Navigating Onlife Privacy: A Family Environment Perspective on Children’s Moral Principles

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## Authors

Bauwens J.;Gabriels K.;Mostmans L.

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## Sample

The sample consisted of 10 families, varied in terms of family type and composition, with at least one child aged 10–14 years living in urban and suburban areas yet all scoring high in terms of educational level or income

## Implications For Parents About

# Abstract

This article illuminates which moral principles children and their parents invoke to explain onlife privacy-related practices from a family ecological and narrative approach. It draws on a focused ethnographic study with 10 Flemish socially privileged families with a keen interest in digital technologies and at least one child entering their teenage years. We analyse our data through the analytical lens of a sociopsychological framework that considers children’s privacy experiences from three dimensions: self-ego, environmental, and interpersonal. Overall, this article concludes that while risk-averse concerns are present in both the parents’ and children’s narratives about onlife privacy, parents have allowed their maturing children considerable privacy and leeway. Also, both parents and children articulated the importance of respecting one another’s privacy. We frame this set of principles as ‘quadruple R’: responsibility, risk, reputation, and respect for privacy.

# Outcome

"All parents acknowledged that privacy is a self-evident right, both for adults and children and hardly ever recounted conflicts about privacy. Parents reported that they had invested a lot of effort into teaching their emergent teenager lessons about what to share with whom. Parents articulated a deep sense of trust in their children’s growing capabilities because of their own personal digital skills to which their children could resort.
However, risk of privacy intrusion from outside the family (unknown others) was a main concern and regularly mentioned as the first thing they would never do. Adult strangers were especially defined as not trustworthy to share personal information with.
Young people manifested a lot of concern about how to protect one’s reputation online, and at the same time also disdain for others who, according to them, were too careless with their privacy (examples often involved girls and the moral dissaproval of seminude photos). Another example is the one of displaying moral superiority but more in terms of “stupid children” who do not know that it is not safe to share personal details on the Internet.
Overall, all parents agreed that good parenting is built on giving trust and autonomy
to the maturing child and respecting his or her privacy." (Bauwens et al., 2020, pp. 191-194)