



*Exploring Violence Committed by Women:
Karla Homolka as a Case Study*

Professor Sylvie Frigon

University of Ottawa

Institute of Criminology Public Seminar Series

Thursday 13th October 2011, 5.30pm

Seminar Room B3, Institute of Criminology,
Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge, CB3 9DA

A drinks reception in the basement foyer will follow this seminar for attendees

Violence committed by women is a rare phenomenon as women are more often victims of violence than perpetrators of violence. However, there is a "link" between victimisation and criminalisation. I will address this delicate question by using the case of Karla Homolka in Canada. Karla Homolka participated in the homicides of two young women with her husband, Paul Bernardo in the late 1980s, early 1990s. Whilst the death of Karla's sister has been classified as an "accidental death", their participation is still open to debate. Bernardo was declared to be a "dangerous offender" and was sentenced to life imprisonment. Homolka was released in 2005 after a sentence of twelve years. In this seminar, I will present the facts of the case, the trial, and the sentence; and chronicle the shifts of the representations of Karla Homolka as a woman "*in danger*" to a "*dangerous woman*", and the media frenzy at the moment of her release.

Sylvie Frigon is a Professor in the Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa. Her recent research includes a project with Chris Bruckert on the social and professional (re)integration of women in conflict with the law; one with Véronique Strimelle on employment and women; and another for *Status of Woman Canada* on the issue of mental health of women during and after imprisonment. She co-edited (with Michèle Kérisit) a collection of essays, *Du corps des femmes: Contrôles, surveillances et résistances* (2000, University of Ottawa Press); and has also edited a special issue on women and confinement in Canada for the journal *Criminologie* entitled *Femmes, enfermement au Canada : une décennie de réformes* (2002). Her book publications include: *L'homicide conjugal au féminin : D'hier à aujourd'hui* (2003); *Écorchées*, a novel she published in 2006 on the issue of women in prison (this, her first work of fiction, is currently being adapted for the theatre); a book on dance, the body, and imprisonment, with Claire Jenny, choreographer and director of the Parisian dance company *Point Virgule* (2009); and a children's novel, *Ariane et son secret*, about a little girl's search for her imprisoned mother (2010).

This seminar is free, and is open to all interested in attending, with no ticket required.

If you wish to be added to the seminar mailing list, please contact: Joanne Garner, on: jf225@cam.ac.uk

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