Stolen Voices: Literacy, Identity, and Acculturation of Resettled Somali-Bantu Refugees

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STOLEN VOICES: LITERACY, IDENTITY, AND ACCULTURATION
OF RESETTLED SOMALI-BANTU REFUGEES

A Dissertation

Submitted to

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Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Amanda Rae Goldberg

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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We hereby approve the dissertation of

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Literacy is always embedded in social practices, and the ways in which people approach it are grounded in their notion of knowledge, identity, and being. This study looks at literacy through a sociocultural lens to address my research questions:

How do Somali-Bantus develop literacy in the communicative and literate practices of the communities in the United States in which they participate? What impact does this have on their identities?

There were seven participants from four families who took part in my study. They ranged from 18-40 years of age and were resettled between 2004 and 2006. This study utilized ethnographic research tools and was based on qualitative group and individual interviews, observations, and document analysis. Through the interviews, I was able to collect information about the family units, as well as the participants’ stories about life before resettlement, the resettlement process, and adapting to a new culture. I also collected data on literacy practices and their perceptions of self/family units to see how this has impacted the participants socially.

Additionally, I conducted a series of observations at the site in order to gain an understating about how the participants respond to various literacy events as well as how they interact with each other socially.
This study provides the Somali-Bantu community with a voice and a sense of empowerment. My research enabled the participants to tell their stories, represent their community, and work together to deal with some of the difficult issues they have faced and added to the body of literature in this field.