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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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**Books and Monographs**


From late 2016 through August 2017, US government personnel working on the US embassy in Havana, Cuba, reported neurological symptoms associated with exposure to auditory and sensory phenomena. The episode triggered a major change in the US politics to Cuba, a relationship that had reached an important point in 2016 when former President Obama travelled to Cuba and became the first incumbent US President to visit the island in 88 years. Following what has been called by the media “the sonic attacks,” the Trump administration decided to call back most of its personnel serving as diplomats in Havana and announced a series of actions in response to this incidents, whose existence the Cuban government refuses to acknowledge. After exposure to auditory and sensory phenomena in their homes or hotel rooms, the affected individuals “reported a similar constellation of neurological symptoms resembling brain injury” and “were referred to an academic brain injury center for multidisciplinary evaluation and treatment.” This study concludes that “persistent cognitive, vestibular, and oculomotor dysfunction, as well as sleep impairment and headaches, were observed among US government personnel in Havana, Cuba, associated with reports of directional audible and/or sensory phenomena of unclear origin,” and that “these individuals appeared to have sustained injury to widespread brain networks without an associated history of head trauma.” Being the first comprehensive scientific study on those incidents, it will be of importance not only for health sciences scholars but also for those working on Foreign Service, Hemispheric and International Studies, Cuban Studies, US international policy, and the US-Cuba diplomatic sphere.

In lieu of an abstract, some excerpts: “There were 21 individuals evaluated (11 women and 10 men, with a mean age of 43 years). Multidisciplinary evaluations began an average of 203 days (range, 3-331 days; median, 189 days; interquartile range, 125 days) following exposure. [...] For 18 of the 21 individuals (86%), there were reports of hearing a novel, localized sound at the
onset of symptoms in their homes and hotel rooms [...] Affected individuals described the sounds as directional, intensely loud, and with pure and sustained tonality. Of the patients, high-pitched sound was reported by 16 (76%), although 2 (10%) noted a low-pitched sound. Words used to describe the sound include ‘buzzing,’ ‘grinding metal,’ ‘piercing squeals,’ and ‘humming.’

**Keywords:** US diplomatic service; Havana; auditory and sensory phenomena; brain injury; sonic attacks.

**DOI:** 10.1001/jama.2018.1742

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This article is part of a special issue by *Crime, Law and Social Change* which aims at “rethinking organized crime, collective violence and insecurity in contemporary Latin America” by drawing from conceptual and methodological approaches in political science, criminology, sociology, social psychology, cultural studies and investigative journalism. Steven Dudley is the co-director and co-founder of Insight Crime and head of research for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, and is also a Senior Fellow at American University’s Center for Latin American and Latino Studies. His contribution on Guatemala is one of five case studies of this special issue which addresses the puzzle of “why and how in the midst of the world’s most serious crime and violence crisis ‘stability’ and ‘political order’ are nonetheless maintained.” Dudley argues that “in the face of security challenges, elites seem more inclined to work within the framework of democracy than try to replace it. They address issues such as organized crime and violence in as much as they pose threats to their power, their businesses and themselves.”

**Abstract:** The following case study concerns the period in which Carlos Vielman, a well-heeled Guatemalan businessman from a prominent family, became the interior minister of the Óscar Berger administration. While minister, Vielman oversaw the creation of several special units that “acted as an organized crime group,” according to Guatemalan and international investigators. He, along with several of his police deputies were eventually charged for murder. He was later
exonerated by a court in Spain, while others were prosecuted. This case study delves into that period, exploring how Vielman’s ministry represented an extension of the Guatemalan elite’s approach towards security and the government writ large to thwart rivals, regardless of the violent and criminal consequences.

**Keywords:** Elites; organized crime; Guatemala; corruption; violence.

**URL:** https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10611-017-9762-7


The authors provide an analysis of the sustainable innovations in Nicaragua’s small-scale farms based on: technological feasibility, commercial viability, organizational appropriability, and societal acceptability. This paper renews the traditionally implemented centralist perspective for conservation farming and emphasizes innovation systems theory that involves two-directional learning in small-scale farms rather than rigid standardization that often overlooks local socio-cultural issues. This case study of Nicaragua will contribute to a better understanding of how governments and NGOs in low-income countries should approach conservation innovation and drives home the message that when dealing with communities there isn’t a one size fits all solution.

**Abstract:** There are about 500 million small-scale farms in low-income countries on the planet. Farmers have been slow to adopt a threefold set of sustainable agronomic practices known as “conservation agriculture” (CA) that have been shown to double productivity. Our study of a novel CA project in Nicaragua, organized based on principles that counter convention, may point to improved ways of understanding and managing sustainable innovations in low-income countries. In particular, by connecting core ideas from the innovation literature to the literature that explores the role of intermediaries such as NGOs, our case study suggests that the efficacy of NGOs to facilitate the adoption of sustainable innovations by small-scale farmers in these
settings may be enhanced if NGOs employ non-centrist approaches in order to address the critical uncertainties associated with such innovations. We discuss how our findings contradict some of long-standing arguments in the literature, and their implications for theory and practice.

**Keywords:** International development; local innovation systems; non-governmental organizations; organizational learning; small-scale farms; sustainability; sustainable agriculture; sustainable innovation adoption.

**URL:** http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0170840617747921

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**Simone Pereira Souza, Luiz Augusto Horta Nogueira, Johan Martinez, et al.**


This article provides an evaluation of the potential supply of bioenergy from sugarcane short-term and long-term in Latin America and the Caribbean. The evaluation proposes ways for countries to achieve significant reductions in fossil fuel, savings in greenhouse gasses and overall energy security. While the authors optimistically present data to support these claims, they do not omit the challenges countries may face in implementation. These strategies can possibly change the region’s contribution to renewable energy prominence.

**Abstract:** Latin American and Caribbean’s (LAC) external dependency on fossil fuels and the pursuit for renewable energy leads to the need for a strategy to afford a cleaner and reliable domestic energy supply. Sugarcane presents high photosynthetic efficiency and it is a well-spread crop in LAC. Our study aims to explore the potential of different approaches of modern energy production from sugarcane, at a national level, and its implication to the environmental aspects. We found that Guatemala, Nicaragua and Cuba would be able to replace 10% of the gasoline and about 2-3% of the diesel consumption by only using the current molasses. With a slight expansion on sugarcane production, Bolivia can replace 20% of the gasoline and diesel, besides providing surplus ethanol for exportation or other purposes. With a minor investment, bagasse may enlarge the electricity access in many countries whereas in other may represent an
alternative to replace fossil fuel sources. We also found relevant potential on reducing the GHG emissions especially in Bolivia, Paraguay and Nicaragua. However, the implementation of such strategies must be supported by appropriate policies to ensure competitive prices, overcome opportunity costs, and stimulate investments.

**Keywords:** Sustainability; biofuel; bioelectricity; developing countries.

**DOI:** 10.1016/j.renene.2018.01.024

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Personal safety continues to be one of the main security concerns in Mexico and according to this paper, “64% of the Mexican population reported feeling insecure in their municipality.” This quantitative study addresses the following research questions: a) What are the key individual-level determinants of Fear of Crime on its three domains? b) How do the three municipality characteristics —violence, vulnerability, and collective efficacy— affect people’s fear of crime? c) How do these three municipality characteristics moderate the relationship between key individual-level determinants and fear of crime? The paper concludes that fear of crime is a multidimensional construct that “responds to a complex interaction between violent events and conditions of vulnerability at both the individual and contextual levels.”

**Abstract:** In the last decade, Mexico, the second-largest economy in Latin America, has seen high poverty, inequality, and increasing homicide rates, which has led to widespread fear of crime. Two important challenges to understand the elevated levels of fear of crime are the lack of agreement on how to measure it and the debate on whether it responds to actual crime or to a general feeling of vulnerability associated with poverty. Moreover, there is little research in Mexico examining the complex influence of social context at the municipality level, on the relationship between person-level characteristics and fear of crime. Using Mexico’s 2015 National Survey of Victimization the goal of the study is to estimate a two-level hierarchical
regression analysis combining the effects of person-level predictors and municipality level context variables to explain fear of crime in Mexico’s urban population. Our results show that some person level attributes—victimization, incivilities, trust, police effectiveness, and collective organization—are consistently associated with the three domains of fear of crime: feelings of insecurity, perceptions of risk, and avoidance behaviors. The study shows that homicide rates at the municipality level are directly associated with feelings of insecurity and avoidance behaviors. In addition, high multidimensional poverty and inequality at the municipality level amplified the rate by which incivilities affect perceptions of risk. Unexpectedly, collective efficacy at the municipality level and collective organization to solve crime at the individual level were positive and significant predictors for fear of crime in Mexico.

**Keywords:** Feelings of insecurity; perceptions of risk; avoidance behaviors; multidimensional poverty; homicide rates; collective efficacy.

**URL:** https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11205-016-1488-x


The authors provide a more current and fresh look at the complexities of workplace and social mobility in America for the Latino’s Millennials. Issues of biculturalism, enculturation, and acculturation are reconsidered while keeping in mind some of the institutional discrimination this growing workforce group experiences. This article provides vital recommendations for human resource policy and practices while concluding that it is the interests of institutions to have a more diverse, cosmopolitan and global view of their workplace.

**Abstract:** There are a variety of trends that are enabling and forcing organizational change. A crucial trend that has implications for a changing and growing demographic workforce includes Millennials and in particular Latinos/Hispanics as the world and particularly the U.S. workplace continues to have an increased aging workforce. Yet, while Latinos are members of the largest
and also the fastest growing minority group in the United States, they are disproportionately underrepresented in more highly compensated professional and leadership roles across corporate America. The majority of existing career development and acculturation literature in the United States has focused narrowly on Anglo-oriented acculturation as a linear process. Unfortunately, as society has evolved so has the form of prejudices and biases. This is supported by the fact that well more than 50% of Hispanics experience discrimination through a variety of means including micro-aggressions. We believe that developing and maintaining an overlapping and compatible bicultural identity might not be enough and that we need to rethink what acculturation and biculturalism means for Millennials and broaden our thinking to include cosmopolitanism as more encompassing of the Millennials and their place in the world. We believe this article begins the dialogue for more research into this growing part of the U.S. workforce along with practical implications and applications.

**Keywords**: Millennials; Latinos; workforce; cosmopolitanism; biculturalism.

**URL**: http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0739986317754080

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Trinidad and Tobago is mostly known for its creation of the musical instrument the steelpan. What is less known is other forms of drumming which came with African immigrants arriving in Trinidad in second half of the nineteenth century. Ryan J. Bazinet argues that contrary to current narratives, African music was not extinguished in Trinidad. As Bazinet explains, while the island did not have contact with Nigeria, Yoruba culture survived in “the organology of the Orisha drums” and that “Trinidad’s Orisha drumming today is a vibrant neo-Yoruba tradition”. This article adds to the literature on music and culture in Latin America and the Caribbean, shedding light on a small island with a rich cultural heritage which was able to maintain its links with its past but also adapt to modern tastes. It also compliments other scholarship on African music and cultural practices in places like Cuba and Brazil.
Abstract: This article explores the historical changes in Trinidadian Shango drumming between 1939 and 1960. Building on dissertation field research conducted from 2008 to 2013, the study is focused on archived field recordings from Trinidad. The recordings reveal two styles of Shango drumming: one that by 1960 had coalesced into the modern style still performed today, and another that in 1939 revealed an older, more polyrhythmic style perhaps representative of nineteenth-century Yoruba drumming in Trinidad. The findings show that the study of field recordings can lead to a reconsideration of academic and popular discourses.

Keywords: Shango; Orisha; drumming; Trinidad; music; culture.

URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/ethnomusicology.61.2.0287


Roberto Bolaño’s 2666 has been widely considered as a canonical novel within the realm of Latin American literature. This article analyzes the strategies employed in the first part of 2666 from the perspective of how a monolingual narrative constructs a multilingual story. The author discusses the motives and implications of the latter by means of analyzing “how the languages spoken at the story level are organized relative to each other and to the language in which the novel is written, in order to then examine the ways in which the narrator renders speech events in the different languages involved.” What makes this article noteworthy among the vast bibliography dedicated to Bolaño’s 2666 is precisely that it argues “to dismiss the tension between multilingualism at the story level and monolingualism at the discourse level as a defect of the novel is to pass over one of 2666’s principal proposals and to deny a key aspect of Bolaño’s narrative poetics.” The article will be especially valuable to those working on Latin American literature, literary studies, multilingualism, translation, and critical approaches to narrative.

Abstract: This article examines the first part of Roberto Bolaño’s novel 2666 with regard to the strategy of telling a multilingual story in a monolingual narrative. Discussing the motives
behind, and implications of, this flattening of the text’s linguistic surface, it argues that to dismiss the tension between story and discourse as a defect is to overlook one of the novel’s principal proposals and to deny a key aspect of Bolaño’s narrative poetics. The article shows that in ‘La parte de los críticos’, effortless communication is confined to a utopian communicative space, which provides a level playing field for characters from different cultural-linguistic backgrounds. The novel’s approach to multilingualism and translation, for which Bolaño may have found support in his readings of Ludwig Wittgenstein, suggests that to him, languages matter not for what separates them but for what they have in common as a generic means of communication. The article contends that the novel’s linguistic flatness is programmatic, exposing to ridicule narratives that claim to represent reality faithfully. In place of the myriad real-world problems of Babel, Bolaño sets an ideal of linguistic transparency and perfect translatability made possible by way of literature.

**Keywords:** 2666; Roberto Bolaño; multilingualism; translation; narration; multilingual story; monolingual narrative.

**DOI:** 10.3828/bhs.2018.13
ALEXANDRA GONZENBACH PERKINS.

Representing Queer and Transgender Identity

ISBN 978-1-61148-842-5 (Hardback)
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More on this book:

Alexandra Gonzenbach Perkins graduated with a Ph.D. in Romance Studies from the University of Miami. She is currently an instructor of Spanish at the University of Alabama. Her research focuses on narrative, theatre, and performance art in Latin American, the Caribbean, and larger global contexts, and the effects of transnational movement in works that represent queer and transgender identities.

Summary: “Fluid Bodies traces the intersections of global movement with transgender and queer identities from authors and artists of the Hispanic Caribbean. Utilizing the theme of fluidity and travel, Fluid Bodies analyzes novels, graphic novels, theatre, and performance art. These works demonstrate how transgender and queer bodies redefine belonging, particularly national belonging, through global movement and community making practices. Through these genres, the text follows the movement of transgender and queer identities from textual spaces to spaces of the body. The gradual movement from text to body—as it occurs in these genres—demonstrates the variety of representational strategies that dismantle binary readings of gender, sexuality, and nationality. Transgender visibility is a pressing social issue, and today’s transgender moment will be a social and political necessity for years to come. Of particular importance are representations of transgender and/or queer people of color. The field of transgender representation is growing, and Fluid Bodies adds to the visibility of transgender and queer identity from the Hispanic Caribbean. By investigating the relationship between novels, graphic novels, theatre, and performance art, Fluid Bodies emphasizes how each work plays on and against the separation of language and the body, and how Hispanic Caribbean authors and artists represent transgender and queer identity in order to redefine cultural and national belonging in various geographic spaces.”
Marcos Antônio Alexandre obtained a Ph.D. in Literary Studies at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais in Brazil, institution in which he is currently a professor. His research focuses mainly on theater and performance, race, and queer studies.

**Sumário:** “As obras apresentadas nesta publicação, sem dúvida, cada uma a sua maneira, apresentam várias facetas relacionadas aos negros e à cultura afrodescendente levantando apontamentos que dizem respeito a aspectos fundamentais enfrentados por esses sujeitos, dentre os quais destaco a questão do negro assediado (física, moral e psicologicamente), alienado, desejado, engajado, homossexual, objeto, pobre, politizado, rejeitado, rico, violentado etc. Quando grupos como Bando de Teatro Olodum, Cia Espaço Preto, Grupo dos Dez, entre outros, colocam em discussão esses temas, eles possibilitam que o leitor/espectador repense os espaços de representações aos quais os negros costumam ser encarcerados ou, pelo menos, deixam um sinal de que o teatro não deixa de cumprir com sua função pedagógica e/ou política —como deixou asseverado em seus argumentos Irazábal. Assim é o teatro negro, essas são ferramentas ideológicas, estratégicas e estéticas dos grupos que pesquisam e realizam propostas espetaculares sobre a cultura e a cena negra.”
Ana Raquel Minian is an Assistant Professor in the Department of History and the Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity (CCSRE) at Stanford University. She holds a Ph.D. from Yale University, and her research focuses on comparative studies, migration, race, and ethnicity.

**Summary:** “In the 1970s the Mexican government acted to alleviate rural unemployment by supporting the migration of able-bodied men. Millions crossed into the United States to find work that would help them survive as well as sustain their families in Mexico. They took low-level positions that few Americans wanted and sent money back to communities that depended on their support. But as U.S. authorities pursued more aggressive anti-immigrant measures, migrants found themselves caught between the economic interests of competing governments. The fruits of their labor were needed in both places, and yet neither country made them feel welcome.

Ana Raquel Minian explores this unique chapter in the history of Mexican migration. *Undocumented Lives* draws on private letters, songs, and oral testimony to recreate the experience of circular migration, which reshaped communities in the United States and Mexico. While migrants could earn for themselves and their families in the U.S., they needed to return to Mexico to reconnect with their homes periodically. Despite crossing the border many times, they managed to belong to communities on both sides of it. Ironically, the U.S. immigration crackdown of the mid-1980s disrupted these flows, forcing many migrants to remain north of the border permanently for fear of not being able to return to work. For them, the United States became known as the *jaula de oro* —the cage of gold.

*Undocumented Lives* tells the story of Mexicans who have been used and abused by the broader economic and political policies of Mexico and the United States.”

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**ISBN 9780674737037**