Parents love to share posts and pictures about their children online, a practice referred to as sharenting. Research on sharenting has mostly concentrated on parents’ motives. Research on the perspective of the children, is limited and restricted to studies with a quantitative methodology.

Impression management theory states that one’s online presentation is determined by one’s own strategic use of expressions and by the online behavior of others. Through sharenting, parents thus shape the digital identity of their children. This representation might contradict with the way adolescents strive to represent themselves. The goal of this study is to investigate how adolescents experience sharenting against the background of their own impression management.

Focus groups were conducted among 46 Flemish adolescents (12-14 years old). Based upon the audio recordings, each focus group discussion was transcribed. Two researchers took part in the coding analyses. An almost perfect agreement was found between the two raters’ judgements ($K = .84, p < .00$).

The results indicate that most adolescents trust their parents when sharing things about them. Sharenting is not really experienced as problematic, although it can be irritating for adolescents who are trying to create a good online impression. Given the high importance of their online representation, adolescents experience difficulties in having no control over what their parents are sharing about them, especially because they are aware of the potential consequences of the sharenting. In order to avoid conflicts with parents or embarrassing situations, adolescents formulated boundaries concerning what types of posts can be shared, how often and with whom.

This study has implications for both parents and adolescents. Parents should be aware of their children’s feelings when sharing things about them. Adolescents like to have control over their image, it might thus be a good practice for parents to think before they post.