initially indicated that the land rights of those now residing in the borders of the United States would be honored, settlers in California and New Mexico were

²³³ DeLay, 297.

²³⁴ Singletary, 24.

quick to dispossess the Mexicans living there of any they were interested in. Thus, while a multitude of images of Mexico had existed, the policy that the U.S. and the people of the United States had taken reflected the views of the Democratic press. The Mexican people had proven they were unfit to harness the resources and potential of the lands in Mexico, and thus, their land rights were superficial at best in the minds of those settling in the Southwest. Similarly, the U.S. sought to restrict the access to voting for the Mexican people in the newly established territories, thus insuring that the political landscape of the Southwest would flow along Anglo-Saxon lines.²³⁵ The Mexican people had seemingly been thrust to the lower rungs of the racial ladder that made up U.S. society during this period, and the Mexican people would be forced to adapt to the new system of power they had found themselves in.

While Mexicans and Mexican-Americans struggled to re-construct their lives from prior to the War, the Mexican-American War created a sectional rift in American society that would extend and define the political and social landscape of the 1850s. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had been passed without the inclusion of the Wilmot Proviso. The issue of the Wilmot Proviso had proven that the sectional issues such as slavery ran deeper than political affiliation. Even the signing of the Wilmot Proviso reflected this sentiment as most northerners opposed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo as it seemed to benefit the South more than the North.²³⁶ During the debate over the treaty, former President John Quincy Adams, a former proponent of No Soil, collapsed after giving a speech railing against the treaty and the war and he would later die from this event. But the deeper divide was yet looming. The discovery of gold in California in 1848 and its announcement by President Polk in 1849 sparked a mass migration to California in search

²³⁵ Gomez, 64.

²³⁶ Foos, 154.

for quick economic gains from mining the readily available placer gold.²³⁷ Quickly, California was eligible for statehood and the question again arose whether or not California would be free or slave. The debates over California and the formation of the “Compromise” of 1850 led to a back in forth in the Senate over the merits of slavery and other sectional issues. William Seward and John C. Calhoun famously attacked each other’s views on the issue of slavery and sectionalism and set the tone for the sectionalism that would develop throughout the 1850.²³⁸ There had been a fear during the war, that the acquisition of territory held by Mexico would be nothing more than a poison that would slowly weaken the United States. The Mexican War has often been called a “rehearsal” for the events of the Civil War, and much of the sectional tension that built during the 1850s can be traced to the Mexican War.²³⁹

The Mexican character throughout the War underwent drastic changes in some presses, and others, the character the newspaper sought to espouse simply evolved or found validation for the paper’s original claim prior to hostilities. The Democratic press focused on ideas of innate racial hierarchies, innate and predestined expansion of the United States, and a belief in the civilizing powers of the Anglo-Saxon presence in Mexico. Some Whig newspapers agreed with this sentiment, mainly those in Boston, as these papers had been chief supporters of the racial sciences of phrenology and ethnology. While some Whig papers such as the *New York Tribune* sought to present a counter-narrative to that of the Democratic press, their views were amongst the minority. Papers like the *Tribune*, *The Liberator*, and the Catholic press sought to portray Mexico in a vastly different light. Mexico was not some degenerate people only fit for subservience within the sphere of influence of the United States. Rather, the people of Mexico were a resilient people that were imbued with the same principles of civility and intelligence that

²³⁷ Howe, 817.

²³⁸ Wilentz, 640.

²³⁹ Rodriguez, 6.

that the people in the United States were as described by those espousing Anglo-Saxonism. Regionally, only the North contained a significant degree of disunity in its characterization of Mexican people. Chief among them was New York with its conflicting presses. New Orleans also presented itself as a unique case about the press during the war. While it was the central hub of information throughout the War, papers like the *New Orleans Picayune* perhaps underwent the greatest degree of change of any of the wartime presses. While it followed a similar trajectory of that of the Democratic presses during the early stages of the war, midway through the conflict, the *Picayune* changed its stance on its characterization of the Mexican people and sought to portray them instead in a manner devoid of nationalistic pride or racial hatred. The Catholic press went against the grain of other religious presses of Protestant origins that sought to display the Catholic identity of Mexico as a genitor of the weakness and inferiority of the Mexican people. The Catholic Church to the Catholic press was the only source of stability, and as such, the source to bring about a cessation of hostilities during the War. Moral reform groups also presented Mexicans in a negative light. Members of temperance movements saw Mexico as a problem for U.S. society as they noted that their inclination toward alcohol, and had held views disparaging other races in the U.S. for their consumption of alcohol prior to the war. Thus, for a majority of newspapers, the image of Mexico they espoused found support of the government after the war given the actions taken by the government of the United States and the people that would settle the American Southwest.

The people of Mexico, and now Mexican Americans, had begun their journey throughout the racialized world of the United States as racial others. Their property rights were often neglected and their ability to vote was curtailed in order to preserve the Anglo-Saxon hegemony in the American Southwest. Indeed, it had been the marriages between Spanish and the

indigenous populations in Mexico that had led to the birth of what some would chide them as the “mongrel” race of Mexicans. This identity as half-Spanish, half Native American led to a future of confusion over their place amongst the other races in the United States. It was this dual identity that led to Mexicans having to negotiate their position within American society, existing both in the shadow of their Spanish heritage and defined by their Indian identity.²⁴⁰ Thus, at the onset of their journey within the social confines of the United States, the Mexicans had to navigate as racial others and hope to establish themselves amongst the “white” races of the United States and gain political, economic, and social acceptance.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 47.

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