

Book Review (Accepted, Pre-Publication Version)

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David Maguire.

Male, Failed, Jailed: Masculinities and ‘Revolving-Door’ Imprisonment in the UK. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

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There are surprisingly few studies bringing together scholarship on men, masculinities and prisons. It remains relatively underexamined that in countries across the world, the overwhelming majority of people in prison are men. *Male, Failed, Jailed* addresses this gap, and substantially moves forward our understanding of “prison masculinities”. Maguire does more than simply apply a gendered lens to understand the stories, experiences and practices of incarcerated men; he examines the identities and trajectories of his participants in their totality, with particular attention to the role of class and geography in shaping their (in)ability to achieve their own gendered aspirations and societal expectations.

The monograph is based upon life history interviews with thirty men together with ethnographic observations in a local prison in the city of Kingston upon Hull, UK. Maguire explains that Hull, like many cities and towns in the North of England, was dependent on heavy industry that has evaporated since the 1970’s-80’s, leaving it with some of the highest rates of unemployment and poverty in the country. In his exploration of his participants’ experiences growing up in and around Hull, Maguire provides a powerful sense of place,

illustrating the significance of geographies in forging people's life histories and (lack of) opportunities - and diverging constructions of masculinities - and the impacts of seismic global shifts in capitalism on specific locales and their inhabitants.

Maguire highlights the continued relevance of Connell's concept of "protest masculinities," as the men attempted to achieve some degree of power in a world where little is available to them through legitimate means, with destructive consequences for themselves and others. He draws on the Teesside School's influential work on youth transitions to chart the participants' trajectories to adulthood and towards criminal careers within impoverished working-class neighbourhoods. Maguire describes how many of the men learned to develop 'hard' masculinities from a young age, often as a strategy for survival; from the streets where they spent much of their time and where anti-authority and acts of violence were commonly valued, to 'care' institutions and school, to penal spaces. They were given few opportunities to 'grow out of crime' in such institutions, which were often complicit in their experiences of violence and brutalisation. By late adolescence, they had typically progressed from 'buzz'-based to more material- and violence-based crimes. Maguire discusses how the adverse conditions of their childhoods, undereducation, and early incarcerations in turn dislocated their school-to-work transitions, reducing their already-limited options in a shifting labour market, which only became more challenging as their 'biographical scars' built up with age.

Maguire shows that the men's gendered expectations remained largely based around attaining industrial breadwinner identities no longer available, arguing that masculine norms are preparing many working-class men in deindustrialised spaces such as Hull for prison rather than the workplace. Instead of equipping them to navigate these socioeconomic challenges upon release, the brutal experiences of imprisonment often only reinforced the kinds of

masculine practices contributing to the men's ostracism in the first place, leaving them trapped in a cycle of incarceration, despite motivations among many to change. Maguire notes that several of the men's paradoxical descriptions of incarceration as not being as difficult as they first dreaded illuminates the impoverished and violent conditions of their lives beforehand, rather than prison somehow being insufficiently punishing.

Maguire's development of the concept of "prison masculinities" is highly valuable, illustrating how men jockey for crumbs of power within the gendered prison hierarchy; for example in exploring the subordinated subjectivities of men on the Vulnerable Prisoners' Unit. Without ever minimising their crimes, the book provides moving insights into the vulnerabilities of participants, often kept concealed within their cells, as they struggled to deal with their absences in the outside world (particularly as fathers), and their failure to meet culturally valued masculine expectations as "providers" and "protectors."

Maguire's important study has shone a light on the experiences of an extremely marginalised group of men in a hidden social context, who have shared highly personal and honest reflections on their lives. He has achieved this in a sensitive and reflexive way, openly weighing his own positionality as the researcher throughout, influenced by feminist-inspired critical masculinities approaches. Maguire reflects perceptively on the opportunities, contradictions, and, most often, challenges presented by his "insider" perspective, as someone who has himself been in prison and has a background not unlike many of the interviewees. *Male, Failed and Jailed* demonstrates the continued relevance of critical theories of men and masculinities to criminology (where this arguably continues to be under-recognised given men's dominance of crime), to prisons, to the people within them.