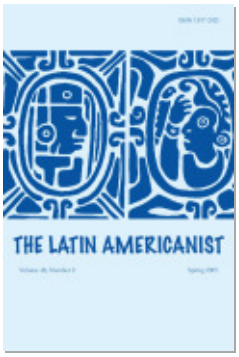
What Justice? Whose Justice? Fighting for Fairness in Latin America ed. by Susan Eva Eckstein, Timothy Wickham-Crowley (review)



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(Review)

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What Justice? Whose Justice? Fighting for Fairness in Latin America. **By Susan Eva Eckstein & Timothy Wickham-Crowley (eds). Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University Press, 2003, p. 362, $24.95.**

Edited books pose a challenge of strategic emphasis for the editors and the reviewer. This review focuses on the whole, while admitting the parts are often better. The editors seemingly chose the inverse approach. Drawing from the universe of papers presented at a LASA Congress highlighting social justice, they have produced an eclectic and uneven collection. They make an effort to pull it all together, but as their three-part title, four internal divisions, the six objectives outlined in their introduction, and the absence of a concluding chapter suggest, have not quite succeeded. The common theme is less justice than "injustice" in the many forms it takes in contemporary and historical Latin America. Even then, certain, otherwise excellent selections (Aníbal Pérez-Liñán on presidential crises, Sybil Delaine Rhodes on Brazil's participatory budgets) do not quite fit. It bears mentioning in passing that only one article (Lisa Hilbink writing on Chile) focuses on the legal and judicial issues conventionally subsumed under the label "justice" and that all other authors, whether using the term or not, are writing about something else.

If, as explained in the preface and introduction, one principal aim was to illustrate the different disciplinary approaches to the theme, this was accomplished, but at the cost of considerable inconsistency in focus, methodology, quality, and even the definition of the problem. I am not convinced disciplinary distinctions are really the crux of the matter, and in any case, it is hard to appreciate them when the authors vary so much in the topics they are investigating and in their level of analysis. It is a long stretch between Philip Oxhorn's theoretical discussion of the sequencing of citizenship rights, or Terry Karl's arguments about the region's "vicious cycle of inequality" to Leigh Payne's recounting of Argentine torturers' confessions or Beatriz Manz's analysis of patterns of remembering violence in a Guatemalan village, and it is hard to imagine any single reader not discounting some selections as entirely irrelevant to his or her interests. The editors admit the work includes a political agenda. Still, some chapters (June Nash on women's movements in Chiapas) wear their politics a bit too obtrusively on their sleeves, producing an interpretation of events many may find questionable. There is also a cross-cutting problem of the quality of data and analysis. Many selections draw

their evidence from secondary sources, often hardly covering the waterfront, or use illustrative excerpts from interviews. This becomes more problematic the broader the authors' aims, but even in pieces generalizing less widely, the conclusions reached frequently exceed the weight of the supporting material.

This said, many chapters (which ones depends on the reader) present ideas and arguments meriting a book of their own, a characteristic comprising the volume's greatest strength and shortcoming. It is a tantalizing sampler, likely to leave even those enamored of a particular topic or approach frustrated by the inevitably incomplete treatment. Most of the authors have so condensed their material that a reader not versed in the histories of the countries covered or the broader questions addressed may be lost in the alphabet soup of party acronyms (Pérez-Liñán; Marc Chernick on Colombian violence; John Peeler on indigenous politics) or fail to grasp the significance of the example (Hilbink on Chilean judicial "exceptionalism"). The book's natural audience may be students in introductory courses, but many articles require considerably more background if one is to capture their implications. Initially written for a series of specialized panels, most selections do not speak to the general reader or, for that matter, to each other.

Finally, there is a tension here between what David Scott Palmer, writing on community organizations in Ayacucho, Peru, calls micro (or informal) and macro (or formal) politics, with the overview pieces reverting to the reductionism we used to see in discussions of the region's political parties. Parties or movements are defined by their formal platforms with little attention to internal dynamics or the links (such as clientelism, opportunism, social or political pressure, militancy) among leaders or between them and voters or members. True, the work's aim is not to document the motives for political involvement or apathy, but to the extent it covers "the fight for fairness," one would like to know more about who is fighting, how, and with what expectations. The editors' political agenda may preclude such overt cynicism, but there is an emerging body of literature, largely ignored here, on Latin American parties and other governance institutions that suggests much of their failure to advance greater "fairness" lies in the specific, often conflicting motivations of those supporting or working within them.

Perhaps justice or injustice is simply too big a topic for one volume, and we should take the book, not as the ultimate word on the issues, but rather as a collage of ideas and a jumping off place

for further work. As, along with most readers, this reviewer lacks familiarity with all the relevant literature, I cannot say whether the entire set of contributions adequately represents the approaches included. Still, I finished the reading with some ideas I would like to pursue further, and others I find less useful, but now understand better. As a first cut, that may be more than sufficient, but the work also makes clear that developing a multi-disciplinary approach to a theory of justice/injustice will take more than an illustrative collection of essays.

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The World Bank

Cuba's Foreign Relations in a Post-Soviet World. **By Michael H. Erisman Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000, p.270, $24.95.**

In his latest book on Cuban foreign policy, H. Michael Erisman continues the excellent work from his previous books. He utilises the framework he has developed previously (in *Cuba's International Relations: The Anatomy of a Nationalistic Foreign Policy*, 1985 and *Cuban Foreign Policy Confronts a New International Order*, 1991, edited with John M. Kirk) and uses it to examine Cuba's foreign policy in the new world order that has appeared since 1992, prompted by the disappearance of the Soviet Union. This latest book is an excellent and thoughtful work on explaining Cuba's reaction to this situation. It would be of great benefit to anyone interested in Cuban foreign policy and shows very good value at $24.95.

The framework he uses to explain Cuba's foreign policy is three fold. Firstly, he discusses the specific nature of fidelista Cuba; secondly, he examines the role of counterdependency with regards to a surrogate/superclient theses in particular with its relationship to Moscow; and finally, he analyzes how Cuban foreign policy has had to adapt to the constant hostility from the United States.

First, Erisman examines Cuba's foreign policy from the time of the victory of the Cuban Revolution to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This period is analysed in three separate chapters: 1959-1972, 1972-1985, and 1985 to 1992. This is a monumental task for anyone to attempt in a mere three chapters due to the nuances and vigorous nature of Cuba's foreign policy in this