



GREY LITERATURE REVIEW (PART TWO): SOCIAL ISOLATION IN LATER LIFE

Literature Search: Social Isolation in Later Life

Part II: Results of the Grey Literature

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INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the process and results of a search of grey literature conducted to accompany a rapid review¹ of peer-reviewed literature on social isolation among older people. This review was conducted in August 2016 as part of the Hamilton Seniors Isolation Impact Plan (HSIIP) by the Gilbrea Centre for Studies in Aging. The intent was to review documents outside the peer-reviewed academic literature in order to identify additional relevant works that were not retrieved, or were excluded from, the rapid review of the academic literature (see Grenier, Weldrick, Bradford-Janke & Dunn, 2016).

SEARCH STRATEGY AND METHODS

The search strategy was based on the six-stage framework refined by Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien² used in *Rapid Review: Social Isolation in Later Life – Part I: Results of the Peer-Reviewed Literature* (Grenier, Weldrick, Bradford-Janke & Dunn, 2016). The stages included: (1) identification of the research question, (2) identification of grey literature sources, (3) selection of relevant sources for the review, (4) charting information and data from the selected sources, (5) summarizing and reporting the results of the review, (6) stakeholder consultation.

Grey Literature Database Search: A broad, sweeping search was conducted in August 2016 to find relevant grey literature on social isolation in later life. This search had multiple stages with varying degrees of success. First, a search of grey literature was conducted across the following grey literature databases: 1) Grey Literature Report; 2) des Libris; 3) Open Grey; 4) OAster. The following search strategy was used: [(late* life or old* person* or old* people* or elder* or old* adult* or senior*) AND (“social * isolat*)], searching titles only. Specific searches for each database varied slightly due to differences in database indexing (i.e. how articles are categorized and archived using key words). For example, Open Grey does not allow for searching titles only. As such, a modified search strategy was used whereby the search terms were applied to the entire citation listing, as opposed to titles only. The search strategy was replicated across the four databases.

Reference List Hand Search: Search terms and procedures varied across databases. Specific searches for each database varied due to differences in database indexing (i.e., how citations are categorized and archived using key words). For example, Open Grey does not enable title-specific searches, so that search was not specific to document titles. There is little consistency with regards to how grey literature is indexed across databases. To accommodate, we conducted extensive hand searching to uncover grey literature publications that were not stored in the above mentioned databases. This hand searching consisted of manually examining the reference lists of our identified peer reviewed papers (89) and grey literature (35) retrieved in the *Rapid Review: Social Isolation in Later Life – Part I: Results of the Peer-Reviewed Literature* (Grenier, Weldrick, Bradford-Janke & Dunn, 2016). A total of 124 reference lists were hand searched.

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¹ Ganann, R., Ciliska, D., & Thomas, H. (2010). Expediting systematic reviews: methods and implications of rapid reviews. *Implementation Science*, 5, 56. <http://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-5-56>

² Levac, D., Colquhoun, H., & O'Brien, K. (2010). Scoping studies: advancing methodology. *Implementation Science*, 5, 69. <http://www.implementationscience.com/content/5/1/69>

FINDINGS

Using the grey literature search strategy 54 citations (database search) and 60 citations (reference lists search) were retrieved on social isolation among older people. The inclusion criteria were as follows: 1) the source must not be peer-reviewed; 2) the source must be available in English; 3) the source must focus on social isolation (e.g., citations that simply mention social isolation were not included); 4) the source must focus on older people; 5) the source must have been published since 1995. This date was selected for the purpose of consistency *Rapid Review: Social Isolation in Later Life – Part I: Results of the Peer-Reviewed Literature* (Grenier, Weldrick, Bradford-Janke & Dunn, 2016). The inclusion criteria were applied to all 114 citations through the screening of titles and executive summaries. Citations that did not meet these criteria were removed from the pool.

Criteria 1: Must not be peer-reviewed (1)³

- 1 – Peer-reviewed journal article

Criteria 2: Must be available in English (3)

- 3 – citations not available in English

Criteria 3: Must focus on social isolation (29)

- 6 – childhood health and well-being
- 3 – study focused on social exclusion and/or social well-being
- 3 – adult health
- 3 – animal studies
- 2 – migration and/or migrants
- 2 – labour and/or work
- 1 – biological study
- 1 – health technology
- 1 – study focused on social programming
- 1 – study focused on community development
- 1 – study focused on substance use
- 1 – farming and agriculture
- 1 – autism
- 1 – income
- 1 – parenting
- 1 – older people (but not social isolation)

Criteria 4: Must focus on older people (4)

- 3 – social isolation (no discussion of age)
- 1 – social isolation in children

Criteria 5: Must have been published since 1995 (10)

REFERENCES:

³ These citations were crosschecked with the rapid review (Grenier, Weldrick, Bradford-Janke & Dunn, 2016) results to ensure they were captured.

A preliminary review of retrieved titles resulted in the identification of 32 duplicate sources which were removed immediately from the pool bringing the new total to 82 unique sources. Additionally, 2 sources were removed because the sources were not able to be located (e.g., did not appear in web based searches when title and/or authors were searched, did not include active URL in reference). Based on a review of the unique source titles one (1) additional citation was removed because it did not meet the citation type criteria (i.e., must not be peer-reviewed). A more in-depth review of remaining citations executive summaries and full texts resulted in the removal of 33 sources because they did not meet the citation focus criteria (i.e., social isolation and older people). In these cases, sources typically had a section mentioning social isolation and/or older people, but the focus of the source was on other issues (e.g. falls). At this stage, 3 sources were removed as they were not available in English. Lastly, 10 sources were removed because they were published prior to 1995. This process resulted in a final set of 33 sources that focused directly on social isolation among older people (see Table 1). The paper reviewed sources deemed most relevant for the project are included in the reference list at the end of the document (see Results).

TABLE 1. GREY LITERATURE REVIEW RESULTS	
54	Sources retrieved from database search strategy
60	Sources retrieved from 124 hand searched reference lists
114	TOTAL Grey Literature Sources
32	Duplicate sources removed
2	Sources deemed not retrievable
1	Non-grey literature sources removed (e.g. published in peer-reviewed journal)
29	Non-relevant sources removed based on non social isolation focus
4	Non-relevant sources removed based on non older adult focus
3	Non-English sources removed
10	Sources removed based on publication date prior to 1995
33	Total Sources reviewed and summarized

RESULTS:

Alcock, C., Burgess, L., & Hasan, H. (2014). Connecting isolated senior citizens: illustrating the complexity of social information systems development. In H. Hasan (Ed.), *Being Practical with Theory: A Window into Business Research* (pp. 126–130). Wollongong, Australia: Research Online. Retrieved from <http://ro.uow.edu.au/buspapers/424>

Barrett, A., & Mosca, I. (2012). *Social Isolation, Loneliness and Return Migration: Evidence from Older Irish Adults [Discussion Paper No. 6331]*. Bonn, Germany. <http://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.833694>

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