

# Impact of the Inclusion of Grey Literature on the Scholarly Communication Patterns of an Interdisciplinary Specialty

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## Abstract

**Problem/goal:** Researchers who more routinely use traditional scholarly literature published in peer-reviewed journals are especially disadvantaged in understanding, accessing and obtaining grey literature in their fields of research.(Lasker, 1998) For example, researchers in health policy find that their research depends on both the well-organized and relatively easily accessible journal literature used by scientists and clinicians; the researchers also need to find reports literature published by think tanks and independent research organizations. The purpose of this research is to identify the interconnectedness – or not – of health care policy research through a citation analysis of journal literature and grey literature.

**Research methodology:** This research is a citation analysis study of health care policy, expanding the literature studied to include not only the journal literature used by researchers but also the grey literature produced by think tanks and independent research organizations. The working hypothesis of this paper is that the evidence will bear out anecdotal comments that there is a division or separateness between the two types of literatures; and also, that the literatures are seemingly inaccessible to the researchers and users of the different groups. That is, that the literature most used and identified with Group A is difficult to locate and less likely to be used by Group B and vice versa.

The study will analyze the references/citations of journal articles to both journal articles and grey literature and the references/citations of grey literature to journal articles and grey literature published in the last five years on changes in Medicaid, a health care policy issue. The purpose of the study is to assess the impact that the inclusion of grey literature has in a citation analysis of a particular field.

Inclusion of grey literature may have no impact on the citation-generated network of a particular field, serving only to strengthen the already existing network or image. Or, inclusion of grey literature may have a strong impact on a network, revealing parts previously invisible when using only the journal literature. The revealed, or more complete network picture, may indicate that both literatures are well-integrated, each citing the other to a high degree. Or, the complete network picture of a field may indicate that the literatures instead exist in parallel, each communicating on the same topic, but seemingly – as indicated by the citation analysis – not communicating to, or for, each other. If the literatures exist side by side, and are not well-integrated – as indicated by citations – this raises a series of questions for health policy researchers. Is the lack of shared citations a sign that one of the literatures does not cite? Or does the lack of shared citations mean that the literatures do not have significance for each other?

**Anticipated results:** It is anticipated that the journal literature will have more references, more references to journal literature and fewer references to grey literature (specifically reports literature). Grey – reports – literature will have fewer references than journal literature and when the grey literature does cite it will more frequently cite non-journal literature.

## Introduction

Researchers who more routinely use traditional scholarly literature published in peer-reviewed journals are especially disadvantaged in understanding, accessing and obtaining grey literature in their fields of research (Lasker, 1998). For example, researchers in health policy find that their research depends on both the well-organized and relatively easily accessible journal literature used by scientists and clinicians; the researchers also need to find reports literature published by think tanks and independent research organizations. The purpose of this research is to identify the interconnectedness – or not – of health care policy research through a citation analysis of journal literature and grey literature.

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Research in the area of specialties and in the related areas of invisible colleges, research fronts, epistemic communities, etc has focused on first identifying and documenting the existence of a specialty. A subsequent line of research worked at characterizing the nature of the specialty and its interactions: