Virtual honour: violating and restoring family honour through the Internet

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Although honour codes may seem old-fashioned, these traditions have found their way into virtual reality. Violent or threatening behaviour based on honour codes can be classified as either violating honour or as restoring honour. Police files of honour based violence contain examples of both types of behaviour and of individuals who use the Internet to reach their goals. This article deals with two key questions: how have honour codes found their way into virtual reality, and what does this imply for police practice regarding honour based violence? These questions are addressed through a description of the current method for the police to handle cases of honour based violence and the work of the Dutch national centre of expertise on honour based violence (LEC EGG), an assessment of internet use among ethnic minorities in the Netherlands, cases from the archive of the LEC EGG and some considerations on policing cybercrime in general. This leads to the conclusion that to fully assess the risks in cases of honour based violence, it is necessary for the police to take into account the online activities of victims and offenders.

1. Introduction

In spite of the dominant image that honour codes and related views on gender roles within the family and preferences for particular marriage partners may seem old-fashioned, these traditions have recently found their way into virtual reality. In earlier research, Janssen draws attention to four possible ways to illustrate that honour is a dynamic concept: "*in a society, (groups of) people with different notions of honour can enter into contact, ideas about honour can change, (relatively) new codes of honour can originate and, as a result of technological developments, honour can also acquire a virtual existence*" (Janssen, 2009a, p. 46). An illustration of the virtual existence of honour and honour based violence is the following case, derived from the archive of the Dutch National Centre of Expertise on Honour Based Violence (*Landelijk Expertise Centrum Eer Gerelateerd Geweld*, in short: LEC EGG) that is based at Haaglanden Police (the Netherlands) [4].

A teenage girl from a conservative family has a different lifestyle: she does not wear a headscarf and hangs around with boys. Her family does not approve of her friendships with these boys. The girl notifies the police because she is worried something might happen to her if her family discovers her secret: she has been pregnant and had an abortion. She fears possible negative consequences coming from her relatives. An older sister has already discovered she has a boyfriend. Shortly after that, the boyfriend is threatened through a social networking site.

Within the mechanism of honour based violence, violent or threatening behaviour can be classified as *violating* honour or as *restoring* honour. Police files on honour based violence contain examples of both types of behaviour and of individuals who use the Internet to reach their goals. The girl mentioned above, for example appears to have violated her family's honour by starting a relationship with a boy her family does not approve of and by having sex outside marriage. Her older sister tries to put an end to the affair by making threats to the boyfriend using a social networking website in order to restore the family's honour.[5]

Although the concepts of honour and honour based violence attracted a great deal of attention in recent years, the impact of new technologies and the Internet on honour codes have so far not been discussed. In this article we will deal with two key questions:

• How have honour codes found their way into virtual reality?
• What does this imply for police officers tackling cases of honour based violence?

To answer these questions, we will summarize in the second paragraph how the Dutch police is dealing with honour cases, and discuss the activities of the LEC EGG. Subsequently, we will assess the use of the Internet by members of ethnic minorities living in the Netherlands. Paragraph four is dedicated to the description of a few honour cases selected from the LEC EGG archives. In the fifth paragraph we briefly look into the influence of technological developments of the Internet on daily police activities, and finally we will try to answer the two key questions.

2. Honour based violence and the police in the Netherlands

Honour based violence has attracted a great deal of attention in recent years, both in the public and the academic debate.[6] Given the fact that honour is damaged and restored in a large variety of ways, identifying an honour case is far from simple. The current debate on the subject of honour is focused on the context of families and in terms of relationships between men and women (Janssen, 2008). In the Netherlands, a working definition of honour based violence has been created for policy-making purposes.

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5   For an extensive overview of actions that can be classified as either violation or as restoration of honour, see Janssen, 2009a, p. 55, and Ferwerda & Van Leiden, 2005, p. 42.

6   This is the case in The Netherlands, but also in other European countries. For Dutch research on the public and academic debate on honour based violence in the UK, Germany and Turkey, see M.H.C. Kromhout (Ed.) (2008). *Eergerelateerd geweld in Groot-Brittannië, Duitsland en Turkije. Een overzicht van informatie inzake aard, omvang en aanpak*, Den Haag: WODC. For international research in English, see M.M. Idriss & T. Abbas (Eds.) (2010). *Honour, Violence, Women and Islam*, New York: Routledge. For a discussion of the public and scientific debate on honour crimes in Germany, see K. Pratt Ewing (2008). *Stolen honor. Stigmatizing Muslim Men in Berlin*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

The authors state that: "*Honour based violence is any form of mental or physical violence on the basis of a collective mentality and in response to (the threat of) damage inflicted on the honour of a man or a woman, and the honour of his or her family, of which the outside world is aware or is likely to become aware*" (Ferwerda & Van Leiden, 2005, p. 25). This means it is likely that governmental institutions focus on cases of intra-family conflict and vice.

To improve the way honour cases are dealt with by Dutch police[7], a national centre of expertise, the LEC EGG, was set up in 2008. In that year the Dutch police consisted still of 25 regional police forces and a nationwide police service. When complex cases are at hand, the LEC EGG offers nationwide assistance to regional forces. Occasionally the LEC EGG also assists in police investigations abroad, for example in Belgium. In addition, the centre performs academic research into the background of damaged honour as a motive for violent behaviour and into practical methods used by police officers to deal with this particular kind of violence.

Through this close partnership of academic research[8] and practical support, the LEC EGG has developed a method to identify, analyse and handle honour cases. This method involves three steps. During the first step the police looks for signs of honour based violence available on their computer systems. These computer systems contain daily observations by police officers. When police officers respond to an incident or when a civilian files a report, this information is entered into the system. To conduct daily searches through police systems for clues connected to honour based violence, a query has been designed. These clues or keywords are called *'red flags'*. Red flags can be found at three different levels: the cause of a conflict (such as insults or threats), the consequences of restoring honour (such as murder, manslaughter, and suicide, but also missing persons), and the cultural background connected to a particular case (information on the interdependency of individuals and their community).

Police officers assess the cases selected by the query. When sufficient grounds for honour based violence have been found, the second phase of the method is applied. This means that a checklist is used to collect detailed information about the specific social and cultural background of (possible) victims and (possible) offenders. The information obtained from the checklist can be used to analyse the risks of honour based violence. This analysis consists of timelines in a case and possible cultural influences on the motive for violence, among other components.[9] When further knowledge is required, external experts can be called in to review a case. These are for example anthropologists whose field of expertise covers a specific culture, language or the social system of honour and honour based violence in a certain culture.

After a thorough analysis of a case, the third step is taken, more precisely the construction of a plan to handle the case. Since honour cases vary in complexity and severity of violence, police interventions are equally variable. The police task is to enforce the law, and when civilians break the law by threatening or violent behaviour, there are consequences.

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7   Of course the police is not the only institution dealing with honour based violence. There is close cooperation between different parties such as (local) government, women's shelters and the police.

8   The two authors of this article form the scientific team of the LEC EGG.

9   For an overview of the methods of the LEC EGG, see Janssen, 2009b (English). For an in-depth report on the use of the checklist and analysis, see Janssen, 2009a (Dutch).

Whether this eventually leads to prosecution is the decision of the public prosecutor. In the Netherlands, an adequate legal framework is installed investigate honour based violence. Police and prosecution are obliged to follow the method of the LEC EGG as described above.[10] One of the most important goals of the method is the identification of honour based conflicts in an early stage. Through this early identification, we hope to be able to prevent violent escalation of these conflicts. When a violation of honour is recognised by police in an early stage, the problem might still be not widely known in the community. The hope is that the conflict is not yet considered as serious and that there is still room for non-violent solutions.

The LEC EGG receives approximately between 400 and 500 calls for assistance per year from regional police forces. This does not imply that all these cases definitely involve honour as a motive for violence. The LEC EGG always refers to them as 'possible' honour cases because these cases have been brought in for analysis. Whether or not the motive for the use of violence is linked to restoration of honour, still needs to be established. Such cases are investigated by the police and evidence has to be collected and brought before court. Furthermore, they concern only cases that the police recognize as honour related and which have been sent over to the centre. It is impossible to determine exactly how many honour related incidents occur in the Netherlands. There may be honour related cases that are unknown to the police or cases that are being handled by a local police officer without assistance of the LEC EGG. As always in criminological research, the so-called 'dark number' of unregistered incidents should be taken into account.

As stated earlier, there is a large variety of cases involving honour based violence. Honour killing is the ultimate form of violence. The majority of cases dealt by the LEC EGG are threats: about 50% of all cases. Approximately a third involves assault and battery. The number of fatal cases has been quite consistent from year to year. On average 13 cases (approximately 3%) are reported every year. These cases may vary from suicide to murder or manslaughter. Whether it was murder or manslaughter needs to be determined by a court (Janssen & Sanberg, 2010). We cannot provide information on the outcome of the criminal cases, because this is recorded by the prosecutors and the courts and is not linked to police information. The LEC EGG has presented a proposal for a system of registration for the police. Currently, pilot projects are running in several regional police forces. Furthermore, the legal body that deals with prosecution is considering possibilities to link the cases registered by the police with the follow-up in the judicial system.

There is a wide array of ethnic groups that are associated with the cases processed by the LEC EGG. Most cases have Turkish roots, followed by Moroccan and others include Afghan and Iraqi cultures. One reason that such a large number of Turkish cases appear is linked to the fact that the Dutch academic debate on honour based violence is based on field research carried out among Turkish and Middle-Eastern cultures (e.g. Van Eck, 2001; Ermers, 2007). Educational programmes on honour related violence for police officers are based on a general textbook (Janssen, 2009a) and the studies by Van Eck and Ermers are often used as detailed examples of specific cultural practices. Thus, when police officers or other professionals are dealing with violence involving

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10   Since June 2010 there is an official guideline for policing and prosecution of honour based violence, see: Aanwijzing huiselijk geweld en eergerelateerd geweld van 29 maart 2010, *Staatscourant* 2010, 6462.

people of these particular ethnic backgrounds, they are more likely to think that this violence must be connected to an honour motive (Janssen & Sanberg, 2010). The range of ethnic backgrounds involved in the LEC EGG caseload also reflects the multicultural nature of Dutch society. Approximately a quarter of these cases, concern people of Dutch origin. The cultural backgrounds presented in the cases that are researched by the LEC EGG roughly correspond to the size of these particular ethnic groups in Dutch society (Janssen & Sanberg, 2010).

At this stage, there are two issues we want to address. First, the LEC EGG does not wish to single out the mentioned ethnic minorities as intrinsically violent. They are not; violence occurs among all layers of society. Second, we do not wish to condemn the concept of honour itself. In recent anthropological and philosophical works, authors such as Pratt-Ewing (2008) and Appiah (2010) argue that honour codes do not necessarily lead to violence. To be an honourable member of a community, means to exercise self control: to control one's needs and urges, to pay respect to others, and to care for others. The positive side of honour is easily forgotten. It is important to bear this in mind reading this article and other publications on honour based violence. Here, we will focus on the violent cases because that is the scope of the LEC EGG. If there is violence, the police has a role to play.

3. Internet use among ethnic minorities in the Netherlands

The cases handled by the LEC EGG relate to a wide variety of ethnic minority groups in Dutch society. According to the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (*Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek*, or: CBS), in 2008 the total number of members of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands was 3.2 million (20% of the total Dutch population). Of this group, 1.8 million belong to the so-called group of 'non-western ethnic minorities' (i.e. from Turkey, Africa, Latin-America and Asia, except Indonesia and Japan) (CBS, 2011). Among the largest groups of non-western ethnic minorities are those of Turkish and Moroccan descent. As stated earlier, these are the ethnic backgrounds involved in the majority of cases handled by the LEC EGG (Janssen & Sanberg, 2010).

Dutch research (Motivaction, 2009) among a group of 1,494 people with a Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean background, aged 15 to 70, shows that currently 84% of people of Moroccan origin have home access to the internet, compared to 72% of people of Turkish descent. While in 2009 the number internet users among people from ethnic minorities was nearly 17% lower than that of native Dutch internet users, there has been a surge in internet connections among ethnic minorities since 2009, particularly among people of Turkish and Moroccan origin. Motivaction concluded that the surveyed group on average spends between 9 to 12 hours per week on the Internet. Ethnic minorities with a Turkish or Moroccan background spend about one quarter of that time to visit specific cultural websites. The tables displayed below provide an overview of the top 5 most popular sites among Internet users from Turkish and Moroccan origin (Motivaction, 2009).

Table 1: most popular sites among users of Turkish background		
Nr.	Name website	Reach in percentage
1	TurksNieuws.NL	16%
2	Turkije.pagina.NL	15%
3	Damla.NL	14%
4	Hababam.NL	14%
5	ZamanHolanda.nl	13%

Table 2: most popular sites among Internet Internet users of Moroccan background		
Nr.	Name website	Reach in percentage
1	Marokko.NL	43%
2	Yasmina.NL	24%
3	Marokko.pagina.NL	24%
4	Maroc.nl	22%
5	Maghreb.NL	19%

(Source: Motivaction, 2009, p. 15/18)

The connection between Internet use and honour codes becomes apparent when we take a closer look at the online activities of people of ethnic minorities. Both Dutch and international scholars point out that immigrants are now able to form networks through the internet, which allows them to have "*a sense of bonding with the network*" (Mitra, 2001, p. 30) and helps them in their quest for an identity (Frissen, 2008). Diaspora communities in different countries can find each other and keep in touch with their country of origin. Through these networks and websites, they can challenge the stereotypical images[11] produced by the mainstream media (Mitra, 2001; Linders & Goossens, 2004; Brouwer, 2005; Georgiou, 2006). In the online discussions on websites such as Yasmina.nl, young people explore how a 'good' Muslim ought to behave in various social situations (Brouwer, 2005).

Although we stress the differences between religious beliefs and cultural habits, it is clear that the topics discussed on Internet forums are deeply linked with the concept of honour. Honour codes are basically rules on how to behave within a certain community. Because honour is a sensitive topic that not everyone dares to speak about in public, young people turn to anonymous discussion forums to get answers to their questions. Moroccan youngsters claim that the Internet has increased their understanding of their own culture and has improved their contacts within their own group (Linders & Goossens, 2004). A Dutch professor of ICT and Social Change speaks of a "*virtual homeland*" that is constructed of elements from the old and the new world: "*an imagination of dreamed reality*" (Frissen, 2008, p. 21).

The opportunity to keep in touch with people of the same ethnic background is not the only merit of these websites: there are also different worlds to explore. The anonymous nature of Internet forums and chat rooms provides the opportunity to escape the social control of tight knit communities. Sensitive issues like sexuality and gender relations – topics that are directly linked to honour codes – are discussed freely. Blogs like the one of the young Egyptian woman Ghada Abdel Aal, titled *Wanna be a bride*, denounce the rules surrounding marriage proposals in Egypt and reflects on her own misadventures with grooms-to-be.[12] The immense popularity of her blog has led to

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11 Such stereotypical images often refer to Muslim immigrant communities. In western media, Muslim men are depicted as oppressive and violent towards Muslim women, who remain passive. For a discussion of these stereotypes, see S.H. Razack (2004). Imperilled Muslim women, dangerous Muslim men and civilized Europeans: legal and social responses to forced marriages, *Feminist Legal Studies*, 12 pp. 129-174. Additionally, Brouwer (2005) cites the stereotypical representation of Moroccan women in Dutch media. Pratt Ewing (2008) elaborates on the stereotypical image of Turkish men in Germany.

12 The blog is written in Arabic and can be reached at http://wanna-b-a-bride.blogspot.com. English as well as Dutch translations of Abdel Aal's book are available.

the publication of a book that has become a bestseller in Egypt and was translated into several languages (Abdel Aal, 2010). This illustrates how important these issues are for contemporary Muslim youth. Via the Internet, boys and girls can communicate with each other beyond the social control of their parents, and without crossing social boundaries. Brouwer (2005) found that this is an important reason for Muslim girls to use the Internet. Because it is not appropriate to go to a bar to meet someone of the opposite sex, they look for eligible partners through the Internet. They can chat and e-mail each other, and when a match seems to be probable, they are able to choose to go on a date in the real world, which may or may not lead to marriage. The Internet thus broadens their horizons and enhances for them the possibility to make their own choice in life, while maintaining an honourable reputation.

Honour based violence is a reaction to a person that does not live by the rules of the community. Going online in itself is not a violation of honour. But when the online activities for example lead to sex outside of marriage, there is a problem. When Internet users cannot keep their activities secret, and the violation of honour becomes known by family members or members of the community, problems arise.

Any online activity is intertwined with social interaction between people in the real world (De Haan, 2008). Since the rise of social networking sites, many online activities have become less anonymous and more entangled with social networks in real life. This is also visible in cases of honour based violence. Damaging honour through virtual means can lead to very potent risks, as is illustrated in the next paragraph. Whether the increasing use of Internet by people of ethnic minorities will lead to more cases of honour based violence, is unclear. Not every online activity is considered a violation of honour. The point is that internet can play a role in honour based conflicts, and it is important that an institute like the Dutch police, in connection with the exercise of its core responsibilities (where controlling the activities based on good information is the starting point), realizes this. Furthermore, Dutch police should take the ongoing concerns of ethnic minorities seriously (Timmer, 2003). Internet plays an important role in that process.

4. Internet and cases of honour based violence

4.1. Methodology

To illustrate the effects of the rise of Internet use among ethnic minorities, we describe a number of cases handled by the LEC EGG. These cases contain elements of interaction between the virtual and the real world. The empirical data has been retrieved from the archives of the LEC EGG. The cases were selected from the archives between 2007 and 2010. The ethnic background in these cases is exemplary in the entire LEC EGG caseload; most cases involve people with roots in North Africa or the Middle East. We did not consult full police files, but selected information from the database which is set up for collecting management information. The records contain information on the victim, suspect, their age, ethnic backgrounds, how the case was referred to LEC EGG, who is working on it, and what actions were undertaken, as well as a short summary of the case. It is possible to filter out relevant records by searching for keywords in every field.

To filter cases containing elements of online activities, we chose keywords referring to general terms such as Internet, and online. Other keywords refer to methods of online communication, such as chat, chatroom and Msn (a programme for instant messaging). We also included keywords for specific social media, such as Facebook (a social networking website) and Hyves (the Dutch version of Facebook).

Not all records that were filtered through the keyword search were relevant to our research questions. Some cases were discarded because the internet-related words in the record refer to actions by police officers or other professionals handling the case and not to the behaviour of the actual victims or suspects. When two or more cases appeared to be very similar, only one was used for this study. Therefore, the cases described here do not form a complete overview of all internet-related cases in the archives of the LEC EGG.

After the selection of the cases, the information from the database was summarised into a chronological, compact storyline by the authors. To ensure anonymity, all references to names, addresses, and ethnic background have been left out.

To sort and describe the cases, we used a diagram derived from earlier research of honour cases. Research has shown the LEC EGG is asked for help during three different phases in the development of a threat: a) when a person is afraid that threats will be made when sensitive information is revealed, b) when a person is threatened, and c) when a (violent) threat is carried out (Janssen & Sanberg, 2010). It is important to bear in mind that the phase refers to the status quo of a case at the moment that it is brought to the attention of the LEC EGG. The people involved do not freeze in time at that moment; their lives go on. This means the case may develop over time.

In the following paragraphs, cases are sorted according to the diagram depicted below.
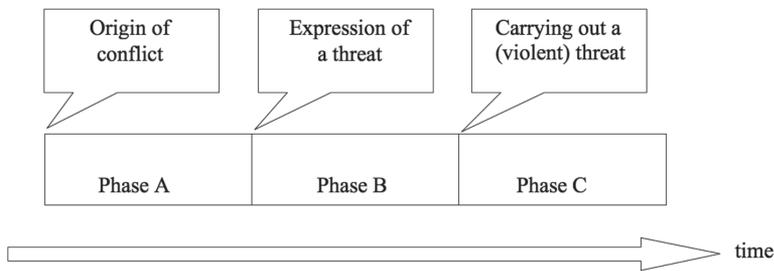
(source: Janssen & Sanberg, 2010, p. 67)

4.2. Phase A: origin of conflict

In some cases, no threat has occurred although the people involved feel threatened. They fear that something might happen because, for instance, a secret has been revealed. When there is an origin of conflict, but no one has yet been explicitly threatened, the case is labelled 'phase A'. Below, five examples of cases that found their way to the LEC EGG in phase A are described.

Change of heart
A young man and woman have a relationship. They decide to live together and plan to get married soon. A few months later the young man's attitude towards his girlfriend changes: he starts abusing her and forbids her to communicate with others, neither face to face nor through the Internet. He forces her to hand over the passwords for her email account and a social networking site.

Looking for a new man
A couple has problems in their marriage. The wife goes online to seek contact with other men. She meets a man through a chat room and falls in love with him. Her in-laws know what's going on and feel that the couple should get a divorce. They take distance from their daughter-in-law. The woman's own family, who lives abroad, has not yet been informed, except her mother.

Trying to keep a secret
A young woman is pregnant. The father is her boyfriend. The couple is not married and the pregnancy was unintentional. The young woman delivers her baby while staying at a shelter for battered women. She is afraid her family will find out that she is having a baby. But she tells a few friends about her pregnancy. One of them speaks regularly online with a cousin of the young mother. The news of the baby will probably not remain a secret much longer.

In the first case, a husband tries to isolate his wife by limiting not only her face-to-face contact with other people, but also any online communication that she might engage in. There is no sign of damaged honour yet, but there are signals of an originating conflict in the controlling attitude of the husband. The married woman in the second case has violated the family honour because she fell in love with another man. As they only met through the Internet, there was no physical contact between them. It seems as if her disloyalty is therefore less problematic for her environment, because there has not been a threat of retribution from her husband or his family. Still, it might be regarded as origin of conflict. The third case presents a clear origin of an honour conflict, because the baby is clear proof of sexual intercourse before marriage. If the girl manages to keep this a secret, the stage of violation of honour has not yet been reached. But because of online communication, it is highly likely that the news will spread rapidly.

4.3. Phase B: expression of a threat

Phase B refers to cases where a person was threatened. In these files, some threats are clearly stated, for example: parents may threaten their misbehaving daughter to send her away to live with her grandparents in their country of origin, or a husband may threaten his wife to kill her if she has an affair. These threats clearly include which actions will be undertaken when the victim does not conform. More often, the threat is vague, as is illustrated by some of the cases below.

Father in prison
A man has been sent to prison for killing his wife. His two children, a boy and a girl, are being raised by their aunt (their mother's sister). The father tries to contact his children from prison. He wants to arrange a marriage for his daughter. The problem is that the girl has had boyfriends and she is no longer a virgin. She tells her family that she has been raped. When her father learns about this, he telephones the aunt's house and contacts his son on his son's mobile phone. Apparently, he has been able to find the mobile phone number online, through his son's profile on a social networking site. The father commands his son to do something about the honour that is lost as a result of his sister losing her virginity and threatens his son with repercussions if he refuses to follow his instructions. The son and the aunt start to become very frightened and they notify the police.

Not what he had in mind
A girl and a boy have a relationship. After a few months, the girl's parents insist they get married. This is not what the boy has in mind, and when he tells them this, they threaten him verbally and even menace him with a knife. The boy gets frightened and leaves the country for a while to stay with some relatives. When he returns to the Netherlands, he gets involved with another girl. As soon as the family of his ex-girlfriend learns about this, they threaten him again by telephone, email, and a social networking site. The young man notifies the police.

Age difference
A young woman has had a relationship with a much older man. The relationship has led to an unintentional pregnancy. The woman has had an abortion. Her family knows this. Her boyfriend asks her father for his permission to marry her, but he is turned down. The relationship ends. The declined man visits the house of the family and puts photos of his ex-girlfriend on the family's computer, telling her younger brother that he "could now watch some pretty pictures of his sister". He also tells them that he will take revenge on the family, putting the pictures online for everyone to see. The whole family (mother, father, brothers) sees the pictures. The father is very concerned that the extended family (uncles, aunts) will see the pictures and that they will spread rumours about his daughter. He fears that some of his own brothers will not hesitate to use violence against the ex-boyfriend. He does not want anything to happen to his daughter.

Stalker
A young interethnic couple has lived together for a few years, when the girl decides to end the relationship. The ex-boyfriend is stalking her continuously. He hangs around in places she visits regularly and sends her threatening emails and text messages. The girl and her mother notify the police.

Under suspicion

An underaged girl is raped by a young man. She tells one of her friends what has happened to her and the friend in turn passes the story on to the girl's father. The father wants her to make an official statement to the police, but the girl is afraid of her violator. The young man then notifies the police that he has been threatened by the girl's father, and claims that the sex was consensual. Investigation by the police learns that the young man has threatened the girl with the menace that, if she does not do what he wants, he will put compromising pictures of her online. Furthermore, he turns out to be a suspect in a case involving human trafficking and forcing girls into prostitution.

In the first case, we see a potentially violent man who manages to find his son as a result of his son's failure to shield his online profile properly. The violation of the family's honour, as a result of his daughter's behaviour, is the cause of the conflict. The father is wielding power on his son to restore their family's honour because as a prisoner he is not able to do that himself. In the following three cases, problems arise following a break-up. There are plenty of examples of such problems to be found in the LEC EGG caseload. One case involves a family threatening the ex-boyfriend of their daughter: they want him to marry her, but he has other plans. This case also shows that honour conflicts can go on for a long time. In the cases 'Age difference' and 'Stalker', problems are caused by ex-boyfriends. The intentions of the stalker are not very clear, but the declined man in 'Age difference' is trying to force the family to allow him to marry their daughter. Because he has compromising digital pictures of her, there is a risk of violation of honour, which could be restored through a marriage. The last case also involves compromising pictures and blackmail, this time used to wield power on a girl with the intention to force her into sex against her will. A serious case, where the perpetrator is suspected of other crimes as well.

4.4. Phase C: escalation

Other cases reach the police when threats and a violent escalation have occured. It is not always possible to link the threats and the violence in a cause-effect chain. For example, imagine a family with a history of domestic violence. After a while there is a clear sign of an honour based conflict possibly causing further violence. The violence committed before the violation of honour cannot be classified as honour based, for there was no honour motive at the time. The two cases labelled as 'phase C' seem to present a causal relation between a violation of honour, a threat and a (violent) escalation.

Determined daughter

Threats are made and violence is committed by a father who disapproves of his daughter's boyfriend. His daughter sticks to her choice. The police successfully conducts mediation between father and daughter, and the situation cools down. A few months later, the girl has an online conversation with her father and during that conversation he starts harassing her again about her boyfriend. She saves the transcripts of the conversation and her father's threats, and emails this to the police officer who is handling her case. The police contacts her father and urge him to stop threatening his daughter. He admits his misstep, but claims that because the police is keeping a close watch his daughter behaves arrogantly towards him. The girl has sent a copy of her passport and of her current address to the police, in case anything happens to her.

> *Blackmail*
> A teenage girl has a sexual relationship with a boy. When their relationship ends, the boy puts nude pictures and videos of her online on a social networking site. He contacts her family and demands money from them. If they refuse he will not delete the pictures and videos. The father of the girl reports the boy's extortion to the police.

The case of the 'Determined daughter' illustrates that the Internet can also be used to gather evidence and to use it for the victim's benefit. This is an encouraging conclusion: when victims have the necessary skills to use the internet to their benefit, and the police keeps a close watch, further violence may be prevented. The last case is an example of a threat that has been carried out. Even though the family's honour has been violated, the victims refuse to give in to extortion. They file a report with the police.

In general, the cases mentioned above show the interconnection between Internet and honour based conflict. In each case the police is contacted at a different phase of escalation. In each of these phases, it is possible that victims and/or offenders make use of the Internet. Every kind of online communication is used such as chat rooms, e-mail, instant messaging services, and social networking websites. The specific use of the Internet that we have encountered in the cases does not show very advanced use of technology. The offenders simply use the day-to-day online communication that everybody knows.

Not all behaviour classified as violating or restoring honour is a legal offence. The 'Change of heart' case is about a power struggle between a man and a woman; the man is determined to gain control of his girlfriend's social life, both offline and online. In the 'Looking for a new man' case the wife's behaviour of chatting online with other men could be frowned upon but is not a criminal offence. When there is a possibility of spreading rumours through instant messaging, as in the case 'Trying to keep a secret', no legal offence has been committed. Despite the fact that the storylines presented here do not always reveal the outcome of the case, we can assure the reader that all the illustrated criminal offenses are investigated by the police. Both the virtual threat and the real risks are investigated by a police officer, who meets the (possible) victim face to face.

The descriptions above illustrate that internet plays a role in cases of honour based violence, whether it is a mere threat or a more serious case of violence. What are the consequences of this finding for the police officers dealing with these cases? This will be the focus of the last part of this article.

5. Internet, crime and the police

After the presentation of internet related cases and before answering the two key questions, we will briefly consider the relationship between recent technical developments and policework. This is done from the perspective and experience of the authors' work at the LEC EGG.

5.1. New types of crime?

The rapid development of new technologies has changed the shape of society. New ways of communication, paying bills and exchanging information, also provide criminals with new opportunities. Many different types of crime can be linked to computers, and many definitions have been suggested by scholars. A distinction is often made between cybercrime and computer crime. Computer crime refers to crimes whereby the use of a computer is absolutely essential, such as hacking into someone else's computer. These are new types of crime. On the other hand, cybercrime refers to a conventional act of crime that can also be committed with the use of a computer (e.g. Van Wilsem, 2010). Threats or extortion via the Internet are examples of cybercrime. With this definition in mind, some of the cases presented above fit the description of cybercrime. For example, the young man in the case 'Not what he had in mind', is threatened via e-mail and a social networking site: a criminal act carried out in cyberspace.

A recent book on cyber and computer crime in the Netherlands includes a chapter on 'cyber extortion' (Leukfeldt, Domenie & Stol, 2010). The authors state that there are different types of cyber extortion, and identify the following categories: threat, damage or disturbance, protection and shaming. The category 'threat' refers to the offender threatening a company to make their website inaccessible. 'Damage' or disturbance can for instance be caused by uploading a virus into a computer system. A hacker provides 'protection' when he offers to fix a weakness he has discovered in a computer system, in return for money. This would be the digital version of the classic extortion scheme of the mafia, protection racketeering (Leukfeldt et al., 2010). These types of crime are not directly applicable to the more personal nature of conflict embedded in honour based violence. The classification seems to be designed for crimes that affect businesses rather than individuals. But the last category of cyber extortion, mentioned by Leukfeldt et al. (2010), is definitely linked to honour based violence: the category called 'shaming'. Shaming refers to the publication of sensitive information that has been retrieved through hacking into the victim's computer. However, from the cases dealt with by the LEC EGG as well as from information in police files analysed by Leukfeldt et al., we learn that sensitive information usually has not been obtained through hacking but through previous (online or offline) contact with the victim. Many cases involve some kind of connection between the victim and the offender, mostly defined as an 'acquaintance'. The victim sends sensitive information (e.g. compromising photographs or web cam images) to another person, who in turn uses this information to threaten the victim. A striking similarity in Leukfeldt's extortion cases is the connection with sexuality. In a number of cases the offender threatens to disclose sexually explicit photographs of the victim, and in certain cases the victim and the offender had previously a relationship. These characteristics are also typical for cases of honour based violence, as we discovered in paragraph 4. In three cases, the suspect possesses compromising images of the victim ('Age difference', 'Under suspicion', and 'Blackmail'). These can be used for extortion, or to force victims into giving in to the wishes of the offender. To be sexually active outside of marriage is a violation of honour in conservative communities. When there is photographical evidence of sexual acts and these are disclosed to family members or members of the community, the family honour is violated. Individuals who are part of a conservative community where honour is an important issue, are vulnerable to this kind of cyber extortion when sexually explicit photos are involved. The extorters are shaming

the victim's reputation, and when the victims are part of a community who adhere strictly to honour codes, not only the individual but also the family honour is damaged.

In short: new elements of the crimes mentioned above are the use of internet and technology. The criminal acts that are committed in cyberspace are not necessarily new. The crimes can be old fashioned, including honour based violence.

5.2. Policing the Internet

How does the police react to cybercrime? As the internet has become such a widespread communications mechanism, police forces around the world have developed new surveillance capacities to monitor Internet users (Brown & Korff, 2009). Policing Internet crimes is not an easy task. Jewkes (2010) defines some important obstacles: the Internet enables its users to remain relatively anonymous, its unbounded scope forces the police to cooperate across geographical boundaries and legal systems, the traditional occupational culture of the police clashes with the versatility of the Internet and causes resistance among police officers who do not consider policing cybercrime to be a part of their job (Jewkes, 2010, p. 525).

There are no quick solutions for the problems that the police has to deal with when facing cybercrime. Jewkes identifies three areas that need improvement. First, specific legislation against cybercrime has to be designed and implemented. Second, the government should increase their efforts to prevent cybercrime to be commited. Last but not least, Jewkes states a point of concern about the training of information and computer skills of police officers at all levels of command (Jewkes, 2010, p. 542-543).

One of the methods of policing cybercrime that is often suggested, is Internet surveillance. In an article on police work and the so-called 'digital revolution', the authors state that "*Internet surveillance includes the structural and systematic search for – and focussed monitoring of specific websites, monitoring of specific texts, persons and groups. This is done to determine whether action is necessary and if so, what measures should be taken. Through Internet surveillance, the Internet is proactively monitored, which can lead to investigations, intelligence operations (monitoring), maintenance of public order and administrative advice*" (Klap & Van der Sluis, 2009, p. 10). In an interview, Internet expert with the Dutch police Ido Nap, argues that in addition to traditional methods of surveillance applied by police officers, Internet surveillance will eventually become part of their daily job[13]. Leukfeldt et al. (2010) have a similar approach to policing cybercrime. During their study, the authors have found that the reports of cybercrime contain minor offences mostly committed by 'ordinary' criminals who were acting alone. The significance of these findings for the police is that cybercrime should not only be combated by specialised units, as is presently the case, but that all police officers should have some basic knowledge of the subject, while it is very likely that they will come across cybercrime in routine police investigation (Leukfeldt et al., 2010). As we have stated before, online activities are closely connected to real life, and this also applies to cybercrime. Victims of digital threats often are victimized by traditional threats as well (up to 60%, see Van Wilsem, 2010, p. 79).

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13   http://www.binnenlandsbestuur.nl/politie-houdt-op-internet-jeugd-in-de-gaten.705223.lynkx

Currently, Internet surveillance is mainly used to detect child pornography networks and terrorist activities. On other terrains, the method is still in an exploratory phase in The Netherlands. In international publications, questions are raised on the proportionality of Internet surveillance. This new technology poses a threat to privacy and the monitoring of large numbers of Internet users can lead to actions against innocent people "*on a scale that is unacceptable in a democratic society*" (Brown & Korff, 2009, p. 125). There are several interesting legal questions regarding these developments that deserve attention (see Brown & Korff, 2009, Jewkes & Yar, 2010). These questions have been addressed by many authors in the field of internet crime.[14] As far as honour based violence is concerned, questions about privacy of civilians have been raised as well. In a publication by the Dutch government on the handling of honour cases, the rules for sharing information about (possible) victims and suspects by different organisations such as police, women's shelters or child protection services, are explained in detail (Helpdesk Privacy & Programmabureau Eergerelateerd Geweld, 2008). The publication does not go into security problems on the Internet regarding honour based violence. It is important to address the consequences of Internet use on honour based violence in further research. Another interesting research question is how to integrate specialised techniques for policing the Internet into existing methods of police investigation. Hunton (2010) explains that it is important that cyber tools fit into the design of more conventional policing techniques and research strategies. There should be a connection. This is just as important in cases of honour based violence. A good example is found in the case 'Determined daughter', that does not only contain an illustration of criminal behaviour by means of an instant messaging programme, but the victim and the police use the same technical possibilities to save the threatening text as evidence against the offender. The police then confront the offender with his behaviour and convince him to stop threatening his daughter. Further research should examine how tools for cyberpolicing could fit into the official method of tackling honour cases as described in paragraph 2.

The discussion on pro's and con's of new technologies such as Internet surveillance and its implementation in police practice that is being carried out,[15] make interesting research subjects for scientific and practical police researchers as well as legal professionals. Especially when honour based violence is brought into the equation: the authors have not found any literature that combines these elements. From a practical point of view, at this moment it would help if police officers handling honour cases simply ask the victims whether they use the Internet and to what extent other people in their community have access to the information they share in cyberspace.

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14 For a further critical consideration of the legal basis for Internet surveillance and other investigative techniques, see Brown & Korff, 2009. A chapter in the Handbook of Internet crime considers whether whether public calls for control of the Internet that often arise after serious internet-related crimes, should take precedence over the freedom of expression that is one of the main characteristics of the Internet: Wykes, M. (2010). 'Harm, suicide and homicide in cyberspace: assessing causality and control', in: Jewkes, Y. & Yar, M. (Eds.), *Handbook of Internet crime,* Cullompton: Willan Publishing, pp. 369-390. This is merely one example, the handbook contains more chapters that are devoted to the tension between legislation and policing cyberspace.

15 In a recent issue of the Dutch magazine for police officers, the implementation of Internet surveillance and the thematic approach of the regional police forces are discussed: Leijen, R. (2011). 'Op internet heb je geen APV' [On the Internet, there is no such thing as a general police regulation], *Blauw,* Vol. 7, nr. 8, pp. 14-17.

6. Conclusion

The questions that form the basis for this article are: how have honour codes found their way into virtual reality, and what does this imply for police officers tackling cases of honour based violence? We have used cases of the LEC EGG to illustrate the role of Internet in honour based violence. We have tried to depict how honour codes have found their way into virtual reality, and that it is vital for police officers who are assigned with cases of honour based violence to be aware of this. This has become clear through our assessment of academic research on the topics of Internet use among ethnic minorities and the implications of widespread Internet use creating new ways to commit crime and at the same time creating new opportunities for criminal investigation.

The rapid succession of new developments in (communication) technology makes the virtual world a dynamic place. Nobody will deny that the Internet is a dynamic environment. But the prevailing image of honour codes is that they are outdated and even an archaic and static practice. With this article we hope we have illustrated that honour codes are just as dynamic because certain groups of people keep these honour codes alive, and these people use modern technologies just as much as anyone else. Honour asserts itself on the internet through discussion forums and blogs where appropriate behaviour is discussed, through chat rooms and instant messaging services by way of which relationships are started and ended, through social networking sites that enable the quick dissemination of (sensitive) information and images. Any online activity is entangled with social networks in real life. When police officers deal with an honour case, they should not only offer guidance on security risks on the street or in the home, but also give advice to victims regarding their online activities.

Although new techniques such as Internet surveillance may be a useful method to respond to possible honour cases, we want to emphasize that this paper is not a plea for Internet surveillance of honour based violence. Researchers in the field of Internet crime state that many issues remain to be resolved concerning methods of policing cyber crime, like Internet surveillance. Their main concerns lie with the privacy of Internet users and freedom of expression. We share these concerns, but want to stress the fact the police cannot turn a blind eye to developments in virtual reality and the occurrence of criminal acts in cyberspace, even of crimes that are considered to be old fashioned, such as honour based violence. What we would like to suggest is that police officers address online security issues when they encounter (possible) victims of honour based violence (or any other crime for that matter). As we have stated in this article, Internet is used among all ethnic groups in the Netherlands, including communities that are associated with honour based violence. It is therefore very likely that police officers that handle honour cases will encounter elements of cybercrime or other entanglements of virtual and actual reality.

This means the police should ask victims about their online activities: do they have a personal profile on a social networking website, did they put any photos or other information online that can be used against them? And if that is the case, who has access to this information? Is it visible to everyone or do only friends and family members have access to this information? Is their online social network limited to the Netherlands or does it include individuals from other countries as well? Police officers could ask victims whether their online profile is secured and what contact information (such as

phone number or address) is made public. By putting these questions to the victim, the police may be able to help (possible) victims to minimize real risks as a result of actions taken in the virtual world. Raising awareness and preventing (further) damage should be their main priorities.

This article stresses the negative side of honour codes, for the simple reason that our research is focused on those cases that (are at risk to) escalate into violence. These are the cases where the police has a role to play. However, we would like to emphasize that there is a majority of law abiding citizens in these communities who do not commit violence, who do not threaten their family members, and who at the same time respect honour codes. In the academic debate on this field, the concept of honour is no longer discussed solely in a violent context (e.g. Pratt Ewing, 2008 and Appiah, 2010). Several scholars stress the need for a positive approach to the values that are embedded in honour codes. Honour, after all, also means self-control. And if Internet users in general would demonstrate some self-control, the Internet would be a much happier place for everyone.

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