

# A Case Study on Psychopathic Behaviour

## PAUL BERNARDO KARLA HOMOLKA

This short article is taken from Charlotte Greig's *Evil Serial Killers: In the Mind of Monsters*, published in 2005. Please note that some of its contents are graphic and may be disturbing.

On the surface, Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka seemed the most unlikely of serial killers. They were a middle-class young Canadian couple, both good looking and fair-haired. However, these ostensibly model citizens conspired together in the rape, torture and murder of at least three young women, including Karla's own sister, Tammy. At her trial, Karla blamed all the crimes on her abusive husband Paul. Subsequent evidence showed that she herself was just as deeply implicated. However, it is probably true to say that without Bernardo, Homolka would never have killed – while Bernardo almost certainly would have done, whether or not he had had a lover to aid and abet him.

### ABUSIVE FATHER

Paul Bernardo was born in the well-to-do Toronto suburb of Scarborough in August 1964, the third child of accountant Kenneth Bernardo and home-maker Marilyn. At least that is what Paul believed when he was growing up, it was only when he was sixteen that his mother revealed him to be the offspring of an affair she had had. By this time, it was abundantly clear that all was not well in the seemingly respectable Bernardo household. Kenneth was physically abusive to his wife and sexually abusive to his daughter; meanwhile, Marilyn had become grossly overweight and remained virtually housebound.

Nevertheless, up to that point Paul appeared to

be a happy, well-adjusted child, who enjoyed his involvement in scouting activities. It was only when he became a young man that he revealed a darker side to his nature. He was good looking, charming and, not surprisingly, popular with women, however, his sexual appetites turned out to be anything but charming. He would beat up the women he went out with, tie them up and force them to have anal sex. This behaviour carried on through his time at the University of Toronto, a period during which he also developed a money-making sideline in smuggling cigarettes into the US. After leaving college, he got a job as an accountant at Price Waterhouse. Not long afterwards, in October 1987, he met Karla Homolka at a Toronto pet convention.

Karla Homolka was born on 4 May 1970 in Port Credit, Ontario, the daughter of Dorothy and Karel Homolka. She had two sisters, Lori and Tammy. Like Bernardo's, this was a middle-class family, but in this case it seemed to be a genuinely happy one. Karla was a popular girl who attended Sir Winston Churchill High School and then became a veterinary assistant, working at an animal hospital, which was where she met Paul Bernardo.

### DARK FANTASIES

Unlike most of his previous girlfriends, Karla was not repulsed by her new boyfriend's sexual sadism. Instead, she joined in enthusiastically, encouraging him to go ever further into his dark fantasies.

Before long, this meant going out and finding women to rape. Over the next few years, Bernardo carried out well over a dozen rapes around the Scarborough area. How far Homolka was involved is not entirely clear, though one victim reported seeing a woman lurking behind the rapist, filming the event.

The police took a long time to deal with the case. In 1990, they finally released a photo-fit sketch that produced an immediate identification of Paul Bernardo. A blood test was taken from Bernardo, revealing that he had the same blood group as the rapist. Further tests were called for. Unbelievably, it took the police laboratory three years to carry out detailed tests, which proved conclusively that

Bernardo was the 'Scarborough Rapist'. By that time, however, he was also a murderer.

As time went on, raping strangers was no longer enough for Bernardo. He developed a fantasy about raping Karla's fifteen-year-old sister Tammy. Once again, Karla was a willing accomplice. She decided to drug Tammy, using anaesthetics stolen from the veterinary clinic where she worked. On 24 December 1990, Karla got Tammy drunk and

administered a drug called Halothane to her. Both Paul and Karla then raped Tammy and videotaped the entire episode. They did not initially intend to kill Tammy but the anaesthetic caused her to choke on her own vomit, and she died on her way to hospital. The official cause of death was suffocation. Karla's grieving parents put the tragedy down to an accident, caused by Tammy having drunk too much.

### MARRIAGE OF MINDS

Karla grieved briefly but was soon engrossed in planning her wedding that summer. A few weeks beforehand, she lured one of her friends, a teenager named Jane, round to the house and gave her the same treatment she had doled out to her sister. This time, though, Jane survived the experience, awaking from her drugged sleep confused and sore, but unaware that she had been raped by both Karla and Paul. This lapse of memory undoubtedly saved her life.

The couple's next victim, fourteen-year-old Leslie Mahaffy, was not so lucky. Paul abducted her on 15 July 1991 and the couple raped and tortured the girl over a twenty-four hour period, filming the event, before Paul finally killed her. Her body was found soon afterwards, dismembered and encased in cement on Lake Gibson. The same day that Mahaffy's body was found, Paul and Karla were married in a lavish affair at Niagara.

Four months later, on 30 November 1991, fourteen-year-old Terri Anderson disappeared. She may well have been murdered by Bernardo and Homolka, but the case remains unproven. Their final victim was seventeen-year-old Kristen French, abducted from a church parking lot on 16 April

1992. This time, the couple kept their victim alive for three days, raping and torturing her. They finally murdered her when they realized they were due to attend an Easter dinner at Karla's parent house.

This was the last murder the couple committed. By the summer of 1992, Bernardo had started to take out his rage on Homolka and in January 1993 she left him. The following month, the police finally ran the test on Bernardo's blood sample and discovered that he was the Scarborough Rapist. As Bernardo's name had also come up in the investigations into the murders of Mahaffy and French, the police finally put the whole case together. Homolka successfully painted herself as just another victim of the dominating Bernardo and agreed a plea bargain whereby she would plead guilty of manslaughter and receive a twelve-year prison sentence in return for testifying against Bernardo.

### WILLING PARTNER

Homolka's trial duly began in June 1993. She once again played the abused wife and received the agreed sentence. However, two years later, when Bernardo's trial began and the prosecution revealed the new evidence of Bernardo's videotapes, the judge and jury were able to see, in all too graphic detail, how willing a partner Homolka had been in the rape and torture of Mahaffy and French. Bernardo did his best to put the blame back on to Homolka, but the videotapes were utterly damning, and he received a life sentence in prison. Homolka, however, is due to be released from prison in July 2005, an eventuality that many Canadians view with horror and disbelief.