

The child within essay



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Crimes and the criminals themselves are the result of some underlying effect. This can be the product of many determining factors.

Some children experience abuse in their household and thus commit the same crimes which they were subjected to as children. Some mothers encounter the overwhelming feeling of sympathy which people lavish on them after a death of their child and that sympathy replaces the love they once felt. There are a plethora of possibilities. In the case of Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka, there were many contributing factors, however, the underlying factor which triggered off Paul's evil rampage is childhood abuse and the psychological trauma he received in his younger years.

Karla Homolka, on the other hand, is simply a sexual predator. She fed off of Paul's sexual desires, and her own perverted tendencies came to light. The bottom line is that Paul and Karla were both slaves to their own sexual desires. When Bernardo was first arrested for his crimes in 1993, it was seen that he was the criminal mind and the genius behind the atrocities and Karla Homolka was a victim along with his rape victims, and the two teenage girls who were murdered - Kristin French and Leslie Mahaffy. As more evidence was presented which showed Homolka participating in the crimes as well, it could be seen that she was very much guilty as well. Despite her contributions, Homolka is commonly and still seen as a victim of Bernardo's.

She was somehow forced into the crimes - the compliant spouse of a sexual sadist. Contrary to this popular and widespread thought, Homolka is clearly as much a part of these crimes, and just as twisted and maniacal as Bernardo. Homolka initially worked out a plea bargain with the Crown in

exchange for her testimony against Bernardo. At this point the courts did not know the videotapes she and her husband had made of the rapes, and so the full extent of Karla's role in the crimes was not yet clear. It was automatically assumed that she was yet another victim of an oppressive male. Battered woman syndrome, it would seem.

Karla would get twelve years in prison for each of the two victims, but the sentences would be served concurrently. She would be eligible for parole in a little over three years with good behaviour. The government even agreed to contact the parole board on Karla's behalf, pointing out to them the importance of her testimony against Paul. (Bardsley) This plea bargain would go down as the worst plea bargain the government of Canada ever made.

Paul Bernardo grew up in a very dysfunctional household. His stepfather would physically abuse his mother, and both physically and sexually abuse his sister. He even went to court for fondling a young girl. The treatment from his mother was no different.

She would verbally abuse Paul and his brother and sister. Up to this point, Paul was seen as a polite, smart, considerate young man, and everyone who knew him thought highly of him. Girlfriends praised him for his kindness, and anyone who knew him could testify to his politeness and 'normality', it would seem. When Bernardo was 16-years-old however, he got into an argument with his mother and she blurted out that he was the result of an affair. This threw Paul off the deep end.

It was at this point that his vicious tendencies came to light. He became abusive to his girlfriends and lost respect for women in general. He hated his

mother for lying to him for so many years, and started to call her profane names, and resented her completely. This horrible childhood molded Paul into the crazed sex maniac he was to become. Karla's childhood was much different.

She grew up in a nice middle class home, had loving parents, and two sisters and a lot of pets. Her forming years were not much different than most others. Then, at the age of 17, she met Paul Bernardo. Her life took a drastic change at that point. The night they met, they engaged in sex – a fitting start to their strange and deadly relationship. Paul's need for sex, and Karla's willingness to give him what he wanted, resulted in perhaps the greatest atrocities in Canadian history.

This does not condone her actions, but rather proves she is an equal partner in the crimes. The childhood abuse that Paul received is one of many aspects which is typical of “ characteristics which are typically found in the sexually sadistic serial killer” (McCrary). Supervisory Special Agent Gregg O. McCrary of the FBI helped out with the investigation and upon capture of Bernardo, concluded that he fit this profile perfectly. He stated other typical characteristics which include: being above average intelligence; being neat and well groomed; had parental conflict; selecting an occupation which makes him an authority figure; fascination with weapons; compulsive driving; initially presents the image of a sincere, caring, loving and attentive individual; dominating personality; obsession with sexual sadism; compulsively collects and uses pornography; collects and keeps as trophies personal items belonging to past victims; married at the time of the offence; selects victims who are particularly vulnerable, and favours the young; and

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finally 93% of sexually sadistic serial killers plan their crimes carefully. These characteristics similarly fit the descriptions of such notorious killers as Ted Bundy and Jeffery Dahmer.

It is fascinating, yet horrific, that this stems from an unhealthy childhood and a sincere hatred and disrespect for women that was aroused by his mother. In a similar case, Ed Gein also suffered from a strange childhood. His mother was the world to him, and she raised him and his brother in an extremely strict Christian household. Everything was evil to Gein, and he trusted nobody nor anything but his mother.

When his brother Robert bad-mouthed their mother when he was a teenager back in the 1920's, Gein got upset with him for saying such horrible things about their mother and later that week, his brother was discovered dead from asphyxiation. Gein was such a shy child that he wasn't blamed for the death, but it would be seen later on that it was most likely Ed who killed his brother. Ed ended up going off the deep end when his mother passed away a year after his only brother died. Ed was 39-years-old when his mother died, yet he was still extremely emotionally and psychologically attached - so attached that his insanity was " attributed to the unhealthy relationship he had with his mother and his upbringing. Gein apparently suffered from conflicting feelings about women, his natural sexual attraction to them and the unnatural attitudes that his mother had instilled in him.

This love-hate feeling towards women became exaggerated and eventually developed in to a full-blown psychosis" (Bell). Similarly, the notorious criminal Ted Bundy " was led to believe that his grandparents were his

parents and his natural mother was his older sister”, and his biological father was never known to him (Bell). This is an extremely similar scenario to Paul Bernardo. The effects of childhood abuse and improper upbringing can clearly be seen. Karla Homolka is a different case.

She had no history of childhood abuse or neglect, she wasn't lied to as a child. What made her sexually assault, rape and kill her sister and those other young girls? Was there an answer? Like I stated earlier, the initial reaction was that Homolka was as much a victim as the girls were. But this was before the videotapes were seen. Police confiscated videotapes of Bernardo and Homolka's rapes, yet this was after the plea bargain was settled.

Homolka was thought to have been yet another case of Battered Woman Syndrome. The videotapes clearly showed her actively participating in the sick sexual acts with Paul of her own free accord. She licked her lips, smiled at the camera, and willingly did what Paul asked of her (Pearson 35). It would seem that she always had a sick and twisted sexual deviant side, and that it took someone like Paul Bernardo to bring out the worst in her. It can be likened to teenage peer pressure. Karla was so terrified of losing the man she loved, that she would do anything to remain a part of her life.

This is much like the case of Bonnie and Clyde. Clyde was the one who had the rough background, and Bonnie had always been a good girl. People trade in their morals in order to fit in and not feel the association which they crave. Karla's compliance with Bernardo shouldn't be seen as a female suffering

from Battered Woman Syndrome, but rather she showed culpability and complete consent to her crimes.

She knew that what she was doing was wrong, but still did them anyway out of fear of losing the man she loved. The main premise would seem to be that Karla was caught in an evil web of love. In no way is Karla Homolka a victim, but rather a co-conspirator. This case is and has always been not necessarily what happened so much as who did it.

People have been passing the buck and blaming others from the very beginning. The fact shouldn't be who did it, or find the reasons why they did it, but rather that they did do it and they should simply be charged on that fact alone. The postulation is that Paul and Karla were both sick individuals, and they should both equally punish for the crimes which they committed. Dysfunctional families have social programs to help them out today which may not have readily been available when Bernardo was a child.

Perhaps awareness will prevent crimes from occurring in the future, and help out the children who withstand too much trauma.