

Empowered to be resilient:

Neo-liberal Penal Rhetoric and The Corston Report (2007)¹

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In one of the most recent and influential reports on women's imprisonment in England and Wales, *A Review of Women With Particular Vulnerabilities In The Criminal Justice System*,² Baroness Jean Corston reiterated the concern that the women's prison estate was comprised of highly vulnerable individuals who were ill served by a system designed with men in mind. The report was initiated in response to a number of controversial self-inflicted deaths in women's prisons- of note is HMP Styal, which had experienced six self-inflicted deaths in a twelve month period. Thus, in 2006 the government commissioned Baroness Corston to conduct a report which would review the adequacy of government initiatives for women and girls in conflict with the law, and make recommendations for change.

The Corston Report was published in 2007 and made some significant acknowledgements about the women's prison population. Corston stated that most women in prison could be described as victims themselves, since they had histories of violence and abuse.³ Her concerns reiterated what researchers and activists have been highlighting for numerous years, that the women's prison population is comprised of individuals who are socially and economically deprived.⁴ Corston in outlining these issues, stated that women in prison were often mothers; pregnant; drug users; alcoholics; appeared very thin and unwell; had been victims of sexual and emotional abuse; were not in control of their lives; did not have many choices; were frail and vulnerable despite often appearing brash and confident; had self-harmed; had mental health problems; were poor; were not all the same, they were individuals; and that they were disproportionately from black and minority ethnic groups, as compared to their representation in the general population.⁵ She importantly acknowledged that the nature or seriousness of women's offending had not worsened, and therefore the increase in the women's prison population was representative of an increasing willingness to use custodial sentences for less serious

¹ The paper is based on the findings of the authors Master's thesis. See Dunbabin, H. (2013). *Gender Responsive Penalty: A Feminist Abolitionist Analysis of Official Penal Discourse on Women's Imprisonment Post Corston Report (2007)*. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Central Lancashire. Available at: [http://clok.uclan.ac.uk/9801/2/Dunbabin%20Helen%20Final%20e-Thesis%20\(Master%20Copy\).pdf](http://clok.uclan.ac.uk/9801/2/Dunbabin%20Helen%20Final%20e-Thesis%20(Master%20Copy).pdf).

² Corston, J., (2007), *The Corston Report: A Report by Baroness Jean Corston of a Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System*, London: Home Office.

³ Corston (2007:3).

⁴ See Carlen, P., (1983), *Women's Imprisonment A study in Social Control*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Heidensohn, F., (1985), *Women and Crime*, London: Macmillan.

⁵ Corston (2007:27)

offences.⁶ She furthermore reiterated the concern that women in conflict with the law were being inappropriately dealt with by a system designed with men in mind.⁷

In total Corston made 43 recommendations which she argued would form “a blueprint for a distinct, radically different, visibly led, strategic, proportionate, holistic, *woman-centred* approach”.⁸ She stated that this approach would recognise that women and men are different, but that equality was not reducible to equivalent treatment of men and women in the criminal justice system.⁹ This being so, Corston recommended that every agency within the criminal justice system should accelerate and prioritise the implementation of the Gender Equality Duty, and recommended that the duty be taken on board by every public body within the criminal justice system. She furthermore stated that a mainstreaming of services for women would be more likely to reduce the risk of re-offending, and recommended that an Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group for women be immediately established, guided by a top level *champion* for women.¹⁰

In what was clearly her most radical recommendation Corston stated that the government should announce within six months, a clear strategy which should take place within ten years to replace women’s prisons with smaller custodial units. She noted that these units should be well dispersed, multi-functional and staffed by women, stating that women need help, care, and therapeutic environments to assist them in rebuilding their lives.¹¹ Corston purported that these smaller units would be a real alternative to custody. They would facilitate the supervision of community sentences and provide support to women offenders, and those who were at risk of offending, the aim of which would be to encourage women to access support and early intervention.¹² Thus many of Corston’s recommendations clearly advocated downsizing the woman’s penal estate.

Whilst Corston clearly made some important acknowledgements regarding women’s imprisonment in England and Wales, her approach is however not without limitations and implications. There have been some significant concerns raised in relation penal reform attempts that propose gender responsive models.¹³

Gender responsivity in question

Kelly Hannah-Moffat, in her influential text *Punishment in Disguise*,¹⁴ has argued that the incorporation of feminist discourse, such as woman-centeredness,

⁶ Corston (2007:16)

⁷ Corston (2007:2).

⁸ Corston (2007:79)

⁹ Corston (2007:24)

¹⁰ Corston (2007:2).

¹¹ Corston (2007:5)

¹² Scott, D. & Codd, H., (2010), *Controversial Issues in Prison*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

¹³ See Hannah-Moffat, K., (2001), *Punishment in Disguise*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press;

Goodkind, S. (2009). ‘You can be Anything you Want, but you have to Believe it: Commercialised Feminism in Gender Specific Programmes for Girls’, *Signs*, vol 34 (2), pp.397-422.

and, Haney, L., (2010), *Offending Women: Power, Punishment, and the Regulation of Desire*, California: University of California Press.

¹⁴ Hannah-Moffat (2001).

empowerment and an ethics of care¹⁵ within penal policy may increase the potential to reframe penal power in women's corrections.¹⁶ Whilst penal reformers have endeavoured to be aware of gender differences, and have importantly acknowledged that the needs of women in prison are different from the needs of men, Hannah-Moffat has, nonetheless, drawn attention to the potentially flawed nature of such endeavours highlighting that they rely on stereotypical assumptions regarding femininity.¹⁷ Indeed, gender responsive approaches are reliant on the existence of a homogenised female 'norm', which is in fact nowhere universally defined.¹⁸ Thus, whilst feminist critiques of gender neutrality have importantly drawn attention to the concern that the male norm has been utilised in the organisation of penal policy,¹⁹ they have also created new methods of responding to women in conflict with the law.

In a prison context such responses have had some positive impacts for women, in that the experiences of incarceration are undoubtedly different for women than they are for men.²⁰ They may also however reinforce stereotypes regarding suitable feminine behaviour. As Hannah-Moffat notes,²¹ whilst women may be characterised as maternal, nurturing, victimised, and disadvantaged, they may also be assumed to lack discipline and maternal skills, as a result they are perceived as being irresponsible and risky. Thus women in conflict with the law can be dichotomously seen as both *at risk* and *a risk*.

Hannah-Moffat has therefore drawn attention to the ways in which feminist knowledge can be radically excised from its original meanings when incorporated within official penal discourse. Utilising a Foucauldian analysis of power and knowledge, and drawing on recent governmentality literature, she has highlighted the ways in which the state has become infused with other modalities of governance. Furthermore, in drawing on actuarial forms of power,²² it is apparent that risk based modes of governance have become deeply embedded in contemporary penal discourse.²³ However, unlike actuarialism, disciplinary modes of governance have not been replaced by risk based technologies. They instead co-exist in what she has

¹⁵ An ethics of care is associated with gender/cultural feminists, see:

Gilligan, C., (1982), *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, and

Noddings, N., (1984), *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Berkley, California: University of California.

¹⁶ Hannah-Moffat, K., (2010), 'Sacrosanct or Flawed: Risk, Accountability and Gender Responsive Penal Politics', *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 22(2), pp. 193-215.

¹⁷ Hannah-Moffat (2010).

¹⁸ For further consideration of these issues see: Cruikshank, B (1999). *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects*. USA. Cornell University Press.

¹⁹ See Gilligan (1982); Noddings (1984) and Heidensohn, F., (1986), 'Models of Justice: Portia or Persephone? Some Thoughts on Equality Fairness and Gender in the Field of Criminal Justice', *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 14, pp. 287-298.

²⁰ For further consideration of these issues see: Carlen, P. (1994) 'Why Study Women's Imprisonment? Or Anyone Else's?' *The British Journal of Criminology*. Vol 34, pp.131-140.

²¹ Hannah-Moffat, K., (1999), 'Moral Agent or Actuarial Subject: Risk and Canadian Women's Imprisonment', *Theoretical Criminology*, 3, pp.71-94.

²² Feeley, M., & Simon, J. (1992), 'The New Penology: Notes on the Emerging Strategy for Corrections and Its Implications', *Criminology*, 30, pp.49-74.

²³ Hannah-Moffat (2001).

termed *hybrid moral/actuarial penalty*.²⁴ Women in conflict with the law are not solely subject to moral management, they are also subjected to therapeutic interventions designed to minimise their overall risk of reoffending. The governance of women is therefore likely to be reliant on a number of intrusive interventions that are designed to assess her overall *riskiness*. Thus the lives of women in prison are likely to be subject to scrutiny in a number of areas, in assessment of their past abuses and traumas, assessment of drug and alcohol dependency, assessment of their parenting skills, and of their education and vocational training.²⁵ Gender responsive penal reform attempts are therefore likely to be incorporated within managerial discourses of *risk*, and as a result *needs* are likely to be calculated as factors contributing to the risk of re-offending. In addition, these *high-risk needs* are likely to be framed as the result of poor life choices and a woman centred approach may be deemed the solution to this crisis of *risk/need*.

The implementation of woman-centred strategies in a neo-liberal context is likely to be fraught with tensions, since neo-liberalism promotes individualism and rationality. Subjects are expected to be prepared, adaptive, self-sufficient and reflexive beings who conduct their own risk assessments. They are therefore deemed solely responsible for the outcomes of their lives, whether these be financial, social, or political.²⁶ Thus woman-centred approaches may be deployed as neo-liberal strategies of governing from a distance, through the implementation of programmes designed to maximise adaptability and resilience in those whose *needs* are deemed to be indicators of *risk*. Inevitably then, the burden of responsibility for reducing *risk* is placed with the individual, and blame can be allocated should an individual 'fail,' or refuse, to minimise her risk or reoffending through programmes designed to *empower* her to do so.²⁷ Thus *governance from a distance* ²⁸ should not be viewed as an indicator of state retrenchment. Whilst crime control is removed as a sole responsibility of the state through the creation of state partnerships and diffuse state policy, this should instead be viewed as a means of dissolving the state of full responsibility in crime control, a manoeuvre that ultimately serves to strengthen the state.²⁹ As Hannah-Moffat notes, gender responsive penal reform attempts "feminise[] the discourse and practices of imprisonment without fundamentally challenging or restructuring the disciplinary relations of power in prisons".³⁰ Thus there is no consideration of the fact that such strategies are overwhelmingly applied to those at the bottom of the socio-economic strata. In addition such strategies are particularly problematic since empowerment is generally associated with the

²⁴ Hannah-Moffat (1999:82).

²⁵ Hannah-Moffat (2010:200).

²⁶ Joseph, J. (2013). 'Resilience as embedded neoliberalism: a governmentality approach' *Resilience: International Policies, Practices and Discourses*, vol.1(1). pp.38-52.

²⁷ Hannah-Moffat, K (2000a) Re-forming the Prison: Rethinking Our Ideals'. In: Hannah-Moffat, K. & Shaw, M., (2000), *An Ideal Prison: Critical Essays on Women's Imprisonment in Canada*, Manitoba: Fernwood Publishing.

²⁸ Described as an on-going process of state partnerships. See Rose, N., (1999), *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

²⁹ Hannah Moffat (2001); Haney (2010).

³⁰ Hannah-Moffat, K (2000b:521). 'Prisons That Empower: Neo-Liberal Governance in Canadian Women's Prisons'. *The British Journal of Criminology*. 40, pp.510-531.

emancipation of oppressed groups. It is a strategy less likely to be perceived as abrasive and oppressive and thus one that is less likely to be challenged.³¹ Gender responsive strategies may therefore present the prison as a suitable location for empowerment and healing. Ultimately this frames the prison as a locus of social justice,³² a strategy that obscures its role as a place of punishment.

The concerns in relation to gender responsive penal reform attempts are of particular relevance in relation to the Corston Report, one of the most recent and influential reports on the imprisonment of women in England and Wales.³³ As Scott and Codd have acknowledged,³⁴ Kelly Hannah-Moffat's analysis has clear implications for the reform recommendations set out in Corston Report, since a "holistic, woman-centred approach"³⁵ is advocated.

Analysing Corston: Promoting resilience as a viable empowerment strategy?

From the outset of her report Corston undoubtedly made some important acknowledgements about the women's prison population. In doing so she stated that when women were exposed to certain vulnerability factors, such as domestic circumstances, personal circumstances and social-economic factors, this was likely to lead to a crisis point resulting in imprisonment. For Corston these vulnerability factors are significant:

It is these underlying issues that must be addressed by helping women *develop resilience, life skills and emotional literacy*.³⁶

Given the outlined concerns regarding woman centred approaches, this suggestion is problematic since the focus is clearly individualistic. Women in prison are assumed to lack emotional literacy and the skills in which to succeed in life. Promoting the need for resilience and life skills is indeed problematic, as Joseph has acknowledged, resilience is a concept that all too readily aligns with the aims and functions of neo-liberalism, since it can be associated with strategies of adaptation, which are purported to be essential in uncertain economic climates. Whilst resilience as a concept may not be wholly reducible to neo-liberal governance and policy, it may nonetheless support the overall aims and functions of neo-liberalism. Since, in such a case, it may be associated with an individual's ability to 'bounce-back' when faced with difficulties, whether they be economic or social.³⁷ Thus the solution to financial hardship may be measured in terms of the ability of an individual to negotiate change, to use their initiative to adapt their behaviour accordingly in order to make appropriate life choices. The overall aim therefore is the "mobilisation of social agents" in their own governance, minimising and obscuring the role of

³¹ Hannah-Moffat (2001).

³² Hannah-Moffat (2000a;2001).

³³ Furthermore, as Scott & Codd (2010) have noted, the Corston Report has informed some of the most recent policy developments in relation to women offenders.

³⁴ Scott and Codd (2010:40).

³⁵ Corston (2007:79).

³⁶ (Corston, 2007:2, para.1, emphases added).

³⁷ Joseph (2013:41).

external forces and influences. Ultimately this serves to reinforce and indeed conceal hierarchical relations of power.³⁸

Therefore in designating women in conflict with the law as *emotionally illiterate*, the assumptions drawn from such a statement are that they the law lack the necessary skills to negotiate the *inevitable* social and financial changes in life. The solution to which is the development of resilience in order to better negotiate these changes, marginalising the role of structural relations in either their success or failure.

Corston in laying out her recommendations for a woman-centred approach further argues:

Respect for one another, forming and maintaining relationships, *developing self-confidence, simply being able to get along with people without conflict* must come before numeracy and literacy skills. *Life skills*, for example, how to live as a family or group, how to *contribute to the greater good*, how to cook a healthy meal, are missing from the experiences of many women in modern society who come in contact with the criminal justice system.³⁹

For Corston the development of life skills is the most important factor of all, this must come before all else. Presumably the assumption is that in order for women to contribute to the greater good, to be productive individuals in society, they must be educated and trained in skills designed to foster self-reliance and resilience, presumably by suitable female role models,⁴⁰ those adhering to the normative standards of femininity.⁴¹ As Hannah-Moffat has observed, such rhetoric allows for strategies of responsabilisation whilst at the same time minimising the role of the state in creating, and exacerbating, social and economic inequalities. Furthermore what is apparent here is the assumption that women in conflict with the law are solely responsible for the outcomes of their lives, regardless of the external pressures and constraints those lives are subject to.

Whilst Corston did recommend that the women's prison population be dramatically reduced, and a new system of custodial units be established for the most serious offenders, her discourse nonetheless lost sight of the experiential reality of prisons.

In advocating a community centre structure for women's corrections, Corston cites Asha and Calderdale as pioneers of a woman centred approach:

³⁸ Joseph (2013:1).

³⁹ Corston (2007:44, para 4.27, emphases added).

⁴⁰ Corston (2007:86), does indeed advocate that women's day centres and residential units be staffed by women. It should be acknowledged that whilst female staff may be beneficial in terms of providing women only settings for those with experience of violence and abusive relationships, the governance of women by women is not without coercive power dimensions. As such, these dimensions should not be overlooked since they may be presumed to be wholly supportive and therapeutic, *see* Hannah-Moffat (2001) for a discussion on the coercive aspects of maternalism.

⁴¹ It is perhaps here that the similarities between Corston, and prior penal reformers, notably Elizabeth Fry, can be drawn.

“Their broad approach is to treat each woman as an *individual* with her own set of *needs and problems* and to increase their capacity to *take responsibility for their lives*”⁴²

Thus in setting out her blueprint for a *woman centred approach* Corston promotes discourses of responsabilisation as a solution to the concerns surrounding women’s corrections in England and Wales. If Asha and Calderdale are indeed pioneers of a woman centred ethos, their broad approach appears to be to categorise the *needs* of vulnerable women as *problems*, and to place an emphasis on the objective of responsabilising vulnerable women to take sole charge of their lives. In this sense empowerment is envisaged as a means of diminishing dependency, through the promotion of resilience, self-sufficiency and responsibility. Strategies that clearly conform to neo-liberal ideals.

Therefore, despite the real opportunity for change presented by the Corston Report, it nonetheless subscribed to neo-liberal rhetoric, that emphasises individual responsibility, resilience, self-confidence and independence as solutions to economic and social marginalisation.

The government response to Corston

The Government published its response to the Corston Report in December 2007, setting out a strategy to develop community based provisions for offending women, and those at risk of offending.⁴³

The Government agreed with most of the recommendations made by Corston, responding by publishing the Ministry of Justice Gender Equality Scheme on April 1st 2008, and by implementing gender specific standards in women’s prisons.⁴⁴ A further forty million pounds of funding was given to the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to support effective community sentences, an Inter-Ministerial Group was established, and a Ministerial Champion for women was appointed.⁴⁵

However Corston’s most radical recommendation, regarding the replacement of current women’s prisons with smaller local units, was side-lined. The government concluded that the recommendations of its Working Group had highlighted that whilst the underlying concept of the smaller custodial units should be taken into account when developing the women’s prison estate, the overall structure of the custodial units was not feasible. The Working Group identified what they deemed to be key weakness of the proposed units, stating that a range of smaller units within already established women’s prisons, holding between 100-150 women, would be

⁴² Corston (2007:10, para 18, emphases added).

⁴³ Ministry of Justice, (2007), *The Government’s Response To The Report by Baroness Corston of a Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System*, London: MoJ.

⁴⁴ Prison Service, (2008), *Prison Service Order 4800: Women Prisoners*. Available at: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psos>.

⁴⁵ Ministry of Justice, (2008), *Delivering the Government Response to the Corston Report: A Progress Report on Meeting the Needs of Women With Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System*, London: MoJ.

more practical in supporting the vulnerabilities of incarcerated women.⁴⁶ It was further argued in relation to the regimes of the units that:

*'Self-care' units help to reduce the austerity of the institutional environment and provide independence and self-reliance to build self-esteem.*⁴⁷

Firstly, the suggestion of smaller units within existing women's prisons was sadly ironic, since this was the structure in place at HMP Styal during the time of the controversial self-inflicted deaths of six women.⁴⁸ Secondly, the rationale for the regimes of the units is indeed problematic. Again, similarly to the Corston Report, the regimes of such units, regardless of how they are structurally implemented, are argued to promote self-reliance and independence. Strategies which are deemed to facilitate self-esteem, an attribute often associated with empowerment. Thus the link between the generation of self-esteem and independence is forged. Presumably such regimes construct dependency as detrimental to self-esteem, confidence, and overall empowerment.

Alternative approaches

It can therefore be argued that gender responsive, woman centred penal reform attempts are insufficient, and furthermore that they may in fact serve to legitimise the use of imprisonment.⁴⁹ As Carlen and Worrall⁵⁰ have noted, a fundamental focus on both male and female imprisonment may therefore be preferable, since a specific focus on women's imprisonment may result in the presumption that women's prisons are less abrasive than men's. An assumption that may lead to an increase in the women's prison population if the repeated official message of reassurance is that women's prisons are caring, therapeutic and empowering institutions.

Thus, anything less than abolitionist approaches to penal affairs are unlikely to significantly reduce the women's prison population.

What is required is a woman-wise penology, similar to that advocated by Carlen over 25 years ago, which would aim to ensure that the penal regulation of women does not increase their oppression further, *and* that the penal regulation of men does not brutalize them, making them more violently, or ideologically, oppressive towards women.⁵¹

Imprisonment should therefore be recognised as inappropriate for both men and women, since it can be understood as a violent and dehumanising environment that is more likely to perpetuate harm, than reduce it.⁵² Since abolitionist approaches

⁴⁶ Hansard (2008), *House of Commons Debate*, 03 July 2008, col.311.

⁴⁷ Ministry of Justice, (2008:11).

⁴⁸ The Waite wing at HMP Styal, housing those deemed most vulnerable, was fenced off from the rest of the prison.

⁴⁹ Hannah-Moffat, K. & Shaw, M., (2000), 'Introduction'. In: Hannah-Moffat, K. & Shaw, M., (2000), *An Ideal Prison: Critical Essays on Women's Imprisonment in Canada*, Manitoba: Fernwood Publishing.

⁵⁰ Carlen, P. & Worrall, A., (2004), *Analysing Women's Imprisonment*. Devon: Willan Publishing.

⁵¹ Carlen, P.(1990:114). *Alternatives to Women's Imprisonment*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

⁵² This is a particularly contested statement in regard to the imprisonment of men who have committed serious violence against women. Indeed, not all feminists would argue such a case. For a detailed discussion of the tensions, and similarities, between feminism and abolitionism see: van

aim to reduce the reach of the penal dragnet,⁵³ through a clear decarceration agenda, they are far less likely to be incorporated within official penal discourse. An abolitionist approach acknowledges the limitations of gender responsive approaches, through a recognition that they are likely to be incorporated within official rhetoric in support of the prison, leaving it and the central state more powerful than before. Furthermore, as Scott⁵⁴ has acknowledged, abolitionism allows for an assessment of the rightfulness or wrongfulness of imprisoning socially and economically excluded individuals. Since abolitionists have long recognised that imprisonment is overwhelmingly and relentlessly wielded against those most marginalised in society, it is therefore far more likely to challenge the legitimacy of imprisonment.⁵⁵

Conclusions

It is evident, and perhaps unsurprising, that the core recommendation of the Corston Report, to significantly downsize the women's penal estate, has not been realised. Nearly ten years on from the publication of the report, it remains clear that there has been a small impact on the women's prison population. At the time of writing, December 15th 2016, the women's prison population in England and Wales stands at 3,944.⁵⁶

Furthermore it is clear that self-harm and self-inflicted death remain significant issues in the women's penal estate. Whilst there had been a welcomed fall in the number of self-inflicted deaths in women's prisons, from 14 in 2003 to 5 in 2015, the number of self-inflicted deaths increased sharply in 2016 with 11 recorded by December.⁵⁷

In addition the female prison population still accounts for a disproportionate number of self-harm incidents, despite only representing 4.6% of the prison population. In the twelve months to June 2016 there were 7,596 recorded incidents of self-harm by female prisoners, a rise of 6% on the previous year.⁵⁸ As Inquest note, the underlying issues surrounding women's prisons remain "stubbornly familiar, and go beyond the prison walls".⁵⁹

Whilst Corston reiterated the multitude of issues that women face, her discourse was nonetheless disconnected from a social justice agenda. Her recommendations were further made without a critique of prison building and

Swaaning, R., (1989), 'Feminism and Abolitionism as Critiques of Criminology', *International Journal of The Sociology of Law*, 17, pp. 287-306.

⁵³ Sim, J. (2009). *Punishment and Prisons: Power and the Carceral State*, London: Sage.

⁵⁴ Scott, D.(2009). *Ghosts Beyond Our Realm: A Neo-abolitionist Analysis of Prisoner Human Rights and Prison Officer Culture*, Saarbrücken: VDM

⁵⁵ Scott (2009); Sim (2009).

⁵⁶ The Howard League for Penal Reform (2016). 'Weekly Prison Watch' available at:

<http://howardleague.org/prisons-information/prison-watch/>

⁵⁷ Inquest (2016). *Deaths of Women in Prison*. Available at:

<http://www.inquest.org.uk/statistics/deaths-of-women-in-prison>. Accessed 15/12/16.

⁵⁸ Ministry of Justice (2016:9-10). *Safety in Custody Statistics Bulletin, England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to September 2016, Assaults and self-harm to June 2016*. London. MoJ.

⁵⁹ Inquest (2013). *Preventing Deaths of Women in Prison: The Need for an Alternative Approach*. Available at:http://www.inquest.org.uk/pdf/briefings/INQUEST_Preventing_deaths_of_women_in_prison.pdf.

refurbishment. As Sim has noted, the absence of such a critique does little to “challenge the central role of the prison within contemporary political and popular consciousness”.⁶⁰ Furthermore her strategy did not challenge the notion that women in conflict with the law are rational subjects, who are responsible for the circumstances of their lives, it reinforced it. In doing so Corston allows for the structural relations impacting upon the lives of vulnerable women to be side-lined.⁶¹ What is apparent from her discourse is that women who do not conform to the neo-liberal ideal of the adaptable, resilient and self-sufficient subject, capable of self-managing risk, are likely to be deemed emotionally illiterate beings. The remedy to such a state is compliance with woman centred strategies designed to embed self-sufficiency and resilience, in order to overcome their presumed emotional illiteracy.

⁶⁰ Sim (2009:142).

⁶¹ Dunbabin (2013).