



MWIA CASE STUDIES

VIOLENCE CAUSING DEATH & CULTURAL VIOLENCE

Case 17: Immigrant Family in Canada

Objective

- To illustrate how adjusting to a new culture may conflict with traditional values and result in violence

Narrative Case

** At the end of the case study you can find "Learning points" related to information presented in the narrative case, denoted by numbers in square brackets.*

Inderpal was the youngest of three siblings. She had an older sister and an older brother, both of whom had been born in the Punjab in India. Her family moved from India to Canada (specifically Surrey, British Columbia), looking for better opportunities for their children. Inderpal was born when her older siblings were 10 and 12 and she was the only one of the three children born in Canada.

The family was very traditional and the temple was a big part of their lives. Despite living in Canada, her older sister and brother thought and acted like their immigrant parents and never caused their parents any grief. Inderpal was very Canadian and had a multi-ethnic group of friends. [1]

In high school, Inderpal liked to go to parties where she would smoke and drink and do drugs. When she

started to date a white boy from College, her family felt that she had overstepped the limits. Despite their demands to stop dating this boy, Inderpal said she was Canadian and could do what she wanted. When the family would go to temple, they could see others looking at them and knew they were talking about Inderpal's behaviour.

Inderpal's brother felt that she was destroying the honour of the family. He had given it lots of thought and decided that he must make things right. One night he waited for her to leave a party, intercepted her and dragged her into the bush, where he promptly stabbed and killed her. He put her body in the trunk of the car and drove out to a rural area where he could leave her body where it would not be found. [2]

Learning Points

- [1] Despite moving to Canada, assimilation is not easy, as Canada encourages multi-culturism where immigrants are encouraged to live according to their traditions and values. When immigrants come from very traditional countries, there is often difficulty embracing the more liberal Western way of life. This often leads to family conflict.
- [2] Honour killings are the term given to murders performed because the victim has brought shame to the family by their behaviour.

Background information

- Honour killings are distinct from domestic violence for three reasons:
 - They are planned in advance
 - They can involve multiple family members in the killing
 - Perpetrators of honour killings often do not face negative stigma in their families or communities
- In 2000, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimated that there were at least 5,000 honour killings world-wide annually, which may be an underestimate because many cases go unreported or are falsely reported as suicides. Although this practice is currently primarily associated in media reports with certain Arab cultures, variations of harmful cultural practices toward women involving violence based on notions of honour
- have been known in many cultures world-wide and in many historical times.
- This reference provides general information about Honour Killings, including basic classification system and consideration of the “reasons” given for this type of violence against women:
<http://www.meforum.org/2646/worldwide-trends-in-honor-killings>

References

- The Canadian Bar Association (n.d.). *Service Barriers for Immigrant Women Facing Domestic Violence*. Retrieved 15 October 2018 from: <https://www.rvlaw.ca/PDF/Service-Barriers-for-Immigrant-Women-May-29-13.pdf>
- Cohen, T. (n.d.). *'Honour killings' on the rise in Canada: Expert*. Retrieved 15 October 2018 from: <http://www.canada.com/life/Honour+killings+rise+Canada+Expert/3165638/story.html>
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- Muhammad, A. A. (2010). *Preliminary Examination of so-called "Honour Killings" in Canada*. Retrieved from: http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/hk-ch/hk_eng.pdf