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THE HELPFULNESS OF SELF-HELP READING AS DESCRIBED BY SELF-
GUIDED ADULT, FEMALE READERS (203 pp.)

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The goal of this phenomenological research study was to explore the helpfulness of self-help reading. The main research question was: What about the experience of self-help reading during a difficult life situation is helpful to the self-guided, adult reader? Several subquestions were also explored. Six female participants completed a series of semi-structured interviews. The interviews were coded and analyzed using an adaptation of Colaizzi's (1978) 9-step analysis for phenomenological research. Themes from the data analysis suggest there is a distinct structure to the helpfulness of self-help reading, which is comprised of four major categories: (a) thinking and feeling dimensions to self-help reading, (b) self-help reading as a medium for re-visioning of self, (c) what readers bring to the self-help reading experience, and (d) contexts for the self-help reading experience. There is a dual nature to the helpfulness of self-help reading as self-help reading has both head and heart knowledge. In addition, as the reader progresses through reading phases, the reader engages in a process of self-change, or a re-visioning of self. Self-help reading provides an opportunity for the reader to develop a sense of hope that self-change is possible. The reader also gains a greater understanding of self and situation, reevaluates the self relative to the situation, and makes a choice and a commitment to carry out change. Finally, the reader is connected to a larger community

of helping relationships and brings certain characteristics and perspectives to the self-help reading experience. As this particular structure to self-help reading is not found elsewhere in the research literature, the research findings contribute to understanding the experience of self-help reading. The findings have implications for the practice of self-help reading. Limitations to the research study were examined and suggestions for future research were provided.