

Aguirre, C. (2005). *The Criminals of Lima and Their Worlds: The Prison Experience, 1850-1935*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
DOI: 10.1177/1057567706290545

Carlos Aguirre examines the development of institutions of confinement for male offenders in Lima, Peru, between 1850 and 1935. The material for this book is based primarily on an unused collection of documents from institutions of confinement as well as various administrative organizations associated with the Peruvian prison network. This examination contextualizes these institutions of confinement by providing readers with an understanding of essential historical issues that shaped various aspects of Peruvian society, including prisons. By contextualizing the prisons in Peru, Carlos Aguirre provides a more insightful understanding of these institutions and their prisoners.

The book is organized into three parts. The first part, "Apprehending the Criminal," contextualizes these institutions of confinement by exploring essential societal factors that greatly influenced how offenders were punished in Peru. A key aspect to this contextual perspective is what Aguirre identifies as the "criminal question." The criminal question connects "crime with certain plebeian forms of socialization and culture, or as frequently happened, by explaining crime as the inevitable result of those cultural forms . . . a problem associated only with the lower classes of society" (p. 19). Thus, to understand prisons, one needs to understand the intersection of race, class, and urban development. This section then explores how the early developments in explaining criminal behavior shaped policy concerning offenders. Specifically, based on their "scientific findings," physicians, hygienists, and criminologists argued that there was a distinct criminal class. These "facts" further enhanced policy to focus on offender characteristics rather than social characteristics. Finally, Aguirre focuses on the criminal justice system within this societal context by specifically examining the police; he argues that the police helped to reinforce the perception of the "criminal class" by targeting certain segments of Peruvian society.

The remaining two parts of the text focus specifically on prisons. The second part, "Prisons and Prison Communities," provides readers with a general discussion on the development of Peruvian prisons with a specific emphasis on the Lima penitentiary, the Guadalupe jail, and El Frontón Penal Island. Aguirre examines the various types of male inmates incarcerated in these institutions. A key distinction, which influenced the prison environment, was between political prisoners and common criminals. Aguirre stresses the importance of realizing that the prisoners included a diverse group of individuals from different social, racial, regional, legal, and political backgrounds.

The third part, "The World They Made Together," provides an interesting look at how these prisoners interacted on a daily basis. Aguirre illustrates how the prisoners employed various approaches to cope with the realities of their incarceration. He identifies these adaptations as the "customary order." Specifically, this involves the prisoners engaging "in types of relations that contributed to the building of a different type of order . . . resulting from the series of negotiations, transactions, and mutual accommodations between inmates and prison officials and guards" (p. 144). Another interesting facet of prisoners adapting to these institutions of confinement was the emergence of prison subcultures. This section also examines such issues as protests and prisoners' rights.

In the concluding chapter, Aguirre provides an insightful summary of institutions of confinement in Peru. He notes that studies of prisons worldwide have revealed their oppressive and inhumane treatment of individuals within that society. He further maintains that his study of prisons in Peru, however, is not just to validate such observations. Rather, it is essential to study prisons because

they reveal a great deal about the values and obsessions of a society, the ways in which power and domination are both exercised and contested, and the connections between legal mandates and cultural values, on the one hand, and state policies and ordinary citizens on the other hand. (pp. 216-217)

One interesting point in this chapter is that Aguirre does not examine the prisoners as “passive victims of their fate”; rather, he provides readers with an understanding that these individuals had a sense of agency in which they attempted to adapt to their condition in varying approaches.

Overall, this book raises key issues that are essential when understanding how societies punish criminal offenders. First, although prisons have traditionally been geographically located “outside” of society, they are greatly affected by the values, mores, and interests of that very society, especially those with power and influence. Second, although the oppressive nature of prisons has been examined worldwide, this book emphasizes the importance of incorporating a contextual perspective. Specifically, to fully understand how a society punishes their offenders, one needs to learn the history of that society as well as the essential facets specific to that culture. Finally, this book emphasizes that these offenders were not passive victims but do have a sense of agency; this realization provides a greater appreciation of how individuals approach their condition of confinement.

This is a well-researched historical understanding of institutions of confinement in Peru. Aguirre’s approach to introducing essential facets to Peruvian society is extremely well organized, especially for readers who may be unfamiliar with such facets. Given this approach, readers obtain a greater appreciation of the issues that shaped the evolution of these institutions as they continue with this examination. A major strength of this book is providing readers with key issues that are generally raised in the field of corrections while appreciating the importance of using a contextual framework when examining how different societies punish their offenders. A major drawback is that this book only focuses on male offenders. This was not, however, because of Aguirre’s lack of considering such an examination. Rather, he notes at the beginning of the book that there was little documentation of female offenders during this time period.

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Britton, D. M. (2003). *At Work in the Iron Cage: The Prison as Gendered Organization*. New York: New York University Press.
DOI: 10.1177/1057567706290533

This book attempts to illustrate how a seemingly neutral bureaucratic entity, such as the prison, is gendered. The author, Britton, argues that the prison, as a total institution, is gendered at the following three levels: culture, structure, and agency. At the level of culture, it demonstrates how gender ideology and masculinity in particular shape the social expectations and institutional practices of the inmates as well as those of the correction officers (COs). At the structural level, the author illustrates how the hierarchical power is distributed and institutional policies are constructed along the gender line, thereby reproducing the gender ideology. At the level of agency, the author refers to the microlevel of gendering, including the process of social interactions and identity construction, which reinforce as well as reproduce gender inequality in the prison organization.

This book illustrates the gendering process taking place at the three levels in the prison with interview data with 72 COs in male and female prisons. To be specific, chapter 2 of this book reviews the historical development of American prisons reflecting the gender stereotypes of the society at large. Chapter 3 provides a brief review of the social history of the occupations of the COs. Chapter 4 traces the career path of the COs to the prison, which reveals the advantageous positions men hold