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Presented by the Distinguished Fellows of the University of Miami Institute for Advanced Study of the Americas, Felicia Casanova, Samantha Chaitram, and Ernesto Fundora, under the guidance of Dr. Sallie Hughes and Dr. Felicia Knaul, the *LAC Digest* provides a snapshot of academic literature must-reads: new research articles and other publications recently released on Latin America and the Caribbean with the potential to shape future research and understandings of the Americas. A broad range of disciplines and perspectives are included in each edition. The selections are picked after a comprehensive review of new articles from dozens of publications and of new releases from publishing houses and university presses. *Click to see a list of publications reviewed.*

** UM Faculty, please send us your just-published articles or upcoming books so we can feature them in the LAC Digest. Please email the information to [Ernesto Fundora](#).*

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RESEARCH ARTICLES

Research from UM political scientist Merike Blofield, director of Women's and Gender Studies and 2017 U-MIA lead for Gender and Social Development, opens our digest with two just-published articles stemming from a one-day symposium at U-MIA in spring 2017, entitled *Gender Equality Post-Millennium in Latin America*. Blofield's research focuses on gender and socio-economic inequalities, politics and policy, with a focus on Latin America. Her articles examine the effects of Latin America's pink tide on gender equality and abortion politics. The entire special issue is found [here](#).

MERIKE BLOFIELD, CHRISTINA EWIG, AND JENNIFER M. PISCOPO. (2017) "The Reactive Left: Gender Equality and the Latin American Pink Tide." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 24.4: 345-369.

Abstract: *This introduction assesses the effects of Latin America's pink tide on gender equality in the region. We find that left governments and left competition provide an opportunity for advancing gender equality. However, the dominant pattern during Latin America's pink tide was one of a reactive left. Pink tide governments typically did not have clearly articulated gender equality initiatives on their immediate policy agendas. Instead, left governments mostly reacted to pressures from domestic gender equality activists. In addition to left ideology and feminist mobilization, left party type and policy type explain progress and setbacks in gender equality across six outcome areas.*

Keywords: Pink tide; Latin America; gender equality; reactive left.

URL: <https://academic.oup.com/sp/article/24/4/345/4775169>

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MERIKE BLOFIELD AND CHRISTINA EWIG. (2017) “The Left Turn and Abortion Politics in Latin America.” *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 24.4: 481-510.

***Abstract:** We address the puzzle of left governments and abortion policy reform during Latin America’s pink tide. Contrary to expectations, left government abortion reforms in this period have ranged from full legalization to supporting absolute prohibition. Confirming previous scholarship, we argue that abortion reform is influenced by public opinion, level of secularization, the strength of feminist mobilization vis-à-vis conservative religious mobilization, and ideology of government. However, while left government is a necessary condition for abortion policy liberalization, it is not a sufficient one: type of left party is crucial. Institutionalized partisan lefts are more likely to liberalize than populist left governments.*

Keywords: Abortion politics; pink tide; left governments; Latin America.

URL: <https://academic.oup.com/sp/article/24/4/481/4775171>

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Sallie Hughes, Associate Professor in Journalism and Latin American Studies, is the U-MIA Faculty Director and Senior Research Area Lead. Her just-published research in *Latino Studies* is part of a special issue examining social hierarchies within Miami’s multi-ethnic Latin American-origin population.

SALLIE HUGHES. (2018) “The Latino/a audience unbound: Intra-ethnic social hierarchies and Spanish-language television news.” *Latino Studies*, 1-22 (First Online).

This study investigates how Spanish-language television news constructs Latino/a audiences. Relying on constructivist methodologies that allow participants to dialogue about media and to interpret media messages through personal experience and group culture, it compares the Mexican, Puerto Rican and older Cuban diasporas with Hondurans, Dominicans and recently arrived Cubans. After discussing the findings, the study’s author states that “Comparing how first-generation Latino/as make sense of Spanish-language news unpacks pan-ethnicity from the

perspective of the audience, showing that audience formation is much more complex than the pan-Latino/a label suggests.” Precisely the latter is one of the key points that make this study relevant to those working on Latino/as, journalism, and media studies, but also to those interested in sociolinguistics, language and media, media management, audience construction, and cultural studies. The article calls upon news producers to be “more attentive to shared local conditions and experiences, which might foster political coalition-building or market growth,” and decisively contributes to the larger enterprise of theorizing Latino/a audiences.

Abstract: *Many US Spanish-language television producers, marketers and academics construct Latino/a identity in Spanish-language media narrowly, despite numerous scholarly critiques of the pan-Latino label. Examining how Latino/a immigrants in metropolitan Miami interpret representations of immigrants, immigrant communities, and urban services in Spanish-language news, I argue that diverse Latino/a audiences emerge according to how the media representations evoke participants’ subjective positioning in locally and nationally embedded social hierarchies. The study reveals how intra-Latino/a factors affect audience formation, and discusses implications for audience studies and journalism practice.*

Keywords: Journalism studies; Audience reception studies; Latino/a media.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41276-017-0107-6>

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Seth Schwartz, Professor at the Department of Public Health Sciences, is the Director of the Ph.D. program in Prevention Science and Community Health. Schwartz’s research focuses on the interface among identity processes, family relationships, health risk outcomes, and well-being. His article analyzes the cultural stressors that contribute to substance use among Hispanic immigrant youth.

TIMOTHY J. GRIGSBY, MYRIAM FORSTER, ALAN MECA, BYRON L. ZAMBOANGA, SETH J. SCHWARTZ, JENNIFER B. UNGER. (2018) “Cultural stressors, identity development, and substance use attitudes among Hispanic immigrant adolescents.” *Journal of Community Psychology* 46.1: 117-132.

This article highlights the bicultural stressors that contribute to substance use among non-U.S. born Hispanic youth. The researchers established a unique sample of mostly Cuban and Mexican immigrant adolescents in both Miami and Los Angeles. The findings of the study deserve particular attention because it informs future interventions that can address migrant identity formation, stress, mental health, and substance use, as well as broader social justice issues around immigration on a community level. The study presents significant theoretical implications for understanding the relationship between cultural stress and substance use outcomes for immigrant youth.

Abstract: *The goal of this investigation was to determine whether various cultural stressors (bicultural stress, perceived discrimination, and perceived negative context of reception [PNCR]) predict positive and negative substance use attitudes, directly and indirectly through personal identity, in a sample of immigrant Hispanic adolescents. Data on cultural stressors, substance use attitudes, and covariates were collected from 302 Hispanic immigrant adolescents (152 from Miami [61% Cuban] and 150 from Los Angeles [70% Mexican]) at 3 time points. PNCR was associated with identity confusion ($\beta = .175$, $p = .033$). Identity confusion significantly predicted higher positive attitudes toward alcohol and other drug (AOD; $\beta = .216$, $p < .001$) and cigarette use ($\beta = .191$, $p = .015$) and mediated the relationship between PNCR with unfavorable AOD attitudes ($\beta = -.019$, 95% confidence interval [CI] $[-0.052, -0.001]$) and favorable AOD attitudes ($\beta = 0.038$, 95% CI $[0.003, 0.086]$). Perceptions of a negative context of reception may hinder successful personal identity formation and impact health outcomes for immigrant youth.*

Keywords: Cultural Stressors; Substance Use; Perceived Discrimination; Immigrant Adolescent; Identity.

DOI: 10.1002/jcop.21920

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ADAM BAIRD. (2018). “Becoming the ‘Baddest’: Masculine Trajectories of Gang Violence in Medellín.” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 50.1: 183-210.

This article analyzes the role of masculinities in the reproduction of gang membership in the poor *barrios* of Medellín, Colombia. Although masculinities are not the sole determinant of gang membership, “it is clear that processes of male socialization in contexts of exclusion are central to understanding why gangs persist.” The author describes Medellín’s gangland mosaic, analyzes the role of *barrio* masculinities in the ganging process, and concludes that “In Medellín’s *comunas populares*, the masculinities of gang life are a repository of meaning that narrate the city’s history of violence. Where masculine *habitus* underlies youths’ urge to be productive and locally valued men, exclusion and poverty collude to block legal and dignified pathways to manhood.” Thus, “there is practical logic to joining the gang which stands out not just as a mechanism for survival, but as a path to demonstrable success, as a capital-rich site for male identity formation.” This study will be of interest to those working on urban violence in Latin America, sociology of crime, queer studies, and identities’ formation.

Abstract: *Drawing upon 40 life-history interviews with gang members in Medellín, Colombia, this paper argues that many young men join gangs to emulate and reproduce ‘successful’ local male identities. The accumulation by the gang of ‘masculine capital,’ the material and symbolic signifiers of manhood, and the accompanying stylistic and timely displays of this capital, means that youths often perceive gangs to be spaces of male success. This drives the social reproduction of gangs. Once in the gang, the youths become increasingly ‘bad,’ using violence to defend the gang’s interests in exchange for masculine capital. Gang leaders, colloquially known as duros or ‘hard men,’ tend to be the más malos, the ‘baddest.’ The ‘ganging process’ should not be understood in terms of aberrant youth behavior; rather there is practical logic to joining the gang as a site of identity formation for aspirational young men who are coming of age when conditions of structural exclusion conspire against them.*

Keywords: gangs; urban violence; youth violence; masculinities; masculine capital; Medellín; Bourdieu.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X17000761>

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SABINA DEWAN AND LUCAS RONCONI. (2018) “U.S. Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Enforcement of Labor Law in Latin America.” *Industrial Relations* 57.1: 35-56.

This article provides an interesting account of the complex history of free trade agreements (FTAs) between U.S., Latin America and the Caribbean, and their impacts on labor law regulations in the region. The article estimates the effects of these FTAs on enforcement of labor standards and compares them to US agreements with other countries, such as Israel, Australia and South Korea. The evaluation found no indication of changes over time in labor regulation for Mexico pre-post NAFTA when compared with Brazil and Chile. The review concludes that FTAs labor provisions and other strategies for building trade capacity are vital and have contributed to the improvement of labor practices in the region.

***Abstract:** The paper provides difference-in-differences estimates suggesting that Latin American countries that signed a free trade agreement with the United States experienced an increase in the number of labor inspectors and inspections. We also find large heterogeneity across signers and no evidence that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) had a positive impact on Mexico. We conclude by suggesting that the stringency of content of the accord and the resources devoted by the U.S. government to increase enforcement make a difference.*

Keywords: NAFTA; Latin America; Labor Laws; Trade Agreements.

DOI: 10.1111/irel.12199

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M. FISBERG, I. KOVALSKYS, G. GÓMEZ SALAS, R.G. PAREJA TORRES, M.C. YÉPEZ GARCÍA, L.Y. CORTÉS SANABRIA, ET AL. (2017) “Developing a cooperative multicenter study in Latin America: Lessons learned from the Latin American Study of Nutrition and Health Project.” *Revista Panamericana de Salud Pública* 41: e111.

The Latin American Study of Nutrition and Health (ELANS) was a multinational survey with the goal to depict the nutritional status of people in Latin America and to investigate physical activity, food consumption, and nutrient intake among representative samples in urban

populations of eight countries. This study is particularly important because it is one of the first of its kind to attempt to understand health behaviors for a region. The paper presents the challenges and lessons learned in developing such a multi-national study and provides a model for future collaborative research. The study provides evidence of the advance toward regional data collection and health informatics.

Abstract: *This report examines the challenges of conducting a multicenter, cross-sectional study of countries with diverse cultures, and shares the lessons learned. The Latin American Study of Nutrition and Health (ELANS) was used as a feasibility study involving the most populous cities of eight countries in Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela) in 2014-2015, about 40% of the population of the Americas. The target sample included 9000 individuals, 15-65 years of age, and was stratified by geographic location (only urban areas), gender, age, and socioeconomic status. Six principal challenges were identified: team structuring and site selections; developing a single protocol; obtaining ethic approvals; completing simultaneous fieldwork; ensuring data quality; and extracting data and maintaining consistency across databases. Lessons learned show that harmonization, pilot study, uniformity of procedures, high data quality control, and communication and collaboration across sites are imperative. Barriers included organizational complexity, recruitment of collaborators and research staff, institutional cooperation, development of infrastructure, and identification of resources. Consensus on uniform measures and outcomes and data collection methodology, as well as a plan for data management and analysis, communication, publication, and dissemination of study results should be in place prior to beginning fieldwork. While challenging, such studies offer great potential for building a scientific base for studies on nutrition, physical activity, and other health topics, while facilitating comparisons among countries.*

Keywords: Latin America; Multicenter Studies; Nutritional Surveillance; Nutritional Surveys; Regional Research.

DOI: 10.26633/RPSP.2017.111

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BRIGITTE ADRIAENSEN. (2017) “Las poéticas del sinsentido en la literatura argentina contemporánea: reflexiones acerca de su relación con la ironía, el kitsch y el camp.” *Revista Iberoamericana* LXXXIII.261: 755-766.

Following Wim Tigges’ notion of “nonsense” as a literary genre —especially through the simultaneous presence of both profusion of meaning and lack of sense—, this article studies the nonsensical tendency in Argentinian narrative of the last decade. Works by César Aira, Daniel Guebel, Washington Cucurto, and Sergio Bizzio are analyzed here from the nonsensical framework. The study also surveys the connections between nonsense and irony, kitsch, and camp elements. The article will be especially valuable to those working on Argentinian literature, literary studies, the poetics of fiction, and postmodern approaches to narrative.

In lieu of an abstract, an excerpt: “Parece que en una parte de la literatura argentina de la última década se va afirmando una tendencia hacia el nonsense o el sinsentido. Esta tendencia se constata en la obra de autores tan diversos como César Aira, Daniel Guebel, Washington Cucurto y Sergio Bizzio para nombrar solo los casos más representativos. [En este artículo] se intenta mostrar el papel del sinsentido, la ironía y del camp en la obra de Daniel Guebel, autor muy influido por César Aira, que ha colaborado estrechamente con Sergio Bizzio y cuya obra tiene, desde mi punto de vista, algunos aires de familia a primera vista insospechados con la de Washington Cucurto.”

Keywords: Contemporary Argentinian Literature; nonsense; kitsch; camp; César Aira; Daniel Guebel; Washington Cucurto; Sergio Bizzio.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5195/reviberoamer.2017.7545>

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OPINION AND JOURNALISTIC ARTICLES

HAROLD TRINKUNAS. “The Tragedy of the Venezuelan Opposition: Why It’s Been Unable to Effectively Challenge Maduro.” *Foreign Affairs*. January 5, 2018.

As the Venezuelan crisis worsens with a decline in oil production, hyperinflation and starvation continuing to destabilize the South American nation, one would expect massive discontent with the Maduro regime. Venezuela’s opposition coalition, the Democratic Unity Committee, was able to win two-thirds of the seats for the National Assembly in 2015, but the coalition seems unable to effectively challenge the current regime. Maduro’s party won most of the gubernatorial races in 2017. Harold Trinkunas examines the question, why was Venezuela’s opposition unable to capitalize on the government’s massive unpopularity? In this article, he highlights some of the reasons including inter alia: the manipulation of the electoral system by the government, fraud, the opposition being formed on the basis of winning elections rather than on ideology or policy, and their underestimations of the political machinations of the Maduro regime. Harold Trinkunas is the Deputy Director of the Center for International Security and Cooperation in the Freeman Spogli Institute at Stanford University.

In lieu of an abstract, an excerpt: “Maduro and his allies fear being held accountable if there is a political transition in Venezuela, either because they have engaged in massive corruption, are connected to international drug trafficking, or have committed human rights abuses. Many of these crimes potentially have an international dimension, as the sentencing of two nephews of Venezuela’s First Lady on cocaine-smuggling charges in a federal court in Manhattan in December 2017 illustrates. Members of the ruling elite are right to fear extradition to the United States if they lose power. They have thus deliberately set out to guard against any possibility of a coup or unfavorable election results through several tactics, including packing the Supreme Court with pro-regime judges and politicizing the armed forces, the police, and the oil industry.”

Keywords: Venezuelan opposition; elections; Maduro; Democratic Unity Committee.

URL: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/venezuela/2018-01-05/tragedy-venezuelan-oppositio>

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BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS



SANTIAGO MUÑOZ MACHADO. *Hablamos la misma lengua. Historia política del español en América, desde la Conquista a las Independencias*. Madrid: Crítica, 2017. 832 pp.

ISBN: 978-84-17067-35-9

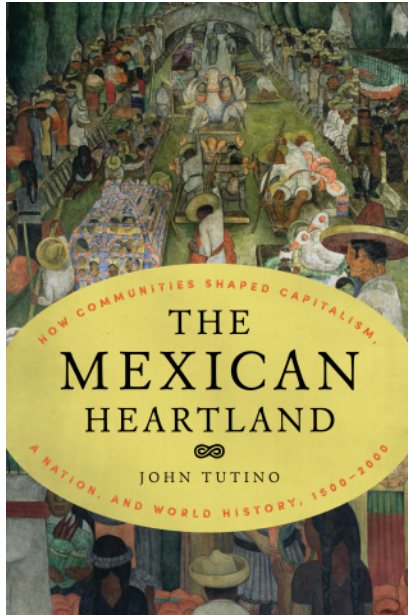
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Santiago Muñoz Machado is professor of Law at the Universidad Complutense and member of the Real Academia Española. Author of more than 40 books, in *Hablamos la misma lengua* he depicts a political history of Spanish language in the Americas, from the conquest to the struggles for independence in the Nineteenth century. Its comprehensive, well-documented analysis offers a unique perspective of Latin American history through the implementation and subsequent evolution and enrichment of the Spanish language in the region.

Sinopsis: “Santiago Muñoz Machado, Premio Nacional de Ensayo en 2013 por *Informe sobre España. Repensar el Estado o destruirlo*, nos ofrece en esta ambiciosa obra una historia política de la lengua española en América Latina desde el descubrimiento hasta las independencias. A través de un relato tan ameno como riguroso, el autor pasa revista desde los primeros momentos de la conquista, cuando la lengua constituía una muralla con los habitantes de los territorios recién conquistados, hasta la imposición de las normas, religión o costumbres de los conquistadores. No faltan en el relato las aportaciones desde el otro lado, esto es, los préstamos de las lenguas indígenas al castellano o la complicada situación política en cada uno de los territorios hasta llegar a las independencias, sin olvidar el papel de la literatura a ambos lados del Atlántico.”

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JOHN TUTINO. *The Mexican Heartland: How Communities Shaped Capitalism, a Nation, and World History, 1500-2000*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. 512 pp.

ISBN: 9780691174365

More on this book:

<https://press.princeton.edu/titles/11125.html>

John Tutino is professor of History and International Affairs and the director of the Americas Initiative at Georgetown University. This is his most recent book, and it has been described as “A major new history of capitalism from the perspective of the indigenous peoples of Mexico, who sustained and resisted it for centuries.”

Summary: “*The Mexican Heartland* provides a new history of capitalism from the perspective of the landed communities surrounding Mexico City. In a sweeping analytical narrative spanning the sixteenth century to today, John Tutino challenges our basic assumptions about the forces that shaped global capitalism—setting families and communities at the center of histories that transformed the world. Despite invasion, disease, and depopulation, Mexico’s heartland communities held strong on the land, adapting to sustain and shape the dynamic silver capitalism so pivotal to Spain’s empire and world trade for centuries after 1550. They joined in insurgencies that brought the collapse of silver and other key global trades after 1810 as Mexico became a nation, then struggled to keep land and self-rule in the face of liberal national projects. They drove Zapata’s 1910 revolution—a rising that rattled Mexico and the world of industrial capitalism. Although the revolt faced defeat, adamant communities forced a land reform that put them at the center of Mexico’s experiment in national capitalism after 1920. Then, from the 1950s, population growth and technical innovations drove people from rural communities to a metropolis spreading across the land. A masterful work of scholarship, *The Mexican Heartland* is the story of how landed communities and families around Mexico City sustained silver capitalism, challenged industrial capitalism—and now struggle under globalizing urban capitalism.”

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