One Wall Many Voices: Framing the U.S.A-Mexico Border Fence in Editorial Cartoons from the Two Countries

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論文題目
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by
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Abstract

One Wall Many Voices: Framing the U.S.A-Mexico Border Fence in Editorial Cartoons from the Two Countries

By

Liliana Arrieta Rodriguez

Walls provide not only physical but also ideological boundaries between neighbors. They can be seen as a symbol of protection or segregation. Using as stimulus the security fence between Mexico and the United States, this study aims to identify the main frames in American and Mexican political cartoons to decode the different messages and symbolism towards the border wall through which one can understand the U.S.-Mexico border issue as seen in the newspapers from the two countries.

Using a qualitative analysis, the thesis studies 34 American and 69 Mexican cartoons from dailies that are representative of the press in the two countries. The cartoons evidence the use of six frames and symbolism: Death of migrants and the renegotiation of NAFTA were exclusively used by the Mexican papers. The freedom issue and the divisive nature of the wall balanced in both countries’ cartoons and the main preoccupations of the United States cartoons concerned the
country’s double standard of hiring illegal migrant laborers while at the same rejecting an immigration agreement with Mexico.

This study’s original contribution serves as a small step in the long road of empirical database expansion in framing political cartoons and the symbolism behind the portrayal of barriers.

Keywords: framing, political cartoons, walls, symbols, barriers, U.S.-Mexico fence
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I would also like to express my entire appreciation to the members of my Advisory Committee, Professor Wen-Ying Liu and Professor Sewen Sun for every valuable comment and suggestion.

Last but not least, I want to thank my mom Doris Rodriguez and my fiancé Casper Pohlmann for their encouragement, aid and love. Without your support, I would not be here.
List of Cartoons Analyzed in Text

M1 “Frontier”. Created by Angel Boligan and published on June 5, 2003 in the Mexican Newspaper “El Universal”.

M2 “Technology in the Wall”. Created by Dario Castillejos and published on November 8, 2006 in the Mexican Newspaper “El Imparcial”.


M4 “NAFTA”. Created by Angel Boligan and published on April 26, 2004 in the Mexican Newspaper “El Universal”.

M5 “Renegotiation”. Created by Obi and published on March 4, 2003 in the Mexican Newspaper “El Norte”.

M6 “Bush wall head”. Created by Obi and published on April 23, 2003 in the Mexican Newspaper “El Norte”.

M7 “Liberty Wall”. Created by Angel Boligan and published on October 27, 2006 in the Mexican Newspaper “El Universal”.

M8 “Recycled”. Created by Nerilicon and published on October 6, 2006 in the Mexican Newspaper “Milenio”.

M9 “Migratory Workers in the Wall”. Created by Nerilicon and published on January 24, 2006 in the Mexican Newspaper “Milenio”.

M10 “Immigration Reform” Created by Angel Boligan and published on May 20, 2007 in the Mexican Newspaper “El Universal”.


A2 “Exactly Alike”. Created by Trever and published on October 31, 2006 in the American Newspaper “Albuquerque Journal”.

A3 “Illegals Stay Out”. Created by Kal and published on November 30, 2005 in the American Newspaper “Baltimore Sun”.

A4 “Tear down this Wall” Created by RJ Matson and published on June 15, 2007 in the American Newspaper “The St. Louis Post Dispatch”.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

As a journalist, I have documented the desperation of families who are not able to pay 30 Mexican pesos (USD $ 2.30) to settle a medical bill. I have also documented the high rates of unemployment and the yearly migration rates of young people that, in spite of the sacrifices their family made to provide them with education to become an engineer or an architect, as soon as they graduate from college they start their journey to the border to work picking up the crops. So even that I personally disagree with the moving of people from Mexico to the United States, I can understand their anxiety and their vision of working illegally in the U.S. to reach the quality of life its own country has denied them.

As a Mexican citizen, I have lived different stages in the Mexico-United States relations: before the American government approved the build-up of the border wall and after it. I feel curious about the politicians’ way of thinking and how in their imagination, the so-called security fence could aim to solve a migration problem that has been there already for a century; without any consideration to realize a legal, practical and feasible solution for the migrants and its American employers. For that reasons I am questioning what the wall is telling us in the Mexican side of the border? How is it seen in the American side? We believe the political cartoons from both perspectives will exhibit differing visions and interests of the two main actors as well as some universal values shared by all.

This thesis shall begin with how people look at walls in history and contemporary times. We will also give some snapshots of the U.S.-Mexican wall before delving into the meanings of this barrier in the newspapers’ cartoons and the symbolism used to represent the meaning in the cartoons in the following chapters.
1.1 Walls Have Meanings

In 2005, the publication of 12 cartoons in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad in unappropriated ways for the majority of Muslims resulted in an enormous controversy around the world leading to further boycotts, riots, violent acts against the Danish embassies in Islamic countries and several death threats to its cartoonists.

How simple caricatures can cause such reaction in people? As an integral part of many newspapers, editorial or political cartoons are tools for criticizing, evaluating and making people reflect about current issues and social phenomena. Within this social phenomena are the walls which have been built to provide ideological and physical boundaries between neighbors. Originally, the walls were conceived to protect people against the rough weather, they were built at strategic locations made from locally available materials and later, entire nations started using them as a resource to protect themselves against enemies.

The most famous example is the Great Wall of China, which includes a sequence of barriers built and maintained between the 5th century B.C. and the 16th century A.D. to protect the northern borders of the Chinese Empire from barbarian attacks during various successive dynasties. In contemporary times, the most prominent example would certainly be the Berlin Wall built by the socialist state of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) or East Germany not only to demarcate its border with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) or West Germany, but also to control the national movement and restrict people’s migration. In 1952, East German leaders met the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in Moscow, where he advised them to build up their border defense, telling them that “The demarcation line between East and West Germany should be considered a border – and not just any border, but a dangerous one ... The Germans will guard the line of defense with their lives” (Harrison, 2003: 240). As a result, the inner German border between the East and West German states was closed and a barbed-wire fence erected. Later, the construction included guard towers placed along 96 miles of large concrete walls of 11.8 feet high circumscribing a wide area later known as the “death strip” because it contained anti-vehicle trenches, beds of nails and other defenses. For West Berlin it was the concrete wall that marked
the border and only in that side was officially a mere and plain “wall”. Nevertheless in East Berlin it was called “antifascist protective rampart” and the use of the word “wall” was strictly forbidden (Ladd, 1998:18). The Berlin wall, after being erected for 28 years, fell down along with the Eastern European Communist regimes in 1989. But despite the hopes it evoked, its collapse did not result in an end of walls. Mark Ehrman observes:

In the heady aftermath, watching Berliners hugging in the streets, it was easy to believe that walls would become another absurd relic of a barbaric past. Beirut’s barriers came down the same year as Berlin’s. Cyprus’s Green Line, Europe’s last barrier, would become more porous. Israel and Palestine seemed at the cusp of a solution. One could even imagine Korea’s DMZ, the last remaining Cold War barrier, crumbling in the aftershocks. Walls seemed headed for museumdom.

Instead, a new generation of border barriers began crisscrossing the planet. Bill Clinton, who came to power promising ‘a bridge to the twenty-first century’, gave us a wall with Mexico instead (Ehrman 2007, p. 40).

Walls not only signify an artificial or physical structure but also connote ideological and political beliefs. In the case of the Berlin wall, it came to denote “all the consequences of the division of Berlin and of Europe” (Ladd, 1998:16) as known by Winston Churchill’s metaphor of an “iron curtain”. The Berlin wall became most famous as the preeminent cold war symbol. In this concern, Manghani (2008) writes “The wall became the signifier of the Cold War scenario. Thus, the Berlin wall was never simply a concrete edifice, but actually a panoply of symbols, myths and images; indeed, a textual and intertextual phenomenon” (p.36).

In 2001, Israel started planning a barrier to be four times as long and in places twice as high as the Berlin Wall, in order to divide the State of Israel from Palestine. Since the beginning, this barrier was highly controversial because while the Israelis most commonly refer to it as the “Separation fence” or “Anti-terrorist fence”, the Palestinians point at it as the “Racial segregation
wall”. Following a Palestinian violence outbreak in 2002, Israel began the construction of a barrier that would separate most of the West Bank from areas inside Israel. The Israeli Supreme Court made reference to the conditions and history that led to the building of the barrier. In the September 2005 decision, it described the history of violence against Israeli citizens and cited the attempts Israel had made to defend its citizens, including military operations carried out against terrorist acts, and stated that these actions:

...did not provide a sufficient answer to the immediate need to stop the severe acts of terrorism. . . . Despite all these measures, the terror did not come to an end. The attacks did not cease. Innocent people paid with both life and limb. This is the background behind the decision to construct the separation fence. (Supreme Court of Israel, 2005:815)

Still under construction, Israel's barrier is expected to reach at least 403 miles long and is planned to be completed this year. In addition to the concrete wall and fencing materials used in the construction of the structure, sections of Israel's Separation Barrier additionally include electrified fencing, two-meter-deep trenches, roads for patrol vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles, sniper towers and razor wire.

There is general agreement that the barrier improved Israeli security concerning suicide bombings (Nissenbaum, D., 2007). However, there is debate over how effective the wall has been in preventing other attacks. While this is happening, the blockade construction had other effects for Palestinians including reduced freedoms, road closures, loss of land, increased difficulty in accessing medical services in Israel, restricted access to water sources and economic effects.
1.2 The U.S.-Mexico Wall

In North America, there is another wall. One built by the United States of America to delimit its border with Mexico. The abysmal differences in wages between both countries when the minimum salary in Mexico is the equivalent to US$0.48 dollar cent per working hour and US$5.15 or 7.25 dollar per working hour in the U.S., makes the immigrants flow coming from the South difficult to stop. Therefore, due the high proportion of illegal cross-border stream in this frontier, in 1993 the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) announced the construction of a wall along 698 miles of American-Mexican border which is still under construction and as of January 2010 had completed 643.3 miles of fencing.

The U.S.-Mexico border wall not only includes the physical barrier, but also aerial vehicles and a virtual fence together with infrared equipment, cameras, electronic ground/fence sensors, thermal imaging and video cameras, radars and the deployment of more than 18,000 Border Patrol agents. The American CBP’s Secure Border Initiative (SBI) Program Management Office (PMO) had supervised the deployment of technology and tactical infrastructure construction at the border since it was authorized by the Secure Fence Act of 2006. This approval “incensed public opinion in Latin America like no other issue in recent years” (Morley, 2006a).

Comparing the border between Mexico and the U.S. to the old situation between East and West Berlin is “rather more precise. With billions of dollars’ worth of technology, the presence of some 10,000 Border Patrol agents –in addition to Customs, Drug Enforcement Agency and other federal officers- we are finally indeed what restrictionist politicians have envisioned with their rhetoric: Fortress America”(Martinez, 2004:52).

In addition, discussing the extent and costs of the Secure Fence, Philip Caputo writes:

Close the border with walls both virtual and real? Well, the physical wall proposed by the Secure Fence Act, which President Bush reluctantly signed last year, will cover just 700 of the Line’s 1,950 miles. Count on it, ways will
be found to get around it, or over it, or under it. True, the gaps in Fortress America’s fence are supposed to be covered by sensors, cameras, and other high-tech surveillance equipment, but some legislators have begun to shy away from appropriating the funds after the inspector general of Homeland Security warned that costs, first estimated at $8 billion, could soar as high as $30 billion (Caputo 2007: 25).

In this concern, *La Jornada*, a Mexican newspaper, wrote “The walls have served as sources of intense and bloody friction between armored countries. Its erection and operation are extremely costly in political and economic terms, and very inefficient, though some of its toll has to be paid with the blood and pain of those who have tried to cross them. Thus, they are historically unsuccessful, disgraceful and degrading” (Carrillo, 2005). The Mexico City daily *Excelsior* denounced the push for a border wall as a sign of “The new Apartheid” in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over another.

The American SBI program was established by the department in early 2007 to carry out the Congressional mandate and had determined the goal to build roughly 670 miles of fencing by 2013. The diverse consequences about this barrier construction diverge from land loss to economic and environmental effects as for example, announced in September 2007 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 60 to 75% of the protected lands and refuges in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas would be affected by the border wall because it would block river access preventing animals from reaching water, disturb animal migration patterns and destroy essential vegetation for many native and migratory species.

However, without a doubt, one of the most serious effects has been the increase of deaths in the Mexican-American border. According to Mexico’s National Commission of Human Rights, from 1994 to 2007, about 4,745 migrants died trying to cross the U.S. border. In December 2009, when the promoter of the U.S. immigrant cause through the foundation “Border Angels”, Enrique Morones Careaga was awarded the National Prize for Human Rights, he declared that
before the U.S. - Mexico wall construction, one or two people were dying per month across the border but after the wall, one or two people die on a daily basis.

That wall has caused deaths more than anything else. It's incredible that since 1994 when they built the fence between San Diego and Tijuana, the north migration flow has decreased 20% but even that fewer people are crossing, more are dying because the Border Patrol and the wall forced them to cross in more dangerous areas (Hernandez, S. 2009).

In addition, the construction of the U.S. – Mexico border wall has also increased the business of human trafficking and spread a new phenomenon: the rising of migrants’ abduction done by the same traffickers to ask the migrants’ families for ransom.

The Guatemalan indigenous leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Rigoberta Menchú, described as an offense the U.S. decision to build a fence along the Mexico border to stop immigration: “Putting fences I do not think they [Americans] can stop immigrants, whereas especially poverty, unemployment and inequality exists” (ABN, 2005). For Paterson (2008), in Mexico and Latin America, the wall is viewed as a symbol of racism, xenophobia, and militarism. Critics such as New Mexico scholar Felipe Ortego y Gasca have compared the Bush administration’s wall to the historic failures of the Great Wall of China, the Maginot Line, and the Berlin Wall.

The comparison of the U.S. security fence with other borders around the world has been imminent. In his visit to Midland, Texas in 2006 no less than Mikhail Gorbachev compared the American barrier with the Berlin wall: “You remember President Reagan standing in Berlin and saying, ‘This wall should be torn down’. Now the United States seems to be building almost the Wall of China between itself and this other nation with which it has been associated for many decades and has had cooperation and interaction with” (Scott, 2006). In this concern, longtime CNN correspondent Charles Bierbauer stated: “I’ve seen walls around other countries, most
notably East Germany and East Berlin, and they didn’t work. In fact, they became symbols of oppression rather than anything positive” (Noyes, 2008).

In 2009, Texas State Representative Aaron Peña called for the tearing down of the U.S.-Mexico border wall to mark the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall: “most Americans see it [Berlin Wall] as a symbolic end of tyranny. Here in the borderlands of this country, on the edges of my legislative district, Americans forget that a similar wall was constructed separating family members and a singular community” (Peña, 2009).

Discussing the U.S.-Mexico wall, border expert David Shirk, political science professor at the University of San Diego and director of the Trans-Border Institute, refers:

For me, the fence symbolizes the past. From the Mongols to the cold war, people have tried to contain their fears and enemies with walls. At the end of the last century, we thought all the walls were going to come down. Indeed, building walls and fortifying borders in the era of globalization and economic integration holds inherent contradictions and promises little in the way of effectiveness. Walls may be useful for blocking large, land-based armies, but are probably useless for combating terrorism. We’re in a new era with new problems, but we keep coming up with old solutions (Reno 2006).

Also, religious leaders have discussed the walled borders, such is the case of Renato Martino, head of the Vatican’s Council for Justice and Peace, who condemned the building of walls between countries to keep out immigrants: “Speaking of borders, I must unfortunately say that in a world that greeted the fall of the Berlin Wall with joy, new walls are being built between neighborhood and neighborhood, city and city, nation and nation”. In reference to the U.S.-Mexican fence he qualified it as “an inhuman program, which is what the construction of that wall and all others is” (Reuters, 2006).

What other meanings can this wall have? What other messages is sending to society? For Tobar (2009) the fence is a symbol of the great social distance between Latin America and the
United States being “just a few hours’ drive away” (Los Angeles Times, 2009). For vendor Jose de Jesus Hernandez in Eagle Pass, Texas: “This is a wall of shame. I can’t look at it any other way” Schwartz (2010). U.S. Federal bureaucrats call it the “border fence.” Governor Humberto Moreira of the Mexican state of Coahuila has dubbed it a “wall of hate” and many activists as “the wall of death” (Hylton, 2009; Paterson 2008).

Although border fences can be politically popular in the nations that build them, they are often viewed as a harsh and expensive symbol in neighboring countries. Constructing new fencing to keep out unauthorized migrants, cross-border terrorists, insurgents and smugglers has remained as a priority in various parts of the world. But walls are much similar to other symbols used by human beings. As symbols they represent something visible that by association or convention characterize something else that is invisible, they are open to interpretation by different people in accordance with their individual interests or ideologies.

The Mexican-American border wall thus offers a good example for analysis. The problem at hand can of course be approached from several perspectives. This thesis intends to focus on an examination of the U.S. – Mexico border wall as has been portrayed in editorial cartoons in the major newspapers of both countries.

Previous literature specifically linking editorial cartoons and the border walls seems little or non-existent. Other than a collection of the Berlin wall cartoons presented in the global television network TV5 in 2009 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the article “Cartoon Roundup: Walling Off Mexico” published in the Washington Post (2006b) by Jefferson Morley in which he presents four political cartoons made by renowned Mexican cartoonists. For the researcher’s knowledge, there is no other than the present study. Therefore, the significance of this analysis is to be an original contribution for a better understanding of the U.S.-Mexico border wall and the interests behind and towards it as seen by the North American neighbors and discussed by “cultural studies”, “framing” and “semiotics” scholars.
This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter outlines the background behind building the U.S.-Mexico border wall and research questions this study intends to answer. The second chapter covers the review of literature regarding cartoon studies, walls as barriers, cultural studies, semiotics and framing theory which serve as theoretical framework for this analysis. The third chapter describes the methodology, the search and data gathering process. Chapter four presents the findings of analysis and interpretation. Discussions and propositions that can be explored in future research are presented in the final chapter.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

2.1 Walls as Barriers

Review of existing body of research about border walls, fences or barriers revealed an extensive amount of literature in the areas of sociology, psychology and political science such as the analysis of the representations and symbolism manifested on the Berlin Wall and their meanings before and after the fall of the Wall to measure the level of social distress (Rieber, 1997), analysis of the main reasons for the closure of the East-West sectoral border in Berlin (Maddrell, 2006), patterns of remembrance relating to the Wall and the GDR border which emerged in Berlin after German unification (Saunders, 2009) and lifestyle confrontation in citizens from East and West Germany after the Berlin Wall fall (Achberger, Linden and Benkert, 1999). Also, the development within the field of Israeli-Palestinian socio-politics and social movement studies, such as the analysis of activism around the building of the Wall dividing Israel and Palestine (Pallister-Wilkins, 2009) and the examination of land expropriation cases for the building of the Separation Wall among both neighbours (Falah, 2004); the conceptualization of material walls as artifacts of globalization to bring together a diversity of barriers that share similar attributes including the separation fence in Israel-Palestine, the fence at the U.S.-Mexico border, the fences surrounding immigration detention centres and the fences fortifying the temporary sites of global superpower gatherings (Feigenbaum, 2008).

However, little has been done from the perspectives of communication and cultural studies. For instance, a visual study made by Semmerling (2004) presents the semiotics and discourse analysis of picture postcards in Israel and Palestine in order to expose their national self. He found a “sign war” in their struggle for “the power to produce reality” revealing another level of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, that one over visual signs (p.7-8). Also dealing with
semiotics is the research elaborated by Ladd (1998) in which he presents the picture of a postcard sold in Berlin in the 1980's with the picture of the Great Wall of China simply reading "greetings from Berlin". He argues how in semiotics, the wall is the signifier and Berlin the signified showing as an irony the relatively insignificance of the wall as a physical barrier.

In his research, Stratton (2007) is concerned with the semiotics of the Israeli wall, and how the wall fits into Israeli ways of thinking that we can identify as “modern”. He argues that the actual wall that is being built is overdetermined by the meanings associated with the wall in the Israeli cultural imaginary, including the impact of the Holocaust on the way Israeli-Jews think as he suggests, this wall “needs to be understood through this culturally-based Holocaust anxiety. It bears connotations not only of modern ghetto walls but of the walls of the ghettos the Nazis created, and of the fences of the concentration and death camps. It is no wonder, then, that Israeli-Jews would rather the wall went around the Palestinians than around themselves” (p.4).

Schürer, Jenkins and Keune (1996) covered the use of literary imagery referring to the wall by German authors in their poetry, stories, novels and plays in both the FRG and the GDR. They concluded the Berlin Wall has been one of the most powerful phenomena, visible and decipherable text of the 20th century. Several essays concentrate on the representation of the wall in popular culture, in contemporary songs and ballads, in the cinema and even through the graffiti on the wall itself; however the wall symbolism in editorial cartoons as concerning to this study, was not included.

Also, taking the Berlin wall as a rhetorical resource, Bruner (1989) presented four examples from public discourses during the period 1961-1989 to reveal four symbolic uses of the Berlin Wall: (1) the Wall as a sign of the failure of the West; (2) the use the divisiveness of the Wall as a means for building identifications between West Berliners and the West; (3) use the Wall as a vehicle for challenging the Soviet system and (4) the Wall as the device of dismissing the Wall as something out-of-step with contemporary European life (p.326).

In his book “Image critique & the fall of the Berlin Wall”, Manghani (2008) presents the role of images in critical thought taking as case study images of the fall of the Berlin wall. He does not offer a hermeneutic or historical analysis of visual representations of the Berlin wall presenting
what he calls “image critique”: “a double procedure of both a critique of images and their critical engagement” (p.31).

Plenty of previous research has studied the frontier between both countries from an anthropological perspective that literally describes Mexican-American border locales to explore the concepts of inequality, power, global economics, and connections among cultures and societies (Alvarez 1987; Alvarez & Collier 1994; Chávez 1992; Fernández-Kelly 1983; Greenberg 1987; Heyman 1991; Kearney 1991) as well as theoretical works (Gupta & Ferguson 1992; Rosaldo 1988) concerning the relationships between Mexicans and the United States conceived broadly (Behar 1993; Rouse 1991). Also, the border wall has been previously studied as an evaluation of the enhanced U.S. border enforcement measures (Cornelius 2001; 2004; 2007; Emmott 2007; Hinkes 2008). However, the U.S.-Mexico border wall is a phenomenon that warrants further academic research because of its current impact on relationships between the two countries.

2.2 Understanding and Conceptualizing about Cartoons

Cartoons are a specific media form which tends to use humor and satire to convey messages about the social world (Kris & Gombrich 1962). It can be racist and sexist and it can contribute to the promotion of stereotypes (Templin, 1999). Cartoons are capable of communicating “subtle, complex, multilayered messages about people and events in the details of how they are drawn messages that would be difficult or impossible to express verbally”. Moreover, a political cartoon allows the cartoonist to express views that would be too “extreme, mean-spirited”, or “politically incorrect” to express in an essay column (Gilmartin & Brunn, 1998: 536) and “to be most effective, a cartoon must have three characteristics: sparkling wit, a basic element of fact, and a didactic or editorial purpose” (Cuff, 1945: 87).

The word “cartoon” is derived from the Italian word Caricatura, meaning to charge or load. An early definition is found in Sir Thomas Browne’s “Christian Morals” published in 1716: “When men faces are drawn with resemblance to some other animals, the Italians call it, to be
drawn in *Caricature*; making inference to *Caricature* as a “loaded portrait”. “Cartoon” as a term was first used in its current meaning in the mid-19th century, when the British satirical monthly *Punch* used it as a title for a series of humorous illustrations lambasting the government’s plans for a new lavish Parliament building and contrasting this lavishness with the extreme poverty of many ordinary people (Kleeman, 2006). The antecedents of the editorial cartoon were anonymously produced woodcuts, which typically depicted scenes of a political or religious nature and were hawked around the streets of 17th century Europe. Many of these woodcuts contained words as well as images and there is evidence that some artists even employed speed lines and word-balloons (Sabin, 1996). The invention of copperplate engraving and, in the mid-1800s, of facsimile reproduction facilitated the mass production of more detailed images, and the early cartoons became increasingly humorous and satirical.

At a time when the newspaper was still a predominantly verbal medium, cartoons created a visual sensation and many cartoonists of the late 19th century and early 20th century came to be regarded as influential and highly respected political commentators (Walker, 1978). In 1981 Horn stated that “any draw that encapsulates a complete thought can be called a cartoon” (p.15) while Dovifat (1960) claimed that cartoon is the satirical exaggeration of the own peoples’ particularities or circumstances shown in an accurate or impressive form and Geipel (1972) pointed out that any illustration which makes use of such conventions as physical distortions, exaggerated facial expressions, speech balloons or sequences of framed strip is likely to be called a cartoon, whether or not it is supposed to be defamatory or humorous.

In 1968, Dunn classified cartoons according to their purposes: comic cartoons are for amusement; social cartoons comment in the problems of everyday life and attempt to entertain while editorial cartoons attack a point of view or political figure. In the last classification, the editorial cartoons represent the newspaper’s views and provide readers with condensed information on complex issues. The tone is generally concerned with a political event or revealing a political true motives or behavior (Tyson 1989). They are selected by an editor or an editorial board with only a few elected out of an average of six panels that cartoonists create each week (Buell & Maus 1988).
The editorial cartoon then, developed from the *Caricatura* which in the theoretical sense represents the basic concepts of today’s cartoon studies. According to Harrison (1981), editorial cartoons focus attention on current issues and they can be analyzed for their portrayal of social trends, attitudes and culture. Morrison (1969) emphasized the importance of visual aspects in this discourse, arguing that non-verbal symbols can transmit meaning more directly than verbal symbols and Cahn (1984) suggested that cartoonists should rely on visual properties that are universally understood. Cartoons and caricature aim at those without time to read or who prefer visual news to understand a certain issue by just taking a look into the cartoon. As Streicher (1966) noted, “caricature is a way of catching in a glance the meaning of an event, a person in the news or a pictorial summary of a current power constellation”. Furthermore, he emphasized the aspects involving the cartoon understanding when he affirmed that the caricature analysis “require at least materials from the history of the fine arts, political history of the areas concerned and the sociology of public opinion and mass communication” (p.427). The editorial cartoon expresses criticism or disagreement in a social issue and simplifies the diverse links between the events, the power and the civil society, aiming “at a purposeful condensation of sometimes complex meanings into a single striking image” (Morrison, 1969:253).

From the fundamental conception of *Caricatura* in regard of it as a “loaded portrait”, some features can be exaggerated, Mogollon and Mosquera (1983), for example, stated “a draw in which are deformed, -to excel them- the most peculiar characteristics, the factions and the aspect of a person or thing” and Bergson indicated “catching a sometimes imperceptible characteristic and making it visible to the eyes when enlarging it” (Columba, 1959). Buell and Maus (1988) argue that “exaggeration and distortion” are the cartoonist’s “stock-in trade”. They conclude their analysis of the cartoons about the 1988 elections in the USA with the observation that most cartoons in the sample depict “frontrunners and oddities, and most of these were unflattering to the candidates” (p. 856). In addition, Nelson (1975) emphasized “today’s cartoon means a drawing usually humorous that stands by itself as a work of art” (p.5). A political cartoon is “a satirical comment, usually humorous . . . about a political person, event, institution
or idea, and reflecting the cartoonist’s own values or opinions on that issue” (School Programs Section, National Museum of Australia, 2002: 4).

What makes political cartoons unique is the way in which they typically use a fantasy scenario to comment upon an aspect of topical social, political, or cultural reality. In LeRoy’s (1970) apt words, they are “complicated puzzles mixing current events with analogies” (p. 39). If readers are willing and able to solve the mental puzzle that every cartoon poses, this can give them a real sense of satisfaction and sometimes provoke a humorous response (Smith, 1996). The editorial cartoon then, offers a new manner to observe a social issue by the use of transformation or exaggeration and when it embraces a social criticism, it can take part in historical events of great transcendence, such as the case of the U.S.-Mexico border wall construction analyzed in this study.

Nevertheless, cartoons have not received the academic research attention they deserve despite of their power and popularity. Carrier (2000) insists on the traditional partition between high and low art forms and does not allow “comics” to be part of art history. No discipline has truly dedicated to the study of editorial cartoons, yet at the nexus between several disciplines there is little academic literature on political cartoons (De Sousa, 1981, and 1984; DeSousa & Medhurst, 1982; Edwards, 1992, 1997; Gamson & Stuart, 1992; Hess & Kaplan, 1975; Medhurst & Benson, 1984; Paletz, 2002) with its main focus in humor and satire. However, the split is increasingly diminishing with more and more academic work on caricature and cartoon, as borne out by the references of this study, the publications devoted to humor and cartoon and the expansion of disciplines and approaches such as semiotics, framing, visual and critical discourse analysis to include semio-linguistic work on cartoon texts. These texts can cause not only amusement, claim or reflection but also conflict and clash as was briefly mentioned in the introduction chapter, the controversy with the Danish cartoons published in 2005 in the newspaper Jyllands-Posten depicting the prophet Muhammad in inappropriate ways for the majority of Muslims, resulted in diplomatic problems between Arab countries and Denmark, in addition to a general boycott on Danish products in Arab-Islamic societies (Rustomji, 2007).
A cursory review of literature can tell us that most cartoon studies are qualitative, often of anecdotal nature, compiling cartoonist experiences or criticism of the media and news. Such studies make interesting reading. Their journalistic approach also offers insights into the everyday life of cartoonists and editorialists, besides these studies may be useful as data for more systematic and explicit analyses in news production.

The quantitative approaches included time serial analysis of a few editorial cartoonists (Belk 1987, Beniger 1983, Kasen 1980), time series analysis of a variety of news media in editorial cartoons on a single issue (Gamson & Modigliani 1989), and analysis of an icon such as Fischer’s (1986) Statue of the Liberty in American cartoon art. According to Messaris (1994, 1997, 1998), the recognition of pictorial images is based on people’s ordinary, everyday visual perception and does not require any special competences. It is precisely because images are so close to our real-world perceptions that they can be used as “an especially elusive means of audience manipulation” (Messaris, 1998: 74); however, editorial cartoon involves a degree of abstraction, or, as McCloud (1993) specifies: “amplification through simplification” (p. 30).

Cartoonists generally rely on widely shared cultural symbols and metaphors from popular culture which often seem so natural that we accept them through barely conscious thought processes (Edwards, 1997: 29; El Refaie, 2003: 83). Thus, Raskin (1985) takes prior knowledge to be part of a social scenario selected by the cartoonist and reorganized to form the script which is essential for the accomplishment of the cartoons’ humorous effect. However, Pogel and Somers (1989) pointed out that “the indexes are incomplete; independent bibliographical guides appear in limited numbers; and serious critical analysis of editorial cartooning and cartoonists stylistic political, historical, remains in its infancy” (p.368) and Rothman and Olmsted (1966) stated, “knowledge about the characteristics and effects of newspapers cartoons is not based on research evidence but consists predominantly of assumptions, hypotheses and speculations going not far beyond the adage that one picture is worth a thousand words” (p.67).

Some Spanish literature has been written about cartooning in Mexico but is mostly by cartoonist compilations such as “La Caricatura Politica [The Political Cartoon]” (Gonzalez,
In the English language, very little research literature has been written about cartooning in Mexico, like the retrospective “The Mexican Revolution and the Cartoon” (Alba, 1966). However, a political cartoon analysis of the border walls and specifically boarding the fence between Mexico and the United States, although there are studies on cartoons or humour in the academic journals on media and communication, to the best of the researchers’ knowledge, seems non-existent. Therefore, the significance of this research is to be an original contribution for a better understanding of the border wall and the identification of framing similarities and discrepancies between the American and Mexican press.

We have reviewed literature which is available from the main library and libraries of communication and social sciences of National Chengchi University in Taipei as well as National Central Library in Taipei. Online libraries such as Questia and Google Books, also served as important tools in identifying pertinent literature in Spanish and cartooning as well.


There is already a rich amount of humor research. Specifically on political cartoons, for instance, Cuff (1945) and Lee and Goguen (2003) wrote about the history of political cartoon on the two sides of the Atlantic. Some studies deal with the relationship between editorial cartoons
and reality, for example, Streicher (1967) argues that they are grounded in reality. They are somewhere between what something or someone is and what it is not (Belton, 2000) while Mulkay (1988), points that humor in general derives from patterns of serious political discourse. It is an inversion of the serious world – a response to the difficulties occurring in the course of “socially coordinated production of the serious domain” (p. 197).

Some studies showed the relation between editorial cartoon and its role in persuading the audience about a certain topic. In 2002, Josh Greenberg pointed out that political cartoons are both informative and persuasive because they render normative judgments about social issues by employing a variety of journalistic conventions such as figures of speech, metaphors and irony (p.185). As Savarese (2000) noted, persuasive techniques are used either “deliberately or unwittingly to convince the public of a certain point of view (for or against something) without being explicit” (p.365). However, studies conducted by Cooper and Jahoda (1947) and Carl (1968) demonstrated that the persuasive potential of cartoons might not change readers perceptions since they found evidence to proof that the interpretation of the individual reader was divergent from the cartoonist’s mind. In addition, is difficult to empirically prove a direct causal relationship between the editorial cartoon and the corresponding behavior in the real world. (Morrison, 1969).

Related to news discourse, research on political cartoons (Morris, 1989; Gombrich, 1978); news photography (Hall, 1973; Banks, 1994; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1998; Huxford, 2001) and press (Emmison & McHoul, 1987; Gamson & Stuart, 1992) have shown the prevalence in the research of written or verbal discourse while visual news discourse has obtained less attention. Other studies explore the relationship between the level of satire in political cartoons on the one hand, and the political realities surrounding them on the other. Press (1981) believes that cartooning depends on the political system. In a totalitarian regime, it must praise the system and denounce its enemies. In an authoritarian regime, there is some dispraise, and when the regime becomes brittle, cartooning exposes “their rigid foolishness” (p. 53). In a Western democracy during peacetime, cartoonists are “watchdogs”, keeping power-holders “honest” and “accountable” (p. 56). Morris (1992) continues to examine the status of political cartoons as low,
medium or high satire. He tests two competing high and medium satire hypotheses by studying cartoons of civil servants and the British royal family, arguing that if they too are portrayed mainly in comic terms, cartooning has become high satire, critiquing politics as an institution. One conclusion Morris arrives is that royalty occupy an intermediate position as targets of cartoon. They are often portrayed as the victims and servants of politicians. The study supports the medium satire hypothesis: most political cartooning targets the democratic and public segments of decision-making processes in the contemporary state.

On the other hand, several studies focused on the role of symbolism to influence in a cartoon humorous interpretation “reducing the individual’s tension in the area depicted by the emotional theme of the humor stimulus, be it a joke, a cartoon or a situation” (More & Roberts 1957:236). Thus, to enhance the social aspect of humor, providing society with a channel to liberate tension, just as DeSousa & Medhurst (1982) point out, is “Merely the adult’s way of displacing aggression through the adoption of a symbolic substitute” (p.84). In this sense, an editorial cartoon can be cathartic, resulting in an Aristotelian purgation, recognition or relief. Can also be adjustive, resulting in behavioral or material change. Thus, relief can happen upon beholding a negative object or entity being ridiculed, or dysphemized (Lively, 1942).

But symbols are not only seen as a means for stress release. Scholars and observers have noticed the value of condensing the reality, like for example, when editorial cartoons simplified different social groups and their common perspective. In 1966, Victor Alba pointed out that “the cartoon that uses symbols is found particularly in societies or social groups of less cultural refinement: it is the most common form of cartoon” (p.122).

Besides, the cartoon replicates cultural values and norms that might induce the readers to think and reflect about certain topics. As a means of visual discourse, editorial cartoon uses particular symbolic expressions to transform ideas into pictorial symbols, which, according to Berger (1990), can have a “conventional meaning that often carries a great ideal of emotional baggage with it” (p.148). DeSousa and Medhurst (1982) observed, the strength and the impact of an editorial cartoon lies not only in the cartoonist’s intent of success but also “in the degree and the manner by which the cartoonist taps the collective consciousness of readers and thereby
reaffirms cultural values and individual interpretation of those values” (p.148). Moreover, Carl (1970) concluded that cartoon readers may not interpret cartoons as the cartoonist intended and that no two persons see a single cartoon in exactly the same way, which suggests that cartoons like many visuals, are polysemic.

To conclude, the above review shows that political cartoons have been studied from diverse approaches. Nevertheless, they have not been employed as a means of analyzing its message of a major political event such as the construction of the border fence between Mexico and the U.S.A.

2.3 Cartoons Researched in Cultural Studies and Semiotics

Cultural Studies are a discursive formation that is a cluster of ideas, images and practices, which provides ways of talking about forms of knowledge and conduct associated with a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society (Hall, 1997a: 6). They have no simple origins; have multiple discourses as a whole set of formations including many different kinds of work. According to Chris Barker in “Cultural Studies, theory and practice” (2003), a good deal of cultural studies is centred on questions of representation. That is in how “the world is socially constructed and represented to and by us in meaningful ways” (p.8). In fact, the central strand of cultural studies can be understood as the study of culture as the signifying practices of representation.

Cultural representations and meanings have a certain degree of materiality, they are embedded in sounds, inscriptions, objects, images, books, magazines, and television programmes. They are produced, enacted, used and understood in specific social contexts. The process of ‘encoding’ and ‘decoding’ a text, image or symbol is included within the cultural studies grounded in the basic context of semiotics, where ‘decoding’ involves not simply basic recognition and comprehension of what a text or image ‘says’ but also the interpretation and evaluation of its meaning with reference to relevant codes. Hall (1980) referred to various phases
in the Encoding/Decoding model of communication as ‘moments’. John Corner offers his own definitions:

(1) the moment of ‘encoding’: “the institutional practices and organizational conditions and practices of production” (Corner 1983:266)

(2) the moment of the text: “the... symbolic construction, arrangement and perhaps performance... The form and content of what is published or broadcast” (ibid., 267)

(3) the moment of ‘decoding’: “the moment of reception [or] consumption by the ‘reader/hearer/viewer’ which is regarded by most theorists as closer to a form of “construction”... suggested by the term ‘reception’” (ibid.).

Therefore the present study seeks to use some of the main streams of cultural studies, linking the process of encoding or framing the U.S.-Mexico border wall by the two main actors at the same time that is decoded by the other thru the use of semiotics.

In 1973, Berger observed the majority of attention was directed towards the impact of images in television but editorial cartoons are another visual source of information and entertainment. He claimed that “any medium that has the continued attention of hundreds of millions of people deserves serious attention and study” (Berger, 1973:15), especially if the medium denotes criticism of social issues, as the editorial cartoon does.

Based on the pioneering work of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes is the rethinking of the traditional notion of text. Semiotics deals with signs. A sign is anything that signifies, or has meanings within a certain code and a given context. Thus, all modern and contemporary media texts for example films, clips, ads, television and radio programs, magazine and newspaper articles, cartoons, posters, are legitimate data for semiotic analysis, which can include discourse analysis. Traditional discourse analysis has taken a more critical stance and developed into critical discourse analysis which, according to Van Dijk (2007) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and
inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context (p.108).

According to Mazid (2008) a discursive-semiotic, multimodal version of critical discourse analysis seems to be necessary in handling many modern and contemporary media texts, including political cartoons. The media, Gamson and Stuart (1992) argues, “provide a series of arenas in which symbolic contests are carried out among competing sponsors of meaning” (p.55). Therefore, political cartoon is a subgenre within a broader arena of humor in the media, where verbal jokes, animations, comic strips and non-political cartoons also belong (Mazid, 2008: 434).

For instance, in her study of cartoon representations of Saddam Hussein, Conners (1998) confidently asserts that cartoons “can often be understood across cultures, ages, and levels of intelligence” (p. 97). This, she believes, is due to the common use in cartoons of metaphors and symbols which “simplify ideas” and thus enable readers to interpret the images “quickly and easily” (p. 100). On the other hand, Giarelli (2006) notices that cartoons develop “a subtle semiotic structure to generate a particular meaning that is humorous”. Based on a study of cloning cartoons, she concludes that cloning is used in editorial cartoons “as a vehicle to make comments about perceived negative social behaviors or events as a way to show guilt by association. For example, a cartoon that depicts clones of Osama Bin Laden is as much a condemnation of terrorists as of cloning” (p. 71).

But editorial cartoons also communicate political symbols. The study of political symbols bridges political science, sociology and anthropology and has a quite developed literature dealing with subcategories such as the political aspects of signs (Deshen, 1976); names (Burke, 1969); ceremonies (Aronoff, 1989); memorials (Azaryahu, 1995); holidays (Liebman & Don-Yehiya, 1983; Shamgar-Handelman & Handelman, 1986); flags (Firth, 1973); religious doctrine (Asad,1993; Kopelowitz & Diamond, 1998); ritual (Aronoff, 1977; Kertzer, 1988); “political spectacles” (Edelman, 1964, 1988); and election ephemera (Herzog, 1987). All of these diverse approaches distinguish that symbolic constructs contribute to the creation of meaning within a given political context of power relations.
As political symbols, editorial cartoons employ a range of potential rhetorical tools to define actors and processes of political and societal culture (Diamond, 2002). Furthermore, Kertzer (1988) notes some very important assets for political cartoons when he notes that “three properties of symbols are especially important: condensation of meaning, multivocality, and ambiguity” (p. 11) and Abner Cohen (1979) coincides: “It is the very essence and potency of symbols that they are ambiguous, referring to different meanings, and are not given to precise definition” (p. 87). Symbols are vague, consequently cartoons are meaningful to those who understand something about the larger discourse in which they are constructed. This discourse includes the visual language of signs, conventions and rhetorical devices to convey and interpret meanings which can be grouped under the broad categories of caricature and visual analogy (Hou & Hou 1998). Thus, in a world increasingly dominated by visual forms of communication, many scholars believe that the ability to make sense of visual texts is becoming even more important (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001:1). The present study has benefitted from this tradition and it will contribute not only to the literature concerning analysis of visuals but also to the decoding of the Mexican-American border issue as they are portrayed in the editorial cartoons from both nations.

2.4 Frames and Framing Research

Goffman (1974) has insightfully noted that human beings organize or “frame” everyday life in order to comprehend and respond to social phenomena. Frames enable individuals to “locate, perceive, identify and label the world around them” (p.10). He also postulated that the context and organization of messages affect audience’s subsequent thoughts and actions about those messages.

Gitlin (1980) took a functional approach to framing. He defined frames as the devices that facilitate journalists to organize a vast amount of information and package it effectively for their audiences. He saw frames as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion” organizing the information for both
journalists and their audiences (p. 7). Later, Entman (1991), one of the framing research pioneers, proposed that news frames exist at two levels: (1) as mentally stored principles for information processing (audience frames) and (2) as characteristics of the news itself (news frames). When applied to media framing, the issues can shape the way the public understands the causes of and the solutions to central political problems (Iyengar, 1991).

Media frames then, allow the audience to identify the multiple issues of the social world in a way that could be meaningful to them. In this sense, framing essentially involves selecting “some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation and or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993: 52) frames then, define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies. According to Gamson and Modigliani (1989), a news frame is the “central organizing idea or storyline that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events… The frames suggest what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (p. 143).

News organizations use different words, phrases and images, including those mentally produced through the use of metaphors to define and construct political issues and controversies. These depictions may shape people’s reasoning and attitude about these issues (Nelson et al., 1997). The framing and presentation of events and news in the mass media can thus systematically affect how recipients of the news come to understand these events (Price, Tewksbury & Powers, 1995). According to Hertog and McLeod (2001) frames derive their power from their symbolic significance as they use recognizable myths and metaphors in the narratives. They also carry “excess meaning” as they activate some related ideas or thoughts and they have an accepted, shared meaning within a culture as they resonate with its members. Such attributes become more potent in the case of visuals as framing devices.

Images and signs are powerful framing tools because they are less intrusive than words and requires less cognitive load. Thus, some images have international effectiveness and become apparently universal signs owing their widespread use to the international structures of mass communication (Morgan & Welton, 1992). Images used in news, advertising, arts and literature
have not only a high attractive value but also they often give the first impression of a story, and they are readily remembered (Rogers & Thorson, 2000). Therefore, visuals are good framing devices because, according to Wischmann (1987), they are “capable of not only obscuring issues but [also] of overwhelming facts” (p. 70).

Editorial cartoons can be analyzed for the frames they suggest. According to Messaris and Abraham (2001), visuals have three distinguishing characteristics to frame news issues: (1) the analogical quality of images refers to the fact that association between images and their meanings are based on similarity. The authors propose that because images are relatively analogous to the real objects they represent, no grammar or rules of usage have to be learned first to understand them. (2) the indexicality of images. Because of their true-to-life qualities or indices, “photographs come with an implicit guarantee of being closer to the truth than other forms of communication” (p. 217); images then, become evidence for something and due to indexicality, most viewers may not question what they see because they see what they believe it exist in the illustration. (3) the lack of an explicit propositional syntax in images refers to the fact that visuals do not have a set of conventions for making propositions like cause-and-effect relationships. It offers a clear stumbling block in the identification of frames because claims are less likely to be perceived in visual depictions of reality that stand without text. Viewers mostly make sense of images with the help of contextual or other cues and might be less conscious of being presented with pre-selected information, which may omit certain visual cues.

For example, Borah and Bullah, (2006) examined how five newspapers from different parts of the world depicted the Indian Ocean tsunami and hurricane Katrina during their first week. The salient frames identified across the five newspapers were categorized in six groups: lives lost, lives saved, physical damage, emotional frame, political frame and other.

In a qualitative analysis of newsmagazine photos about stem cell research, Smith (2006) found four themes that emerged as news frames—science, politics, medical and religion. Fahmy et al. (2006) analyzed images of hurricane Katrina, comparing the photo offerings of the Associated Press and Reuters against the pictures on the newspaper front pages and they found
significant difference in the presence of frames that relate to “timeframe, location, victims, race, emotional portrayal, officials, aerial depictions, death, and portrayals of officials” (p. 12). However, frame studies for visuals have been focused only on photographic evidence in newspapers and magazines. This thesis intends to extend frame studies to cartoons as visuals by identifying the frames and symbols in the cartoon representation of the U.S.-Mexico border wall.

2.5 Research Questions

Essentially, the visual discourse in editorial cartoons provides evidence about a social issue. Through the use of metaphors, phrases and satires in a rhetorical metalanguage, the editorial cartoons frame the information and organize graphically the essence of a current issue. As Gamson and Stuart (1992) have argued, political cartoons “offer a number of different condensing symbols that suggest the core frame” of the event (p. 60). Thus, the editorial cartoon helps the audience to condense and process large quantities of information in a faster and simplest way giving the discursive possibilities a direction to aim the understanding of a social issue.

The framing and presentation of events and news in the mass media can thus systematically affect how recipients come to understand these events (Price, Tewksbury & Powers, 1995). In this sense, Entman (1993) pointed out “Frames call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, which might lead audiences to have different reactions” (p. 55). However, the framing theory has been applied mainly in analyzing texts (Berger, 1991). The question of how issues are framed through the images such as cartoons has remained relatively underresearched (Bell, 2001). This disparity has to be corrected considering that just as in textual framing, images as modes of communication have properties that either “enhance or mitigate their consequences” (Messaris & Abrahaim, 2001: 215) and therefore this thesis intends to contribute in the expansion of literature linking frames and editorial cartoons.
Despite the historical construction of the separation wall between the United States and Mexico, its portrayal in editorial cartoons has not been analyzed yet. Therefore, this thesis intends to examine the political cartoons established in the following research questions:

1. *How did the Mexican press frame the U.S.-Mexico border fence in political cartoons of the wall?*

2. *How did the American press frame the U.S.-Mexico border fence in political cartoons of the wall?*

3. *How did the American political cartoons differ from the Mexican political cartoons?*

In order to answer the research questions this thesis intends to utilize a qualitative approach to political cartoon images published from 2003 to 2008 in major Mexican and American newspapers. The purpose is to identify the main frames in the newspapers cartoons’ in order to decode the different messages and symbolisms towards this social issue through which one can understand the U.S.-Mexico border as seen in the newspapers in the two countries.

From the review of existing body of literature, we find that political cartoons transform abstractions into visual symbols. As the main actors in the border wall issue, Mexico and the United States will make use of symbols to encode the American Security fence in the editorial cartoons, and both actors will also decode it in a certain manner through the encoding-decoding process. Each country has the liberty to express its own opinion and concerns towards the American-Mexican border wall, and the political cartoons in this case, serve as evidence of this fact.

In addition, Gamson (1992) refers to a frame as “an implicit organizing idea” which informs and shapes public discussion pointing what is relevant and what is not (p.3). Yet, there is a need to expand the empirical database since little has been done to study the relation between frames and editorial cartoons such as this analysis will address with the case of the U.S.-Mexico border wall because framing constructs the visuals and as a consequence, leads to the idea that different media may present different pictures of reality.
Chapter 3

Method

This study utilizes a qualitative content analysis to answer the research questions. It is intended to identify the main frames and symbols through which to understand the U.S.-Mexico border wall issue as portrayed in editorial cartoons from both countries.

3.1 Collection of the Cartoons for Analysis

Content analysis has been developed as “the major systematic and empirical method for analysing visual material” (Ball and Smith 1992: 20). This research employs the same operational definition as Edwards (2001) used for a political cartoon: “Visual/verbal non-narrative commentary, typically in single-panel form created by a staff member or a newspaper or appearing originally on the editorial pages of a newspaper” (p.2149). A border wall structure may vary in materials and placement with regard to international borders or topography. However, a wall serves as a kind of separation barrier built to limit the movement of people across a certain frontier or to separate two populations. The editorial cartoon is daily published in newspapers and acts as a means of expression through the use of humor, irony or satire containing a political or social message to point, critic or disagree with a current event or personality.

The sample consists of one-frame political cartoons published from 2003 to 2008 based in major dailies from Mexico and The United States of America. This time period was selected to coincide with the approval of the Security Fence Act of 2006 which authorizes the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to construct “the infrastructure necessary to deter and prevent
illegal entry on our Southwest Border, including pedestrian and vehicle fencing, roads and technology” (U.S. DHS, 2010); dividing the U.S.-Mexico border with a wall running from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico.

The cartoon examination was realized in Taipei, Taiwan, from August to December, 2008 thru the use of English keywords such as “U.S.-Mexico border fence, separation barrier, security fence, border wall, walled border” and their equivalent in Spanish “U.S.-Mexico muro fronterizo, muro divisorio, frontera, muralla, barrera, valla” in Internet search engines such as Google, Yahoo!, bing and diverse cartoon databases since they were not readily available physically or accessible in libraries and other research depositories. Among these, all categories of the following were searched: cartoonweb.com, cartoons.nytimes.com, caglecartoons.com, cartoonstock.com, politicalcartoons.com, amureprints.com and editorialcartoons.net. This time period was selected because the tensions at the U.S.-Mexico border were heightening when a Border Patrol agent was the first to be tried for murder since 1994, raising huge controversy. Arizona’s Border Patrol Nicholas Corbett’s defense portrayed the death of the 22-year-old Mexican migrant Javier Domínguez Rivera as a case of self-defense by the 40-year-old agent when he said the migrant tried to throw a rock on him. But the prosecution told a different story, because it revealed that while surrendering, the young man went down on his knees, put his hands in the air, and then he was shot from behind. Corbett had a history of domestic violence, assault on a civilian in Pennsylvania and a professed hatred of Latinos and even the eyewitnesses’ statements which were consistent with the autopsy, ballistics and forensics didn’t match with Corbett’s story, he had two trials but each ended in with the jury unable to decide, so both judges declared mistrials. From 2006 to 2008 U.S. Border Patrol agents killed 12 people but Corbett’s trial incensed again bitter national debates about immigration policies and his trial case was a political lightning rod in the United States (Nathan, 2008).

In total, 154 editorial cartoons depicting the U.S.-Mexico border wall were first selected. However, 51 of them were published in foreign countries such as Austria, China, France, Philippines, Israel, Panama, Ireland, India, Brazil, Cuba and Canada. But since this thesis intends to analyze the cartoons published only by the two main actors in the American-Mexican border
wall construction, they were eliminated as they did not entirely correspond to the sample required for this study. As a result, 69 Mexican and 34 American cartoons were used for analysis. In view of the fact that the search process for the cartoons was realized thru the use of Internet search engines and databases, the scope of this research is limited to the availability of the samples published in major Mexican dailies such as *El Universal* [Universal], *Milenio* [Millennium], *La Jornada* [The Day], *El Norte* [The North], *El Imparcial* [The Impartial] and foremost American newspapers like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Denver Post* and *The St. Louis Post Dispatch*.

The cartoons chosen for analysis are from the dailies of impact in their respective country. *El Universal* is considered the most influential and widely read newspaper in the country. During the 1980’s *El Universal* fought to end the governmental monopoly on newsprint. In 2001 it initiated its online version which offers free access to all content and is ranked the second most visited news site in Mexico with an average of more than 3 million unique visitors each month. The circulation of its print edition counts more than 300,000 copies and reaches from middle class to urban educated people. *La Jornada* is Mexico’s leading left-wing newspaper read by elites. It has some of the country’s best political cartoonists, publishes more readers’ letters than most, and includes high quality coverage in its arts and provinces sections. It was described by the American linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky as “the one independent newspaper in the whole hemisphere” (French-Monge, 2010). It has a circulation of 107,291 copies and its website has approximately 180,000 daily pageviews. *Milenio* is a major conservative national newspaper published in eleven main cities across the country. It has a circulation of 103,000 copies and its readership is composed from middle to upper level class. *Milenio online* offers free access to its constantly updated information and also links the visitor to *Milenio TV* and radio, registering 1.5 million monthly visitors. The 3 newspapers mentioned are based in Mexico City and distributed in all the country.

In contrast with Mexico City where the newspapers’ readership can choose among more than 24 dailies, the situation outside the capital is very different because diversity has been replaced by virtual local monopolies (Sarmiento, 2005: 289). Such are the cases of *El Norte* and
El Imparcial based in the states of Nuevo Leon and Sonora, respectively. Although they face some competitors, these single newspapers have almost total dominance in North Mexico (ibid, 290). For instance, El Norte is the leading newspaper in Mexico’s third largest city, following the independent journalism model it remains one of the newspapers with the most credibility. It has a circulation of 142,561 dailies and its Internet site currently requires a paid subscription for access. El Imparcial ranks in the first position in the Mexican Northwest and has an edition of 21,426 copies. Both are local dailies, however, they occupy the first and the second largest penetration between national newspapers, respectively. Since both newspapers are based in states bordering the U.S., they are being directly affected by the construction of the American Security fence. Therefore, the national but also the regional Northern Mexican perspectives as portrayed in these newspapers’ cartoons are being included for analysis.

Besides, the American dailies also render diversity to the samples. In one hand, The New York Times and The Washington Post are the third and fifth largest newspapers in the United States in terms of circulation with 1’097,000 copies and 762,000, respectively. The New York Times is considered the most influential newspaper which sets a standard for quality journalism unparalleled throughout the country with daily readership of about 5 million people. Known for its general reporting and international coverage, its website receive more than 18 million unique visitors per month. The Washington Post has a particular emphasis on national politics, is America’s capital largest and oldest newspaper with an average weekday circulation of 582,844 dailies. In addition to the wide range of American audience these two papers reach, the provincial perspective is also considered for the cartoons analysis through The St. Louis Post Dispatch, a large metropolitan newspaper famous because after his acquisition by Joseph Pulitzer became a model of crusading urban newspaper to attack political corruption, wealth, and privilege, is also one of the largest newspapers in the American Midwest with a circulation of 255,057 reproductions. Finally, The Denver Post is the sole major newspaper and Internet website published in Denver, Colorado with an average weekday circulation of 255,452 exemplars and more than two million visitors each month on its online version. Both dailies rank
in the top 50 largest-circulation newspapers in the U.S., occupying the 29 and 12 places, respectively.

The different sources of the cartoons sampled suggest that the present research has a comprehensive universe of the border wall cartoons for analysis. However, to clarify both nations’ newspapers’ visions, interests and concerns as portrayed in their political cartoons is necessary to come across briefly in the most significant characteristics and development of the press systems in the two countries.

3.2 The U.S. and Mexico Press Systems

The press in the United States, evolving through a long history of freedom and openness, has been a crucial factor in the formation of the American republic. Strict protections for the press were added to the United States Constitution in 1790, just two years after it was ratified. Since its independence from England in 1776, the U.S. press has operated without fear of prior restraint and with little fear of lawsuits resulting from coverage of governmental issues or public officials and today in the twenty-first century continues operating within one of the most literate, rich and powerful societies in the world.

On the other hand, after being under Spanish rule for three centuries with an autocratic system opposed to any type of free press, Mexico achieved its independence in 1810 and in 1822 became a republic. Of the history prior to the 1910 revolution, the war between Mexico and the United States in the mid-nineteenth century needs to be mentioned because after Mexico lost 55 percent of its territory, this became a permanent source of friction in the relations between both countries. Printing presses existed in Mexico as early as 1536 and small circulation newspapers, such as the Gaceta in Mexico City began to appear about 1660. These publications used political cartoons as a medium for attacking the authorities of both the state and church. General education was not available and so illiteracy was high. Throughout the nineteenth century, amid political instability, journalists pleaded for a free press and frequently cited the American newspapers and constitutional guarantees as models worth emulating. However, following the
1910 revolution, particularly in Mexico City, a number of new papers started for example, *El Universal* in 1916 and the *Excelsior* in 1917. During recent years, the Mexican media system has experienced significant modifications. These may be explained by the strong interdependence between the media and the country’s democratization process since after 71 years of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) dominance, in 2000, Vicente Fox won the presidential election with a new federal political party, the National Action Party (PAN). Nowadays, the government incorporates a mixture of U.S. constitutional theory and civil law system and it also has judicial review of legislative acts. However, with 61 journalists killed and eight missing in the last decade, Mexico is considered the continent’s most dangerous country for freedom of press (RSF, 2009).

### 3.3 Determining the Frames in Cartoons

Since framing involves selection and salience (Entman, 1993), the cartoons would be classified, after careful analysis according to the frequency of the main frames found in reference to the economic, political or social approach given to the issue. The more editorial cartoons, the more important role they play (Morrison, 1969). But “Content analysis by itself, does not demonstrate how viewers understand or value what they see or hear. Still shows what is given priority and what is not” (Bell, 2001:26). Therefore, the symbolism used to express the main concerns of both nations surrounding the border wall will also be considered. Will the American and Mexican frames’ differ? Which symbols are utilized in cartoons of both countries to portray their interests concerning the U.S.-Mexico border wall?

According to the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) *The World Factbook* (2009), the ongoing political, economic and social concerns during the last decade in Mexico included low real wages, underemployment for a large segment of the population, inequitable income distribution, and few advancement opportunities for the largely Amerindian population in the impoverished southern states. Also, the war on drugs and the American intensification of security measures to monitor and control legal and illegal personnel, transport, and commodities across
its border with Mexico. Per capita income remained roughly one-third that of its American neighbor and trade with the US and Canada has nearly tripled since the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. On the other hand, the U.S. remained the world's most powerful nation state with an economy marked by steady growth, low unemployment and inflation, and rapid advances in technology. The main political issues of the United States in the last decade included the debates on immigration with the increasing enforcement of existing laws with regard to illegal immigrants, the building of the border wall and the controversy of the economic, social, and political aspects of undocumented migrants regarding ethnicity, economic benefits, jobs for non-immigrants, settlement patterns, impact on upward social mobility, crime and voting behavior. Also, the wars against terrorism, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the separation of church and State and health care reforms had been setting the news agenda.

During the last decade, the political, economic and social scenarios in Mexico have been dominated by the problem of migration to the United States, which include the high number of cross-border related deaths and violations of migrant’s human rights. Also, the unsuccessful results in the fight against drug trafficking, the increase of social insecurity including kidnapping and extortion and the failed attempts of political reforms to improve the country’s economy. Moreover, the economic crisis, the high rates of unemployment and poverty, the high levels of corruption and the lack of good quality programs and institutions of public health and education had been also some principal concerns of the Mexican society.

Among the bilateral issues between Mexico and the United States, most standing are the random migration from the South to the North and the recent programs to jointly combat the drug trafficking in which both countries recognize their responsibility. In one side, the United States is the main consumer and weapon provider for the drug cartels, in the other, Mexico is a significant supplier of marijuana, the primary transshipment country for US-bound cocaine from South America, and for having the major drug trafficking cartels operating on its territory.
Finally, the renegotiation of the NAFTA, which even during his presidential campaign, the actual American President Barack Obama promised to renegotiate it, so far the issue has been postponed in his agenda. (Barceló, 2010).

Having roughly reviewed the main social, political and economical issues in the United States and Mexico, after careful inspection of the cartoons and due the frequency of its use, six frames were clearly evidenced. The first one concerns Freedom. This frame utilizes the symbol of the statue of liberty to express the limitation or modification in the border accessibility after the U.S.-Mexico border wall construction. The second refers to Death, based in the concept of the people who might lose their lives in their intent to cross the U.S.-Mexico border fence; these cartoons use the symbol of a skeletal figure carrying a large scythe and clothed in a black cloak with a hood. The third frame is Division, corresponding to the association of the border wall between Mexico and the United States with segregation walls in other countries, as for example Germany or Israel. The fourth frame found refers to Employment, which exhibits the pull and push factors that influence the cross-border movement of illegal migrants from Mexico to the United States. The fifth frame characterizes the Economy, manifesting different ideas of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed by the governments of the United States, Mexico and Canada. The last frame concerns to the Immigration Reform, in regard to the contemplation of some changes in the current American immigration policy to increase the legalization of immigrants’ hiring by U.S. companies.

Given our understanding of the political and press systems, as well as the cultures in the United States and in Mexico, as outline above, the selected cartoons for analysis are expected to exhibit the geographical or national backgrounds of the newspapers in which the cartoons appear. As newspapers in both countries are known for their respect for freedom of the press and freedom of expression, there should also be cartoons that are critical of the border wall by taking a non-nationalistic perspective.

On the other hand, we also expect to see most of the symbols used to characterize the border wall representing the respective popular cultural icons. Then, icons that are of “universal”
recognition may also be used by cartoons from the papers in both countries, although the context in which the icons are used or the meanings they intend to convey can differ. In short, these are the “hypotheses”, so to speak, that this research intends to test. All these will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4 that follows.

Chapter 4
Findings

As discussed in the previous chapter, we want to identify the symbols used in the cartoons of the two countries and the frames these symbols attempt to represent. This chapter reports our findings.

4.1 Symbols

A border wall structure may vary in the materials used and its placement with regard to international borders or topography. It serves as a kind of separation barrier to limit the movement of people across a certain frontier or to separate two populations. During the data analysis, in the case of the U.S.-Mexico border wall, many different symbols are found to represent the physical barrier in the editorial cartoons. Such are the cases of construction supplies such as bricks, fence, barbed wire and steel barriers. In addition, metaphorical resources had also being used to signify a specific meaning like for example human skulls to denote the death of migrants in the border, military agents referring to the U.S. government decision to raise its Border Patrol deployment to 17,399 agents in 2009 from fewer than 4,000 in 1993 (Jeffrey, CNS News, 2009); the statue of liberty inferring to the effect of the border wall in both nations’ freedom and curtains or sand to express the cross-border vulnerability of the U.S. security fence.
Also, American gigantic corporations such as the supermarkets Walmart and the fast-food restaurants Mc Donald’s have been used as symbols to divide the American-Mexican border on behalf of the separation barrier.

Besides, very specific symbols were used to represent each country. In the portrayal of the United States of America, the main icons were the “Stars and Stripes” flag and “Uncle Sam” which is its national personification and sometimes more specifically, the incarnation of the American government. He is depicted as a stern elderly white man with white hair and a goatee beard, dressed in attire that recalls the U.S. flag with a top hat with red and white stripes and white stars on a blue band, as well as red and white striped trousers. To represent Mexico, we found its tricolor flag and people wearing the typical big hat with a somewhat high pointed crown, an extra-wide brim and a slightly upturned edge and a poncho which is an outer garment designed to keep the body warm made essentially of a single large sheet of fabric with an opening in the center for the head. Also, the Mexican outfit is usually characterized using light colors and wearing sandals referring to that used by indigenous people. Very often, the migrants were represented carrying their luggage in a small clothed bag hanging from a wooden stick on their shoulders.

Only in the Mexican cartoons we found the caricatures of American President George W. Bush who served from 2001 to 2009, U.S. Secretary State Hillary Clinton and actual American President Barack Obama; Mexican ex-President Vicente Fox who served from 2000 to 2006 and the actual President of Mexico, Felipe Calderon. Moreover, the Mexican cartoons also showed different symbols to represent the death of the migrants in the border with the U.S.A, such like the Latin cross which is a prominent feature of Christian cemeteries and is used in Mexico to mark the place where somebody lost its life. Also, the personification of death as a skeletal figure clothed in a dark cloak with a hood and carrying a large scythe or sickle.

On the other hand, only the American cartoons brought into play an elephant to represent the U.S. Republican Party in the Mexican border wall cartoons. In fact, the elephant has actually been adopted as their official symbol and was born in the imagination of American cartoonist Thomas Nast who associated the elephant with the Republican vote in a political cartoon that
appeared in *Harper's Weekly* in 1874. Also, they employ a pig wearing dark business suit, a top hat and smoking a cigar to represent the private industrial sector in the United States.

The complete selection of cartoons made use of a great amount of signs. Next, in table 4.1 we condense the major symbols used in the cartoons by both countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMBOLS</th>
<th>U.S.A</th>
<th>MEXICO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>American Images</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Flag</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle Sam</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mexican Images</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican Flag</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Hat</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Figures of American Administrations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George W. Bush</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary Clinton</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barack Obama</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figures of Mexican Administrations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicente Fox</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felipe Calderon</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construction Supplies</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Trowel</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricks</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbed Wire</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sand</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Death Related</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeleton</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sickle</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coffin</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hood</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin Cross</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NAFTA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Freedom Division</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Statue of Liberty</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Wall</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Israel Wall</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walmart</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American employers</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal migrants</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Reform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Senate</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Amnesty</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladder</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door/Hole in the wall</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elephant</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevertheless, as we mentioned before, the cartoons yielded an extensive amount of signs, like for example, a gun rifling pointing to the Mexican side of the border, liberty statues covering themselves with shields, a short donkey as symbol of the Democratic party in the U.S. and the “Immigration Bill” incarnated in the fictitious character of the “Zorro”, a kind of hero who was a nobleman and master living in the Spanish colonial era of California, and is portrayed in the cartoon riding the “Senate” horse asking for amnesty visa. Also, rivers and cactus to differentiate the Mexican from the American land and sweeper denoting the kind of job the migrants need to do in the United States.

In addition, the American cartoons generally made use of more elements in each illustration, specially the incorporation of text in speech balloons, footnotes, backgrounds and labels as a resource to complement their representations in contrast with their Mexican counterpart which rely more in the image and made seldom use of text. When employing the same symbols, Mexican cartoons tend to be more critical and exhibit the negative impact of the border wall on the country’s society, economy and politics while the American cartoons are more satirical minimizing the negative impact by diverting to the finding of the possible culpables of the migration such as their politicians or the American employers.

4.2 Frames

Altogether, the symbols used in the political cartoons from both countries were used to signify economic, political and social frames. After careful inspection, they were categorized according the classifications previously mentioned in the last chapter, in concern to Freedom, Death, Division, Employment, Economy and Immigration Reform. To facilitate their
differentiation and discussion in the text, they were numbered and labeled “M” for Mexican, “A” for American cartoons. The differences in the amount of frames published in each country are interesting itself since evidently, there was more substantial coverage of certain topics by a nation, as stated in chart 4.1 on next page where it seems clear that the employment frame was the main focus in the American cartoons while interestingly, the immigration reform frame was quite balanced in both countries’ cartoons.

Chart 4.1 Frequency of frames used by country

To answer the first research question concerning how the Mexican press framed the U.S.-Mexico barrier in political cartoons, we examined the samples published in this country. The results show that a social issue such as the death of immigrants in the border with the United States was very significant. Also, besides the same frame, the one concerning the North American Free Trade Agreement were exclusively used by the Mexican newspapers since we did not find any American cartoon boarding these two topics. In addition, the death and the
immigration reform frames were the most commonly used in the Mexican cartoons. Next, we will address in detail the frames and the symbols used to signify them, starting with those used exclusively in the Mexican dailies.

4.2.1 Death and Skulls

One of the most visible consequences of the border-focused strategy has been the increase in deaths resulting from clandestine entry. Since the United States began beefing up patrols along the 2,000-mile border, deaths have occurred at a rate of one every 24 hours. Mexico’s foreign ministry informed of at least 5,607 cross-border related deaths between 1994 and 2008 while the Border Patrol from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security had reported 4,111 deaths in border areas since 1998, not counting those reported first to local authorities (Hsu, The Washington Post, 2009).

Deaths occurring along the Arizona and Texas segments of the border have increased ten-fold since the implementation of the concentrated border enforcement strategy. Border-wide, the probability of dying versus being apprehended by the Border Patrol has doubled since 1998. These statistics understate the number of fatalities, since they include only those migrants whose bodies have been recovered by the Border Patrol or the Mexican police. Most migrant deaths in the last ten years have been due to “environmental causes”: freezing to death in the mountains of San Diego County, succumbing to dehydration or heat stroke in the deserts of California and Arizona, or being asphyxiated in sealed trucks and railroad cars as migrants are being transported away from the border area. There has also been sharp increase in deaths due to drowning, mostly in the All-American Canal, an irrigation ditch that parallels the U.S.-Mexico border for long stretches in California and Arizona. Federal officials routinely blame these deaths on the tactics of professional people-smugglers. But the smugglers are only satisfying a demand that has been created largely by the strategy of concentrated border enforcement. The strategy has also provoked an upsurge in organized, anti-immigrant vigilante activity on the U.S. side of the border. Vigilante groups now operate in all four southwestern Border States, and they have been acquiring increasingly sophisticated technology like night-vision cameras and unmanned aerial
drones. They make extra-official apprehensions and turn their captives over to the Border Patrol. While only a few cases of migrant injuries or deaths resulting from vigilante activities have been documented to date, the potential for greater loss of life is evident (Cornelius, 2001, 2004, 2007).

From the two frames found exclusively portrayed in Mexican newspapers’ cartoons, Death was the more salient, like for example the cartoon M1 is called “Frontier” shows in first plane the icon of the “Death” representation seated on one of many wood crosses with the “Migratory agreement” hanging from his sickle covered by blood. In the back part we can see the border fence while the Mexican and the American flags are waving with the wind. The death is seated in the American side of the border waiting for more migrants to cross, more migrants to kill. It denotes that the lack of a migratory agreement to authorize American companies to legally hire the migrants have not stop them in their intention to cross the border searching for a job, carrying as a consequence as many deaths as we can count with every wood cross.

The second image is called “Technology in the border” as sarcasm of the “Virtual” fence, a high-tech system to control the U.S.-Mexico border with cameras, ground sensors and radars.
The program was launched by the Bush administration in 2005, as for March 2010 covers the Arizona-Mexico border and is supposed to be in operation along the 2,000 mile border by 2011. The cartoon shows the stereotypical image of the Mexicans, wearing a big hat and sandals, jumping over the wall to cross into the American side of the border and coming back to the country inside their coffins through a kind of mechanical transmission belt installed directly in the wall, evidencing the wall as a sort of “death device”.

Cartoon M3 shows again the icon of the Death building by itself the border wall with human skulls as a substitute of bricks. In one hand is holding a trowel while in the other is placing a new skull in the wall. Written on its sickle we can read “U.S. Mexican border”, inferring the large amount of immigrant deceases, lost in their intent to cross that frontier. The complete collection of images depicting death is included in Appendix A at end of this thesis.

4.2.2 Economy and NAFTA

In 1994, Mexico, the United States and Canada created a trilateral trade bloc in North America. The objectives of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) were only economic, eliminating tariffs to facilitate the movement of goods, services and increase the investment within the three countries. However, even that the exports from Mexico to the U.S. and Canada increased, the results were not favorable because the American imports grew faster than exports, poverty remained at the same levels and the agreement did not help to generate new or better jobs in Mexico. The main reasons are the big differences between industrialized and highly developed countries such as the U.S. and Canada with the economic and social conditions of Mexico, which makes it the weaker partner.
Cartoon M4 illustrates a Mexican farmer holding a map with the “T.L.C.” initials (NAFTA in Spanish) written on it. An arrow drawn in the map is showing the farmer, the way to go from Mexico to the United States in order to allow him to sell few watermelons contained in the back part of a very old and poor vehicle. However, in his way he encounters the border wall blocking the route making impossible to cross. Behind the wall, we can see the American flag fluttering in the wind. Comparing the poor outfit of the farmer and his vehicle, with the neat and structured material wall, we can infer the social and economic differences between both nations. Also, the comparison between small amount of watermelons, the small size of his car and the big height of the wall let us infer the difficulties that Mexican farmers need to face to compete with their products in the NAFTA.

After the unequal results of the agreement in Mexico 100,000 people marched in the streets on two separate occasions under the banner of renegotiation to revise the NAFTA’s agricultural provisions. They demanded protection of basic food production by removing corn and beans from the agreement. Therefore, in 2003, then Mexican President Vicente Fox requested opening up the agreement only to be rebuffed by the U.S. government. In this concern Cartoon M5 presents a Mexican farmer, stereotypically dressed with a *poncho* and a big hat seated over the border wall. Besides him, the American icon “Uncle Sam” is wearing the stars and stripes hat and holding the free trade agreement while says: - “What would you like to renegotiate? It’s all mine anyway”. This cartoon expresses the fear from the Mexican farmer sector that the United States may have taken bigger advantages with the sign of the NAFTA, even if one day there is a renegotiation.

In Cartoon M6, we can see a sort of NAFTA’s negotiation table with the microphones for the Mexican President at that time, Vicente Fox, and Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien. Nevertheless, in the middle of both leaders is former American President George Bush with trowel in hand, building a wall with bricks and barbed wire around his seat denoting the American position to be totally closed at any possibility of the NAFTA’s renegotiation. The images concerning this frame are enclosed in Appendix B.
4.2.3 Freedom and the Statue of Liberty

It is contradictory that being members of the NAFTA, the freedom between Mexico and the United States is being affected by the construction of the border wall. Especially the freedom of movement when along with the border wall build-up, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service launched “Operation Gatekeeper” in an effort to move people away from the migration routes dramatically increasing the number of Border Patrol and military agents forcing people into harsh and desolate areas. For example, people who migrate to California must now attempt their crossing through the Imperial Desert or over the Mountains that are north of Tecate city because in spite of the hazards of extreme temperatures in the desert and mountains, people have not been deterred from trying to enter the United States to find jobs.

Also, many land owners in the U.S.-Mexico border have suffered freedom violations as for example early in 2008, human rights lawyer Peter Schey had sued U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its Secretary Michael Chertoff on behalf of hundreds of Native American communities living all along the International Boundary Zone north and south of the border from California, Arizona, New Mexico and through Texas because the American wall is slated to pass through their inherited properties. The wall is also pointed as an infringement of property rights in both the U.S. and Mexico, and because it “brutally enforces a desperately failed U.S. immigration policy” (Kinberg, 2008:34). According to Kinberg, many American border towns oppose the wall because it will have a devastating impact on their economy. Moreover, the path of the 700 hundred miles of border wall extending from California into Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and stopping just short of the Gulf of Mexico takes it through some of the most fragile and biologically diverse protected lands. Over the years former DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff issued five separate waivers under Real ID, setting aside 36 federal laws to waive the broad subjects of water, air, wildlife and the environment, leaving few -if any- federal, state, or other environmental laws in place. In addition to brushing aside environmental protections, laws relating to farmland, archaeological and historic sites, religious freedoms and Native American graves, were also suspended.
Also many previous edifices had been affected by the U.S.-Mexico border wall construction, like the “Friendship Park” in California, a plaza that paradoxically has stood since the 1970s for the goodwill between Mexico and the United States but was closed in 2009 to make way for a triple fence along the U.S. southern border (Daily Commercial News, 2009).

The Statue of Liberty is a worldwide known symbol to represent freedom and cartoonists have not hesitated to use it in reference to the Mexican-American border wall. Cartoon M7 shows the Mexican perception, when the statue becomes by itself the wall, blocking the pass to a poorly dressed Mexican migrant who is watching the wall from the distance. Comparing the size of the statue with that of the person portrayed, he looks very little while the lack of a background increases the impression of solitude.

The American vision includes more elements. A smiling business man dressed with suit and portfolio takes the place of the statue of liberty. Exactly in the same pose as the famous icon, the business man is holding the “Guest Worker Program” in his left hand and a shiny money sign instead of a torch in the right. In the back part we can read: “Send us your tired, your poor, your
huddled low-wage workers who don’t have the right to vote or organize” while in the border wall is written “Border Security” we can see many people entering thru the “Temporary visas” door. This cartoon gives the impression that in spite of the border wall enforcement to aim keep immigrants out of its country, they still have an open door thru the guest worker program. From 1942 to 1964, the guest worker program authorized the importation of temporary contract laborers from Mexico to the United States. It was re-proposed in 2004 and part of the 2007 Bush’s immigration reform bill which was not approved in the Congress. Moreover, in spite of all the property laws, environmental regulations and community protests, the U.S. DHS had pushed forward with building the U.S.-Mexico border wall. The complete collection of cartoons referring to freedom is in the Appendix C.

4.2.4 Division and the Berlin Wall

According to Skerry (2006) the “remote, often forbidding border” of Mexico and the U.S. has now become the focus of a symbolic struggle over how Americans see themselves in the world. To many Americans, border barriers promote national security. To others, they smack of fortification and militarization by empire-building Washington bureaucrats. Meanwhile, market-oriented conservatives at the Wall Street Journal and human rights activists at the American Civil Liberties Union have both denounced the border fence as a new “Berlin Wall”; though its purpose is to keep foreign nationals out, not citizens in.

A2. “Exactly Alike”  
Credit: Trever  
October 31, 2006 “Albuquerque Journal”

M8. “Recycled”  
Credit: Nerilicon  
October 6, 2006 “Milenio”
Referring to this comparison, we found Cartoon A2, published in an American newspaper where we can see in the left side the U.S.-Mexico border fence with the “Stay Out” notice hanged on it. A migrant carrying a ladder under his arm looks directly to the spectator while the sun shines lighting this side of the cartoon. In the left side we can see the Berlin wall with the “Stay In” notice placed on it. A migrant-to be, dressed in black is lying in the floor beside his suitcase while his ladder is still leant on the wall. He has been just shot to death by a German official who using the searchlight discovered him from the watchtower in his intent to flee. The night sky with the moon in one side and the smoke coming from the guard’s weapon obscure this side of the cartoon. In the bottom, we can read “Exactly alike, except for a few minor details…” which besides the dramatic quality of the Berlin wall cartoon thru the use of darker colors and the circumstances of the migrant-to be death compared with the portrayal of the American border fence where the elements utilized are brighter, the facial expression of the migrant is funnier and the material used in the fence looks more vulnerable; enhance the contrast between them implying that the border fence in the Mexican-American border cannot be as strong, prohibitive, dangerous and mortal as the Berlin wall was.

Cartoon M8 shows a cartoon named “Recycled”. We see a bricked wall and behind, the United States flag flying in the wind. The upper and left parts of the wall are built with homogeneous bricks of same size, same shape and same color. However, the lower part is constructed with different bricks; they look older and have different colors so the mend is easily recognizable. On the wall’s lower right corner we can read “Made in Berlin” written in one of the old bricks, alluding to the imported products that usually contain a label with the legend “Made in…” to specify their country of origin. With the convergence of the recycled bricks from the Berlin wall with the new bricks of the American barrier is implied that does not matter the place where they have been built, they share the same dividing nature.

Due its separation nature, the U.S.-Mexico wall has been compared not only with the Berlin wall but also with its counterpart in dividing Israel from Palestine. But interestingly, in 2008, Kinberg wrote about how activists in the U.S. are largely unaware that even Israeli security experts are against the U.S.-Mexico border wall. “Out of all the countries whose opposition to
the wall is not being reported on by the U.S. press...Israel is the country with current-day wall experience which could be helpful.” (p.38). She quotes a Newsday article of August 14, 2006, that reported on Israel/Palestine Wall builder Uzi Dayan differentiating between the two situations, “The United States is trying to solve the problem of illegal workers. We are trying to avoid bloodshed. There is a big difference. There have been some serious inquiries from Washington about how to build a fence along Israeli lines. They want to emulate us...but I’ve always said that it’s not in America’s best interest. It won’t solve their problem. It’s not cost-effective and it won’t work.” (ibid). According to Kinberg, DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff is quoted as saying in May 2008 that the U.S. could not adopt border security methods used in Israel to prevent Palestinian militants from entering its territory, for U.S. efforts to stop illegal immigrants from crossing its frontier with Mexico. “(Ours is) a vastly longer border. It’s not an area where there is much useful experience” (Kinberg, 2008:38). All the cartoons comparing the U.S.-Mexico border wall with other walled borders around the world to show the division and ironies are comprised in Appendix D.

4.2.5 Employment and Migrant Workers

The second research question addressed how the American newspapers framed the U.S. Security fence in their editorial cartoons and the employment frame dominated over the others just followed by the one concerned to the immigration reform.

Mexico and the United States share a long history of economic integration mediated by cross-border population flows (Ruiz and Tiano, 1987). The American economy has always relied on Mexican labor in its fields and factories, though the level of U.S. labor demand has oscillated along with periodic fluctuations of the economy. When economic boom or war-related labor shortages have increased the need for migrant labor, immigration policies have softened to attract foreign labor; when economic downturns have led to excess labor supply, immigration policies have become more restrictive (Fernandez, 1977). Additionally, as the American population becomes more educated, they are less willing to work in low paying jobs such as agriculture,
manufacturing or other service sector positions. It is the migrants that are willing to work in these low paying jobs with minimum or no benefits. Mexico remains a labor surplus nation as still has a long way to go in improving wages, working conditions and benefits for its citizens. Therefore, legal and illegal migrants are willing to leave their families behind to work in the U.S. in its attempt to improve their opportunities and living standards.

In this frame, the American and Mexican perceptions coincide in criticizing the U.S. anti-immigrant policies stating to do not hire illegal migrants but perhaps in their search for cheap construction labor, they would hire the same migrants to build the wall, going against their own law.

In Cartoon A3, we can read “Illegals stay out!” written in the bricked wall that is being built between the U.S.A.-Mexico border, as we can read both nations’ names written on the ground and divided just by a dashed line. In the center, the very big symbol for America incarnated in “Uncle Sam” is the one who trowel in hand is building the wall. Behind him we can see bricks, cement and rolls of barbed wire to keep working in this construction. However,
he is looking to a group of short people which are standing in the Mexican side of the border at the same time he whispers: - “Pssst, I’ll pay cash if you help me build this barrier”- and the Mexicans are only watching him. In the top left side of the image, we can read: -“America’s attitude toward immigration in a nutshell” this latter meaning “in a few words”. The big differences in the sizes of “Uncle Sam” and the Mexicans who are watching him are most telling us about the superior role of the United Stated over the undocumented migrants. Also, the combination of elements in this image is pointing the dishonest, hypocritical position of the U.S. anti-immigrant policies because while in one hand the U.S. does not want more Mexican illegal workers entering the country –as we can read: “Illegals stay out!”- on the other, many American companies keep offering jobs to them in their attempt to earn more revenues hiring low-cost workers in a “secret” way, just as “Uncle Sam” is “secretly” whispering the people in this cartoon. Such was the case of U.S. Company “Tyson Foods Inc.” which in December 2001 was indicted of recruiting around 2,000 unauthorized foreigners, usually in poultry processing plants in rural locations in order to cut costs and maximize profits. The workers were recruited just inside the American border by smugglers who were paid from USD $100 to $200 per hand, plus an extra fee each migrant had to pay to the smuggler (Rural Migration News, 2002).

On the other hand, Cartoon M9 shows the Mexican perception. We can see five people wearing the stereotypical outfit for a Mexican: big hats, sandals and loose and poor attires. They are working in the construction of the wall. However, four of them are in the same side of the border while the last is collocating bricks standing in the other side of the barrier. Besides, we see a Border Patrol vehicle and at the same time, a Border Patrol agent which rifle in hand approaches to the Mexican and shouts: -“In the other side!!”- inferring he is standing in the American area of the frontier. The American Border Patrol is “supervising” that illegal migrants do not step in the American side of the border but at the same time, they are hiring the undocumented Mexicans to build the wall. This cartoon gives an impression of slavery, of the migrants’ working non-stop under the supervision of the guard who at the first mistake, as for example, step in the wrong side of the border, is ready for a hasty shout.
The frequency of use in this frame in both countries diverge in the two extremes because from Mexico was used only once but from the United States we can find 13 cartoons with a variety of different symbols and meanings, for example a pig wearing business suit and top hat to represent the private sector, the responsibility of American employers and big corporates such as the supermarket chain Walmart for promoting the migrants’ hiring and the American double standard of strengthen the border security and the anti-immigrant laws but at the same time keep hiring the illegal migrants. The complete collection of cartoons concerning to this frame has been attached in Appendix E.

4.2.6 Immigration Reform and the American Senate

Politicians in Mexico and the United States face a difficult decision when it comes to immigration reforms that allow illegal immigrants to legally stay in the U.S. In the past administrations, Mexican President Vicente Fox and American President George W. Bush unsuccessfully proposed as a temporary solution, the implementation of guest worker programs but American senators believed that more guest worker programs will only increase illegal migration and place a bigger burden on the United States society to provide more funding for educational and health services that these new migrants will need and cannot afford to pay. However, migration between both countries is a social process that cannot be turned off and on like a light switch, especially when it has been an issue since the 1900’s. No longer can Mexico have a “no policy” policy and no longer can the U.S. expect for making unilateral decisions on issues that affect both countries. Both nations have determined that immigration reforms are priority even though each comes to the table with different reasons for negotiating. Mexico wishes to improve conditions for Mexican migrants while the United States wishes to control illegal migration and provide labor for needing sectors.

Mexico and the U.S. must negotiate bilateral agreements that can benefit all involved but negotiations over bilateral issues such as migration were postponed in the post-9/11 era when the American administration concentrated on its war on terrorism. Although these negotiations may keep receiving a negative public opinion if the U.S. economy does not improve and
unemployment rates get higher, especially when citizen’s own financial and economic situations influence their opinion and can influence also their feeling towards immigrants such as xenophobia and discrimination, is vital that both countries come to an agreement because of their close proximity in addition to being members of the NAFTA.

In Cartoon A4, we can see a red carpet which is traditionally used to mark the route taken by heads of state on ceremonial and formal occasions. Then we see that American President George W. Bush dressed in a formal suit is being crushed by the wall with the words “No Amnesty!” written on it in a sort of graffiti inferring to not allowing illegal immigrants to legally remain in the United States. With both hands he is holding the megaphone of “Immigration Reform” to shout: “My fellow Republicans, tear down this wall”- referring to the famous words from American President Ronald Reagan to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to destroy the Berlin Wall (USA Today, 2007). From the position he is laying over the red carpet and the direction where he is deviating the megaphone we can infer that some members of the Republican Party just passed along the red carpet, without paying many attention to his claims. The image tell us that despite President’s Bush attempts to ask for an immigration reform that can benefit the illegal workers inside American territory, the only response he is having from the legislators of
the conservative Republican party, is not an immigration agreement but their denial and the construction of the U.S.A-Mexico border wall.

The last immigration amnesty was contained in the Immigration Reform and Control Act, passed in 1986. It allowed about 3 million people, who entered the U.S. before January 1, 1982 to gain legal status. But those who arrived without documents since then have been trapped in the same illegal status. The American Urban Institute estimated there were as many as 5 million undocumented people in the U.S. just before that amnesty (Bacon, 2000). But by 2000, it was rising again to 6 million and by 2009 the estimate reached the 12 million.

In Cartoon M10, we can see from the back of their seats the American legislators are raising their hands in the same manner they will express their vote towards the immigration reform. In this case, each vote is represented with one more brick. Seated in the wall edge, an ugly “Uncle Sam” wearing the stereotypical “stars and stripes” hat and striped trousers is taking each brick from each legislators’ hands, to continue building the wall, doing reference to the U.S. senate Immigration agreement denial and consecutive border fence extension.

In the actual American administration under President Barack Obama, at his word, the Immigration reform would follow health care on the nation’s agenda after public polls have shown support for reforms from at least 60% of American people and the practical impossibility of deporting 12 million undocumented migrants currently living in the United States (Ruiz, NY Daily News, 2009). All images depicting the Immigration Reform frame are included in Appendix F.

Finally, we analyzed the incidence of the cartoons during the time frame selected for this thesis. As discussed in the previous chapter, we chose images published from 2003 to 2008 to coincide with the approval of the Security Fence Act of 2006 which authorized the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to double reinforce the security fence and the installation of lighting, vehicle barriers, border checkpoints, sensors, cameras, satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles in an attempt to watch and control the illegal migration into the United States.
According to Morley (2006a) this approval incensed public opinion without precedents not only in Mexico but also in Latin America, therefore the incidence in cartoons referring to the border wall might be also been influenced with the passing of the Secure Fence Act. In Chart 4.2 we can appreciate the significant difference of the occurrence in the cartoons’ publication during 2006 in both sides of the border.

Chart 4.2 Incidence of the Cartoons published by country

Also in 2008, the frequency in the appearance of the U.S.-Mexico border fence in Mexican newspapers’ cartoons started to rebound because the tensions among both neighbors were heightening after the murder of a Mexican migrant by a Border Patrol agent, incensing again national debates about the abuse of power and the violations of human rights in the Mexican-American border. Stelzner (1965) wrote that “the predominant interests and ideas of any period are reflected in its figurative language which in turn affects and influences the subjects to which it is applied” (p. 52). The cartoons selected in this thesis are a powerful example of this, since they became the reflection of the coverage of the U.S.-Mexico barrier in both countries newspapers’.
Chapter 5

Conclusion and Discussion

This study has used a qualitative approach to analyze the symbols and frames of newspapers’ editorial cartoons from Mexico and the United States characterizing their border wall. The three research questions addressed about how each of the main actors was framing this relevant social issue thru the use of political cartoons published in their national press as well as the main differences, agreements and disagreements in the U.S.-Mexico border wall portrayal. Our results show some interesting differences. Concerning the first research question about how did the Mexican cartoons framed the walled border, we found two frames and symbols exclusively used in cartoons of Mexico’s dailies: one shouting the consequences of the wall in the high number of cross-border related deaths of the migrants and the other characterizing Mexico’s preoccupation with the unequal conditions of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and its hope for a renegotiation with the United States. However, the Immigration Reform and American Senate was the largest frame and symbolism utilized in the Mexican cartoons, seeing an accord with the United States in this field as far and unreachable and also exhibiting the failed attempts of Mexican ex-President Vicente Fox and current Chief of State Felipe Calderon in negotiating a migration agreement with the United States.

The second research question addressing how American press framed the border wall in the political cartoons shed some light in the main concern of the United States thru the use of the Employment and migrant workers frame and symbols which was the most commonly used by the U.S. and almost non-existent in the Mexican sample. In the majority of these cartoons, the Americans satirize their own policies about strengthening the anti-immigrant laws and the border security with the construction of the border wall, the installation of high tech surveillance equipment and the deployment of Border Patrol Agents to keep the illegals out while at the same time, huge American companies like the supermarkets Walmart as well as the agriculture, and
construction businesses keep searching for cheap labor and hiring migrant laborers. Interestingly, the use of symbols towards the *Immigration Reform and American Senate* was the second higher in frequency of use and points to the border wall as the result of a “bipartisan” deal, clears the Senate denial to grant amnesty to the illegal migrants already living in the U.S. and exclusively within this frame, some cartoons made use of an elephant representing the Republican party, as for example “stuck” in the border fence or building a wall around himself while the “Latinos” are only watching and wondering what is wrong with that elephant.

The third and final research question addressed how the American cartoons differed from their Mexican counterparts. The comparison between the frames and the symbols utilized by both actors informed us about the relation and main worries of both nations, their similarities and differences, as for example in the use of frames by Mexican press such as *Death and skulls* and *Economy and NAFTA* which were nonexistent in the American cartoons’ selected for analysis in this thesis. Also the enormous difference among both countries in the frequency of use of the *Employment and migrant workers* frame and symbols because while we only found one cartoon in the Mexican press, the American newspapers’ contained 13 images referring to the “mixed message” the U.S. government and American employers are sending to Mexican people, in one side, tightening the security in its South border but in the other, offering jobs usually compensating with very low wages that are unacceptable for American citizens but sufficient for illegal workers. Moreover, the balance found in the use of *Division and the Berlin wall* was very interesting and the connotation gave by both countries as well because while both nations used the comparison of the American Security Fence with the Berlin Wall, for Mexico represented segregation, but for the United States was a sarcasm pointing they are accurately alike but with the minor difference that the Berlin Wall was built to keep its citizens in, as opposed as the wall built in the Mexican border which its main aim is to keep undocumented people out. In addition, the equilibrium in the occurrence of *Freedom* using the symbol of the Statue of Liberty but communicating different meanings as for example the trampling of freedom rights in the Mexican perspective with American President George W. Bush literally treading the liberty statue to keep building the border wall or the Mexicans opportunist use of freedom deriving in
temporary working visas in the American portrayal. Also, the surprising found of exactly the same use of the Statue of Liberty symbol turning her on her side to make the U.S.-Mexico border fence but with the difference that the Mexican portrayal made no use of text while the American included a speech balloon. Could both countries agree in the vision of wall up-liberty down?

The third research question also direct us to the high and balanced proportion of the *Immigration Reform and American Senate* use, depicted 12 times in the Mexican cartoons and 9 in the American, excelling the salience of this political issue for both North American neighbors because they have been affected for the lack of a comprehensive bilateral agreement that can mutually benefit the countries. The American portrayal shows the concentration of the U.S. senate to keep building a wall and strengthening the South border instead of considering an immigration reform and show their concerns thru the illegal immigration depicted as a Tsunami while the U.S. incarnated in a parent, is building a short sand wall to stop it or drawing very tall senators standing beside a very short “Politics of Immigration Reform” wall but feeling afraid to cross it. The Mexican representation includes the unsuccessful trials of Mexican leaders to arrange an immigration agreement and the failure of the border citizens’ protests. The use of a short ladder that seems like will never surpass the tall border wall as a symbol to express Mexico’s difficulty to reach an immigration reform.

As a means of visual discourse, editorial cartoon uses particular pictographic expressions to transform complex meanings in easily recognizable symbols which simplify a certain topic and enable the audiences to interpret their meaning in a glance. As Cohen (1979) refers, the real power of symbols lays in its ambiguity, and is this lack of a precise definition along with the use of recognizable myths and metaphors that gives the editorial cartoons the unique feature to cause a potent effect in a soft but effective way. In the case of the U.S.-Mexico barrier cartoons has been evident the use of symbols as powerful framing devices, revealing the national concerns in encoding and decoding the same physical fence.

Press (1981) believes that cartooning depends on the political system. Both Mexico and the U.S. are ruled under a democratic government which promotes the freedom of press. However, during the data collection we did not find a single cartoon depicting one of the main
issues between the U.S. and Mexico: the drug trafficking. On October 2007 the Mérida Initiative was announced as security cooperation between the U.S. and the governments of Mexico and the countries of Central America with the aim of combating the threats of drug trafficking, transnational crime and money laundering. If according to Press (1981), during peacetime in a Western democracy, cartoonists are “watchdogs”, why we did not find any cartoon characterizing the drug trafficking especially in the border between both nations? A recent research of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ, 2010) has shown that Media killings and disappearances have made Mexico one of the world’s most dangerous countries for press freedom, with a wave of unprecedented violence related to organized crime markedly increased the last few years. The effects of violence can be felt on both sides of the border with widespread self-censorship as a result of fear, preventing the Mexican media from reporting the news and U.S. reporters covering the drug trade facing threats and intimidation. Therefore, we suspect that violence has become so pervasive that trafficking organizations now exert effective censorship over key issues such as the border wall analyzed in this study. This could be a factor in the absence of “drug trafficking” though prevalent and important in the cartoons from both countries.

In addition, as outlined in our “hypotheses” the majority of the selected cartoons included in this thesis exhibit the national background of the newspapers in which they were originally published. Each country is firmly standing in a nationalistic perspective mostly pointing what is wrong in the other. From the Mexican point of view, the Americans are not tolerant, are not willing to negotiate both a migratory and a free trade agreement; with the wall construction they are blocking, they are segregating and violating the basic human right of liberty. From the American perspective, the Mexicans are opportunist, abusive, stealing jobs, and violating its sovereignty illegally entering the country in spite of the border wall construction. However, we also found some cartoons that are critical of the border wall by taking a non-nationalistic perspective, especially in the two more salient frames, those referring to the **Employment and Migrant Workers** and the **Immigration Reform and American Senate** where we found American cartoons depicting illegal laborers constructing the wall and being hired or supervised by Uncle Sam or others where the military agents in the border are fencing American companies as an
effective way to stop the hiring of undocumented workers. Also American cartoons characterizing the U.S. congress afraid to cross the immigration reform wall and how this same reform is being transformed into a wall construction. Given the freedom of expression tradition across the U.S. and Mexico, the border cartoons from both sides have exhibited their respective independence and criticalness in viewing the wall. These findings also confirm previous research findings that international news is “national” and it reflects the political system and the state of press freedom of the countries in which the media operate.

Moreover, we also found a large amount of the symbols used to characterize the border wall representing the respective popular cultural icons from each country; such are the cases of Uncle Sam to symbolize the United States and the men wearing a big hat to characterize the Mexicans. The Statue of Liberty to represent freedom, even though sarcastically, and the skeletal figure to depict death. These are icons of “universal” recognition just as Morgan & Welton (1992) pointed out, some images become apparently universal signs owing their widespread use to the international structures of mass communication and Cahn (1984) accurately suggested, cartoonists rely on those visual properties that are universally understood “…across cultures, ages, and levels of intelligence” (Conners, 1998: 97).

Nevertheless, though the same symbols may be used by both countries, the context in which these icons are used differs. For Mexico, the Statue of Liberty in cartoons is blocking the entry of migrants to the United States, for Americans it is authorizing the entry of thousands of people with temporary visas. For Mexico, the comparison of the U.S.-Mexico barrier to the Berlin Wall, suggests segregation but for Americans this comparison is illogical because the barrier was not thought to keep the U.S. citizens in, as it was the objective of the Berlin wall, this barrier was built to keep undocumented migrants out.

This analysis shows how thru the use of specific symbols both countries cartoons’ have signified and framed the main economic, political and social issues for which they are concerned. Decoding its meaning, political cartoons have given us an insight into what these two nations ideally might solve in a future to ameliorate their relation because Mexico and the United States
of America are complex countries with a same shared history and their geographical proximity will keep influencing them into cultural interaction and the cross-border movement of people.

Besides, from the linguistic meaning of the terms used by each country, the words “fence,” “wall” and “barrier” are related with the national perspective of the physical fence. In the United States, it is officially called the “Security fence,” term formulated by the American Department of Homeland Security. This notion seems to imply a temporary, light, even neighborly, means of control the random migration coming from the South. However, in Mexico, is known as *Muro Fronterizo*, literally *wall frontier* which implies a more solid structure that protects or separate one population from another. In the Mexican side, “wall” is the proper terminology, in the American, is not. In discussing the same linguistically properties of the terms applied in the separation wall between Israel and Palestina, Rogers and David (2010), suggest “…should there be a need for neutrality, terms have become available. To seek neutrality is to put forward one of the more distant, technical expressions, such as ‘barrier.’” (p.5) certainly, from the point of view of media sources and other actors the question to describe this structure without “side-taking” adjectives, remains.

The scope of this thesis is limited to the political cartoons found by the means of the Internet. Thus, this study should be expanded to include specific high-impact dailies from Mexico and the United States or even include more than two countries. According to Strömbäck, Shehata and Dimitrova (2008) the more distant an international issue is, the more important it is for the news media that the issue involves conflicts that are easily understandable and that can be visualized like the case of the Mexican-American border wall. Also, if the country in which a medium operates is geographically, culturally and socially close to a country involved in an international issue like the case of Mexico and the United States, this proximity will lead to more attention in the news media but also to a process of framing struggles that are mostly played out by domestic actors. On the other hand, if the country in which a medium operates is geographically, culturally and socially distant or detached from a country involved in
an international crisis, this issue will receive less attention in the news media but the framing of the issue will be more influenced by international and foreign actors.

Taking these concepts into account, this thesis suggests some propositions that might be explored in future research because during the sample search and data gathering processes, we found political cartoons characterizing the Mexico-U.S. border wall in the press from remote countries such as China, Ireland, France, Israel, Philippines, Austria, Germany, Lebanon, India, Bulgaria, Romania and United Kingdom. Also, in several provinces from Canada, the third member of NAFTA, and Latin American countries as well, such as Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, Cuba, Brazil, Nicaragua and Colombia. Therefore, the representation of the American border fence in international press might be explored in further research from the perspective of (a) other countries with walled borders as for example Israel-Palestine, Ceuta-Melilla, India-Pakistan, Korea, China, Brazil; (b) the point of view from Latin American nations which their cultural proximity to Mexico and its indirect affectation by the construction of the border wall between the United States and Mexico could be argued; (c) from the perspective of International or foreign press as a whole because not only American and Mexican political cartoonists’ have been concerned about the U.S.-Mexico barrier issue and have been expressing it in their illustrations. All around the world this phenomenon has been boarded from different perspectives and editorial cartoons have made a wall speak about injustice, government incongruence, political struggle, control and death; demonstrating that even beyond borders, languages and distances, one single wall will have many voices. Yet, the existence of cartoons depicting the U.S.-Mexican border wall in countries that are far away from the U.S. and Mexico seems to say that there are universal concerns that can touch the hearts of the people so much as to warrant the caricaturists and cartoonists worldwide. Both phenomena are human nature.
References


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Appendices of All Cartoons Collected for Analysis
A. Death: Mexican Cartoons

“Technology in the Wall”
Credit: Dario Castillejos
El Imparcial, Sonora Mexico
November 8, 2006

“Piece of News”
Credit: Rogelio Naranjo
El Universal
January 12, 2006

“Frontier of the dead”
Credit: Angel Boligan
El Universal
January 25, 2006

“Cross border wall”
Credit: Kemchs
Diario Monitor
February 1, 2008
“Frontier”  
Credit: Angel Boligan  
El Universal, Mexico  
June 5, 2003

“Vote Hunting”  
Credit: Rogelio Naranjo  
El Universal, Mexico  
February 13, 2008

“U.S. Mexican Border Deaths”  
Credit: Obi  
El Norte, Monterrey Mexico  
January 4, 2006
B. Economy and NAFTA: Mexican Cartoons

“NAFTA”
Credit: Angel Boligan
El Universal, Mexico
April 26, 2004

“Renegotiation”
Credit: Obi
El Norte, Monterrey Mexico
March 4, 2003

“Bush immigration border wall in Mexico-Canada meeting”
Credit: Obi
El Norte, Monterrey Mexico
April 23, 2003
C. Freedom and the Statue of Liberty: Mexican Cartoons

“Border Troops Military Statues”
Credit: Obi
El Norte, Monterrey Mexico
May 19, 2006

“Taking Liberties”
Credit: Palomo
El Universal, Mexico
October 25, 2006

“Immigration Wall Statue Of Liberty”
Credit: Kemchs
Uno Mas Uno, Mexico
January 26, 2006

“Liberty Wall”
Credit: Angel Boligan
El Universal, Mexico
October 27, 2006
“Mexican Border Wall”
Credit: Kemchs
Uno Mas Uno, Mexico
January 24, 2006
C. Freedom and the Statue of Liberty: American Cartoons

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Cartoon</th>
<th>Caption</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberty Fence</td>
<td>They turned her on her side and made her a fence.</td>
<td>Mike Luckovich</td>
<td>The Atlanta Journal Constitution, Georgia USA</td>
<td>May 14, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Guest Worker Statue of Liberty”</td>
<td>Send us your tired, your poor, your huddled masses of low-wage workers who don’t have the right to vote, or organize</td>
<td>RJ Matson</td>
<td>The St. Louis Post Dispatch, Missouri USA</td>
<td>March 28, 2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. Division and the Berlin Wall: Mexican Cartoons

“Recycled”
Credit: Nerilicon
Milenio, Mexico
October 6, 2006

“Made in Berlin”
Credit: Ares
EL Universal, Mexico
January 19, 2006

“Not made in Berlin”
Credit: Ares
EL Universal, Mexico
March 30, 2006
D. Division and the Berlin Wall: American Cartoons

“Exactly Alike”
Credit: Trever
Albuquerque Journal, New Mexico USA
October 21, 2006
E. Employment and Migrant Workers: Mexican Cartoons

“Migratory workers in the wall”
Credit: Nerilicon
Milenio, Mexico
January 24, 2006
E. Employment and Migrant Workers: American Cartoons
"Illegals stay out"
Credit: Kal
The Baltimore Sun, Maryland USA
November 30, 2005

"Worker Bee"
Credit: Mike Keefe
The Denver Post, Colorado USA
May 24, 2007

"Border Barrier"
Credit: Mike Keefe
The Denver Post, Colorado USA
April 28, 2006

"Employment Program"
Credit: Eric Allie
Pioneer Press, Illinois USA
March 30, 2006
“Mixed Messages”
Credit: Nick Anderson
The Houston Chronicle, Texas USA
March 31, 2006
F. Immigration Reform and American Senate: Mexican Cartoons

“Unreachable”
Credit: Angel Boligan
El Universal, Mexico
May 18, 2003

“Mission Accomplished”
Credit: Nerilicon
Milenio, Mexico
February 14, 2008

“Immigration Reform”
Credit: Nerilicon
Milenio, Mexico
June 11, 2007

“Immigration Reform”
Credit: Angel Boligan
El Universal, Mexico
April 30, 2006
“The good Neighbor”
Credit: Angel Boligan
El Universal, Mexico City,
October 20, 2006

“Protests”
Credit: Nerilicon
Milenio, Mexico
January 11, 2006

“Mexican President Fox and the Wall”
Credit: Rogelio Naranjo
El Universal, Mexico
December 26, 2005

“Walled Negotiation”
Credit: Obi
El Norte, Monterrey Mexico
March 15, 2007
“The Wish”
Crédit: Dario Castillejos
El Impacial, Sonora Mexico
September 3, 2008

“Immigration Reform”
Crédit: Angel Boligan
El Universal Mexico
May 20, 2007

“Calderón’s visit to the U.S.A”
Crédit: Angel Boligan
El Universal, Mexico
February 14, 2008

“Immigration Agreement”
Crédit: Curry
Ocho Columnas, Guadalajara Mexico
May 19, 2005
F. Immigration Reform and American Senate: American Cartoons

“Tear down this Wall”
Credit: RJ Matson
The St. Louis Post Dispatch, Missouri USA
June 15, 2007

“Immigration Big Business”
Credit: Brian Fairrington
The New York Times, USA
March 31, 2006

“Tough Immigration Policy”
Credit: Mike Keefe
The Denver Post, Colorado USA
October 13, 2006

“Bipartisan Deal”
Credit: Joel Pett
Lexington Herald-Leader
Kentucky, USA
April 11, 2006
“GOP and illegal immigrants”
Credit: John Cole
The Times Tribune
Scranton Pennsylvania
May 17, 2006

“I would like to thank the House Committee for giving me the chance to testify on behalf of the Senate Amnesty Bill.”

“Illegal Immigrant Testifies At House Hearings”
Credit: RJ Matson
The St. Louis Post Dispatch
Missouri, USA
June 26, 2006

“Republican Elephant in the border fence”
Credit: Morin
The Miami Herald Florida USA
June 18, 2007

“Insurmountable wall”
Credit: Nick Anderson
The Houston Chronicle, Texas USA
September 5, 2006
“No Amnesty Visa”
Credit: Trever
Albuquerque Journal,
New Mexico USA
October 12, 2007