Bio Sketch

Dr Karen O’Brien is interested in research that explores fresh approaches to researching and writing Indigenous histories and experiences. She is currently involved in research of Indigenous knowledges, drawing on Indigenous critical theory and exploring concepts of gender and identity formation in Indigenous contexts. Karen’s research explores colonising and decolonising histories, researching and writing Indigenous histories and experiences, Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous critical theory, concepts of gender and identity formation in Indigenous contexts. Her research takes an approach that advocates a critical awareness of the ways in which Indigenous history has been written and one which might positively influence its research in the future. It examines the debates about representation and synthesising Indigenous histories within a broader historical context and explores some ways in which Indigenous knowledge may be incorporated within the academy. Karen’s research explores historical sources that are rich in personal narrative and life stories such as biography, testimonial studies and oral histories and it draws on a range of theoretical and methodological approaches that aim to secure an authentic historical voice. Her previous research and publication examines manuscripts of legal records from a variety of courts, quarter sessions and assizes. In addition to research in colonising and decolonising histories, she is interested in researching oral culture, social, economic and gender contexts and in examining criminal complaints and exploring how gendered ideas were disseminated in society from primary source materials such as diaries, casebooks and papers of those involved in crime, with the aim of reconstituting past communities across varying geographical, cultural and temporal domains.

Area(s) of Expertise

- Colonising and decolonising histories
- Socio-Legal History
- Indigenous studies and Indigenous rights
- Indigenous critical and cultural studies

Current Research Activities

Karen has recently published books that explore the lived realities of women and the influence of ideologies on gender constructs. She is currently supervising research that explores methodologies of biography, oral history and testimonial studies that aim to secure an authentic historical voice. Her current research examines the politics of Indigenous identity, gender and knowledge production.

Two Key Publications

*Ideology, Gender and Power: The Lived Realities of Female Experience,* (Saarbrücken, 2010)