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Performing honor online: The affordances of social media for surveillance and impression management in an honor culture

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Abstract

In recent years, research on online impression management has received considerable scholarly attention, with an increasing focus on how the affordances of new media shape the impression management process. However, scant attention has been paid to how individuals perform their identity online in places where surveillance is the norm—and punishment for non-compliance to behavioral codes is severe. This qualitative study of Azerbaijan, an honor culture with a norm of surveillance and serious repercussions for deviating from behavioral codes, explores how young adults balance the tensions between wanting to connect, create, and interact in these spaces while still adhering to behavioral codes. Findings from interviews reveal a complex set of strategies young people employ to both adhere to and break free of the restrictions they experience in offline settings. In many ways, these strategies are similar to those identified in research on more open societies; however, the ramifications for behavioral violations are so severe that careful and controlled impression management becomes paramount for Azerbaijanis, and especially so for women, who face significantly more restrictions than men.

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Introduction

Honor cultures are cultures where honor is the dominant value around which society is organized, with associated behavioral codes (Vandello and Cohen, 2003). Surveillance is the norm in such cultures because others must validate that an individual is adhering to the behavioral code. Impression management, therefore, is an appropriate framework for understanding how individuals in honor cultures ensure that others see behavioral adherence.

This study focuses on *online* impression management in an honor culture where surveillance has long been the norm—Azerbaijan, a culturally Muslim, oil-rich former Soviet republic. The sociocultural structure within Azerbaijan creates an environment where maintaining one's honor carries high stakes, both interpersonally and politically, and for both individuals and their families. Loss of honor can lead to loss of resources, opportunities, and frequently results in psychological or physical punishment. Politically, while most disclosures made in non-honor cultures are considered protected speech, the same comments made in Azerbaijan could lead to a prison sentence for treason. The visibility and increased opportunities for surveillance afforded by social media make it more difficult to deviate from behavioral codes unseen. By examining how Azerbaijanis navigate social media under constant surveillance, we can begin to understand technology's role in facilitating and inhibiting interaction and resource exchange in contexts where the implications of behavior have tremendous repercussions.

Context: Azerbaijan and Azerbaijani society

Azerbaijan is a secular state, due to 70 years of Soviet rule eroding religiosity; that said, Islamic influence is reflected in gender roles and life-cycle rituals (Heyat, 2002; Tohidi, 1997). Politically, the Azerbaijani government is a "full-fledged" authoritarian regime, with near-complete control over media (Kazimova, 2011) and citizens are afforded few civil liberties (Frichova Grono, 2011). Citizens have low trust in others, are fearful, and engage in self-censorship (Gahramanova, 2009). The Azerbaijani government does not block Internet content, but government surveillance and punishment for online activities deemed inappropriate—including imprisonment—has led Azerbaijanis to engage in significant self-censorship online (Pearce, 2015).

Azerbaijani life is permeated by surveillance. Multigenerational households[1] enable more family members to monitor behavior and decrease privacy, especially for women who do not work outside the home (Heyat, 2002).[2] The physical structure of Azerbaijani homes enables neighborly surveillance, meaning "one's movements were more open to scrutiny and required discretion to preserve one's reputation" (Heyat, 2002: 36).

One explanation for the importance of surveillance in Azerbaijani society is that it is an honor culture with an associated set of behavioral codes. Because others must validate

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adherence to these codes, surveillance is the norm, and great attention is paid to what others think. Therefore, people in honor cultures carefully calculate every situation and consider its honor-based implications of their behaviors, with public knowledge of code violations leading to more significant punishments (Van Eck, 2003).

Azerbaijan and honor culture. Azerbaijani society greatly values personal and family honor (Tohidi, 1997). In an honor culture, "[h]onor is considered to be a positive moral standard and reason for pride, related to one's perception of worth and to other people's respect" (Baldry et al., 2013: 364). Honor is the dominant value that society is organized around and almost every action is taken with conscious or unconscious concern for honor (Gregg, 2007). This value is so integrated into life that "people behave, create their relationships, and shape their personalities in order to build and maintain their honor" (Baldry et al., 2013: 364).

Honor is a resource that can be accumulated and/or reduced (Giordano, 2012) through conforming to established behavioral codes (Shafa et al., 2014). This conceptualization of honor is in contrast to non-honor (i.e. dignity) cultures, where each individual has inherit worth that is equal to every other person's worth and cannot be "taken away" by others (Leung and Cohen, 2011).

Behavioral codes in an honor culture embody both a structure of social power and serve as a disciplinary tool (Vandello and Cohen, 2003). An individual cannot establish his honor; rather, only others can validate that an individual is adhering to the code (Shafa et al., 2014). Furthermore, behavioral codes differ for men and women. Male behavioral codes require men to demonstrate capacity, power, esteem, prestige, and status (Baldry et al., 2013; Van Eck, 2003; Van Osch et al., 2013). Men must also demonstrate both positive and negative reciprocity (vengeance and retaliation representing negative reciprocity) (Nisbett and Cohen, 1996). Finally, men must demonstrate that they can protect their family and possessions, a need that drives much behavior (Baldry et al., 2013; Vandello et al., 2008).

Women's behavioral codes require them to be modest (Tohidi, 1996; Vandello and Cohen, 2003) and avoid actions that may embarrass the family, because women's honor reflects upon everyone else (Baldry et al., 2013; Van Eck, 2003; Vandello and Cohen, 2003). Thus, the behavioral expectations and degree of surveillance of women, especially in public, are quite high. For example, Azerbaijani women are encouraged to speak in a quiet voice, be reserved, and exhibit shyness (Heyat, 2002).[3] The most important aspect of women's behavioral codes is chastity, understood by the Arabic word for honor, *namus*, which means chastity but has an implication of public decency (Van Eck, 2003; Van Osch et al., 2013). These behavioral codes limit Azerbaijani women's mobility (Heyat, 2002; Van Eck, 2003).

While behavioral code adherence requires surveillance, an actual violation can result in punishment. The individual who "caused" the loss of honor is likely to be punished in some way including gossip (Van Eck, 2003); exclusion or shaming (Leung and Cohen, 2011); loss of access to economic and social resources (Giordano, 2012); loss of a potential marriage (Heyat, 2002; Waltorp, 2015); and even violence (Cihangir, 2013). Individuals who "caused" the loss may also self-inflict punishment or even commit suicide to punish themselves for the family's honor loss (Van Osch et al., 2013).

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Impression management

Due to the nature of surveillance and the chance for punishment in honor cultures, self-presentation and impression management provide useful frameworks to understand how individuals ensure that others see and validate behavioral adherence. Impression management focuses on goal-directed behaviors with the purpose of controlling or manipulating the attributions and impressions that others form and is a primary human motive that pervades every aspect of life (Goffman, 1959; Leary, 1996; Schlenker, 2012); it is the sum of behaviors a person engages in to either control or manipulate the attributions other people form about her (Tedeschi and Riess, 1981). As Goffman (1959) notes, people manage impressions by selectively choosing to highlight certain characteristics and minimize others depending on the audience for whom they are "performing."

Impression management on social media. Social media are "Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selective self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others" (Carr and Hayes, 2015: 50). Social media platforms differ in what they afford users (see Carr and Hayes, 2015; Rains and Brunner, 2014), but most social media include (1) unique system-, user-, and other-generated content; (2) publicly articulated connections (friends, followers); and (3) streams of user-generated content (Ellison and Boyd, 2013).

Social media afford broadcasting and high visibility of content to a wide audience, making information both easier to locate and more persistent than other communication channels (Treem and Leonardi, 2012). Although social media platforms vary in their norms of publicness, all allow content to be shared with others and consumed via a feed. Importantly, the audience for one's disclosures is typically larger and more varied than an offline audience, so online negative impressions may have even more severe consequences compared to offline negative impressions (Litt and Hargittai, 2014; Marwick and Boyd, 2011), which may result in turbulence for the individual (Litt and Hargittai, 2014).

Impression management is particularly salient when examining social media because the affordances of these sites cause various interpersonal contexts to collapse; therefore, users must be conscious of what they are sharing, who may see it, and how they may interpret it (Hogan, 2010; Walther et al., 2008). There is a level of pre-meditated planning in these decisions, and users often have explicit goals when disclosing information such as exerting a degree of social control or clarifying aspects of their identity (Vitak and Kim, 2014).

Content visibility also affords surveillance, or covert, sustained, and targeted information collection (Lyon, 2001); more precisely, it affords lateral *interpersonal* social surveillance or information gathering (Trottier and Lyon, 2012) because social media are explicitly designed for users to "continually investigate digital traces left by the people they are connected to" (Marwick, 2012: 1). Social media surveillance specifically includes monitoring "friends" to maintain a sense of connection and knowledge among other activities (Ellison et al., 2014; Trottier, 2012). Thus, social media involve both watching others and a high awareness of being watched (Marwick, 2012), which increases the need for impression management (Trottier, 2012).

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In this study, we examine particular affordances of social media for impression management that are salient in an honor culture. Given that others' validation of adherence to behavioral codes is the glue that holds honor together, we focus on surveillance, including the ability to both conduct surveillance on others as well as being surveyed by others.

Methods

This study uses a combination of participant observation and interviews. The first author (K.P.) engaged in ethnographic observation, living in the capital city of Azerbaijan (Baku) for 8 months during 2013 and 2014. She also engaged in Internet-based ethnographic observation of the Azerbaijani Internet sphere from 2012 to 2015. K.P. is a North American female with intermediate language skills in the local languages and over 15 years experience in the region. Nonetheless, cultural differences abound in research such as this, and K.P. took care to be thoughtful about the participants' needs, especially given the sensitive nature of the topic (see Brayda and Boyce, 2014; Liamputtong, 2008).

Interviews were conducted in two stages.[4] First, six semi-structured English-language interviews were conducted in person or via Skype in spring 2014. Participants were initially recruited via social media, then purposefully sampled from other participants using snowball sampling techniques (Browne, 2005). All interviewees had greater mobility than the general population, strong English-language skills, and most had studied abroad. Thus, they are not representative of the typical Azerbaijani.

In the second stage, 29 Azerbaijani-language semi-structured interviews (19 male, 10 female; ages 19–27, $M = 22.1$ years) were conducted in person in summer 2014. Criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) was employed to collect data from young, educated Azerbaijanis with active social media accounts. However, all participants currently resided in the capital city, either from birth or attending university or working. In order to have a more diverse sample, non-capital city natives were oversampled. Nonetheless, most Internet users in Azerbaijan *are* capital city dwellers.[5] See Table 1 for descriptive information on all interview participants.

Analysis and discussion

Constructivist grounded theory was used to analyze all interviews. Beginning with inductive logic, K.P. and research associates engaged in systematic comparison, close reading, or an interrogation of data and generated successively more abstract concepts through an inductive process of comparing data, categories, and concepts (Charmaz, 2006). We first look at how interviewees explained the nature of surveillance in Azerbaijan, then present findings about their impression management strategies.

Socially mediated surveillance in honor societies

While surveillance permeates all aspects of Azerbaijani life (Heyat, 2002; Tohidi, 1996), the introduction of social media into the culture makes surveillance easier and less costly to conduct. Indeed, new technologies transcend the physical limitations of traditional

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Table 1. Descriptive data for interviewees.

Interview stage	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation
1	PF1	21	Female	Student
1	PF2	36	Female	International business
1	PF3	37	Female	Academic
1	PM1	31	Male	International business
1	PM2	27	Male	NGO employee
1	PM3	37	Male	Academic
2	F1	19	Female	Student
2	F2	19	Female	Student
2	F3	20	Female	Blogger/cartoonist
2	F4	20	Female	Student
2	F5	20	Female	Student
2	F6	20	Female	Student
2	F7	21	Female	Recent university graduate
2	F8	22	Female	Student
2	F9	25	Female	Medical professional
2	F10	26	Female	Teacher
2	M1	19	Male	Student
2	M2	19	Male	Student
2	M3	20	Male	Student
2	M4	20	Male	Student
2	M5	21	Male	Student
2	M6	21	Male	Student
2	M7	21	Male	Student
2	M8	22	Male	Recent university graduate
2	M9	22	Male	Student
2	M10	23	Male	Unemployed
2	M11	23	Male	Unemployed
2	M12	24	Male	Medical student
2	M13	24	Male	NGO worker
2	M14	24	Male	Lawyer
2	M15	24	Male	Journalist; IDP
2	M16	25	Male	Unemployed
2	M17	25	Male	Student; IDP
2	M18	25	Male	Unemployed
2	M19	27	Male	Journalist; IDP

NGO: non-governmental organization; IDP: internally displaced person, refugee.

surveillance (Marx, 2002). This is especially problematic for female users because they face greater restrictions than males, and social media may be used as a tool to even more closely watch over them. Male family members are typically charged with monitoring their sisters and female cousins; with the rise of social media, their domain of responsibility now extends to their female kin's online activities. PF1 said it is common for young

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women's profiles to be closely monitored by their brothers for possible behavioral code violations. A new male friendship on Facebook results in a brother asking, "Who is this? How do you know him?" Other relatives also monitor young women's posts. F4's aunt called her after reading a Facebook status and asked her to take it down because it might create a negative impression.[6]

Women are not alone in experiencing kin surveillance. As M2 expressed, "all of my relatives watch me." This surveillance extends online. M18, aged 25, was asked by relatives to stop writing on Facebook because it could "embarrass" the family, while 20-year-old M4's relatives sent private messages after he posted a status or shared a news story they thought would reflect poorly upon him. In each case, the interviewee said he removed the content.

Beyond kin, suitors' families, classmates, and strangers also engage in monitoring. For example, suitors and their families will likely monitor a young woman's social media activity to ensure that she will adhere to behavioral codes and reflect well upon them.[7] Multiple interviewees noted that a bride-to-be's social media presence is an important topic in an engagement and she may be asked to relinquish passwords or be explicitly forbidden from having accounts.[8] PM1 spoke of an acquaintance taking his fiancée's phone away, giving her a new phone with a call log he monitored, and an address book of only the husband-to-be and the bride-to-be's female kin.

Classmates also are concerned for group honor and take a strong interest in monitoring their peers and will punish behavioral code violators through a mixture of shaming, exclusion, or psychological/physical violence. PM1 explained the justification for classmates' concern: "Someone being different makes him [the monitor] look bad. So classmates are making sure that everyone is part of 'the grey crowd.'" Likewise, PM3 noted, "This is a part of collective mentality or groupthink … They think of the [cohort] as one person. 'We are one. Others are not us.' Thus by watching others, people are trying to reinforce norms."

Violating behavioral codes: calculating risks and consequences

Despite heavy surveillance and punishment mechanisms in place, behavioral code violations still occur in honor cultures. In line with theories of exchange (e.g. Homans, 1958), individuals likely calculate the desire to violate a code against the likelihood of being caught and the severity of the punishment. Social media provide youth a platform to explore their identity, meet and interact with new people, and create and share content; yet all those explorations, new contacts, and created content are additional material for surveillance. Social media raise the likelihood of being caught because of increased surveillance by others, increased content visibility, content duplicability, and lack of control over others' content posting.

For example, imagine a young woman who changes into a dress her parents would not approve of after leaving the house. Before social media, her calculation would involve the potential for someone seeing her while she was in public and telling her family, as well as the resulting punishment if her family discovered her behavior. In the social media era, she must also consider the chance that she will be photographed, the chance that a photograph will end up online, and the chance that someone who cares enough to

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tell her parents will see it. Finally, the wider potential audience of seeing her in this dress may anger her parents more than in the pre–social media era.

In a more technological example, PF1 vividly described a female cousin's husband who did not allow her to be on Facebook or Instagram; however, the cousin regularly used PF1's Facebook and Instagram accounts to "be in the know." When PF1's cousin secretly uses her cousin's account, she knows PF1 will not tell the husband. She also only logs in when she is certain that her husband will not discover her—she uses a computer or phone belonging to *her* family, not his. She is careful to not accidentally mention something that she learned online. Her calculation of violating the behavioral code tells her that this is a worthwhile violation to make because the benefit is high, the risk of being caught is low, and the severity of punishment, because they already have children, is low.

When punishment is threatened, participants had to make choices about how to deal with their monitors. Many participants told stories of classmates disapproving of their posts and threatening punishment for the loss of cohort honor. Sometimes the disapproval was communicated privately, through private message or face-to-face, while at other times, the disapproval was expressed publicly. For example, F3 said she regularly received disapproving comments on every post—whether it was a photograph of a sunset or something political—saying things like, "Don't you have anything better to do?" Eventually, she blocked most of her classmates on Facebook to avoid the harassment, although she acknowledged that excluding herself from the group was a self-inflicted punishment.[9]

There is also a strong—and legitimate—concern among young Azerbaijanis that the authorities monitor social media (Pearce, 2015). It is likely that security services engage in electronic surveillance, as private messages have been used in a number of court cases against activists.[10] According to participants, it is also commonly believed that there are regime "plants" on social media that will turn in "disloyal" people for posting content inconsistent with behavioral codes. Through either electronic or human surveillance, F9 was convinced that her relative's "likes" and comments were the reason authorities harassed him and threatened to close his business. F9 felt confident that one of her relative's Facebook contacts must have reported the relative's posts. When asked how she thought that happened, she was unsure. M11's parents were visited by police and were told to tell their son to stop being politically active on Facebook. M11 said his father relayed the following message to him: "There is something called a 'Facebook' and apparently you are writing to it and the police want you to stop."

Overcoming surveillance through calculated impression management strategies

Social media present a new element in the behavioral code violation calculation. By design, social media are places for individuals to present themselves to their audience; however, they also introduce innumerable opportunities for potentially *unwanted* surveillance. The larger and possibly unintentional audience and high visibility of content means that, in Azerbaijan, users must be more careful in cultivating their self-presentation than they would offline. To avoid punishment, Azerbaijanis' self-presentation must visibly adhere to honor-driven behavioral codes—especially on social media.[11]

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Female-specific online impression management strategies. The structure of social media, which encourages sharing personal information with large and diverse audiences, directly contradicts Azerbaijani women's behavioral codes of modesty and chastity. Furthermore, behavioral codes regarding interaction with non-kin males are constantly challenged in these spaces, as social media open up new methods for meeting and talking with male peers *and* opportunities for monitors to observe this. Because social media simplify the process of surveillance, Azerbaijani women have embraced a number of strategies to maintain the balance between using social media and performing adherence to behavioral codes.

Strategy 1: having no social media accounts. At the most basic level, Azerbaijani may choose to not create accounts on social media. Participants described friends or family members who chose to not go online—sometimes because they were too concerned about "what might happen" there. Moreover, as only about a third of Azerbaijani Facebook users are women,[12] this appears to be a common strategy, if one assumes that not being online is a woman's choice.

Strategy 2: deactivation. Temporarily closing one's social media account is another impression management strategy some female interviewees mentioned using when they felt there was too much "pressure" to perform adherence to behavioral codes. For example, F5 was "tired" of her studying-abroad sister bothering her about her online and offline behaviors; by deactivating Facebook, she cut her sister off from both monitoring and potentially punishing her. While research shows this is common in other cultures that do not have strict behavioral codes (Rainie et al., 2013), the motivation for deactivation in Azerbaijan is more closely related to impression management.

Strategy 3: eschew identification. Another way social media users avoid negative outcomes or unwanted audiences is by obscuring their true identity. For example, Tufekci (2008) found college students managed unwanted contact by adjusting the visibility of their profiles and not using their full (legal) names. This strategy was also observed in Azerbaijan, where some women deliberately obscure their identity on their accounts. PF1 described how some young women use stock photos for their profiles or had profile names unrelated to their identity

> because they don't want their brothers or, if they have boyfriends which in some cases they do but their parents or brothers don't know so it's private, like secret, so they don't want them to search for their names and find them.

Eschewing identification results in less friend requests from monitors and gives young women greater control over their friend lists. The obscurity frees them from obligations to classmates and family members because they are virtually invisible to those groups they wish to hide from.

Strategy 4: self-monitoring and self-censorship. For those using social media with their real identities, performing adherence to behavioral codes and maintaining a desired balance

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between publicity and privacy requires significant self-monitoring (Marwick and Boyd, 2011) or self-censorship (Rui and Stefanone, 2013; Vitak and Kim, 2014) by *not* posting certain content on their profile or carefully constructing content to be acceptable to all potential viewers (Hogan, 2010). Participants attributed self-monitoring behaviors to greater concern for their reputation—both for being modest and being chaste. F4 explained that young women are less likely to produce online content than men are.[13] Bland postings—especially images—seemed to be more common with the female participants than male. For example, F9 only posts "serious things," which she describes as classical music and quotations from great literature. She said that when she posts "non-serious" things, abusive comments serve to punish her for violating behavioral codes. Another way users can engage in self-monitoring is by switching modalities from public to private channels. For example, F1 said when she wants to have a more frank discussion with someone, they switch from wall posts to private messaging. She also noted some friends tell her they are reading what she posts, but are afraid to comment or like it because of fear of retribution for perceived norm violations.

Concern for demonstrating chastity is *the* driving concern for young female Azerbaijani social media users and results in significant self-monitoring and self-censorship behaviors.[14] For example, PF1 said, "A lot of girls are pressured into not putting their photographs online because they could end up in bad hands." In this case, "bad hands" could refer to anyone in a position to punish her for demonstrating a lack of modesty. Other researchers have found this as well: for example, Mishra and Basu (2014) found "nice" (i.e. modest) photographs were used in order to not show any signs of sexual assertiveness and potentially harm the family's honor, while Waltorp's (2015) participants used social media as a platform to demonstrate their devotion to Islam—in part to perform for their families.

Male-specific online impression management strategies. Young Azerbaijani men must perform adherence to behavioral codes of demonstrating status, protecting female kin, and retaliation against insult. Azerbaijani male culture is aggressive and Azerbaijani social media are rife with trolling, cyberbullying, and harassment (Pearce, 2015). As PM1 explained, online "you see that people have no respect for each other, you see them trying to blackmail each other." As evidenced in comments from participants, however, it becomes clear that impression management for males is very different than it is for females.

Social media discussions often become an opportunity for status demonstration, an important male behavior in honor cultures. For example, it is common for young Azerbaijani men to pose with cars or check in to a prestigious club. As described earlier, brothers are expected to monitor sisters, including online where defending a sister's honor can turn violent. Participants recalled examples of brothers physically attacking sisters' online suitors.

As insults are significant in honor cultures, the ability to quickly disseminate insults via social media creates frequent arguments between men in Azerbaijan. Insults on social media are even newsworthy, with online gossip sites documenting "battles." Many participants said insulting someone online was a line they would not cross. Parents also instruct their children to not insult others online because of the possible repercussions.

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Gender-neutral impression management strategies. While young Azerbaijan women have a greater need to manage their identity, both men and women employ strategies to avoid the negative repercussions associated with behavioral code violations.

Strategy 1: use different sites. Different social media platforms have different affordances, norms, and audiences. Both male and female young Azerbaijanis recognized the inherent problems with using Facebook because of its popularity, so many reported using alternate sites to avoid those who would monitor and report suspicious posts. Multiple participants said they feel freer to post their opinions on Twitter than on Facebook because Twitter's features—including the more ephemeral content stream, use of "handles" instead of full name, focus on short, text-based interactions, and larger, more dispersed networks—make it easier for individual users to "hide in the crowd." Although Twitter is much more public, these affordances mean the Azerbaijani public that exists on Twitter is different from that on Facebook, and is therefore much less contentious.

Strategy 2: Friend management and multiple profiles. More assertive management of one's social media connections involved defriending and blocking users, especially childhood friends (i.e. friends-by-convenience, not by-choice). Some participants were more selective in online friendships. For example, M8 said he is not Facebook friends with his estranged sister; as she is older and married, there is no expectation for him to monitor her. M2 does not accept friend requests from his relatives on social media. If asked why they did not accept a friend request, some participants used the strategy of pretending they did not see the request. Others used unfriending or blocking as a strategy. For example, F3 actively blocked most of her school friends from her Facebook profile because of the "stupid comments" they made to punish her for what she chose to share.

Blocking or relying on monitors not having accounts is far from foolproof. F3 participates in activities she is certain her mother would punish her for, yet because her mother does not use the Internet, she openly posted about her involvement for years—until the day a neighbor showed her mother a YouTube video of F3 at an event. "At first I denied that it was me, but eventually I told her the truth," she said. This loss of family honor was met with a long period of angry silence and reduced freedoms for F3. Likewise, M3 said he did not block his parents because "they would know why I blocked them. It is better to not let them wonder."

Many male and female interviewees said they have two Facebook profiles: one to keep in touch with family, childhood friends, and acquaintances, and a second that blocks access to those in the first group. Because blocking hides all traces of the individual on Facebook, users may feel freer to share content and interact with people without fear of punishment. Some Azerbaijanis create two profiles to avoid harassment and punishment from friends who disagree with political or social positions. M1 explained that as he became more politically active—something that can bring consequences on him and his family—he kept his old Facebook profile for performative purposes: "It is where I appear like I am a 'normal' person." He posts to that account once a month and avoids discussing his political preferences from those whom may disagree with them. M1 also has a "friends"—or as he describes it, "real"—profile where he is free to post his opinions

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without punishment. His parents do not use social media, but he is concerned about relatives disagreeing with his behavior and punishing him by "bringing stress" to him and his parents. Therefore, he keeps relatives, those who would "sell you out to the university authorities," and potential employers in the old profile.

Collective self-presentation. Because social media are inherently a site of *collaborative identity construction* (Trottier, 2012) or *collective self-presentation* (Litt et al., 2014), users are not in complete control of their online identity. "Other-provided information" (Rui and Stefanone, 2013), such as wall posts, comments, or tagged photos, greatly contributes to others' evaluation of a social media user (Walther et al., 2008), possibly even more so than what the user posts (Walther and Parks, 2002). Compared with non-honor societies, where an off-color joke or picture from a political rally would likely have few consequences for the individual, in honor societies, such identity cues from others may lead to severe punishments from one's family, friends, or the regime.

The most commonly mentioned collaborative identity construction behavior, according to participants, is being tagged in a photo. Many participants noted their close friends understood the danger of tagging and would not tag without asking permission. Some individuals, like F10, avoid having their photos taken at events that would have been met with disapproval and punishment; however, the lack of individual control makes this difficult to achieve. In F10's case, someone tagged her in a picture at an event, and before she could untag it, a cousin saw the picture and news of her actions reached her family, resulting in punishment. Another female participant had her picture taken at a public event by a professional photographer with a large social media following. The photographer tagged her in the photo and immediately she received hundreds of friend requests and dozens of unwanted private messages, mostly from men.

Things that others post require *reactive impression curation* strategies (Wohn et al., 2014) and include changes to privacy settings after a negative event, untagging images of updates, and deleting content (Young and Quan-Haase, 2013). Some participants described having strict settings for allowing others to tag them, especially in unattractive photos and in photos where the participant was doing something she or he felt would be met with disapproval by some in their network. As mentioned above, some participants created multiple profiles to manage their networks and decrease the likelihood of such events occurring, while many others merely deleted the tag afterward.

In sum, participants' descriptions of their social media use reflect the constraints of an honor culture on self-presentation and impression management, with surveillance becoming—in many ways—even easier for family members, classmates, and the government and resulting in greater likelihood of punishment for violations. Young Azerbaijanis have responded by becoming highly engaged in curating their online identities and have developed a number of strategies to control the impressions that others may form about them based on the content they share through social media. Young women face an especially difficult time when trying to interact on these sites due to society's strict behavioral codes, but many in this sample described calculated methods for avoiding surveillance online.

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Discussion and conclusion

While these strategies for managing identity on social media are not dissimilar from those found in non-honor cultures, the different reasons *why* young Azerbaijanis engage in these strategies as well as the *punishments* for behavioral code violations raise the stakes for impression management in this setting. Recognizing the calculations and choices individuals make when under such constraints provides a new perspective on our understanding of impression management. Especially important to this discussion is unpacking the ways social media both enable enhanced surveillance and provide tools to break free of the restrictions those living in honor cultures face in their daily lives. Balancing these two aspects of social media requires careful and calculated strategies if one wishes to be engaged and avoid repercussions for behavioral code violations.

In this study, the affordances of social media sometimes are in contrast with cultural values like modesty and sometimes amplify cultural norms such as surveillance. Despite hopes for the emancipatory potential of social media in cultures deemed oppressive, this study demonstrates that in Azerbaijan, cultural values and norms that some consider oppressive or prohibitive not only continue but flourish online. This speaks to the need for scholars to explore and contextualize the positive and negative affordances of different types of social media (see Fox and Moreland's (2015) study of the dark side of social network sites), rather than neutralizing them.

Performing adherence to behavioral codes in an honor culture may be second nature, but it is also "exhausting" (PM1) and tenuous (Vandello et al., 2008), and the repercussions of not adhering are often severe—punishments can include shaming, exclusion, and psychological and physical violence. Social media provide unique challenges to users in these cultures because adherence to behavioral codes is still expected, but the sites' affordances may create tensions with family and friends, or lead to violence or legal troubles.

So while social media have not had the emancipatory effect some would have hoped, they expose individuals to *different* sets of behavioral codes and this might provide potential for change. Cihangir (2013) demonstrates that attitudes toward honor-based behavioral codes do and can change with exposure to differing attitudes toward them; this change can occur through locating and interacting with new and likeminded individuals through social media (Farrell, 2012). Many participants, especially but not exclusively young women, said social media allowed them to meet new friends with more "progressive mentalities" than friends from their neighborhood or school. Likewise, social media afford preference revelation, a mechanism in which individuals make their private preferences known (Farrell, 2012). Social media allow Azerbaijanis to reveal their beliefs and attitudes, sometimes without facing repercussions for preferring something unpopular or undesirable, such as when a number of "liberal" Azerbaijanis posted notes of sympathy on social media sites following the suicide of a young gay man (which his friends report was done to end the loss of honor for his family).

Azerbaijanis' impression management strategies reveal many parallels to strategies seen in non-honor cultures (e.g. Hogan, 2010; Vitak and Kim, 2014). However, the *motivation* for engaging in these strategies and the potential *negative consequences* of mismanaging one's online identity are significantly different. Waltorp (2015) argues that

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individuals are motivated to engage despite risks because social media allow them to cautiously augment their social being by extending their typical existence to another virtual space where they can express themselves. This caution takes place through what Nissenbaum (2011) argues in her discussion of contextual integrity: that privacy management is achieved through controlling access to information and ensuring that information flows appropriately. By examining a group's norms around surveillance and privacy, we can better understand when privacy violations occur and why privacy-related actions may be condemned in some societies and accepted in others. In the case of Azerbaijan, cultural norms significantly influence privacy expectations and consequences for code violations. Participants described social media use as a "high stakes" activity, with the threat of severe punishment a reality. Azerbaijanis must carefully curate their online identity through mastering privacy tools and self-monitoring to use social media in meaningful ways. In this way, findings from this study provide new insights into social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) in that they highlight how cultural factors influence the cost-benefit analyses individuals engage in when disclosing information through mediated channels. This is an area of theory development that warrants further research, especially with increasing popularity of social media and the removal of geographical and temporal constraints to interaction.

Social media also expose individuals to other ways of thinking. In light of this, it is important to recognize that while social media enable more opportunities for surveillance in a culture already permeated by surveillance, they are also a potential source emancipation for those feeling constrained by society's norms and codes. That said, the higher penalties for norm violations in these societies require users to be much more active curators of their identity than in less restrictive societies. In the end, each individual must weigh the costs and benefits associated with each online disclosure; while the costs are likely higher in honor societies, it may be that the rewards are higher as well. Future research should continue to evaluate how people in similar societies navigate new technologies, and whether these technologies are likely to become tools of oppression or tools of freedom.

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Notes

1. The average number of adult household members is 3.58 (range 1–10, $SD = 1.32$ years), according to an annual national poll.
2. While some Azerbaijani women work outside of the home (21% of women are employed vs 62% of men, and 39% of women self-identify as a housewife), attitudes toward women's modesty negatively impact this. Women's jobs should be "clean" such as schoolteaching, versus working in a restaurant (Heyat, 2002).

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3. Women are also strongly discouraged from smoking, drinking, driving, and being in close contact with non-related men (Heyat, 2002; Tohidi, 1999).
4. K.P. conducted the first round of interviews, sometimes with assistance from three North American female graduate students. In the second round of interviews, K.P. was accompanied at interviews by a male Azerbaijani research assistant in his late 20s; he provided language interpretation when needed.
5. http://www.katypearce.net/2013-caucasus-internet-and-technology-infographic/
6. It is important to note that many interviewees expressed that kin monitoring is not necessary, because the norm of modesty is so ingrained in young Azerbaijani women.
7. Most Azerbaijani young people do not "date" in a way that is familiar to Western readers. As young women are discouraged from interacting with young men, a young couple may not know each other very well before they become engaged.
8. It is impossible to determine how common this is. But over a quarter of interviewees mentioned this occurring to a friend or being aware that this sort of practice exists. As only a third of Azerbaijani Facebook users are women, there is evidence that fewer women have accounts. http://www.katypearce.net/facebook-users-in-april-and-july-2015-in-azerbaijan-according-to-facebook/
9. "Blocking" on social media platforms often results in the blocked user not being able to see any of the blocker's content, even on a third party's page.
10. K.P. has sat through hours of judges reading private and public Facebook conversations as trial evidence. This media report discusses how private Facebook messages and status updates were submitted as evidence in a court case: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDdKr3dkc4g
11. Günsoy et al. (2015) found that Turks (an honor culture similar to Azerbaijani) had greater self-censorship of social media content than Americans, significantly explained by concern for honor.
12. http://www.katypearce.net/facebook-users-in-april-and-july-2015-in-azerbaijan-according-to-facebook/
13. K.P.'s observations support this statement.
14. Madini and Nooy (2014) argue that the Internet provides a space for potential circumvention of modesty and chastity norms and Waltorp (2015) similarly argues that identity play takes place on social media for young Muslim women, concerns about the potential punishment for violating norms online dominate as well.

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