

**University of Louisville's  
Graduate Student Council Research Grant Proposal Fall 2020**

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## **I. Introduction**

Future teachers are entering classrooms more heterogeneous, globally connected, and politically charged than ever before (Stover, 2006). Accordingly, scholars are calling for pre-service teachers to become more familiar with multicultural texts (e.g., Lazar & Offenber, 2011; Swartz, 2003) and to cast a critical eye at who is telling that story and who is missing (e.g., Bishop, 1990; Fox & Short, 2003). Multicultural texts are defined as literature by and about people of underrepresented or marginalized groups. Though some may argue it should include literature by and about all cultures, Bishop (2015) maintains that such a definition only warrants the term literature.

While many teacher preparatory classes offer book lists and resources on multicultural texts or assign multicultural literature to be read, that is not enough (Jago, 2015; Tschida et al., 2014). Future teachers need to read multicultural literature in conjunction with *dialogic* discussions to cultivate a deeper understanding for the diverse world in which they live and will teach (Bakhtin, 1981; Jago, 2015; Resnick, Asterhan, & Clarke, 2015). However, just asking pre-service teachers to engage in dialogue, does not guarantee that it will be dialogic (Alexander, 2020). Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) brings awareness to the context in which the dialogue is situated, illuminating the individual, social, and structural components of discussion that make it dialogic. Although CHAT is often overlooked due to its complexity (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010), it offers a systematic and information-rich framework to understand intricate learning environments, like dialogic interactions, which is explained below.

Dialogic interactions are tension-filled exchanges that result in the co-construction of new understandings. As individuals respond to and anticipate the response of another, dynamic and collaborative chains of understanding are formed (Aukerman, 2013; Bakhtin, 1981; Nystrand, 1997). Rosenblatt (2013) supports dialogic discussions in her transactional theory of literary work. She claims “when students share responses to transactions with the same text, they can learn how their evocations from the same sign differ, can return to the text to discover their own habits of selection and synthesis, and can become aware of, and critical of, their own processes as readers” (p. 949). Not only do dialogic discussions honor and engage participants with varying interpretations, they also provide pre-services teachers insight into their own choices and selections as a reader.

When preservice teachers engage in dialogic discussions on multicultural texts, learning is transformative, as they encounter and negotiate the understandings of others (Aukerman, 2013; Alexander, 2020). While several studies have examined students' literary discussion (e.g. Adams, 2020; Henneke, 1994; Rogers & Moseley, 2008), few take into account the cultural and historical context in which they are situated to examine shifts in community (e.g. book clubs) and individual activity (Engeström, 2001). For my dissertation I plan on using CHAT so I can analyse the larger system of norms, community, and artifact rooted in that discussion, to better understand and inform future practices of dialogic discussions around multicultural texts in teacher preparatory classes.

This qualitative study investigates weekly book club discussion on multicultural text in a pre-service children's & adolescence's literature course, to understand what mediates dialogic discussions. The study is guided by the following questions:

- What mediating factors foster dialogic discussion around multicultural texts?
- How does dialogic peer-led discussions impact how students respond to multicultural texts?
- How does dialogic peer-led discussion about multicultural texts shape students' understanding of diversity?

## II. Study Design & Methodology

This qualitative study is rooted in sociocultural theories of learning and development, which suggest that learning is an active, social, and context-specific phenomena (Vygotsky, 1978). To systematically study dialogic interactions around multicultural texts I will use activity-system analysis, a methodology that is derived from Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The study will be conducted in two sections of a pre-service teachers course on children's literature, during the fall 2020 semester, in which I am the primary instructor. The course is designed so that each week students engage in small-group book club discussions about a common piece of multicultural children's or adolescents' literature through a video conferencing platform. Data will include students' written literary autobiography at the start and end of the course, recordings of peer-led book clubs, semi-structured student interviews at the midpoint and end of the semester, students' weekly book reflections, small-group post-discussion reflections, and researcher memos.

## III. Analysis

Data analysis is organized into three phases, which corresponded to my three research questions. In phase one, I will use a combination of deductive - CHAT based codes- and inductive coding. The primary data sources I will draw on are focal multicultural book club transcripts, group post discussion reflections, and student interviews. I'll develop and organize themes using Engeström's (1987) activity system model to investigate what factors supported and hindered dialogic discussions on multicultural texts. In phase two and three, I'll utilize the constant-comparative method (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1994) to identify themes regarding how students responded and understood multicultural literature with the presence of dialogic discussion. Additionally, I will closely examine and compare students' autobiographies from the start and end of the semester, and students' weekly book reflections.

## IV. Budget and budget justification

<i>Item</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>Total</i>
Third-Party Transcription Service	4.45 Hours of transcribed audio	\$1.50 per minute	\$400.50	
DeDoose: Web Application for Analyzing Qualitative Research	9 Month Student Subscription	\$10.95 per month	\$98.55	
				\$499.05

*Third-Party Transcription Service \$400.50*

This project will require several audio files to be transcribed, from book club discussions to student interviews. While I plan to transcribe some of it myself, having the online transcription service Rev transcribe 4.45 hours of my audio files will give me more time to carefully analyze the transcribed audio files. Funding for this will better ensure I can complete my dissertation on time.

*DeDoose - \$98.55*

How a study is managed strongly influences the types of analysis that can be done (Huberman, Miles, & Saldaña, 2020). Dedoose, an online application for storing and analyzing data, will further support me in organizing, coding, categorizing, and visually displaying my data.

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GSC Research Grants App Sample  
Project Description & Budget