

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION

THE COGNITIVE APPREHENSIONS REGARDING DRINKING WATER AMONG EDUCATED AMERICANS AND ARABS LIVING IN MIDDLETOWN

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This qualitative study described and compared the cognitive apprehensions regarding drinking water quality (DW) in Muncie, Indiana, USA. The comparison was between two different, culturally elite groups using constructive-grounded theory. Eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with both Arab (n=9) and American (n=9) participants. Five essential themes emerged from the interview data: the sensory properties of drinking water, pollutants, health concerns, information sources, and experience.

The data from this study is grounded to the epistemologies regarding drinking water. The epistemologies differ between the Arab and American groups due to social factors, such as ethnicity, culture, and past experiences. The study showed that the two groups in the study perceived knowledge regarding drinking water in different ways.

The study showed that the educated Arabs had different cognitive apprehensions regarding drinking water compared to educated Americans due to their previous experiences with drinking water quality in their home countries and their lack of interest in the local media. However, similar findings regarding beliefs about pollutants and diseases in drinking water were shared between the groups. The grounded study found that each group had different behaviors regarding drinking water, and it developed a theory that described how different epistemologies lead to different actions regarding drinking water among different ethnicities.

Some recommendations based on the study findings endorse that the government agencies should provide a readily accessible publication about the drinking water quality to the community. It is recommended that the government agencies promote the dissemination of water quality studies' findings through mass media, social media, and other means of communications with the public. In addition, recommendations should also be provided to enhance the local environmental awareness of international students at universities.

