The Limits of Sharenting: Exploring Parents' and Adolescents' Sharenting Boundaries Through the Lens of Communication Privacy Management Theory

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Parents sharing information about their children on social network sites (SNSs) (i.e., sharenting) is common today. However, previous work confronting parents' and adolescents' views on sharenting and related privacy concerns is limited. Therefore, the present study scrutinizes parents' motives for sharenting and adolescents' attitudes toward sharenting and negotiated privacy management strategies. Communication Privacy Management (CPM) was used as a theoretical framework. Based on 30 semi-structured interviews, two motives for sharenting were identified. Parents share information about their adolescent children because they are proud of their offspring or to inform family and friends. In turn, adolescents' approval of their parents' sharenting behavior depends on the content parents disclose online. Adolescents perceive sharenting as positive as long as they are nicely portrayed and positive events are shared. Additionally, both adolescents and parents are concerned about the child's online privacy. They adopt several strategies to respect privacy boundaries and to avoid privacy turbulence.

Keywords: social network sites (SNSs), adolescents, parents, sharenting, privacy, Communication Privacy Management (CPM) theory

INTRODUCTION

Social network sites (SNSs) are an integral part of adolescents' daily lives. Fully 95% of the adolescents (between 13 and 17 years old) in the United States have access to a social media platform, and 45% say they are almost continuously online (Anderson and Jiang, 2018). In Europe, 77% of 15- to 16-year-olds visit social network sites daily. On average, 81% of these children go online using a mobile phone (Smahel et al., 2020). Smartphones seem the preferred means to go online, facilitating easy and rapid picture taking and sharing. Although mobile phones and usage of SNSs are widespread among teenagers, parents are also active on SNSs and share information about their children online in various forms (Brosch, 2018). Research indicates that 75% of parents who use social media at least monthly share pictures, videos and status updates

about their children online. However, on average, 9% of parents say they never share photos or videos of their children online. As children grow older, a growing number of parents declare not to post information online about their child (Livingstone et al., 2018). Adolescents are confronted with both their own online personal disclosures, and their life's digital record compiled through their parents' *sharenting*, i.e., the online disclosure of children's personal information by their parent(s) (Blum-Ross and Livingstone, 2017).

Social network sites offer parents unique opportunities to keep their online networks informed about their children, from pregnancy to birth, from their child's first steps to other crucial and more mundane moments in their child's development (Latipah et al., 2020). Consequently, parents may disclose personal information and shape the digital persona of their child long before it decides whether or not to have an online presence (Davidson-Wall, 2018). Think, for example, about parents who post the first ultrasound images of their children online (Leaver, 2020). Moreover, when a child enters adolescence and starts to use digital communication platforms, it often has to deal with the presence of its parents on SNSs. Almost half (47%) of United States parents with children under 18 who use SNSs are "friends" online with their children (Duggan et al., 2015). A more recent study among Belgian adolescents even found that 73% is connected through Facebook with at least one parent (Verswijvel, 2019). Depending on children's privacy settings, this gives parents access to their children's online posts. While SNSs offer new ways of communication between parents and children, parents also contribute to their child's online identity by sharing information about their child or family activities. Through sharenting, parents receive emotional support and get in touch with like-minded people (Brosch, 2016). As parents are sometimes confronted with issues and questions when raising their child, sharenting can make them feel less alone to work through parenting as they seek advice from others in their online network (Duggan et al., 2015). Prior research has found that especially mothers (56%) share information about their child (up to 4 years old) concerning parenting issues (Davis et al., 2015). By sharing information about family activities and how they deal with educational challenges, parents want to showcase their parental competencies. Therefore, engaging in sharenting can be seen as a form of impression management on how they perform as a parent (Collett, 2005; Kumar and Schoenebeck, 2015).

At the same time, parents' engagement in sharenting can impact young people as they experience crucial developments during their teenage years. Adolescence is characterized by important transitions that also fuel young people's psychosocial needs.

During teenage years, young people transit from childhood to adulthood, through puberty, leading to changes in their physical appearance. Next to this physical transition, young people's cognitive transition relates to the development of more advanced and complex reasoning competencies. Adolescents make improvements in information processing, reasoning and gaining expertise. Young people's emotional transition is related to changes they experience in the way they view themselves and to their growing capacity to function independently. Next, adolescents' social transition is characterized by changes in their

relationships with their parents, peers, and first romantic partners (Hill, 1983; Steinberg, 2005, 2013).

While adolescents go through these transitions, they have several psychosocial needs, that comprise the need for intimacy, sexuality, autonomy, identity, and achievement.

The need for intimacy relates to young people's demand for close and caring relationships with peers and romantic partners. At the same time, the relationship between adolescents and their parents changes. Young people spend more time with friends, less with their parents. Adolescents need to individuate by gaining more independence from their parents (Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg and Morris, 2001). Moreover, adolescents also need to express emotional and sexual feelings and enjoy physical contact with others. They become sexually active and engage in romantic relationships (Steinberg, 2013).

In general, peers become their preferred confidents to share their feelings and thoughts. So close friendships develop, that involve openness, loyalty and confidence (Brown and Larson, 2009). Young people also develop relationships with others on SNSs, with whom they share friends, activities, or passions. As friends gain a predominant place in young people's lives, they are increasingly concerned about the impressions they leave on people their age, the feedback they receive, and how they feel accepted by their peers (Steinberg, 2013). Both offline and online, young people perceive which behavior is desired, approved or disapproved by their peer group. While they engage in more close relationships with peers, their need for autonomy results in more physical and emotional distance from their parents (Pinquart and Silbereisen, 2002). Adolescents aspire to reciprocity and more equal power in their relations with their parents. Increasingly, they want to take decisions concerning issues related to their life that were previously under parental jurisdiction (Laursen and Collins, 2009). As teenagers want to think and act more independently, this may result in discrepancies between parents' and adolescents' perspectives, leading to tensions and conflicts (Montemayor, 1983; Collins, 1990). This need for more autonomy is related to young people's need for identity, their need to discover who they are, who they want to become, and how they fit the world they live in Steinberg and Morris (2001). Therefore, adolescents develop competences, make important educational and occupational decisions that will prepare them for adult life. To fulfill this need for achievement, to become a competent and successful member of society, advice from parents, family members, peers, and teachers is also important (Wigfield et al., 2011; Steinberg, 2013). While developing a sense of self, adolescents experiment and develop multiple self-presentations. This identity exploration is part of a healthy identity development leading to a more coherent and stable identity (Steinberg, 2013). While young people develop their self-concept in terms of personal beliefs and standards, they are aware that others can have different images of them and that they can influence other people's perceptions about them through the way they behave and present themselves (Steinberg, 2013). As adolescents' identity develops, they also experiment with their online self-presentation (Brinthaupt and Lipka, 2012). Young people are subject to their peers' feedback by disclosing personal information on SNSs concerning their activities and ideas. As the impressions formed among their peers are important to them,

adolescents carefully consider what to self-disclose online. By using privacy settings, they also delimit which information can be seen by (groups of) SNS contacts (Christofides et al., 2012; Walrave et al., 2012). Parents' disclosures about their children might not fit with how adolescents want to represent themselves online (Ouvrein and Verswijvel, 2019). Therefore, conflicts can occur between the online impression young people want to form about themselves and their parents' disclosures about their adolescent children (Lipu and Siibak, 2019).

To date, research has mainly focused on parents' motives for sharenting and the content they share online. One study found that eight out of ten parents post information on Facebook about milestones in their child's life (birthdays, graduation, etc.), while three out of ten communicate on Facebook about educational issues they face. Moreover, one in ten parents reveals their child's health issues (Marasli et al., 2016). Other research found that parents disclose information about school results and health problems (Wagner and Gasche, 2018). In other words, personal information about a child's health, or educational problems parents face, may become widely accessible. Therefore, concerns have been voiced on sharenting, especially on what has been called "oversharenting," the sharing of too much or too sensitive information (Choi and Lewallen, 2018; Lazard et al., 2019). This may lead to children sharing less personal information with their parents (Hawk et al., 2013; Klucarova and Hasford, 2021). Further, parents who engage in sharenting create their children's online footprint, which is accessible to their online social network, but also to social media providers and marketers (Keith and Steinberg, 2017). Especially the child's personal information is interesting material for data mining or other commercial purposes such as targeted advertising when the child ages (Donovan, 2020; Kaur and Kumar, 2021). Moreover, pictures that seemed funny at the time could be seen as embarrassing in a later stage of life, when an individual starts college or applies for a job. In a time where recruiters engage in cybervetting (i.e., searching for personal information of job candidates online), pictures, opinions, and comments posted in one's young years could be used to assess a job candidate's character (Berkelaar, 2017). In sum, disclosing the child's personal information on social media affects the child's privacy. Sometimes, the child has no control over the content parents share online, let alone over the possibility of allowing their parents to post any information or to create their digital narrative (Steinberg, 2017; Ranzini et al., 2020; McTigue, 2021).

Besides the motives for sharenting and content shared by parents, previous work has tackled adolescents' perceptions and experiences regarding parents' sharenting practices. Prior research has investigated adolescents' perceived parental motives for engaging in sharenting and adolescents' attitudes toward content their parents post online. Four motives have been discerned: (1) parental advice motives (asking or giving their SNS friends educational advice), (2) social motives (stimulating conversations with friends and their children on SNS), (3) impression management motives (to shape impressions on how they perform as parents), and (4) informative-archiving motives (to inform online contacts of family activities and keep an online record of them). Adolescents positively assess informative-archiving motives; however, they disapprove of parents' engagement in sharenting for impression management purposes (Verswijvel et al., 2019). While Verswijvel et al. (2019) focused on young people's perceived motivations for their parents' sharenting, research confronting parents' and teenagers' views is limited.

Also adolescents' attitudes toward sharenting have been the subject of investigation (Levy, 2017; Sarkadi et al., 2020). Ouvrein and Verswijvel (2019) indicated that adolescents formulate a set of four boundaries their parents should accept when engaging in sharenting. The first boundary relates to the type of content, as parents should respect that not all kinds of information about their children can be shared. Parents cannot share embarrassing things for instance. The second boundary refers to the intimacy of the information. According to adolescents, parents cannot share information about their children that is too personal. The third boundary relates to the regularity of sharenting. As children grow older and become aware that there is an online world where they are represented in a specific way, the more restricted parents' sharenting should be. Parents should not participate in oversharenting. The fourth boundary refers to the involvement of the adolescent. Parents should ask their children's permission when children understand the impact of sharenting, mostly around 13 years old (Ouvrein and Verswijvel, 2019). This study focused on young adolescents' (12- to 14-year-olds) views on their parents' sharenting, but also the opinions of older adolescents should be investigated. The way older adolescents manage their privacy online and value their independence from their parents could differ from those of younger adolescents (Ouvrein and Verswijvel, 2019). However, research confronting parents' and children's views and how they negotiate which information can be put online or not is scarce (for notable exceptions, see: Moser et al. (2017) and Lipu and Siibak (2019)). The present study's central aim is to investigate parents' and adolescents' viewpoints by conducting in-depth interviews with three family members (an adolescent and both parents). As sharenting involves the disclosure of personal data of one individual (a child) by another (a parent), the negotiation process that is involved is investigated. In this context, the Communication Privacy Management (CPM) theory offers a framework to gain insight into these negotiations.

COMMUNICATION PRIVACY MANAGEMENT THEORY

The opportunities social media offer to parents to share messages related to one's children highlight the need to find common ground between parents and children concerning the boundaries of this digital disclosure of personal information. In short, with whom which personal information is communicated. How individuals negotiate these boundaries is enlightened by the Communication Privacy Management Theory developed by Petronio (2002). Specifically, CPM recognizes three general principles (i.e., "privacy ownership," "privacy rules," and "privacy turbulence") to clarify the privacy-related choices individuals make when managing the disclosure of information and highlight

the tensions that may arise between people when violating privacy boundaries (Petronio and Child, 2020).

One of CPM's tenets is that individuals believe they own information related to them and are therefore convinced they are entitled to control this information (i.e., "privacy ownership") (Petronio, 2013). When an individual grants access to his/her personal information, others become (authorized) co-owners, forming a mutual privacy boundary surrounding this shared personal information. However, when personal information is shared, individuals (i.e., the original owners) believe they keep the rights to their personal information and, therefore, want to further control its access. Hence, senders and receivers may have to negotiate or co-construct "privacy rules" concerning the information they mutually hold (Petronio, 2016). Individuals develop a set of rules based on principles or values that are important to them. Some of the rules are stable and influenced by core criteria based on culture, gender, or other characteristics (Petronio, 2013, 2016). For instance, within a family, members bring their own sets of rules based on their individual privacy orientations and learned or negotiated in their own families. Further, as these rules may differ, they negotiate and merge their rules, as they become co-owners of personal information they share (Petronio, 2013). Therefore, sharing personal information between family members includes (implicitly or explicitly) some obligations for the recipient concerning (potential) third-party dissemination. Regarding sharenting, parents for instance demand other family members to limit the number of posts about their children or agree to only share content of the child in private messaging-apps (Autenrieth, 2018).

Next to a family's external privacy boundary, internal privacy boundaries exist within a family. Depending on the need to protect some personal information, a member may keep some information to him/herself or establish a privacy boundary with a close friend or another person who is not a family member. For instance, to manage the child's social media presence, parents communicate to other family members which content of the child they find (in)appropriate to share with (non-)family members (Ammari et al., 2015). Seventy-nine percent of parents also indicate they only post photos of their children in "friends" mode, so the pictures they share are only available to a well-chosen group of people, rather than entirely public (Kopecky et al., 2020).

In sum, CPM theory highlights the notion that privacy is not seclusion but the choice to keep information for oneself or entrust it with selected others. This principle echoes Altman's words, "Privacy is the selective control of access to the self" (Altman, 1975, p. 24). CPM grasps this dialectic tension between individuals' access and privacy needs, which drives their privacy management choices (Child and Petronio, 2011). Privacy is, therefore, not only the claim of an individual but also the claim of couples, families, or other types of groups concerning the personal information they co-own within their shared privacy boundary. In order to get insight into the privacy boundaries and the principle of "privacy ownership" proposed by CPM theory, the present study investigates parents' motives for sharenting and the way adolescents' experience their parents' sharenting behavior:

RQ1: What are the motives for parents' sharenting behavior?
RQ2: How do adolescents perceive their parents' sharenting?

However, privacy boundaries evolve. Whenever an individual or a group of individuals entrust personal information to others, they reshape the privacy boundary (Griffin et al., 2014). By disclosing personal information, individuals become linked with each other in privacy boundaries (Petronio, 2004). Once personal information has been shared, the involved parties negotiate privacy rules about sharing this information with others. For instance, within a family, members reveal personal information to each other in order to meet personal or relational needs. At the same time, they can decide to conceal information from their partner to keep it within a personal privacy boundary (Child and Petronio, 2011). A group of individuals who collectively hold personal information negotiates the privacy rules for (potential) third-party dissemination. Setting these co-ownership boundaries creates a backstage—a safe zone—to share personal matters. In general, once someone has been granted access to personal information, privacy rules are coordinated and negotiated with the authorized co-owners to continue to control third-party access to one's personal information. Correspondingly, co-owners hold and operate collective privacy boundaries. How much others may know, and how, if at all, they may further disseminate the information is regulated between them (Petronio, 2013). In short, the regulation of privacy through establishing and coordinating privacy rules is a continuous communication process. For instance, family members need to agree on their privacy boundary permeability. This refers to how protected or porous the group's privacy boundary is. For example, how parents and children come to an agreement on keeping pictures or messages to themselves. If it is not clearly discussed what can or cannot be revealed and to who, privacy boundaries become blurred.

Regarding sharenting, this process may contain negotiations about how the child's privacy may be warranted and with whom the child's personal information can be shared online (Autenrieth, 2018). To scrutinize how privacy rules are constructed and develop over time, the study explores the following research questions:

RQ3: How do parents and adolescents negotiate which information can be put online or not concerning the child?
RQ4: How do both parents and adolescents engage in setting privacy rules and strategies?

Finally, individuals engage in a risk-benefit trade-off in specific situations by adding up the benefits and subtracting the potential risks in sharing or concealing personal information. Especially a child's right to privacy and protection can clash with the willingness of parents to share information about the child (Kopecky et al., 2020). When family members do not share common privacy rules, this could lead to what Petronio (2002) calls, "privacy turbulence." Privacy turbulence occurs when, intentionally or not, violations are made in how co-owners regulate the flow of personal information with third parties (Petronio, 1991, 2002). Such privacy violations among

family members or friends can impact the core of a relationship (Steuber and McLaren, 2015). Specific circumstances or actions by co-owners of the personal information may challenge the agreed-upon privacy boundary. Moreover, an individual who originally owned the information may expect that co-owners, who are now part of the collective privacy boundary, will know and follow the agreed-upon privacy rules (Child and Petronio, 2011). Co-owners who explicitly coordinate how shared personal information should be handled may reduce the chance of privacy turbulence (Petronio, 2016).

If a picture of a child initially shared within a family is transmitted to others, they become co-owners of that information and become co-responsible for managing it. These new confidants are drawn into a collective privacy boundary (Griffin et al., 2014). The new recipients can decide to distribute the message further or synchronize their privacy boundary coordination by deciding, for instance, to stop the further transmission of the message. Their co-ownership, and corresponding co-responsibility, is an important facet in the dissemination of a message. Privacy turbulence can, therefore, be seen as a relational transgression (Petronio, 2002; Steuber and McLaren, 2015). Privacy violations are impactful and disruptive. However, next to the immediate negative impact that they may cause, privacy violations hold potentially positive outcomes (Petronio, 2010). Such critical moments can become occasions to reaffirm privacy rules or take other initiatives to recalibrate or re-coordinate the privacy rules and, possibly, prevent other privacy breakdowns (Child and Petronio, 2011). To study this privacy turbulence as well as the reaffirmation of privacy boundaries, we set up the following research questions:

RQ5: How do the online disclosures of parents concerning their child(ren) lead to privacy turbulence?
RQ6: How does this privacy turbulence result in reaffirming privacy boundaries?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the current study, semi-structured interviews were conducted as this technique is appropriate for exploring new research areas (Becker et al., 2012). It allows participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms, and provides the researchers the opportunity to ask probing and clarifying questions to reach an in-depth understanding of parents' sharenting behavior and adolescents' experiences and perceptions (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006).

Participants and Data Collection

Thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted in Dutch (in April and May 2019) among ten Belgian families. We opted for semi-structured interviews so that each interview proceeded in a similar manner. However, there was room for adjustments according to the answers covered in the interview. A different interview guide was written out for the parents and the adolescent children. During the interviews with the parents, questions were asked regarding their social media usage,

sharenting behavior, and their motives for sharing information about their adolescent children on SNSs. We also asked questions about their privacy management strategies and situations that led to privacy turbulence (see **Supplementary Appendix A**). During the interviews with the adolescents, questions were asked about adolescents' social media behavior, followed by their attitudes toward sharenting, possible privacy turbulence, and their privacy management strategies (see **Supplementary Appendix B**).

Within each family, one child had to have reached adolescence (i.e., 13–18 years old), and at least one parent should participate in sharenting behavior. Therefore, convenience sampling was used to select the families. Of each family, three members were interviewed separately, namely the (step)father (*Age range* = 42–56 years old; M_{Age} = 48.30 years, SD_{Age} = 4.64 years), the (step)mother (*Age range* = 42–49 years old; M_{Age} = 44.50 years, SD_{Age} = 2.46 years), and their daughter (*Age range* = 14–18 years old; M_{Age} = 15.57 years, SD_{Age} = 1.72 years) or son (*Age range* = 15–16 years old; M_{Age} = 15.67 years, SD_{Age} = 0.58 years). In total, ten (step)fathers, ten (step)mothers, seven adolescent girls, and three adolescent boys were interviewed (see **Table 1**). When a family consisted of several children, we opted to interview the oldest child within the adolescence phase as this offered opportunities to discuss past mutual agreements that had been made regarding sharenting, and potential changes in parents' sharenting behavior.

The interviews took place in separate rooms within the family home in order to create a safe environment for interviewing. The respondents could freely share their opinion without the other family members being able to influence them. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and emphasized that all data would be processed anonymously. The respondents participated voluntarily in the study and had the right to refuse to participate in the research or to withdraw at any time. The interviews were recorded with an audiotape and lasted between 30 and 50 min. The study's protocol was submitted and received approval from the Ethics Committee for the Social Sciences and Humanities of the University of Antwerp.

Data Analysis

Based upon the audio recordings, each interview was transcribed verbatim. The verbatim data were analyzed in NVivo 12. Two researchers involved in the current study took part in the coding process. The researchers analyzed the transcriptions using an inductive coding technique as they created the codes based on the qualitative data. Following the approach of Corbin and Strauss (1990), the data analysis consisted of three steps: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. During the open coding phase, the first researcher highlighted parts in the transcriptions and saved them in NVivo. In this way, main concepts could be distinguished and provided with a code. During the axial coding phase, the first researcher compared the assigned codes and clustered these together into broader categories and subcategories. Also, further development of codes took place. Eight main categories were distinguished: privacy management, privacy turbulence, reactions about sharenting, sharenting motives, sharenting practice, rules about sharenting, social media usage by the adolescent child, and social media

TABLE 1 | Overview of the participants.

Family	Members	Age	Number of children within the family
1	Father	56 years old	2
	Mother	49 years old	
	Daughter	18 years old	
2	Father	48 years old	2
	Mother	42 years old	
	Daughter	17 years old	
3	Stepfather	46 years old	3
	Mother	43 years old	
	Son	16 years old	
4	Father	46 years old	3
	Mother	42 years old	
	Daughter	17 years old	
5	Father	42 years old	3
	Mother	46 years old	
	Son	16 years old	
6	Stepfather	53 years old	1
	Mother	45 years old	
	Daughter	15 years old	
7	Father	43 years old	2
	Mother	42 years old	
	Daughter	14 years old	
8	Father	54 years old	2
	Mother	47 years old	
	Daughter	14 years old	
9	Father	47 years old	5
	Stepmother	43 years old	
	Son	15 years old	
10	Father	48 years old	2
	Mother	46 years old	
	Daughter	14 years old	

usage by the parent(s). These main categories were further divided in subcategories. The second researcher also went back and forth through the transcriptions and assigned parts to categories/codes. The second researcher also had room to make adjustments. The selective coding phase was dedicated to analyzing and making connections and relationships between the categories/codes. After a vertical analysis was performed for each participant separately, a horizontal analysis across all participants was conducted to develop general insights and patterns (Miles and Huberman, 1994). These general insights and patterns are illustrated in the following section with quotes to increase the validity of the results (Cohen et al., 2007; Guest et al., 2012).

During the coding process, the researchers used memos to write down their thoughts and interpretations to increase the reliability of the coding work (Cohen et al., 2007). Using the statistical program R, Kappa agreement scores were calculated between the two researchers to determine if an agreement was found between the two raters when they assigned parts of the transcriptions to specific categories/codes. The interpretation rules of Landis and Koch (1977) were used to assess whether

the kappa agreement scores indicated a slight agreement (0–0.20), a fair agreement (0.21–0.40), a moderate agreement (0.41–0.60), a substantial agreement (0.61–0.80), or an (almost) perfect agreement (0.81–1.00). A very high agreement was found between the two researchers when they assigned the findings from the interviews to specific categories/codes (κ = 0.86, p = 0.00). When there were disagreements between the two raters, a debriefing was used (Mortelmans, 2007).

RESULTS

Parents' Sharenting Behavior and Their Corresponding Motives

In the interviews, questions were asked regarding parents' sharenting behavior and their corresponding motives. Of the 20 parents, 17 parents indicated that their posts were related to family trips or exceptional moments, such as going to a restaurant, visiting a theme park, going on vacation, and a birthday party. In other words, parents did not feel the need to post pictures of their child's everyday life, but mainly shared milestone events.

"Recently, we went to a China light festival were we met our son's girlfriend for the first time. We took a family picture at the festival and my wife posted it on social media" (Stepfather, family 3).

"If we are on vacation with the family and I have a nice picture of it, I will post it on social media. I sometimes share about a family gathering or a family weekend.... When it is someone's birthday, I always post something" (Mother, family 6).

Parents also shared children's achievements or successes on social media. Thirteen parents stated that most of the time they shared the achievements of their child(ren), such as sport performances or "excellent" school results. As parents seem to focus on successes, more negative events or experiences were not shared on social media.

"When my daughter participates well in a gymnastic show, I am proud of it and I will share it on Facebook" (Father, family 9).

"If they come home with bad school results, I will not put it on social media. But if they have good school results, then I will post that I am actually proud of it" (Mother, family 4).

Specifically, 16 parents argued that negative events, such as quarrels or negative behavior, cannot be shared on social media as they belong to the private sphere.

"I do not think that we should post something about a quarrel with our children... There are things that you just want to keep in the private sphere, and that is certainly one of them" (Father, family 8).

Nevertheless, six parents also argued that they should not post too many things about achievements or successes as this could be perceived as unbelievable or bragging.

"I know a few people who post about their child almost every day. That does not interest anyone, and it does not reflect the total picture.... Life does not solely consist of successes. I do not want to create that image" (Father, family 5).

"Some people seem to have the perfect life. . . but it is not like that in reality. Not every day is a party" (Mother, family 8).

Regarding sharenting motives, 13 parents mainly shared information about their adolescent children on social media because they were proud of them or wanted to inform their family and friends.

"Maybe because I am proud or do not have to call the whole family. You just reach a lot of people" (Mother, family 8).

"That is pride. To keep the family and friends informed" (Father, family 7).

Interestingly, adolescents corroborated parents' motives for sharenting. When the interviewer asked the adolescents about their perceived motives for sharenting, eight out of ten mentioned that their parents mainly share information as they are proud of them. Three adolescents believed sharenting to be useful to update relatives and friends.

"I think because they are proud of me and what I do in life" (Daughter, family 4).

"They post pictures of me so my family can see them" (Son, family 3).

Adolescents' Attitudes Toward Sharenting and Privacy Turbulence

Adolescents' attitudes toward sharenting seem to depend on the information parents shared about them on social media. Almost all adolescents (nine adolescent participants in total) had a positive attitude toward sharing information about family activities or vacations. The adolescents perceived those posts as nice and cute, as long as the adolescents looked good in the pictures.

"I like a photo of the family during the Christmas season. I would even share that picture on my profile" (Daughter, family 1).

"My parents are allowed to share holiday photos, as long as I look good on the pictures" (Son, family 9).

However, during the interviews, it became clear that the idea of a good and beautiful picture was different for adolescents and their parents. Adolescents attached great importance to the clothes they wore on the photo and their pose. Conversely, parents found it more important that the pictures were authentic (i.e., that their children were true to themselves), that their children were recognizable, and that they smiled.

"My wife has taken many pictures of our children on vacation. When selecting the photos, there was a discussion between us and our daughter. My daughter wanted to select totally different photos than us. . . photos of which we thought that she does not look the way she really is. My daughter, of course, has a different idea of what the photo should look like: what face she should make or which pose she should take to look cooler" (Father, family 10).

"A photo that makes you look crazy and weird. . . I would rather not have it online" (Daughter, family 10).

As parents and their adolescent children sometimes disagreed whether the photo was beautiful, sharenting ended in unpleasant and embarrassing situations. Seven adolescents identified less good-looking pictures as embarrassing because other people could laugh at them and comment on them. A few adolescents also found some information their parents shared about them on social media irrelevant and unnecessary to post (e.g., school results).

"Children at school could see the photo and they laughed with it. I did not find that so pleasant" (Son, family 5).

"If my mom shares something about me or a photo, and I do not look good on the picture, it is a little embarrassing. All my mom's friends see it and I do not like it" (Daughter, family 6).

"I find it not okay that my parents share my school results online. [. . .] You can only get comments on that and I do not want that. [. . .] It's just not necessary" (Son, family 4).

Similar to parents stressing that they mostly share positive information about their children and do not share negative events, six adolescents stressed that information about quarrels and negative behaviors is private, has to stay within the family, and cannot be shared online.

"I would not like it if my parents post that I have not passed the exams" (Daughter, family 2).

Moreover, to avoid or solve privacy turbulence, adolescents and parents both emphasized the importance of offline discussions about which content they find (in)appropriate to be shared about the child on social media.

"I do not think it's necessary to comment on a post [when I do not like the picture my parents shared of me]. I just ask my parents if it was really necessary to post such an ugly picture of me on Facebook" (Daughter, family 1).

Privacy Management Strategies Conducted by the Adolescents

Approximately half of the adolescents seemed to trust their parents to respect their privacy when engaging in sharenting. However, all adolescents indicated that they increasingly want to take control of their own privacy management as they grow up. In order to avoid the violation of their online privacy, adolescents adopted different privacy rules. Seven adolescents indicated that parents should ask their child's permission before posting something on social media and that they should have a say in the information parents share. Eight adolescents sometimes asked their parents to remove the information or deleted the post by logging in to their parents' profile.

"I would appreciate it if they would ask for my permission" (Daughter, family 8).

"If something is wrong with it, my parents have to remove it immediately" (Son, family 9).

Adolescents' growing interest in their own privacy management seemed to stem from their need to manage their online identity. Adolescents indicated that they are

concerned about their online identity and the impressions they make on peers.

> "In the past, I was not that concerned about it, and I did not really look at the information my parents shared about me on social media. Nowadays, I am concerned about my online identity. It probably has to do with peer pressure and the need to be popular" (Daughter, family 4).

Moreover, adolescents prefer that their parents do not share too much information about them on social media as they perceive this as embarrassing. Parents' posts on social media may also not disclose too much personal information about the adolescents.

> "I really would not like it when my parents share everything on social media" (Daughter, family 7).

> "My parents are not allowed to share personal things… where I live, my telephone number, my e-mail, and so on" (Son, family 5).

Adolescents also tried to take control of their own privacy by adjusting their privacy settings on social media. Three adolescents aimed to restrict the spread of posts in which they are tagged by having a private account or by the setting that they first must approve a tag before the information appears on their own profile.

> "Also on Facebook, I have adjusted my privacy settings so that I can control which information appears on my timeline. Thus, I can decide when they have not asked my permission about it" (Daughter, family 4).

> "I prefer that an account is private, so that not everyone can see it. Just friends, or friends of friends" (Son, family 3).

Privacy Management Strategies Conducted by the Parents

Parents themselves argued that they also apply various strategies to protect the privacy of their adolescent children on social media to avoid privacy turbulence. In total, 16 parents indicated that they ask their child's permission to share information about them most of the time, especially when their children grow older and become adolescents.

> "For some things, we ask if it would be okay to share it" (Mother, family 3).

> "Yes, we should ask permission from a certain age. Not when they are little. I think they are entitled to their own privacy from a certain age" (Father, family 2).

As soon as the parents have received the child's permission, they are aware that the information about their child should not be shared with everyone. Eight parents mentioned that they sometimes share the information with a limited number of people (e.g., Facebook groups) and not with their entire social network (i.e., fragmented sharenting).

> "You can also indicate who is allowed to see the information. I think it is a good thing that you can say: family members and/or good friends. Not everyone" (Mother, family 2).

> "We regularly share information about the children in a hidden group" (Mother, family 7).

Three parents also indicated that they try to get an overview of the privacy limits of their adolescent child by making jokes. This means that the parents make jokes about the information they would share on social media without actually doing, to test the privacy boundaries set by their children.

> "Sometimes, I test it with a joke by saying 'I will share it on Facebook.' Then, I get an overview of what is (not) allowed" (Father, family 8).

In addition, eight parents mentioned that they try to empathize with their adolescent child by asking themselves the following question: "Would I appreciate it when someone shares something like that about me on social media?"

> "I always think: if they would post such information about me, would I like it? If I would not like it, I would not post it myself" (Mother, family 5).

Nevertheless, sometimes parents share information on social media for which the adolescent children have not given their consent. It also happens that, over time, adolescents no longer like it when certain information about them is available online. In such cases, parents indicated that they were willing to remove that information from their profile.

> "If my children indicate that they no longer like a certain photo, I will delete it" (Mother, family 4).

Parents also learned from sharenting incidents. For instance, they may abstain from sharenting behavior in the future when their adolescent children did not appreciate it in the past.

> "If you share something and the children report that they do not like it and appreciate it, then you no longer share it in the future" (Father, family 7).

DISCUSSION

Previous research on sharenting predominantly focused on prevalence rates, and the content and motives for sharenting from the perspective of the parents (Duggan et al., 2015; Kumar and Schoenebeck, 2015; Brosch, 2016; Latipah et al., 2020) and the children (Moser et al., 2017; Lipu and Siibak, 2019; Ouvrein and Verswijvel, 2019; Sarkadi et al., 2020). The current study extends the literature on sharenting by increasing the insights on sharenting and privacy management of parents and children within one family. Through the lens of the Communication Privacy Management theory (CPM), parents' motives for sharenting, adolescents' attitudes toward their parents' sharenting behavior, and privacy management strategies were investigated by conducting 30 semi-structured interviews among 10 families.

All parents indicated that they share things about their adolescent children on social media. Their sharing is, however, largely restricted to special occasions, such as vacations, and achievements. This finding is in line with previous research among adolescents (Autenrieth, 2018; Ouvrein and Verswijvel, 2019), but differs from studies among prospective parents and parents of young children, on which parents regularly post about

daily happenings (Duggan et al., 2015; Kumar and Schoenebeck, 2015; Marasli et al., 2016). The parents in our study considered sharenting behavior as an easy way to express their pride and to keep the family and friends up-to-date. Previous research among parents of younger children also identified other motives, such as getting advice, impression management, and social goals (Duggan et al., 2015; Kumar and Schoenebeck, 2015; Marasli et al., 2016). This difference might be explained by the fact that some needs and motives to share about children (e.g., for advice, to collect memories) might be higher when children are younger (Davis et al., 2015; Duggan et al., 2015; Blum-Ross and Livingstone, 2017). Interviews with the adolescents showed that the type of content parents post online determines how young people respond to it. Adolescents like it when their parents share their successes but are rather resistant when parents share weird, too personal, or embarrassing information. The boundaries found in the focus-group study of Ouvrein and Verswijvel (2019) could also be discerned on an individual level: (1) parents cannot share embarrassing things, (2) too personal information, (3) too often, and (4) they should ask permission. These boundaries seem to reflect the importance adolescents attach to their own online identity creation (Steinberg, 2013). As literally mentioned in our interviews, adolescents want to be perceived as cool by their peers, and therefore see the clothes they wear and their pose as important, whether or not this resembles how they really are. By contrast, parents attach importance to the authenticity of the picture, that their child is recognizable and smiling. What adolescents find important in their online identity seems to contradict with the online identity goals of parents (Marasli et al., 2016; Davidson-Wall, 2018; Ouvrein and Verswijvel, 2019), whose primary focus is on realistically presenting their child and a happy family (Bartholomew et al., 2012; Kumar and Schoenebeck, 2015). In line with existing research (e.g., Hiniker et al., 2016; Ouvrein and Verswijvel, 2019), our participants discussed how these opposite drivers seem to stimulate occasional conflicts about sharenting and privacy. In one survey study, for instance, a positive significant relationship was found between the frequency of sharenting and the amount of family conflict (Ouvrein and Verswijvel, 2021).

Our study also focused on how parents and adolescents negotiate which information can be put online or not concerning the adolescent and how they engage in privacy management strategies. Parents and children are aware of the importance of privacy. Therefore, they engage in preventive actions (e.g., asking for agreement from the child) to avoid discussions. For adolescents, this mainly consists of using privacy settings, which allows them to control what will be shared on their own timeline. Some respondents indicated that they become more concerned about their online identity, and even related this to peer pressure and the need to be popular, which may induce the need to be in control of the information that is shared about them online. This is in line with previous findings indicating that adolescents strongly reflect on privacy issues and try to control the potential reach of a post on SNSs (Madden et al., 2012, 2013; Walrave et al., 2012). For parents, prevention takes the form of reflection about what is (in)appropriate and how they would feel when such things are shared about them. Some parents also engage in

conversations to check which information is acceptable for their teen to be shared online. They try to gain insight into the privacy boundaries, for instance, by making jokes on which information they would share on social media about their child and checking their reaction. Furthermore, parents also indicated that they try to empathize with their children by asking themselves if they would appreciate it if such information about them would be shared online. This result contrasts with previous research on younger adolescents and younger children indicating that parents are aware of the risks for their children but nevertheless still favor their own motives for sharing things about their children (e.g., Davis et al., 2015; Chalklen and Anderson, 2017). This difference may have to do with the age of the children. When children are younger, are not on social media yet, do not have an opinion, or are too young to express an opinion concerning their parents' sharenting behavior, it might be easier for parents to ignore their perspectives. Conversely, this might be harder for parents with adolescents who can control their online behavior and regularly start discussions and fights about it (Hiniker et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, a majority of parents ask their child's agreement to post some personal information online. When adolescents grow older, they have the right to decide for themselves which personal information is disclosed about them (Steinberg, 2017). This self-determination about one's own personal data is also key in, e.g., Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (Finck, 2021). Young people need, therefore, to be accompanied to take decisions concerning their parents' disclosures of their personal data. Adolescents' pursuit for more autonomy also translates in the way they present themselves online. As teenagers grow older and their personality further develops, they may not, or no longer, identify with personal information related to them put online by their parent(s). Therefore, they need to become, as they age, more in control of their online identity (Steinberg, 2017; Lievens and Vander Maelen, 2019; Ouvrein and Verswijvel, 2021).

In the last part of the study, we examined how sharenting leads to privacy turbulence and the reaffirming of privacy boundaries. Adolescents seemed to appreciate that parents posted pictures online of family moments, such as holidays and other activities. However, adolescents attached great importance to how they looked in the pictures their parents shared online. Their definition of a "beautiful picture", acceptable to be shared online, is different from their parents' views. Parents prioritized authenticity and whether their child was cognizable, while adolescents attached more importance to "looking good" (for instance, in terms of the pose they take and clothes they wear). This difference in perspective led to some situations of privacy turbulence, where adolescents felt embarrassed by the picture a parent posted online. These situations led to adolescents asking their parents to remove a picture of them, which their parents shared online. Parents also learned from these sharenting incidents to decide what to share about their children on social media on future occasions.

In general, parents try to prevent privacy turbulence by asking their child's permission to share personal information about them. Especially as adolescents grow older, parents involve them in deciding which information is shared about them online. Moreover, some parents use functionalities of SNSs to engage

in fragmented sharenting, sharing specific information about their child with a limited number of contacts (e.g., a specific group of people) rather than with their complete online network. The study results further indicate that adolescents also try to prevent privacy turbulence by adapting their privacy settings, so specific information is not available for their parents to share among their online networks. Some adolescents also used specific functionalities of SNSs by setting a warning when they are tagged in a picture, so they have to approve it before it is published online. Taking these privacy management strategies into account, this study aims to stimulate parents to engage in conscious sharenting behavior in order to avoid violation of their child's online privacy. Interventions have been developed to inform parents about the risks of sharenting and reduce their willingness to post (sensitive) information about their children online (Williams-Ceci et al., 2021). Social media platforms but also schools could take initiatives to raise parents' awareness on sharenting consequences. Parents could also be stimulated to use their privacy settings to share personal information about them and family members with a selected number of SNS users. Also media literacy training for pupils could focus on the potential consequences of sharenting and stimulate young people to initiate conversations with their parents (Garmendia et al., 2021; Williams-Ceci et al., 2021). Parents and their children could, therefore, be stimulated to negotiate which content can be shared, and with whom, before posting personal information on social media. Further, adolescents should be given the opportunity to more easily alter their online presence after it has been established by their parents (Ammari et al., 2015). As children do have the right to be forgotten (also online), they should have the possibility to manage or delete their digital narrative. In sum, we highlight the importance of communication between child and parent about the child's sharenting experiences to get insight into the child's privacy boundaries and limits of sharenting.

LIMITATIONS

Notwithstanding the study's results, some limitations should be acknowledged. As this study used convenience sampling to select families in which at least one parent participated in sharenting behavior, no parents were interviewed with a strong negative attitude toward sharenting. Moreover, it seems plausible that only parents who had relatively good communication with their children about sharenting were willing to participate in the study. The study also focused on traditional families [i.e., (step)father, (step)mother, and their son or daughter], whereby no single-parent families or LGBT-families were involved in the study. For future research, it would be interesting to consider the type of family and the quality of the parent-child relationship. Previous research (Verswijvel et al., 2019) indicates that adolescents'

degree of closeness with their parents is related to their attitude toward parents' sharenting behavior.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, only a limited number of participants were involved. It is recommended to replicate the study to confirm and validate our results. In addition, we asked the adolescents and their parents questions about previous experiences with sharenting, which may have led to recall bias (Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore, it would also be interesting to conduct focus group discussions where adolescents or parents are encouraged to exchange thoughts. By exchanging thoughts, individuals can better recall their thoughts and views (Kitzinger, 1995; Becker et al., 2012; Bryman, 2016).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the EASHW University of Antwerp. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2022.803393/full#supplementary-material

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