

Raising Awareness of Grey Literature in an Academic Community Using the Cognitive Behavioral Theory

Yongtao Lin, Tom Baker Cancer Centre, and
Marcus Vaska, Health Sciences Library, University of Calgary, Canada

Abstract

Cognitive skill training, part of cognitive behavior management, is based on the cognitive behavioral theory. The principle that thinking controls behavior has been widely used by educators to develop methods to improve the performance of students; this concept can be further extended to clinicians who provide multifaceted health promotion and psychological counseling programs. The plan of our educational project is to raise awareness among students, faculty members, and researchers of material not produced via standard commercial publishing channels, emphasizing the role that grey literature plays in teaching and research in our academic community.

Pre-test surveys conducted prior to these ventures indicate that while researchers, students, and faculty members may have used grey literature resources at some point during their research pursuits, more than one-third (36.7%) believe they haven't done so, a significant number expressing uncertainty in not knowing how to find, effectively use, and evaluate grey literature. In terms of specific grey literature resources, the majority (85.7%) of users have had rich experiences with association and government websites, but lack familiarity with other useful resources such as subject-based directories, databases, or well-established grey literature repositories.

"When opportunity knocks, you should probably open the door!" (Schwann, Petermann, & Petz, 2008). This statement indicates the value and importance of theories in promoting new practices in health services. A theory can lay the foundation of a teaching or learning goal by describing the purpose, intervention, and assumed outcome of a proposed endeavor (Wayne State University). As health sciences librarians, the need to promote grey literature in terms of visibility and accessibility, thus raising awareness, forms the basis of our teaching goals and is thereby the focus of this paper.

Undoubtedly, as the barrier between white and grey literature becomes narrower with the advent of technology that seeks to uncover the unrecoverable, challenges will inevitably arise, especially when deciding what exactly about grey literature needs to be promoted. The cognitive-behavioral theory helps describe various factors regarding lack of awareness and misguided conceptions about searching for elusive material, while also guiding the selection of sources of grey literature and the methodologies we have adopted in our promotion project.

Three such educational initiatives that we have developed, based on the principle that change will occur only as you think differently, will be highlighted in this paper. These include the creation of a Grey Literature Speaker Series (<http://glspeakers.wetpaint.com>)¹, where subject specialists/liaison librarians at the University of Calgary discuss their experiences and challenges with uncovering and using grey literature in their subject areas; a joint presentation to faculty members and students at the University of Calgary Faculty Technology Days showcasing the impact and role that technology, such as mobile computing, has played and continues to play when it comes to the grey literature; and library information sessions to cancer researchers based on user experiences, expectations, and needs when it comes to seeking non-traditional material.

The One-Minute Paper, distributed after a session to assess participant learning outcomes, reveals that knowledge of different sources and current trends in grey literature has significantly increased. We therefore advocate the use of the cognitive behavioral theory as a channel for developing education programs and promoting grey literature in our academic community.

Keywords: *cognitive behavioral theory, grey literature, raising awareness, teaching, academic community/setting, assessment*