

Title	:	"Have You Seen the Wheel?": The Circulation of Grey Literature about Domestic Violence among Members of an Online Survivor Group
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Since the passage of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act by the U.S. Congress in 1994, federal, state and non-profit agencies have received funding for research about the incidence and types of violence directed against women in the home and by intimate partners. The research has produced countless reports, pamphlets, circulars, brochures, forms and surveys documenting the extent, consequences, contributing factors of violence. Current research, focused on risk reduction strategies, is generating a bounty of workbooks, audiovisual materials, and interactive websites.

To protect women's safety and privacy, much of the material pertaining to domestic violence is disseminated discreetly by battered women's shelters, social service agencies or provided by police and the courts at points of extreme emergency when women encounter these public institutions. As increasing numbers of individuals gain access to broadband connectivity and agencies embrace the principles of e-government, however, more of this grey literature is published online.

Unfortunately, most of the material remains disorganized, with no one agency or source functioning as a base for authentication, cataloging and rational dissemination to individuals in crisis. With rare exceptions, the arrangement and distribution of the materials fail to account for the various stages of crisis women must pass on the way to a safe life. For various reasons then, many women never seek assistance from formal sources and instead prefer online support groups.

Broken Spirits is one such online support group created for and sustained by survivors of domestic violence. The international support community of about 4,900 members was founded in 2001 as an anonymous bulletin board. To date over 36, 000 entries on the subject of domestic violence have been posted by members. This unique corpus contains the candid expression of resource preference of survivors that is vital to information specialists who are charged with improving and increasing access to materials relevant to users in most need.

This minimal-cost study examines the selection and circulation of materials among members of the support group. Computer-aided content analysis of 750 threads created during a one-year period was used to identify and count the mentions and recommendations made of a large assortment of cognitive and affective aids.

Preliminary findings indicate that the most relevant materials to survivors include current research on post-traumatic stress disorders, personal risk reduction, cyber-security, legal advocacy as well as reliable information about the control and abuse cycles that they confront daily.