Young Parents and Information Triangulation

While we have access to more information than ever before, figuring out which information is accurate and useful can be a real challenge. This is especially the case when the information is controversial or very specialized — for example, parenting advice or medical information.

To understand how people in everyday life decided what information was trustworthy and useful, we observed and interviewed young parents in Greater Vancouver. We learned that people often seek and compare different information sources to assess and interpret information.

We interviewed 39 young parents (37 mothers, 2 fathers). The average age of young mothers and young fathers was 18 years old.

### Ethnicity
- White: 21
- Indigenous: 11
- Latino/a: 6
- Filipino/a: 4
- Black: 2
- Chinese: 2
- South Asian: 2

Note: 10 people identified with multiple ethnic groups

### Parenting Status
- Expecting first child: 8
- One child: 28
- Two children: 3

### Education Level
- Some high school/currently completing high school: 30
- Graduated high school: 4
- Trades/college/university: 5

### Key Findings

Young parents were often critical consumers of information, questioning and comparing different sources (i.e., “triangulating”) to decide what was best. This was particularly true with information that was important to them, such as health and parenting. They triangulated information in 4 main ways:

1. **Escalating** from convenient everyday sources to ones that are harder to access but carry more authority. This was common with non-urgent concerns. For example: looking online, verifying the information with a public health nurse, and then checking with a doctor if there was still uncertainty.

2. **Getting a second opinion** to check one expert source against another. This helped verify information such as a diagnosis or medical prescription. For example: consulting with multiple health care providers to see if they agreed with each other.

3. **Comparing experts vs. everyday perspectives**. This helped determine how expert advice would apply to one’s own life, or to better understand difficult language (e.g., medical jargon, advice that’s not in a person’s native language).

4. **Scattershot or inclusive approaches**. This helped make sense of a confusing or controversial topic by consulting multiple sources in any order, and often bouncing back and forth between expert and everyday perspectives.

It’s important to note that in emergency situations, young parents went right to an expert (such as calling 911 or going to hospital). Triangulation only happens when there is enough time to figure something out.
Young Parents Practiced 4 Types of Information Triangulation Practices...

1. Escalating Authoritativeness Triangulation
   e.g., internet -> doctor

2. Second Opinion Triangulation
   e.g., doctor -> another doctor or health care provider

3. Expert/Lay Perspective Triangulation
   e.g., doctor -> family member

4. Inclusive Triangulation
   e.g., doctor -> daycare staff -> friends

For more about information triangulation and young parents, please see:


The Young Parents Study

The Young Parents Study is a five-year research project that seeks to better understand the experiences of young parents (aged 15-24) with a variety of health, education, and social service interventions and policies. It involves interviews and fieldwork at young parent programs in Prince George and Greater Vancouver, British Columbia. The study aims to gather information that can be used to improve services and supports for young parents both locally and provincially.

This study is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and led by Dr. Jeannie Shoveller of UBC’s School of Population and Public Health.

For more information about the Young Parents Study, please visit our website:


Thank You.