Understanding the Lived Experiences of Women Refugees from the Middle East and North Africa Region: A Phenomenological Approach

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the role of urban public libraries in Texas from the viewpoint of women refugees from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. These women encounter challenges as they navigate their daily lives in the U.S. By implementing Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2017), critical feminist theory (De Beauvoir, 2009; hooks, 2009), and critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998), the researcher examines the information needs and information seeking behaviors among women refugees (including their connection with public libraries).

The researcher utilizes phenomenology by conducting interviews and focus groups with MENA women refugees. Through phenomenology the researcher examines the connections amongst MENA women refugees and their lived experiences in the U.S., explores truth by stating that human knowledge is generated from the work of the expert researcher and somebody who can mention "I" and who is responsible for their knowledge, and educates citizens to become accountable agents of truth (Sokolowski, 2000, Vagle, 2014).

When conducting the semi-structured interviews and focus groups, MENA women refugees share their individual and collective experiences in relation to the information services that public libraries offer to them. These women understand the world by interacting with other people and things, and then they disclose their valuable experiences "truth" with the researcher. The knowledge that these women reveal proves that their experiences are crucial, valuable, and that the creation of human knowledge is not only an outcome of the expert researcher but represents the achievements and possession of all individuals who participate in the research project (Bevir, 2003).

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

information needs; information seeking; public libraries; research methods; critical librarianship.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

phenomenology; women refugees; MENA region; truth; qualitative study.

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