EXPLORING THE PESPECTIVES AND PRACTICES OF ELAR SECONDARY TEACHERS

WHO USE CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEXT IN AN URBAN CLASSROOM SETTING

A Record of Study

by

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ABSTRACT

The record of study utilized a qualitative research design to explore and observe teacher perspectives and practices when using culturally relevant text in their classrooms. The objective of this study was to understand these perspectives and practices and how they impact a teacher's ability to use culturally relevant text. Semi-structured interviews and unstructured observations were conducted and synthesized using In Vivo coding process. The analysis of interview data and observation notes resulted in the development of case studies, which outlined factors that interfered with teacher's ability to use CRTs, the practices and resources used by teachers implementing CRTs, and the perspective of teachers using CRTs in their classrooms. Final analysis of the data resulted in the development of the READ graphic organizer, which is designed to guide teachers in properly selecting CRTs for their classrooms, and a structured PD outline for integration of CRTs into an English Language Arts secondary classroom.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to the culture, and my Black son who I love.

I dedicate this to the culture, and my Brown skin wife who I love.

I dedicate this to the culture and moms and them: Them encompassing my uncles

And aunt who dances and my aunt who died in 2020.

I dedicate this to the brother and sister that I raised, and

The brothers and sister I met in my twenties.

And I dedicate this to my granny and my stand in pops

Jerry Thompson, and my grandfather who

Is more earth than flesh; His essence lives

On. Nonetheless, he told me to get my lesson:

Here it is pops. I dedicate this to the culture,

And all the cats from around the way

Who sip beer all day and taught me

An unorthodox methodology, and the barber who was a stand in

Dad and philosopher and teacher and historian, and I dedicate this to the church

On 150, and the choir in the church, and the momma in the choir, and the minister who ended all

his sermons the same way, and I dedicate this to the culture. Finally, I dedicated this to

To the brown skin dad who abandoned us. Trust me, I'll avoid

Your pitfalls.

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Contributors

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Funding Sources

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CHAPTER I INTRODCUTION

The Context

For decades, demographic trends have shown that our classrooms are becoming more diverse. Sharma and Christ (2017) referred to this trend in American classrooms as a shift from "majority white to majority non-white" (p. 295). With schools experiencing a shift in the physical and cultural make up of their students, the role of teachers, especially English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) teachers has become even more important in preserving the cultural context of their students. Sharma and Christ (2017) outlined the need for educators to acknowledge the various cultures of students by utilizing culturally responsive instruction, getting to understand the lived experiences of their students, and most importantly, utilizing culturally relevant text in their instructions. For ELAR teachers, using culturally relevant text is pivotal in allowing students to become active participants in their learning. According to Clark (2017) culturally relevant text is beneficial in helping students of color craft a unique understanding of the world and develop as reader. To accomplish this goal teachers need training, guidance, and opportunities to develop the knowledge and ability to use culturally relevant text in their classrooms (Sharp & Johnson, 2016).

National Context

As of 2017, data from National Center for Education Statistics continues to depict reading gaps between students of color and their white counterparts (Northrop, Borsheim-Black, & Kelly, 2019). Historically, when compared to white students, students of racial and ethnic minority groups have been known to underperform on standardized measures involving literacy (Holt & Smith, 2005). Comparatively, these factors show a lack of progress towards educational equality between ethnicities and the minimal impact of educational policies design to help

children of color once they enter school (Paschall, Gershoff, & Kuhfeld, 2018). Among the factors perpetuating the reading and literacy gap between minority and white students is the aspect of curriculum and reading materials used by school and teachers across the nation. Debates on the effectiveness of teachers and curriculum are seen as possible factors the lead to educational inequality (Northrop, Borsheim-Black, & Kelly, 2019). Additionally without appropriate polices and educational interventions, the lag between students of color and white Americans will continue to grow (Holt & Smith, 2005).

Analysis on population trends in the United States, project that by the year 2024, the Country's minority rate will reach 54% (Warkentien, 2019). The population trend as outlined in Warkentien (2019) depicts the importance of educators finding unique ways to implement culturally relevant teaching methods in their classrooms. Among the many teaching ideologies, strategies, and techniques, used by teachers to help educate students of color, implementing culturally relevant text in English and reading classrooms aids in helping students feel included in their learning while using their backgrounds to make connections with the world (Clark & Fleming, 2019). Ginsberg and Glenn's (2019) research suggests that multicultural young adult literature aligns with the faces and experiences present in the modern American classroom. As the nation's population continues to become more diverse, school systems and personnel must refine or rediscover policies, systems, and teaching practices to help students of color flourish and avoid the potential pitfalls of the low achievement gaps and the school to prison pipeline (Craven, et.al, 2020).

Personal Context

As an educator, I begin each year with a motto. Typically, the motto connects to my upbringing and my struggles. During the 2019-2020 school year, my motto was an "education can save your life", but when I reflect on that motto, I begin to wonder how an education can save a student's life if they are not exposed to learning material that allows them to become self-reflective thinkers and learners. As a young man, growing up in rural Texas, I was exposed to different forms of literature; however, I did not have the opportunity to engage in multicultural text. In fact, the closest I got to a narrative on African American conditions, during high school, was *To Kill a Mockingbird*. As I matured as a reader, learner, and thinker, I realized *To Kill a Mockingbird* did not provide me with a rich cultural experience, but rather marginalized my views of the African American experience. I was not introduced to narratives or readings that outlined the African American condition or the conditions of other cultures. Perhaps this was due to the focus of our high school campus, or maybe it was due to the teacher's lack of knowledge towards other cultures; nonetheless, it was not until college that my perspective towards literature and language was modified.

As a college student, my plan was not to become a teacher, instead my plan was to become a physical therapist, but along the way I was introduced to multiple culturally relevant texts. These texts challenged my perspective on literature and introduced me to the power of culturally relevant text as a tool that connected to my struggles, my life, and my voice. It was during this time, that my ideology on literature and reading changed. Years later, after going back to college to obtain my Masters in Curriculum and Instruction, I was given the opportunity to enter the classroom as an English teacher. Again, it was not my original plan to become an English teacher, but luckily I had the opportunity to enter the classroom and provide my students

with insight into the world of literature beyond the traditional canon. However, what I encountered was the complete opposite. Although I had the autonomy to use culturally relevant text in my classroom, I did not have the experience or guidance to properly implement these texts in the classroom that was nearly 80 percent Caucasian. Dealing with these challenges during my first year taught me a valuable lesson about using literature to help students make connections to the world. Furthermore, I learned that even though individuals may not agree with the themes and topics presented in a given text, the lesson that we learn from culturally relevant text help us, as citizens, understand our past and challenge norms, specifically norms that undermined equality and equity for all citizens. I can attest that during my time at the rural high school in Texas, I challenged my students to use literature to understand their country. This factor was on full display during the Trump election where we used *Farewell to Manzanar* (Houston & Houston, 2002) to juxtapose Trump's proposed immigration laws with Franklin D. Roosevelt ban on individuals of Japanese descent. By creating a space for my students to shape and explore their ideas through the lens of characters and themes relevant to minorities (in the case of Farewell to Manzanar, individuals disenfranchised by their country), it became apparent that students, despite their race and ethnicity, needed and deserved the opportunity to read and analyze text from authors of color. For me, using culturally relevant text involved going beyond using traditional text primarily written by white men.

In 2018-2019 my wife and I decided to move to a larger city in Texas. This move not only challenged my ability as a teacher, but also forced me to reexamine my role as an educator, mentor, and student. At a large urban school in Texas, I was offered the opportunity to work with a population of students who were the complete opposite of the students at the rural school district that I previously worked for. At the large urban school, the student population was more

diverse, with students of Hispanic heritage dominating all demographic groups. As a teacher of color, I did not look at this as a challenge, instead I viewed this as a chance to teach a group of students who struggled with issues of race, identity and poverty. Although my students understood the struggle, the adopted text, provided to me and my colleagues, did not relate, nor provide context to the issues that our students faced daily. Luckily, our principal was progressive in his approach to helping students develop as readers, and through his guidance, our English department was able to develop a library of culturally relevant texts.

The introduction of culturally relevant text, introduced another hindrance, which was an issue of pedagogical approaches. For me, experience dictated that I use my background as an African American, methods developed from various professional development opportunities, and the knowledge I obtained from reading and researching books on poverty, to create a unique learning experience for my scholars. However for my colleagues, who lacked the knowledge, background, and skill, the challenge of incorporating culturally relevant text was evident in our conversations during our professional learning community meetings (PLC).

Currently, in my role as instructional coach at Urban Highs School (UHS), I have observed the growth and development of first year teachers. I have witnessed them struggle; I have witnessed them triumph, and most importantly, I have witnessed them challenge the norms and use culturally relevant text to help students connect their learned experiences with the reading. While observing one class, I witnessed a Hispanic student, a student who did not participate in his class last year, answer every question proposed to him by a young, enthusiastic teacher who adopted a culturally relevant text for her English 2 class. During my professional learning community meetings (PLC) with English 1, teachers are elated to share that their students want to read. In passing conversations with the Honors English teacher, I discovered

that implementing culturally relevant text has helped her classroom engage in reading. In fact during the week of our Mock STAAR test one Latin X student, who took a 5 hour test, elected to read his book while others decided to decompress. Conversations like these make my experience as a teacher, educator, and student rewarding. These conversations remind me of the power of education as a means to have positive influence on a student's ability to understand and develop their aspirations. In 2019-2020 I was lucky to work with a group of young, talented educators who understand the value of creating a space for their students to read literature that connects to their struggles, their cultural norms, and their heritage; however, I also recognize that systemically our campus and district needs additional support to ensure that the use of culturally relevant text becomes a norm in every ELAR classroom. Therefore, my goal is to support the reluctant teacher who only views canonical text as the means of educating our students. Although I recognize and appreciate the value of traditional text (William Falkner, George Orwell are two of my all-time favorite authors), I cannot overlook the role that culturally relevant text plays in the lives of students who attend schools throughout the United States.

In my six years of teaching, I recognized that students deal with various situations. I also recognized that our students have the ability to learn, but it is up to qualified educators to help create space for such learning to occur. Reflecting on my career up to this point, I am reassured by teachers who value using culturally relevant texts to help their students make connection with their reading, and I am excited to know that students, when given the space, will take the opportunity to explore and take agency of their learning. In saying this, I also recognized that we have a lot of work to do not only at UHS, but across the world. As I grow as an educator, I will continue to reflect on how to use tools to help students be successful. I will continue to read and reinforce my techniques as an educator, and along the way, I will challenge and create space for

future and current educators to recognize their students and create learning environments that allow their students to successfully navigate the world. For me, it came later in life, but for future scholars, they will have the opportunity to explore and identify with text that aligns with their realities. To do so, teachers must be willing to overcome their biases, take challenges, develop and adjust their pedagogical practices, and develop learning opportunities that are conducive to the needs of their students.

Situational Context

At UHS, leadership is pushing to help all students succeed as citizens. These goals mean seeing more kids graduate with advance degrees, increasing the overall rating for all schools, seeing more students matriculate, and introducing new programs to help struggling reader become more engaged in their learning. To facilitate this goal, the district has introduced digital reading software, adapted new TEKS, and worked collectively with school teachers across the district to adopt new materials that align with the culturally needs of every student . Urban High School is pushing to introduce more culturally relevant text within all ELAR classrooms. The rationale behind this push is twofold. First, according to the 2018-2019 TAPAR report, nearly 76.6% of the school's student population is Hispanic and 15.4% of the student population is African American (TAPAR, 2019). Among this student population, only 46% of the African American students and 56% of Hispanic population passed or reached the approaches scale, which indicates that a students is approaching proficiency a subject, for the STAAR assessment (TAPAR, 2019). According to this statistic, between 50-60 percent of the Hispanic and African American population is struggling to read at or above grade level. Thus, to encourage students to read and prepare to pass their standardized assessments, leadership has used appropriated funds to purchase culturally relevant text that relates to the lives of the students who attend UHS. Each

text introduces themes and dilemmas that are unique to the students at UHS. Second, leadership purchased text, written from the lens of authors who represent the robust Latin X and African American population on campus, to help ELAR teachers motivate their students to read and analyze topics that are relevant to their lives. By doing so, leadership hoped to see an increase on standardized test scores, which will help bolster the schools rating which, according to metrics established by the state of Texas (TEA), is a B.

Beyond using culturally relevant text as a tool to help students pass their state assessments, leadership acknowledged that the school and district must establish a culture of reading that went beyond the classroom and enabled students to develop as citizens. To accomplish this goal, more effort must be placed on hiring and retaining educators who are willing to advocate for students. Secondly, emphasis must be placed on creating a culture of reading that embodies a focus on themes and concepts applicable to the communities that our students call home. In the past two years, administrative leaders have worked to accomplish this goal by decreasing the size of freshman classrooms (currently at 1:22), establishing PLCs for teacher collaboration , and purchasing resources, such as the books previously mentioned, to aid teachers in the goals of lowering test scores and developing a culture of reading for reluctant readers. Although these efforts are leading the campus in the right direction, we must continue to allocate time and resources into establishing reading as a norm for students who attend the campus.

As a Title 1 high school campus in the Texas, UHS has experienced a drastic demographic and economic change over the past decade. Despite these changes, new leadership has worked diligently to help all students, but specifically students of color, to accomplish their academic goals. In the ELAR department, this change involved the introduction of culturally

relevant text. Per the guidance of the school principal, teachers and instructional leaders were tasked with utilizing culturally relevant text (CRTs)) to help increase reading engagement among Hispanic and African American students. For our campus, culturally relevant text included text that was written by African American and Latin X Author who explored the unique themes of poverty, race, maturity, immigration, and independence. Although the campus has taken the correct steps towards using culturally relevant text in ELAR classroom, more needs to be done to create a culture of reading within and around the classroom. Additionally, to fully understand the impact of culturally relevant text, school leaders must determine the best approach towards supporting teachers in their efforts to properly utilize CRTs in their classrooms.

English teachers, campus wide, recognize the impact of the themes presented in text, but are limited on the longitudinal impact that these themes have on the lives of their students. In additional, educators are reluctant to use culturally relevant text in the classroom, but rather use classic texts to accomplish the goal of developing students. From a leadership role, school leadership, has purchased culturally relevant text, offered professional development on culturally relevant teaching, dedicated time towards promoting teachers to use culturally relevant text, but more needs to be done to help teachers create a culture of reading and learning across the campus.

Historical Context

For the past 3 years, UHS has gone through several changes. One of the biggest changes that occurred on the campus was the hiring of a new principal. As a turnaround expert, the 2019-2020 campus principal was tasked by the new superintendent to change the school culture. As of today, the campus has gone through positive changes. These changes included the implementation of PLCs, for all English subjects, the induction of double-block (freshman

students take 90 minutes of English every day). English for all incoming freshman, and the introduction of a unit by design model to help frame the instructional practice of each teacher. During the 2018-2019 school year, my first year at UHS the 2019-2020 principal challenged the English 1 team to introduce more culturally relevant text (CRTs)in the classroom. To facilitate this goal, the team introduced students to Malala Yousafzai's autobiography and various short readings on Latin X culture. The rationale behind this initiative was to support the growth of readers, create safe zones for cultural relevance, and actualize the principal's goal of getting the campus back on track with district and state expectations when it comes to standardized testing.

As of the 2019-2020 school year, the district has created new initiatives to help students develop healthy reading habits. The initiative, which is known as "Literacy for Life", involves the induction of MyOn, a software that provides students with digital access to e-books. District officials have also displayed their support by posting videos, creating events, and rewarding schools who encouraged their students to use the software. At the local level, our campus has acknowledged this initiative by continuing our efforts to introduce additional CRTs. This year, we have purchased books on immigration, the African American condition in urban centers, and police brutality. Through our PLCs, teachers have expressed that students are engaged with these texts and feel more compelled to have tough conversations about themes: these conversations allowed teachers to create classrooms conducive to the needs of students at urban high school. The push for culturally relevant text at UHS is in its second year, and most teachers are onboard with using CRTs to help motivate and encourage student who struggle to make general connections with what they read in class. As we continue to grow as a campus, we have to be aware of the cultural differences between students and teachers, specifically the cultural

differences presented in the ELAR department, which is under the most pressure due to campus, district, and state expectations.

Since my first year at UHS, I have observed that most of the teachers in the ELAR department were Caucasian. During the 2019-2020 school year the English team consists of 1 African American male and 1 African American female, the rest of the team were White women from various backgrounds. During the 2020-2021 school year, hiring practices led to the hiring of 3 teachers of color in the English department. In our PLC meetings, these teachers show a phenomenal willingness to use culturally relevant text, but there is not enough evidence to support that the use of culturally relevant text helped us close reading and learning gaps for our students. Additionally, because we are in the second year of the program, we can do more to emphasize the use of culturally relevant text systems within the class. Although most teachers have received AVID training, which could help with instructional strategies (especially with the focus on teachers being culturally relevant), it is not emphasized in general education classrooms. Alternatively, using CRTs on campus comes with the perspective that teachers, who have not established norms and space in their classroom, will not understand the plight of their students and will need additional support to properly engage students. To counter this factor, the district provided teachers with professional development on the use of young adult culturally relevant text; however, the PD did not focus on how to use the text and create space, within their classrooms, that is ideal for students to be vulnerable as they develop as readers and thinkers. The PD, instead, focused on helping teacher use resources to find CRTs. Thus, although teachers are encouraged and empowered to use CRTs in their classrooms, there is more that needs to be done to close achievement and learning gaps that have hindered the campus for the last few years.

The intention of using CRTs at UHS is to support students reading and close student achievement gaps, which aligns with literacy initiatives established by the school district. Beyond these factors, Urban High School sees the introduction of culturally relevant text as a way to help students succeed on standardized local and state assessments. Therefore, for my research, I seek to comprehend teacher perspectives on using CRTs, observe their teaching practices in action, and use the information obtained from interviews and observations to develop action items outlining how and why teachers should use culturally relevant text in their classrooms. The "how" will involve the development of professional development programs focused on culturally relevant text. The "why" will focus on providing teachers with a graphic organizer that uses participant perspective to outlines the benefits of incorporating CRTs in our ELAR classrooms at UHS.

Significance of the Problem

With the ongoing strain of various assessments being placed on educators and students, administrative leaders at Urban High School have placed specific emphasis on helping students become better readers and writers. One of the initiatives currently in place on campus is using CRTs to develop a student's ability to comprehend text and make complex inferences about themes that connect to their lives.

Although the push for culturally relevant text has yielded positive results on campus, there is more we need to learn about teacher perspective and teaching practices when it comes to using culturally relevant text in their secondary classroom. Given that several of our freshman come to campus with reading deficiencies, and in many cases lack the schema to dissimilate key concepts and themes presented in a given text, teachers and administrative leaders are challenged with developing programs to help close reading and learning gaps. Another major concern is the

cultural differences between students and the teachers at South. At South, most of the ELAR teachers are middle class Caucasian women, and as of 2019-2020 school year, there are only five minority teachers among a staff of fourteen ELAR teachers. In comparison statistics from the 2018-2019 TAPR shows that approximately 92% of the student population is Hispanic (76.6%) or African American (15.4%) (TAPR, 2019).

Given that 92% of the students at UHS are Hispanic or African American, teachers in the ELAR department deal with cultural and economic divides that increased the difficulty of presenting culturally relevant tasks. To counter this divide, the district provided select campuses with AVID training. The training provided great resources on developing relational capacity, recognizing the unique cultures of our students, and understanding the effects of poverty. The training also provided teachers with teaching strategies capable of creating a culturally relevant classroom; however, more training is needed to help teachers use culturally relevant text in their classrooms. Although the leader of the campus sees culturally relevant text as a starting point to help students, at the secondary level, overcome reading deficiencies as they prepare for rigorous assessments, cultural divides between teachers and students are challenges that cannot be overlooked. Finally, adding culturally relevant text as an instructional aid comes with the challenge of creating space where teachers and students are able to share and discuss controversial topics and ideas. Overall, each challenge presents an obstacle that the campus must continue to address to ensure that teachers are delivering quality instruction, which will provide opportunities for to successfully discern and comprehend key concepts presented in a given text.

Research conducted by various scholars outlines the benefit of using culturally relevant texts and acknowledges that culturally relevant text provides students from non-dominate backgrounds the opportunity to use their experiences to engage and understand a given text

(Clark & Fleming, 2019). Even though evidence supports the use of CRTs, there is more research that aligns with the benefits at the elementary level. Moreover, there is limited research on how teachers who use CRTs are able to close reading gaps and prepare students for the rigor of standardize tests. Thus, beyond the goal of understanding teacher perspective, I undertook this study to address the need for more research on the long term benefits of using culturally relevant text at the secondary level.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences and perspectives of ELAR teachers at Urban who use culturally relevant text in their classrooms. To evaluate the perspectives of teachers who used culturally relevant text as a reading initiative introduced by campus administrators, I sought to answer three central research questions:

1. What factors, if any, prevent teachers from using culturally relevant texts in their classroom at Urban High School (UHS)?

2. What practices/ resources are used by ELAR teachers, at UHS, to implement CRTs?

3. What are teachers' perspective towards using CRTs as an instructional tool in their classrooms?

Important Terms

Culturally Relevant- According to Grant, culturally relevant means "'deals with' or 'is about,' or 'draws' its content, language, and illustrations from familiar objects and events in the lives of the [children] involved, and reflects many aspects of students' life-style and background" (Clark,2017, p. 11; Grant, 1973 p. 401).

Culturally Relevant Text (CRTs)- "CRTs are texts with which children can make deep personal connections; the primary characters remind children of themselves and their families and neighborhoods" (Clark & Fleming, 2019, p.24).

Culturally Relevant Teaching- "Culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy of opposition that recognizes and celebrates African and African-American culture" (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Culturally sustaining pedagogy- "allows for a fluid understanding of culture, and a teaching practice that explicitly engages questions of equity and justice. Influenced" (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Diverse students- "include students who bring different backgrounds in culture, language, economic status, race, ethnicity, and religion" (Iwai, 2019, p. 13).

Multicultural Literature (text)-"reflect the racial, ethnic, linguistic, and class diversity present throughout both the student and general populations in the United States and beyond (Author et al., date; Clark & Fleming, 2019)

Reading material- "Such materials will enable African American children to draw upon and employ their socially and culturally situated, home- and community-acquired skills and knowledge—their funds of knowledge—in support of their reading acquisition. Evidence suggests that texts that reflect African American children's lives and experiences can influence their reading development" (Clark, 2017, p. 4).

Student knowledge- "Students come to school with an incredible array of understandings and insights about the social world" (Sosa, 2019, p. 229).

Student lives- "Children develop cognitive and sociocultural skills and resources through participation in daily family and community activities. Using a funds of knowledge approach to teaching and learning, educators identify, investigate, and value the daily practices and ways of

making meaning and communicating in children's homes and communities as vital educational

resources" (Clark & Fleming, p.27).

Significant Stakeholders

For my Record of Study the significant stakeholders will be the 7 ELAR teachers in the

English Department at UHS, specifically the 7 English teachers will display various levels of

experience using CRTs in their classrooms. Along with these teachers, additional stakeholders

will be our campus administrative team, especially the assistant principal over ELAR, and the

school principal who was the first to actively encourage our teachers to use and adapt culturally

relevant text in our classroom. At the district level, the key stakeholders will be our secondary

ELAR coordinator and her cabinet of instructional design facilitators. These individuals play a

significant role in the development of curriculum and instructional norms that is adapted

throughout the entire school district. Moreover, these individuals, along with district level

professional development coordinators are active in developing professional development and

learning norms for all secondary teacher within the school district. Secondary stakeholders will

include our campuses reading intervention teachers, intervention facilitator, and district

intervention facilitators. Each of these individuals are active in developing intervention

curriculum for students struggling to reach state, district, and campus expectations for STAAR

assessments. The final stakeholder for this ROS are the students of UHS. Our diverse group of

scholars will greatly benefit from the development of teachers who use culturally relevant text to

help them engage in their classrooms and overcome the struggles of comprehending complex

text.

Closing Thoughts

In education, it is pivotal for teachers to be flexible and adhere to the needs of their students. For secondary ELAR teachers working at UHS, using resources such as CRTs encourages students to use their background knowledge and experiences as a tool to comprehend key concepts. However, as students' cultural needs change, so should the resources and tools that teachers use. In many cases, using these tools means that educators must prepare to adapt and think outside their ideology towards life, culture, and society.

In this qualitative case study, I plan to investigate the perspectives of seven ELAR teacher at UHS. I will use qualitative data from interviews, observations, and teacher artifacts to understand each teacher's perspective on using CRTs on campus. In chapter 2, I will identify the various uses of culturally relevant text to establish a deeper understanding of how teachers use culturally relevant text. In Chapter 3 I will establish the groundwork and methodology for my study. In chapter 4, I will analyze, and discuss key findings, and in chapter 5, I will conclude my record of study with insight into future studies and a recommendation for future studies.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

To accomplish the goal of supporting teachers in their efforts to use culturally relevant texts, I will begin my literature review by examining tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally relevant texts to create a clear, concise definition of CRTs. My literature review will also explore the similarities and differences between culturally relevant text and multicultural literature. Delineating possible similarities and differences between CRTs and multicultural literature will outline how each text form is viewed in literature. Additionally, I will investigate various sources of literature to develop a baseline answer to the question: what is the role of a teacher in working with students from different backgrounds? Next, I will identify the role that teachers play in using culturally relevant texts to create diversity and understanding beyond the classroom: most importantly, through this literature review, I will identify various studies on culturally relevant texts and reflect on how research supports the use of CRTs for teachers who do not share the same cultural background as their students. Specifically, I will investigate how culturally relevant text is an extension of the culturally relevant teaching/pedagogy framework, delineate similarities and differences between culturally relevant text and multicultural literature, and outline the role of educators in utilizing culturally relevant text in their classrooms. Throughout this literature review, I will refer to the term culturally relevant texts or CRTs to create context around this phrase, the first step is to identify how the term culturally relevant texts is defined in research.

The Culturally Relevant Framework

Ladson-Billings (1992) introduced the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy by insisting that teachers create meaningful learning experiences that acknowledged the cultural backgrounds of African American students. Culturally relevant pedagogy frameworks encouraged teachers to use various instructional techniques that emphasized the cultural significance of their students as a cornerstone of their academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2014). To elaborate, Ladson-Billings' efforts initiated the call for teachers to look beyond the needs of their students and focus on advocating for their students to obtain academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Additionally, as the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy continued to evolve, the view of a sustainable framework that encompasses a multicultural view came to fruition. Ladson-Billings (2014) reflected on this approach as an expansion beyond viewing culturally relevant pedagogy through the lenses of one minority culture and focusing on the role of multiple cultures and their influence on a global scale. In part, Ladson-Billings (2014) acknowledged that culturally relevant pedagogy is more than a catch-all-terms utilized to prompt a sense of cultural awareness in the classroom. In other words, culturally relevant pedagogy is defined as an approach that encourages the value of assessing student learning and creating student-centered learning opportunities.

In connection to CRTs, research on culturally relevant pedagogy helped educators develop systems within their classrooms that encourage cultural diversity. Moreover, the culturally relevant pedagogy framework challenged the perspective of how we, as educators, viewed and worked with students of diverse backgrounds. For example, according to Garcia and Garcia's (2016) case study on designing, implementing and maintaining culturally relevant

pedagogy, the process of using CRP involved teachers displaying their competence towards teaching in settings that are conducive to allowing student use ideas and concepts that are culturally relatable. Kazanjian (2019) expanded this idea to not only include the focus of teachers but also the role of students in developing an understanding of how what they learn drove their identities. The aforementioned research in this section helps to frame culturally relevant text as an extensions of culturally relevant framework. As mentioned by Ladson-Billings (2014), the culturally relevant framework is designed to help increase teacher awareness to heighten the learning potential of students of color. In this case, culturally relevant texts (CRTs) as a tenet of the culturally relevant framework, are resources that support the cultural identities of students, while allowing them to engage in literature that is relevant to their backgrounds. However, CRTs are only valuable when teachers create opportunities and space, within their classroom, that function to promote the cultural awareness.

Culturally Relevant Text vs Multicultural Literature

According to DeNicolo and Franquiz (2006), multicultural text involved the process of incorporating several key tenants that aided in the description of text that catered to the academic and societal needs of students from non-white backgrounds. These tenants as illustrated in Bishop (1992) categorized multicultural literature as culturally neutral, which are books that referenced characters of different color but did not provide clear context; culturally generic, which are books that provided representation of a character from a different culture, but did not provide real cultural content, and culturally specific, which are books that provided details that are relevant to the development of a key character from a true cultural lens (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006). Hilliard (1995) added to Bishop's (1992) definition of multicultural literature by implying that multicultural literature should allow teachers and students to recognize that

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"culture involved more that which can be seen on the surface" (p.728). Others such as Adam and Harper (2016) prescribed to the idea that multicultural literature operates to help students see their cultural likeness in a character while obtaining the opportunity to see the world from a different cultural lens. As outlined in the literature, the role of multicultural literature involves immersing students in a cultural experience that allows them to be present in the reading, while obtaining the opportunity to learn about various cultures and customs. Reflecting on the research of Bishop (1992) and (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006) showed that although multicultural text has several benefits when it comes to teacher-student relationships, student performance, and student reading ability, it is valuable that teachers use appropriate text, i.e., culturally specific text that holds to the ideas of presenting character that uphold the cultural context of students of color.

Clark and Fleming (2019) acknowledged that culturally relevant texts or CRTs allow students to make personal connections to their families and their living environments. Clark and Fleming expound on the notion that CRTs help students make connection by conveying the idea that "CRTs offer multiple opportunities for students to connect aspects of their everyday lives with facets of the text in order to enhance comprehension" (Clark & Fleming, 2019, p. 24). As an extension of culturally relevant framework, Clark and Fleming (2019) further recognized CRTs as being an extension of the culturally relevant framework and multicultural literature, making it pivotal to expound on the definition of CRT. As seen in research, multicultural literature

When aligned with Ladson-Billing's research (1992, 2014) on culturally relevant/ responsive pedagogy/ teaching, both CRTs and multicultural literature, provides a clear representation of the underlying influence that these forms of literature can have on students and teachers. By identifying the fundamental differences between multicultural literature and CRTs, teachers are better suited to use CRTs in their classrooms; however, beyond simply adding select

texts in the classrooms, teachers must establish the ability to adapt, utilize, and use cultural

relevant text appropriately.

The Role of a Teacher

For years, research has documented the impact of quality teachers in the classroom, and

when it comes to cultural relevance, it clear that when there is a lack of focus on a student's

cultural identity, students can become apprehensive and "perceive white middle-class as

normative and all other possibilities as atypical, different, unusual, other" (Landt, 2007, p. 20).

However, research on culturally relevant teaching and pedagogy has advanced our views on

education and placed more emphasis on the role of teachers in advocating and developing

relational capacity with their students of color. Leading experts such as Dr. Ladson-Billings

acknowledged that "the current demographic shifts in the public school student population have

forced educators to examine more closely the academic performance of students from various

cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds" (Billings, 1992, p. 312). As the United States along

with various Western Countries begin to see drastic shifts in the cultural diversity of their

students, the need for culturally relevant pedagogies and culturally relevant teaching that

embrace the vast cultures of various students becomes a significant and unyielding necessity

(Lopez, 2011). Likewise, on a global scale, the change of population due to human migration has

resulted in classrooms that are more diverse than ever (Kazanjian, 2019), which entails the need

for teachers who are well-suited to provide culturally relevant opportunities to their students.

For example, in a case study on culturally responsive teaching, Myers (2019) explored the key

aspects of ELAR curriculum and the challenge of making British literature relevant to students.

Through her study, Myers outlined that "[although] culturally relevant teaching seem[ed] like a

natural fit for many teachers working in underserved urban school districts, it is not typically

employed because CRT approach in many public schools require[ed] [that] teachers become risk-takers" (Myers, 2019, p. 1). When teachers lack confidence in their ability to use culturally relevant techniques, they develop reasons to not use culturally relevant text. These reasons range from the need to develop teachers who understand how to identify and use culturally relevant texts in the classroom (Scullin, 2020) to the ongoing debate on how canon text fits within the constructs of a culturally diverse classroom (Campbell, 2019). Above all, teacher confidence towards using culturally relevant texts in the classroom remains a major focal point in educational research. Dong (2005) insisted that the lack of confidence stems from cultural differences between students and teachers abilities to apply a methodology that aligns with the use of various culturally relevant text. However, when teacher showed a proficiency towards "risk-taking" they are able to create equity in their classrooms, which as seen in quantitative research conducted by Capone, Donizetti, and Petrillo (2018), involved "advocating for the priority of social, group, and community interventions for the promotion of individual well-being" (2018, p. 380). Capone et al. (2018) and Myers (2019) placed specific emphasis on teachers and educators working to make a genuine connection with their students and acting as risk-takers who create cultural safe zones that allow their students to flourish academically. Similarly, teachers and educators who are willing to use culturally relevant text can develop opportunities for students to be acknowledged in a safe, caring learning environment.

While it is documented that culturally relevant teaching is beneficial to the needs of students from diverse backgrounds, it is clear that teachers play a critical role in advocating and creating opportunities for culturally relevant text to flourish. In a sense, teachers have to be willing to appreciate the diverse backgrounds of their students, see them for who they are, and adopt unbiased predilections that are beneficial to their students. As academic experts and

practitioners, researchers have acknowledged, for decades, that teachers hold a powerful role in solidifying a student's academic success. (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Duke, Cervetti, & Wise, 2017; Evans, 2018, p. 332; Haberman, 1995; Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001). Additionally, teachers who recognize and establish basic principles and practices that include an "ongoing and evolving self-reflection on language and culture" (Evans, 2018, p. 330) are better suited to adapt and use culturally relevant text in their classrooms. However, before teachers can facilitate the role of an exemplary teacher, one that understands and adheres to the process of self-reflection and cultural adaption (Evans, 2018), they must recognize who their students are beyond the classroom. Research on growth mindset conducted by Claro, Paunesku, and Dweck (2016) suggested that one of the biggest indicators of a student's academic achievement is their socioeconomic background. Along these lines, students of color, who hail from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, commonly deal with extenuating circumstances that perpetuate achievement gaps and other "educational paradigms [that] reinforce and reproduce educational and social inequity by design" (Zhao, 2016, p. 720). From a practical standpoint, it is clear that students of color from urban centers and other areas of poverty deal with several obstacles that impede their abilities to flourish in the classroom. Typically, these factors go beyond affecting their attitudes towards achievement and infringe on their attitudes towards literacy and reading. Most students, especially students at the secondary level, hesitate to embrace reading, viewing what they read in school as a detriment from what they perceive as normal (Marin, 2009), which may contribute to their attitudes towards reading and making connections that go beyond their natural predilection towards reading. Therefore, teachers, specifically those who teach secondary English/ literature working in culturally diverse regions are encouraged to recognize the culture of their students, find unique techniques to ensure that

students are represented in what they read and see daily, and encourage students to make genuine connections with what they read. Once they can recognize the various obstacles, both culturally and societally, that impedes a student's ability to learn "teachers must be able to connect with a diverse student population with a wide array of difference and cultural wealth" (Osorio, 2018, p.47). As documented by Osorio, teachers must show a willingness to recognize cultural differences and apply feasible techniques that encourage sustainable growth in the classroom (Osorio, 2018). The research in this section delineates that teachers play a pivotal role in developing a student's ability to read, comprehend, and develop as culturally alert citizens. In a sense, teachers are not only responsible for using culturally relevant text, but adhering to practices such as culturally responsive teaching. Additionally, it is the role of effective teachers to hold high standards for their students while still providing "positive and affirming environments that make students feel comfortable with their surroundings and capable of participating in class" (Graves & McConnell, 2014, p.98). For example, Rogers and McLean (1994) showed that successful literacy teachers engage students in literacy practices that are both innovative and meaningful to students. Similarly, Stewart, Walker, and Revelle (2018) research on teachers acting as advocates of diversity when it comes to student reading choice, realized that ELA educators must provide necessary supports to meet the needs of diverse student populations in an increasingly standardized academic world. Therefore, teachers will continue to play an important role in the development of student readers, and in doing so, they have to recognize the various cultural identities that their students will bring to the classroom and dedicate time energy and effort into learning who their students are outside the classroom.

Setting the Stage by Going beyond the Classroom

In a study on reading culturally relevant text aloud to students with behavioral challenges, Verden (2012) discovered that the use of culturally relevant text created opportunities for teachers to develop better connections while supporting their students as they dealt with behavioral challenges. In other words, by using culturally relevant text, teachers in the Verden (2012) study helped students to create parallels between their realities, which in turn allowed them to make better behavioral decisions. Beyond the cultural significance that culturally relevant text presents to students is the capacity for culturally relevant text to help increase student learning and engagement. Particularly important is the notion that "using literature that is culturally relevant to students will aid them in making authentic and meaningful connections between their lives and school-related experiences" (Verden, 2012, p. 620; Irvine & Armento, 2011); thus, providing students with the ability to make their shared experiences relevant in the classroom, which is valuable in helping students develop into individuals who are better prepared to succeed beyond the classroom. Additionally, Colby and Lyon (2004), remind us of the power of reading, especially the impact that reading has on students of color in and beyond the classroom. In their article on multicultural literature, Colby and Lyon (2014) documented the power of culturally relevant text through the lens of young readers who made connections to the text by recognizing their culture within the pages. Parallel to the student's discovery is the notion that a teacher must become more aware of the benefit of introducing culturally relevant book reading in their classrooms (Colby& Lyon, 2004). On a global scale, culturally relevant texts is viewed as a technique to help students understand literature from several perspectives and "deconstruct perceptions of cultural differences which they come across in their text" (Mohammadzadeh, 2009, p.26). In Spain elementary classrooms using intercultural picture

books resulted in students displaying empathy and understanding toward individuals of different

backgrounds, specifically individuals immigrating into the country (Tome-Fernandez, Senis-

Fernandez, & Martin, 2019). Although Tome-Fernandez, Senis-Fernandez, and Martin's (2019)

research reflect on using culturally relevant text at the elementary level, the benefit of culturally

relevant texts in the classroom is apparent, for students are taking the risk to act as change agents

and acknowledge different cultures all while improving on fundamental skills. Furthermore,

Idrus' (2014) qualitative studies on CRTs in the Malaysian classroom depicted that students who

embark on using culturally relevant texts can bring further their common knowledge to discuss

various topics. The results of the Idrus (2014) study also highlighted the importance of teachers

created a stress-free environment for students to outline their perspectives on their community

through their point of view. Each study, Mohammadzadeh (2009) and Tome-Fernandez, Senis-

Fernandez, and Martin's (2019), and Idrus (2014) detailed the importance of educators providing

students with the opportunity to use culturally relevant texts to develop as learners beyond the

classroom. This development insists that students are not only stewards of learning, but are

proactive members who are willing to become valuable members of their communities and

societies. Similarly in the United States, the documented benefit of culturally relevant texts is

predicated on a teacher's ability to understand a student's culture and develop a space for them to

be successful readers. Most importantly, when culturally relevant text is used accordingly, such

as the case in Dong (2005), students become engaged in "cross-cultural understanding" (p.55),

which provides an opportunity for students to comprehend the nuances of a specific culture as

they develop into a functional citizen in a culturally diverse world.

The research highlights the benefit of culturally relevant text in the lives of students;

however, to create true opportunities for students to use these texts beyond the classroom,

teachers must be willing to act as change agents and advocates. Myers (2019) alluded to the idea of culturally relevant literature and methodology when examining a teacher's willingness to challenge the mandated curriculum in urban high schools. From her review on literature, the culturally relevant text can be presented in the classroom two different ways: the first perspectives is a traditionalist approach that employs culturally colonizing approaches; on the other hand, the second approach focuses on a culturally sustaining approach that is an "analysis of langue as an instance of power, with emphasis on valuing heritage language and flexibility of language practices" (Myers, 2019, p.2). The two approaches towards literature differ vastly, but within the tenets of culturally relevant text, the latter approach is effective in providing teachers with a framework to encourage student growth. Interestingly enough, a lack of confidence in their abilities to make connections and use appropriate methodology aligns with district mandates and policies that place a strain on a teacher's ability to incorporate specific teaching techniques, into their classrooms, for the benefit of students (Myers, 2019). Although a lack of confidence and other factors may hinder and alter a teacher's perception towards culturally relevant text, research shows that when teachers are aware of the cultural significance of their students, they are better suited to select the text that entices and encourage students from non-dominate communities to be successful. Such experiences, as documented by Sosa (2019), give students a safe learning environment to learn, engage, share their experiences, and outline their understanding of the world through the unique lens of a given text. To explain, the notion of creating safe learning environments for students, Sosa used the Cultural Modeling Framework to demonstrate how students can adapt to the demands of culturally relevant text through their specific points of view. The findings from the Sosa study show the importance of "valuing experience and knowledge rooted in the reality of students' lives and ideas about the social

world" (Sosa, 2019, p 229). As a baseline to the needs of their students, the Cultural Modeling Framework, in conjunction with the use of culturally relevant text, insists on recognizing that our students bring an array of knowledge to the classroom. This knowledge is not merely rooted in what they read but is a result of their experience with the world (Sosa, 2019). Thematically, Sosa (2019) and Myers (2019) outlined that the use of culturally relevant text in the classroom must align with a teacher's willingness to act as sociocultural mediators who "set up optimal environments for students to engage in and succeed with school-based reading and writing practices" (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006, p. 159). Furthermore, building awareness and recognizing the literacy needs of students does not merely involve selecting text that mirrors a student's culture, it involves creating a systematic process that involves acknowledging that a student's learned experiences may not mirror the experiences of their teachers. For example, Begum's (2014) showed that a student's learned experience with school literacy may stem from their home experiences, and as a result, students develop an idea about reading. Begum highlight the value of recognizing the value of a student's learned experiences while "develop[ing] curricula that challenge our students, whilst drawing on their existing interests and abilities" (2014, p.22). The research conducted by Begum (2014) and Sosa (2019) placed specific emphasis on teachers working to not only view what students are reading but taking the time to identify how a student's perceptions and culture impacts their ability to obtain and process new knowledge. Thus, research has taken a serious look at the role of a student's learned experience and how these play a role in a student's academic experience/endeavor.

In this section, the research points to several key factors that implicate using culturally relevant text to engage students beyond the classroom, which involves preparing them to view the world through a different lens, and introducing opportunities in the classroom for students to

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use their world knowledge in conjunction with a specific text. In a similar manner, the literature

in this section placed the onus on teachers to provide students with the opportunity to see their

culture beyond the classroom, which involves "offer[ing] experiences that embrace diversity,

honor culture and individuality, and promote the growth of individual students in a classroom

community environment" (Brunow, 2016, p.64). Finally, the literature in this section helped to

establish a sense of awareness towards additional issues such as instructional methodology, and

cultural differences (specifically cultural differences between teachers and students) that may

prevent teachers from properly using culturally relevant text in their classrooms. To counter

these issues, teachers must establish the ability to get to know their students (Brunow, 2016), and

as established in Caleon and Wui's (2019) study of relational capacity, develop the ability to

create classrooms based on love and care. In other words, teachers must adhere to the cultural

differences of their students and acts as change agents who support their students.

Conclusion

Through the literature review it is clear that the functionality of culturally relevant texts does not resonate without the use culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy and culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billing, 1992; 2014; Lopez, 2011, Myers, 2019). Furthermore, through the literature review it is evident that the effective use of culturally relevant text stems from a teacher's ability to be culturally responsive (Billings, 1992; Bishop, 1992; DeNicolo & Franquiz 2006, and Hilliard, 1995). A culturally responsive teacher creates opportunities for students to use culturally relevant text in a safe, secure learning environment (Garcia & Garcia, 2016; Graves & McConnell, 2014; Kazanjian, 2019). Additionally, as seen in the literature, the role of a teacher, in using culturally relevant text, is to act as an advocate who supports the cultural differences of their students, recognize their student's cultural backgrounds, and use techniques that are culturally relevant to support their students (Billings, 1992; Lopez, 2011; Margerison, 1995; Osorio, 2018). As an advocate, teachers can create opportunities to build genuine connects with their students by taking risk in the classroom and recognizing the significance of a student's learned experiences (Claro, Paunesku, & Dweck, 2016; Capone, Donizetti, & Petrillo, 2018; Myers, 2019; Zhao, 2016). Another significant factor from the literature is the fact that teachers hold an important role in a student's educational experience, which justifies their roles in adapting to the cultural norms of their students (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Duke, Cervetti, & Wise, 2017; Evans, 2018, p. 332; Haberman, 1995; Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001). In conjunction with research on the role of teachers as cultural advocates, the literature supports the idea that teachers must create and maintain cultural significance in the classroom (Deprez, 2010; Gay, 2002; Rogers& McLean, 1994), and by doing so, teachers have the opportunity to help students understand their cultural identity and share

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their learned experiences with others (Begum, 2014; Brunow, 2016; DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006; Idrus, 2014; Mohammadzadeh, 2009; Sosa, 2019). The literature within this review provided me with various insights into the role and purpose of culturally relevant text in the classroom (Colby & Lyon, 2014; Graves & McConnell, 2014; Irvine& Armento, 2011; Stewart, Walker & Revelle, 2018; Verden, 2012). A role, which involves helping students recognize their personal identities while navigating and challenging difficult subjects (Adam & Harper, 2016; Bishop, 1992; DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006; Hilliard, 1995). The literature in this review provides a fundamental understanding of culturally relevant text as a hallmark of culturally relevant pedagogy/ teaching; moreover, the literature highlights the role of teachers in establishing opportunities for students to experience their culture within a classroom setting.

In connection to the underlined concept of this research, this literature review provided additional context into the importance of educational systems that recognize the benefits of culturally relevant text, and the value of teacher advocates who are bold enough to motivate and encourage all educators to use various culturally relevant techniques to provide resources for students from diverse backgrounds. For this study, the central question to be answered is how do teachers overcome cultural norms to adapt and use culturally relevant text? For my ROS I plan to take these various insights, and investigate teacher perspective on using culturally relevant text. The hope is to use teacher perspective to create a fundamental framework that encourages teachers to take risks and use culturally relevant text as a mutual opportunity to learn while teaching students a valuable skill.

CHAPTER III SOLUTIONS AND METHODS

Proposed Solution

Through instructional walkthroughs and classroom observations, at UHS located in Texas, I noticed a need for secondary ELAR teachers to use culturally relevant text or CRTs such as short stories, narratives, and poems to help minority students successfully recognize the significance of their identities in society. To reach the proposed solution of this study, I created an online for professional development that will guide teachers as they work towards using CRTs in their classrooms. In addition to the professional development opportunity, I created a graphic organizer using the Acronym READ. The READ graphic organizer I created will help teachers select CRTs that align with the needs of their students. Both the professional development opportunity and the READ graphic organizer will help teachers reflect on how CRTs connect to the student population on our campus. The professional development opportunity will also extend into using culturally sustaining pedagogy to solidify the staffs' ability to use CRTs while "maintains[ing] the multiplicity of students' cultural and linguistic identities" (Wynter-Hoyte, et al., 2019; Paris and Alim, 2014).

By implementing professional development and the READ graphic organizer, teachers at UHS will work toward recognizing their role as educators, improving their ability to select and use CRTs, and creating best practices by utilizing CRTs in conjunction with culturally sustaining pedagogy. Overall, the PD and continuing education opportunities will focus on helping teachers confidently implement CRTs in their classrooms.

Outline of the proposed solution

For the proposed solution I created an outline for a one hour in-house professional development sessions, which will occur during 2021-2022 fall and spring semesters. The professional development sessions will help teachers identify how to select and use CRTs in their classrooms. In conjunction with the professional development programs, I developed a READ graphic organizer to help teachers in their process of selecting CRTs while maintaining culturally sustaining teaching practices in their classrooms. According to Laster et.al, (2020) culturally sustaining pedagogy "manifests instructional environments that fosters and perpetuate the language systems, literacies, and cultures of distinct groups, especially marginalized citizens" (p.91). Thus, overtime I will continue working with campus stakeholders to develop a systematic approach to teaching that aligns with Laster et.al definition of culturally sustaining pedagogy, while creating a culture of learning conducive to the needs of the student population we serve. Finally, I developed the READ graphic organizer to help teachers select and use CRTs in their classrooms. Using Scullin's (2020) CRT rubric, which focuses on identifying CRT based on "cultural authenticity, accuracy, and consciousness in literature" (p.100), as a template I created the READ graphic organizer to facilitate the needs of teachers and students at UHS.

Justification of Proposed Solution

Using culturally relevant text provides (CRTs) student with a unique learning experience that has the potential to help students from underrepresented cultures utilize their experiences to make complex inferences (Kibler and Chapman, 2019). Kibler and Chapman also outlined the importance of teachers implementing dialogue and other culturally relevant pedagogy strategies to create a fully functional learning experiences that embodies and justifies the use of CRTs (2019). Integrating these practices into an English classroom, especially at UHS where we have a

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large Latin X and African American population, offers teachers with the unique opportunity to align educational material with the backgrounds of their students. Along with providing educational material relevant to a student's unique background, integration of CRTs and culturally relevant or sustaining pedagogy will encourage the development of teachers who are proactive in utilizing culturally relevant techniques and resources to promote student engagement and motivation in their classrooms. Along these lines, PD that shows teachers how to select and use CRTs in their classroom is imperative. Research by Christ and Sharma (2018) suggest that professional development focused on culturally relevant text selection and pedagogy, specifically Pre-Service professional development, must focus on teachers developing the skills to select CRTs, understand their student's backgrounds, and help students dialogue about themes presented in CRTs. In connection to the professional development, a graphic organizer called READ was created to help teacher select, explore, and identify CRTs for their classrooms. The graphic organizer will benefit teachers by providing them with a functional guide that allows them to select CRTs for instruction and the development of their classroom libraries (Scullin, 2020).

Study context and participants.

The study took place at Urban High School (UHS). In the past, the school was esteemed as a "country club school"; however, within the last decade demographics have changed, resulting in a large influx of Latin X and African American students. Starting in 2018-2019 school year, the school's principal encouraged the use of more CRTs in the classroom. The push for these texts continued into the 2019-2020 school year. Additionally, the district required that all staff members take professional development on culturally relevance in the classroom. The goal of both programs was to help decrease the cultural divide between staff and students.

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During the 2020-2021 school year, a new principal was hired, and one of his primary goals was to continue using CRTs in ELAR classrooms, while implementing Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, growing AVID based programs, and prompting culturally sustaining teaching practices to improve relational capacity on campus. The seven participants in this study are teachers in UHS English department with educational experience ranging from 3 to 20 years (see Table 1). The teachers in this study were also selected based on their experience using CRTs in the classroom, and their experience and expertise as teacher at UHS.

Table 1

ROS Teacher Profile

Teacher	Year of Experience	Ethnicity	Gender	Experience at UHS
Evelyn	**20**	**African American**	**Female**	**6**
Toni	**4**	**African American**	**Female**	**4**
Rikke	**5**	**White**	**Female**	**3**
Michael	**3**	**White**	**Male**	**3**
Savannah	**12**	**White**	**Female**	**8**
Nia	**8**	**White**	**Female**	**6**
Ashley	**17**	**White**	**Female**	**3**

Note: *Outlines the years of experience, ethnicity, gender, experience teaching CRTs, and number Of years each student has spent teaching at UHS*

Lastly, the teachers of this study were purposefully selected for their ability to provide a bevy of insight conducive to the use of CRTs in their educational careers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Proposed research paradigm

This qualitative study employed a case study research practice/approach. According to Creswell (2007) "case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (p. 73). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) expand on this definition by describing a case study as a deeper analysis of the aforementioned bounded systems. By conducting a case study, I focused on teachers in English department at UHS, which is a title 1 school in Texas, to understand their perspectives towards using CRTs in their classrooms. Through this case study, I used teacher perspectives and classroom observations to create a graphic organizer and professional development outline that educators will use for the purpose of selecting and using CRTs during the 2021-2022 school year. These artifacts are included in the appendix section of this study.

Data Collection Methods

The qualitative case study was first approved by the campus principal in the summer of 2020. Approval was again renewed by a newly-hired campus principal on November, 19 2020. Data collection was approved by the IRB on February 18, 2020. The qualitative case study paradigm was selected to investigate cases within a bounded system (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). Participants for this study were recruited through campus email, with each participant receiving their own personal invite. The intent of case study was to understand teacher perspectives towards CRTs and delineate how these perspectives align with teaching practices. Upon committee approval, research questions were vetted through a semi-structured interview process. Three teachers were selected, based on their experience and knowledge of CRTs for the process of vetting the open-ended questions.

Table 2

Outlines the questions used for the initial semi-structured interview.

ROS Semi-structured interview questions
•What is your definition of Culturally relevant text?
•What are your thoughts on using culturally relevant text in the classroom?
•How do you use culturally relevant texts in your classroom?
•What type of learning spaces do you create to encourage students to explore controversial themes and topics presented in culturally relevant text?
• How do your students react to your attempts to use culturally relevant texts?
•How has using culturally relevant text shaped your perspective on your students and their lives?
•While using culturally relevant text, did you encounter any challenges?
•How did using culturally relevant texts affect your classroom community?
•How did your perspective change after using culturally relevant text in the classroom?
How has implementing CRTS in your classroom changed your perception on student learning?
•In the future, how might you approach text selection or verify that a newly-discovered text is culturally relevant?

Once questions were vetted, data collection occurred in two intervals. The first interval occurred through a virtual setting via Google Meets. During this time, I conducted semi-structured interviews with participants selected based on grade level and teaching experience. The semi-structured interview process allowed the participants to take a critical reflection of the proposed question (Galletta, 2012); thus, enriching the insight provided to me by each participant. To ensure accuracy of my interview notes and the responses of each participate, I record each interview using Google embedded tools. These recording were transcribed via Otter. The second phase of the data collection occurred via observations of teacher classrooms. During the second phase, I conducted unstructured observations to identify how each teacher use CRTs to engage students in discussion, foster a safe, secure learning space for students, and help students connect concepts and ideas presented in the text to their daily experiences. I will document these specific tendencies in my interview journal. Moreover, during the second phase, I analyzed teacher lesson

plans and lesson guides to obtain a deeper understanding of how they use CRTs. Both

observations and interviews occurred at UHS. Interview and observation field notes were

securely stored in an interview journal that remained locked in my office at UHS and my TAMU

student Google Drive.

Data Analysis Strategy

To facilitate the analysis of the data obtained through this study, I coded data to create

specific themes. The process of coding, as Vogt, et al. (2014) described involved the use of

symbols to prepare and delineate data. Furthermore, to ensure the accuracy of each participant's

responses, I transcribed and coded participant's responses simultaneously. To accomplish the

goal of finding and creating themes from commonalities that were revealed during the interview

and observation process, I used the In Vivo coding approach. The In Vivo coding process, which

"uses words or short phrases from the participants own language in the data record as codes"

applying codes (Miles, 2020, p. 65), ensured that each line from the participants responds was

reviewed for accuracy and the creation of key themes.

Timeline

The following table outlines the course of events that will take place during this study.

Table 3

Proposed Timeline for ROS

Timeline for ROS
Phase 1: (Spring 2020-Fall 2020)
•   Obtain permission from campus principal to interview teachers
•   Send out initial emails recruiting teachers to participate in the study
•   Develop qualitative research questions
•   Create an outline to the qualitative approach
•   Conduct initial pilot of research questions
•   Validate and revise these questions
Phase 2: (Fall 2020-Spring 2021)

• Proposal defense
• Conduct interviews with selected teachers (validate answers through member checking)
• Conduct initial observations of teachers using CRTs in their classrooms
• Conduct follow-up interviews with additional teachers
• Review, transcribe, and analyze data to create codes
• Use codes to create themes and further understanding of results
• Aggregate data and complete analysis
Phase 3: (Spring 2021-Summer 2021)
• Revise and Edit ROS draft 1
• Submit Draft 1 for approval
• Revise and Edit ROS draft 2 per committee recommendations
• Defend ROS

Reliability and Validity Concerns or Equivalents

For this study, I addressed reliability and validity concerns by creating dependability and confirmability through a rigorous design that outlines and displays all steps in a consistent manner (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). The process of reliability for this study included triangulating interview responses and classroom observations, conducting member-checking, and maintaining details diagrams and notes through an audit trail. To enhance the confirmability and dependability of my study, observations notes and interview transcriptions were synthesized to validate the responses of each participant and minimize the potential of investigator bias (Shento, 2004). Merriam and Tisdell identified the process of triangulation as "using multiple sources of data means comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people" (2016, p.245). Research points to four types of triangulation methods to validity data; these examples include method, investigator, theory, and data source triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Carter, et.al, 2014; Patton, 1999). Since the primary data sources for my study included collecting responses from a semi-structured interview,

observing the classroom of teachers using CRTs, and collecting teacher artifacts, a method triangulation was implemented to ensure the dependability and confirmability of the data. By using method triangulation, I synthesized interview responses and fields notes with observations and teacher artifacts (lesson plans, teacher notes, etc.) to eliminate the potential of any biases. Furthermore, the process of synthesizing each layer of data, through method triangulation involved an in-depth analysis and review of transcripts, interview notes, observation notes, and teacher artifacts to ensure that the insight provided by each participant aligns with the insight they shared during the interview process.

Additionally, the process of member checking was applied to create an added layer of creating dependability and confirmability to my study. The process of member-checking allowed participants to view and access interview responses and observation findings for accuracy; thus, minimizing the potential of inaccuracies in the collection and delineation of key data points. The process of member-checking aligns with Kornbluch's (2015) definition of member-checking, which recognizes member-checking as a way for the researcher to address biases, while ensuring accuracy of the information collected from participants. Therefore, by conducting member-checking—which includes providing space for participants to review and check the information collected— my study will establish a level of dependability and confirmability that it vital to the validity of the study. The final validity check for my research included the creation of an audit trail. The audit trial will include a detail outline of procedures taken to collect, outline, and validate data (Carcary, 2020).

Closing Thoughts on Chapter 3

The case study paradigms was used to develop insight and depth into teacher perspective towards using CRTs in their classrooms. The case study allowed for a robust insight into how

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teachers viewed and utilized CRTRs at UHS. The overall goal of this study was to create

professional development and ongoing learning opportunities that will help teachers properly

utilize CRTs in their secondary English Language Arts classrooms. Furthermore, the goal is to

help teachers further their knowledge of CRTs by offering helpful guides on best practices for

the classroom. The study acted to empower teachers to use CRTs to provide students with a

culturally enriched experience in their English classrooms.

CHAPTER IV ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Presentation of Data

The data in this section is presented based on interviews and observations conducted with each participant. Each case study will include summaries of participant insight, plus the observations conducted at Urban High School (UHS). To ensure the trustworthiness of this research project, In Vivo coding with quotes directly from the participants' interviews and descriptive coding with field notes from each participant's 45 minute semi-formal observation were utilized. For each interview, participants provided me with lesson objectives and learning guides. The lesson objectives are a campus requirement and provide campus appraisers with a snapshot of student learning expectations. For this study, including lesson objectives and learning guides provided an extra layer of information that aligned with the perspectives and practices of each participant. It is to be noted that the names and locations mentioned in this section are pseudonyms that protect the identities of each participant.

Introducing the Analysis

The purpose of this research study on teacher perspective toward culturally relevant text was to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors, if any, prevent teachers from using culturally relevant texts in their classroom at Urban High School (UHS)?

2. What practices/ resources are used by ELAR teachers, at UHS, to implement CRTs?

3. What are teachers' perceptions towards using CRTs as an instructional tool in their classrooms

In Vivo coding led to the development of themes and commonalities across each case study. Additionally, semi-formal observations provided additional insight on teachers and their

practices. Both datasets were used to help develop themes, which were pivotal in detailing

participant perspective and practice when it came to using CRTs in their classrooms.

Participant 1: Michael

Michael is one of the Caucasian male English Language Arts teachers at UHS. He

primarily teaches reading intervention classes; however, this year he was offered the opportunity

to teach English 3. Michael has worked at UHS for 2 years as an ELAR teacher and a football/

track coach. My interview with Michael occurred on March 26, 2021 via Google Meets. A semi-

formal observation was conducted on May 5, 2021 at UHS. Prior to the observation, Michael

shared his lesson objectives (see table 4) and guided practice activity (see appendix) via email.

According to Michael, culturally relevant text is defined as "texts that relate to the

students in a specific culture." Michael's definition derives from his interactions with various

cultures throughout his childhood. He expounds on this factor by mentioning that he "grew up

understanding that there's different types of texts that would be more relevant to a person that is

from say, Dallas as there is from someone from Longview." Michael also sees the use of CRTs

in the classroom as a tool to help students "connect to the text a little bit easier," for he feels that

"sometimes there's a disconnect if there's not some type of cultural relevance." Michael C.

further continued this explanation by implying that "if there's no connection then they are not

going to get anything out of the text". Michael detailed the idea of making connections and

adhering to his definition of CRTs through the development of a student-centered learning

objective and reading guide. Both sets of data provided delineation between perspective and

practices by outlining Michael's intentions for his students. As mentioned in his essential

question, "the goal of the lesson was to have students talk about abusive behavior within

cultures" to accomplish this goal, students used discussion questions via a guided reading form,

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which aligned with the flow of the reading and allowed for additional discussion to occur. When asked how he utilized CRTs in the classroom, Michael replied that he uses CRTs to select text that relate to his students "to give them the ability to get more out of it." In his observation, Michael displayed this practice when he had students discuss and analyze excerpts of *Loteria* by Mario Zampero. From my observation, I discovered that the text covered themes of rape, abuse, and neglect within a Latin X family. As mentioned in his interview, Michael's aim is to "get more out of it", which in my observation translated into more students sharing their opinions and leading discussion while Michael facilitated the lesson.

When it comes to his classroom setting, Michael depicted his classroom as a "safe space" where he "bring[s] up controversial themes and topics." Likewise, when asked about CRTs and his classroom community, Michael C. states that using CRTs in his classroom "opens the door for more conversation. It opens the door for, you know, students to get to know each other, it opens the door for students to get to know teachers, [and] teachers to get to know students." From my observation, it is evident that despite COVID, students are engaged with the text, and they are not afraid to discuss, interact, and share their expertise on a given topic. I observed this behavior when students discussed the reaction of the main character's father after discovering that his daughter was sexually harassed by a family member. As students carried on their discussion, Michael provided them with the opportunity to react, discuss, and share their insight. For example, in the text there that talks about a father's lack of empathy towards his daughter, who was raped at a young age. The students, both young women and men, talked about the cultural significance of this, affirming that the father's behavior is typical in certain cultures. Thus, from my observation, Michael's classroom setting is safe and conducive to discussions.

As our interview continued, Michael outlined using CRTs in his classroom as a way to "get to know students". He also suggested that "you find out more about your students because of the way they react to certain texts." I witnessed this practice first had during my observation of Michael's class. For example, Michael would read the text to his students, using proper diction when Spanish phrases and terms used by key characters. My observation also revealed Michael acting as both student and teacher. This duality is witnessed through his willingness to ask follow up questions about topics and subjects specific to a given culture, and encourage students to dig deeper into the text by analyzing the responses of characters from the lens of different cultures.

Furthermore during our interview, Michael detailed that has not encountered major issues using CRTs in his classroom, but alluded to district obligations and the lack of CRTs as a challenge. For example, according to Michael, "challenges are always going to be that, you know, sometimes it's not what the district might not want you to use". Moreover, when it comes to availability of text Michael states "I do think that the available choices for more culturally relevant text should be in larger amounts."

From his perception on student learning, Michael recognized that "if the lesson is more relevant to the culture of the students, they're more bought in and they're more apt to take that in stride to increase their learning." For Michael buy-in is described as a student is "enjoying their learning". Michael concluded his answer to the question on student perception noting that culturally relevant text for his students "opens their eyes a little bit and it lets them see like hey there's some things that I can read that are not this whitewash nonsense. This answer also aligned with Michael's commentary on students and their normal reactions to him using CRTs in the classroom. In other words, Michael felt that his students were a "more engaged a little bit", and

they bought into "what they're reading", which made his students' reactions "positive compared to the opposite." As witnessed in his observation, I discovered several of his students positively engaged with the text. During his class students used question stems and guided reading notes to discuss difficult themes presented in the text. Students were engaged and willing to discuss topics relevant to social dynamics within the Latin X culture.

When it comes to text selection/ verifying that a newly discovered text is culturally relevant, Michael vehemently insists that one must "read it", which implies that he reads, previews, and vets the text before implementing it in the classroom. He also highlights the importance of "research" specifically, researching the author and subject matter.

Table 4

Learning Objective for Michael's Reading Class

Loteria Learning Objective	
Essential Question	Do different cultures normalize certain abusive behaviors more than others?
LO (SWBAT Student will be able to)	SWBAT (Student will be able to) SWBAT answer text based questions about tone and character development
DOL	Students will make a connection with a text and make inferences while using textual evidence to support
CRTs used by Michael	*Loteria*

Note I included a hyperlink that leads to a brief summary of Loteria. Sources to the novel are included in the reference section of this study.

Participant 2: Evelyn

Evelyn is an African American educator at UHS. She has 20+ years of experience as an English Language Arts teacher. She has worked at UHS for the last five years, and has worked with honors and on-level students. Currently she is a member of the English 2 team at UHS. My

interview with Evelyn occurred on March 13th. In conjunction with the interview, I conducted a semi-formal observation of Evelyn's classroom on April 27, 2021.In preparation for the observation, Evelyn shared her learning objectives (Table 5) and PowerPoint learning guide with me via email (see Appendix).

In our interview, Evelyn defined culturally relevant text as text "that represents your ethnicity and your background." This definition, according to Evelyn, was present at the beginning of her career and has evolved overtime. In my observation, Evelyn and her students read *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* by James Weldon Johnson. Although the text was published in 1912, it aligned with Evelyn's definition of CRTs, by exploring the plight of a bi-racial black man attempting to find his identity in a racist society.

Evelyn sees the use of CRTs in her classroom as important "because students need to see themselves in literature, they need to see characters that look like them...and maybe even do things that they're doing." Evelyn adds that CRTs are important because "it engages students more, not all the time, but sometimes there's more engagement because a character is very similar to the way I [they] look." For Evelyn, engagement equates to students being interested "in what's going to happen the text and with the characters and may actually follow through to the end and complete assignments." Evelyn's response aligned with the overall goal of her lesson objective, which was to have students "read a novel and identify the type of characteristics that define a character" however, from a practical standpoint, I noticed that not many of her students were engaged. Seemingly enough, several students were disengaged despite the context of the text and its relevance to current events. Evelyn attempted to use discussion questions to help students make these connections; however, her attempt was received with limited interaction

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from the students. A few students elected to answer questions via Google chat features, but students in class did not share their responses.

As our interview continued, Evelyn felt that when it comes to using culturally relevant text, her options are limited to her PLC team, which results in Evelyn not having the "autonomy to just really make my own decisions on text." However, when given the opportunity. Evelyn selects and uses text that she thinks "students would be interested in, that represents them, and things that maybe they've gone through."

Furthermore, when it comes to learning spaces and CRTs, Evelyn describes her classroom as an "environment where students feel comfortable and safe to voice their opinion." In contrast, as for her classroom community, Evelyn outlines that using CRTs is varied and in some cases is based on the student group. Evelyn describes this difference by insisting that "Pre-AP students interact more, they talk more, they have discussion a little bit better...But regular-on level, you kind of got to dig, you've got to create, you got to create those situations where they are going to have discussions." During my observation, I noted the struggle mentioned by Evelyn, for she had to use several follow up questions to get students to respond. She also had to provide students with alternative opportunities (such as the Google chat) to obtain details on their perception of the text.

When asked about how her students react to her attempts to use CRTs in the classroom, Evelyn states that currently students are not completing their assignments; additionally, when compared to previous years, students were less apt to connect to the text. An example that she mentioned in our interview was when her team selected a Latin X themed text, which according to Evelyn "did not connect to her African American students." Despite introducing the aforementioned text to her class, Evelyn was disappointed to see students apathetic, unexcited,

and unmotivated to read. To counter student apathy, Evelyn states that she utilizes "anticipatory activities" to hook students. Evelyn explains this by stating "I really tried to go back and do engaging, you know, anticipatory things, activities that try to get students to connect more with the novel. That's what I try to do when I can plan things on my own." During my observation, I did not witness Evelyn attempt to use anticipatory activities, such as anticipation guides, but I did notice student apathy. For example, instead of reading the text, students listen to an audio recording. Periodically, Evelyn stopped the recording, and attempted to engage students in conversations with discussion questions. For a moment several students seem reluctant to interact; however, Evelyn allowed them to use chat features to share their opinions. Although several students remained disengaged, Evelyn continued her attempt. At one point her passion is met with student optimism when she asks her class about the protagonist's reaction to learning that he was a black man. This question encouraged a few students to briefly interact, while a few students responded via the chat box. This trend continued on as Evelyn paused to ask additional questions and remind students that they can share their responses to her questions via verbal communication or through the Google Meets chat feature.

In connection to CRTs and her perspective on her students' lives, Evelyn states that she learns "things about students", especially when they show connection to the text through the use of dialectical journals. According to Evelyn, "some students wrote stuff that [she] had to talk to a counselor about". As our conversation continued, Evelyn provided further detail into the idea of CRTs helping her connect to her students by suggesting that unlike traditional text such as "Odyssey" or "The Most Dangerous Game", CRTs help students express more " because they can see themselves." I did not observe this practice during my observation, but I observed that Evelyn developed relationships with her students, but again, students where not as engaged.

When asked if she faced any challenges using CRTs in the classroom, Evelyn described issues such as inappropriate language and inappropriate situations. She further detailed issues with reading/ discussing language in CRTs (specifically Spanish), stating that "I encountered, you know, a challenge with that because I don't speak Spanish."

As for her perception towards implementing CRTs and student learning, Evelyn states that her perception has not changed because she "thinks that implementing culturally relevant text...engages the learner more than if that text was not related to their culture". However she advocates that text must represent all cultures, which in her case, means various texts that represent African American and Hispanic cultures. In contrast to this statement, I noticed that only a few of Evelyn's students were engaged with the text, which makes her final statement in her interview valuable, for in her final statement, Evelyn highlighted that she would base text selection on the cultural backgrounds of her students. She insisted that this selection must align with the population (ethnic background), socio-economic status, and the interest of students on a given campus.

Table 5

Evelyn's learning objective for The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man

Learning Objective For *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*	
LO	Student will read with purpose to determine the meaning of a text
EQ	How do reader recognize a character's personality
DOL	Students will read a novel and identify the type of characteristics that define a character.
CRTs used by Evelyn	*The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*

Note I included a hyperlink that leads to a brief summary of The Autobiography of an Ex-

Colored Man. Sources to the novel are included in the reference section of this study. Evelyn

Selected this book as part of her PLC and its connection to district resources.

Participant 3: Toni

Toni is an African American educator at the UHS. She is currently in her 4th year as a teacher, spending her entire career working at UHS. Currently she teaches a combination of Advancement Placement and Pre-Advanced Placement classes. Our initial interview occurred on March 12, 2021 via Google Meets on the campus on the UHS. The meeting was conducted via Google Meets to adhere to Covid guidelines and procedures. Following our interview, I observed Toni's classroom. My observation of Toni's classroom occurred on April 26, 2021. Prior to my observation, Toni shared her lesson guide (see Appendix) and learning objectives (Table 6). In contrast to her colleagues, Toni did not use the campus format for developing learning objective; however, she did provide me with a learning objective and essential question.

To begin our interview, Toni outlined her definition of CRTs as a text that she uses to "monitor her students' normal beliefs, behaviors, and backgrounds." She developed this definition based on knowing her students and what "makes them tick." Toni's definition of CRTs stems from her willingness to not merely relate to her students but "connect with them on a level that they may understand."

When asked about her thoughts towards using CRTs in the classroom, Toni described CRTs as an important instructional tool because they allow her students to "understand where she is coming from as an African American female." Toni further mentioned that introducing CRTs with similar ideas to Shakespeare helped her students connect and makes classroom discussion "way better." Toni also highlighted that CRTs allow her students to "see themselves in the text." Moreover, when I asked Toni about her practices when it came to using CRTs in

your classroom, Toni stated that "the first thing that I make sure my kids know is prior knowledge." When referring to prior knowledge, Toni is talking about background knowledge on themes, topics, and situations that will occur in the text. From here, Toni explained that she used "a journal or some type of writing assignment that asks the general question." Next, Toni used a starter text to help students begin "the discussion". My observation of Toni's class aligned with her thoughts on using CRTs in her classroom. During my visit, I observed her students leading discussion, while using online resources to interact and answer questions about the text. During my interaction, I noticed that all her face to face students interacted verbally, while her virtual students interacted using the Google slide (see artifact). On one occasion, a virtual students elected to join the conversation. It is also evident that student have prior knowledge the text and Toni's expectation, and as mentioned in our interview, writing is used to help student express their opinions and answer discussion questions.

As for learning spaces within the classroom, Toni explained to me that she created a space that encourages judgement free conversations about the text they are reading. Toni explains this by saying "And I have to explain to them that this is an honors class. So the things that you don't think that you can talk about, you can talk about it here. And they have to also feel like they're not being judged." The focus of Toni's classroom was to have students lead the conversation. Both virtual and face to face students engaged in conversations, and were able to hold their conversation in an inviting classroom setting. From my observation, I noticed that students held mature discussions that covered the objective, without limiting their opinions.

From the perspective of student reaction towards her use of CRTs in the classroom, Toni reports that she has received "positive reaction from the students." She goes on to say "they actually appreciate it because I'm trying to connect with them and understand their cultures and

where they come from their behaviors, the reason on why they do the things that they do."

Although Toni reports not having any negative impacts, she mentioned that her students would like to "look at the celebration part of our [their] cultures." Similarly, when it comes to her own perception, Toni states that using CRTs with her students "has opened my eyes up to who they are as a person, and not really listen to the stereotypes. Additionally, utilizing CRTs makes Toni "excited to look at the world through their eyes even if it's for 90 minutes." Toni also added that "working at a school that is mostly Hispanic and Black… made me want to also make my Hispanic student know that I see them." Likewise, when I asked Toni about her perception towards student learning and CRTs, she stated that using CRTs helped her to realize that she could "let go of the training wheels". To clarify, Toni means to give students more freedom when she uses the phrase "training wheels "Furthermore, by taking off the "training wheels", Toni is able to use higher order questions and facilitate the learning process while students lead the way. In essence, Toni highlights that students have more autonomy and in a way, are "in charge of the classroom." Once Toni concluded her instructions, students were given the platform to share their thoughts and discuss key concepts and themes within the text. Throughout the discussion, students shared their insight by conversing with their peers and or inputting their responses on the Google Slide. During these discussions, Toni only interjected to add more insight or to engage students for the purpose of extending the classroom conversation. Besides these brief moments, Toni actively listened while students continued their conversations. As highlights in our interview, Toni's modified Socratic Seminar or "silent Socratic seminar" enabled both face to face and virtual students to engage and feel comfortable enough to share their thoughts and opinion, and through it all, a young African American man, not Toni,

facilitated the conversation, asked his fellow peers to clarify their ideas and statements, and invited his classmates to share their input.

Towards the end of our interview, Toni described the challenges that she faces when introducing CRTs in her classroom. These challenges range from the lack of resources available for all student groups, and students getting upset about a situation that occurs in the text and not expressing themselves "due to other kids...making fun of them". Toni also described the challenge of helping students navigate their feelings, especially when you "wake up something inside of them". Toni depicts this moment as one of the biggest challenges "because… when you go looking for that spark, and you get it, as a teacher, you got to figure out how to handle that without feeling threatening, and feeling a feeling like they can still trust you at the end of the day."

Finally, to conclude our interview, Toni was asked to reflect on how she planned to select CRTs for her classroom. Accordingly, Toni outlined that she planned to "have my kids kind of fill out a survey or kind of like a form" to help with the selection process.

Table 6

Toni's learning objective for The Invisible Man

Learning Objective for *The Invisible Man*	
Objective	Explain the narrator's attitude towards his own invisibility by analyzing the elements such as diction, tone, motifs, and style.
Essential Question	What is the narrator's attitude towards his own invisibility? In other words, how does he seem to feel about being invisible and how does the author convey this?
CRTs used by Toni	*Invisible Man*

Note Unlike her colleagues, Toni's learning objective does not include a DOL (demonstration of

learning). I included a hyperlink that leads to a brief summary of Invisible Man. Sources to the

novel are included in the reference section of this study. Toni selected this older CRTs due to its

alignment to AP testing expectation. Thus, she purposefully selected this text to prepare her

scholars for the AP exam.

Participant 4: Rikke

Rikke is a Caucasian educator with 4 years of experience teaching ELAR. Currently,

Rikke is in her 2nd year at UHS. During her time at UHS, Rikke has worked as an ELAR 1

teacher, and currently she teaches honors level ELAR 1 classes. I was granted the opportunity to

interview Rikke on March 5, 2021. The interview occurred via Google Meets, which aligned

with district and campus expectations on campus meetings. After our initial interview, I

scheduled and observed Rikke's English 1 honors class on April 26, 2021. In preparation for the

observation, Rikke shared her Pear Deck slides (see appendix) and learning objectives (Table 7).

During our interview, Rikke described CRTs as text that "relates to students, cultural

backgrounds, whether that be race, or demographic, or age or anything else." She further

highlighted that her colleagues "have probably helped kind of cultivate that definition." Rikke

displayed her learning objective by asking the essential question "are we products of our

environments?" When asked about her thoughts on using CRTs in the classroom, Rikke

described using CRTs in the classroom as "incredibly important, especially when it's so difficult

to engage learners in the learning process." Additionally, Rikke mentioned that she typically

paired CRTs with anticipation guides as "priming activities." For Rikke, priming activities are

used to introduce a student to ideas presented in a text. She added that these methods are "ideal

in a regular school year, [but] this year has been tricky" due to hybrid learning and other Covid

based protocols. During my observation of Rikke's class, I witnessed virtual and face to face

students were engaged in reading The *Other Wes Moore*. By selecting *The Other Wes Moore,* Rikke adhere to her definition of CRTs, for the text, specifically the chapter students where reading, covered the topic of environment and its impact on a young black man's life. Rikke provided students with access to Pear Deck slides, which were used to guide instruction and allowed students to interact with each other. By integrating the Pear Deck Rikke was able to help guide students through the text while providing them with various ways to engage and interact. Although many of her students did not engage in a verbal discussion, they shared their insight on the Pear Deck slide, which was displayed on the board. As mentioned in her interview, student were engaged in hybrid learning, but despite this, Rikke was able to keep students engaged and focused on the themes presented in the text. A powerful moment in my observation occurred

When I asked Rikke about the learning environments she created to use CRTs, she stated that using CRTs helped her to create a learning space that enabled students to have discussions about the text. Furthermore, when it comes to her classroom community, Rikke explained that CRTs, "in a very simplified manner, made me feel closer with my students"; additionally, Rikke stated that CRTs made "kids more engaged, which is obviously a positive thing." Finally in the same quote she added "So I would just say had a really positive outcome on our classroom community." During my observation, I recognized that Rikke had a great rapport with her students, which helped her keep them engaged. I also observed that the classroom was a safe zone for students to share their ideas using multiple platforms. Although must of the engagement occurred via student typing their responses, there was an occasion were more students had a verbal response to a question. This situation occurred when Rikke asked student to share their reflection on how the main character interacted with law enforcement.

In response to questions on student perception towards her attempts at using CRTs in her classroom, Rikke has not noticed a positive or negative reaction from her students. Instead, she stated students "enthusiasm comes out just in their engagement, whether they're more engaged and understanding what we're reading, compared to a different type of text". On the other hand, when it comes to her perspective, Rikke described that using CRTs made her more "aware of what could potentially be going on in their life and their past experiences." Conversely, Rikke, in our interview, saw CRTs as having a small scale effect on student learning, stating that CRTs " brought out some learning that I probably otherwise wouldn't have seen, like some a little bit more enthusiasm from certain students or a little bit more involvement." From my observation, I noticed that there was a physical distance between Rikke and her students (this distance is due to Covid guidelines), but the Pear Deck slides provided students with an avenue to discuss key topics. Rikke was proactive in reminding students that they can type their responses then share their ideas with the class. To get more students to participate Rikke asked additional follow up questions, which focused on the context of the story and parallels between African American and Latin X cultures. These questions helped students make deeper connections; however, I observed that some students remain reluctant to share their insight; however, when Rikke brought in examples about law enforcement and race, students became slightly more engaged. While students conducted their discussion, using multiple forms of communication, Rikke actively listened and interjected only to provide clarification, ask a deeper question, or seek additional information.

When asked about potential challenges that she faces when using CRTs in the classroom, Rikke mentions that she has a difficult time finding resources that align with a given text. She

primarily mentions a lack of anticipation guides as a challenge, especially since these guides and other resources provide her with a "starting point".

For the final question of our interview, Rikke acknowledged that selection of CRT is based on the flexibility of curriculum standards and a teacher's ability to get to know their students.

Table 7

Rikke's learning objective for The Other Wes Moore

Lesson Objective for "The Other Wes Moore"	
LO	SWBAT make connections to identify, themes in, and make inferences about "The Other Wes Moore"
Essential Question	Are we products of our environment or our choices?
DOL	Students will read, annotate, and answer reading questions over Chapter 2: "Coming Home"
CRTs used by Rikke	*The Other Wes Moore*

Note I included a hyperlink that leads to a brief summary of The Other Wes Moore. Sources to the novel are included in the reference section of this study

Participant 5: Savannah

Savannah is a Caucasian teacher with 12 years of experience teaching ELAR. She is currently in her 8th year at UHS. During her stint teaching at UHS, she has taught several classes, but primarily focused on AP (Advanced Placement) and college prep courses. My interview with Savannah occurred on April 1, 2021, and to align with campus and district expectations, our interview was conducted via Google Meets. I followed my interview with

Savannah by observing her class on April 12, 2021. Savannah provided me with details on her literature circle (see appendix) and her learning objectives (Table 8).

Savannah defined CRTs as text "that the audience can reflect and see themselves in. And its stories from all different perspectives". Savannah added that her definition derives from her experience and her classroom. She additionally described her classroom as "science experiment. And I learned from these kids, and I see what they need and what they are yearning for."

Savannah recognized that CRTs in the classroom are "so important" insisting that "there are layers to culturally relevant text that we get with context and exigence". In connection to her classroom practice, Savannah said that she used CRTs to help her students discuss and navigate social justice issues. Savannah also shared that she "always start with issues of social justice, what's going on in the world". Moreover, Savannah used CRTs to help students analyze, discuss, and have a "critical eye" when it comes to text that mirrors their experiences. Savannah applied this practice in her classroom when she provided students with the freedom to select their text and the roles that they used in their literature circle. Savannah's students selected from The *Distance Between Us*, *The Other Wes Moore*, *Born a Crime*, and *Between the World and Me* (one group selected *Glass Castle).*

When asked about learning space and classroom community as it related to using CRTs, Savannah described her classroom as a place to "build those relationships and that trust with those kids." During her interview Savannah further explained that her learning space enabled students to have discussions about difficult topics and ask questions that they may not be able to ask in another classroom. She describes her community as a place "where kids...trust each other because [we] talk about things and we open up." The idea of safe classrooms and communities build on trust aligns with Savannah's classroom practices. During my observation, I noticed that

her groups consisted of a diverse group of students working face to face and virtually. In these groups, students were tasked with developing question stems, leading discussions, and answering pre-developed question stems through the Rhetorical Roundtable: Diction Detective activity. The Rhetorical Roundtable activity allowed students to develop analysis on their preselected text. As students worked in their groups, Savannah walked around the class and helped students facilitate conversations on their novels. I further observed that several students utilized various forms of communication to convey their ideas. For example, one group of scholars held an open discussion with their face to face partner, while their online partners placed their ideas in the chat box. Therefore, as stated in her interview, Savannah's classroom was a safe and trusting environment, and students of diverse backgrounds had the autonomy to ask questions, lead discussion, make their own decisions, and work in a community to answer difficult questions about topics mentioned in the books that they selected.

After detailing her classroom culture and community, Savannah provides me with details on how students reacted to her attempts to use CRTs. According to Savannah, "the more modern stuff I use, I think engages my kids because it's like I said, they can relate to it." On the other hand, Savannah described that some of her students "pushback", and some of her students felt that "things weren't necessarily the most appropriate." My observation aligned with Savannah's sentiment on the text that she used during my observation, for student were organized, engaged, and used grade level commentary to share their ideas. I did not witness any pushback; however, a few student where not prepared and did not participate as well as other students.

When asked if she encountered any challenges when using CRTs, Savannah responded that using CRTs can "bring up issues that may trigger kids", and due to COVID several kids are reading and discussing text through a computer, which Savannah highlighted as a unique

challenge this year. Although I did not observe this factor in her classroom, I can attest that most of the students working from home used the chat feature to share their ideas, where in person or face to face student elected to verbalize their opinions and answers.

As for her perspective on her student's lives, Savannah mentioned that using CRTs reminds her that her kids "need to be seen in the classroom". Additionally, CRTs allowed her to focus on the skills of her students and be more "empathetic" when it comes to her students and their lives. Savannah also stated that adding CRTs has not changed her perception on student learning, but has encouraged her that "when kids get choice you get more buy in." From the field notes taken during Savannah's observation, I noted that Savannah provided students with choice, by allowing them to have the ability to select their reading material and groups.

Savannah concluded our interview by detailing how she would select or verify that a newly discovered CRTs is ideal for her class. Savannah's process will include reading and familiarizing herself with the text and the author and advocating/ learning from various communities that represent her student population.

Table 8

Savannah's learning objective

Lesson Objective	
MC Mock Passage 4 and 5 Literature Circles Discussion:	Be prepared to share your role and what you analyzed with your group (You are the expert). All entries need to be on the Google Sheets for your group
Essential Question	How Does Syntax and Style Help an Argument?
DOL	MC Mock Passage 2 and 4 from Monday; Literature Circles Roles Google Sheets

CRTs used in Savannah's class	*Distance Between Us*, *The Other Wes Moore*, *Born a Crime*, and *Between the World and Me*

Note Hyperlinks for each CRTs leads to a brief summary of the text.

Participant 6: Ashley

Ashley is a Caucasian teacher at UHS; she has 14 years of experience in education, teaching at the secondary and university level. In her 3rd year at UHS, Ashley teaches dual credit and college prep courses. My interview with Ashley occurred on April 1, 2021. The interview occurred via Google Meets to align with campus and district protocols on meetings due to COVID-19. Following our interview, I observed Ashley's dual credit literature class on April 8, 2021. The class consisted of a group of young women using Google meets to communicate, interact, discuss, and analyze key themes in *The Joy Luck Club*. The text selected by Ashley was unique especially since the students in her class were all girls, and included students from various Asian backgrounds. To adhere to COVID protocol, several students worked from home, while the rest of her class worked in the actual classroom. To prepare me for the interview, Ashley shared her lesson plan (see appendix) and learning objective (Table 9).

To begin our interview, Ashley established her definition of CRTs as text "that the reader or the majority of readers identify with, or somehow it applies to their situation." Her definition comes from her experience as a writer and recognizing that as a high school student "none of that text] was culturally relevant to [her] personality." To align with her definition of CRTs, Ashley viewed CRTs in the classroom as "a necessity and is often what draws in those reluctant readers. The decision to use such text as teaching tools is also a mode of encouragement in itself."

As we continued our conversation, Ashley informed me that she used CRTs to help create conversations in her classroom. This year, in particular, she had a class of all girls, and they were able to have unique conversations and dive deeper into the text from a different

perspective. Ashley also outlined that she used CRTs to help students analyze the text, and this year, she allowed her students to write a folk short story that aligned with their cultural identities "I decided to let them do their own short story that was sort of in the style of folk narrative. And I learned that one of my students is Burmese and she, I think she was born in a refugee camp in Burma." In her learning objective, Ashley established that her student would lead discussion, and in her classroom, all her students played a unique role in sharing ideas about the next. From my observation, I noted that Ashley's small group of students, all girls, created questions and lead most of the conversation. Furthermore, Ashley's students shared their personal examples, which resonated across the classroom. As students led conversations and shared their personal connection, Ashley provided insight and kept her students on track by reminding them to share their examples. I also observed that Ashley gave all her students the space to ask their questions and share their experiences.

When asked about learning spaces and classroom communities, Ashley described her classroom as a "safe space" for her students to learn, research, and write about topics presented in CRTs. Ashley also acknowledged that she took the time to prepare her student to have hard conversations about themes in CRTs; according to Ashley, "I'm always setting them up with, hey, there are these things that are really difficult that they're going to show up in this poem, or this novel, or this news story. And it's happening in the world, whether this is a fictional piece or not, it's, it's happening, and we have to acknowledge that". As for her classroom communities, Ashley mentioned that her classroom is a place where students "want to talk about something a whole lot more and feel more comfortable talking about things when they're presented with something that they can identify with." During my observation, I observed Ashley allowing her student to lead and facilitate conversations. While her student led the discussion (by creating

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questions), Ashley helped to facilitate the conversation. Throughout my observation, I noticed Ashley's students were highly engaged and displayed a willingness to have tough conversations about topics and themes from the text. The themes within the text led to additional conversations on COVID, racism, the American Dream, and cultural differences.

For my next set of questions, Ashley described how her students reacted to her using CRTs in the classroom. Ashley depicted these reactions as mixed, for one group, her dual credit students, were "receptive", and another group "a different dual credit class", was less receptive, and ended up reading the book "1984". Ashley explained to me that this particular class was more receptive to 1984 due to its connection to political concerns in today's society. Along these lines, Ashley mentioned that she has, from time to time, faced a few challenges when it comes to using CRTs in the classroom. In one occurrence, Ashley described a situation that occurred when she taught in college, this situation involved her using Public Enemy lyrics to help students, at the college level, understand how to develop an argumentative essay. As a result, she received "several negative looks"; however, in contrast, she states that her current students do not push back on CRTs, and are able to make connections because they share these experiences with the authors of these texts. In the classroom, I did not witness student pushback, and as stated in her interview, I noticed that students made connections with the text and shared their experiences. It was especially powerful to observe Ashley's Asian scholars share their cultural experience with immigration and race, which connected to the experiences of the LatinX students in the class.

When I asked Ashley to explain how CRTs have changed her perspective on her students' lives and their learning, she revealed to me that CRTs help her learn from her students. One specific example occurred while Ashley worked at a different high school. In this example, Ashley introduced a text with themes that emphasized dynamic components of the Jewish

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religion and culture, introducing this text led to her discovering that one of her students was Jewish, which allowed her to tell her students that "you guys are teaching me like, like, we're exchanging knowledge, even though you know, I'm just the one facilitating it." On the other hand, using CRTs has not changed Ashley's perspective towards student learning, for she affirmed that "we needed to have more, more stories and more, just whatever's being written by more than just white men. I've always thought that that needed to be the case. We need to hear more voices because we have more voices in this country."

    To conclude our interview, Ashley informed me that she would approach or verify that a newly discovered text was culturally relevant by workshopping and working with colleagues.

Table 9

Ashley's lesson objective

Lesson Objective for Student led discussion questions.	
LO	students will share short stories written based on one aspect of Amy Tan's work; students will lead discussion of *The Joy Luck Club* with their pre-written upper-level questions; students will apply their own questions to a new close reading assignment
Essential Question	How can my own creative stories follow the narrative models that Amy Tan wrote in The Joy Luck Club? How can I understand the importance of Amy Tan's novel The Joy Luck Club in American literature? How can I use the questions I've written to formulate an analytical, literary essay?
DOL	Students will use prepared discussion questions based on Amy Tan's novel The Joy Luck Club in order to direct discussion of the novel; students will begin outlining an essay based on one of their prepared discussion questions
CRT used in	*[Joy Luck Club](#)*

Note The hyperlink leads to a short summary.

Participant 7: Nia

Nia is a Caucasian ELAR teacher at UHS. She has taught English for 8 years, and is currently in her 2nd stint working at UHS, teaching Pre-AP. My interview with Nia occurred on March 5, 2021. To adhere to COVID protocols outlined by the campus and school district, Nia and I conducted our initial interview via Google Meets. On May 17 2021, I completed my observation of Nia's Pre-AP classroom. My original observation was rescheduled due to administrative obligations. During my initial (05/14/20210) visit, Nia's class was in the process of analyzing spoken word poetry using the Rapid Fire Method. Upon completing their writing, students were asked to discuss key concepts and make connections. The primary poem used during this initial observation was a spoken word poem titled "High School Training Ground". Although I did not complete this initial observation, Nia shared with me responses from her Google chat box, which was used by students to share their opinions. Copies of these responses are hyperlinked in the appendix section of this study.

During my 2nd observation, which occurred on May 17, 20201, Nia's class worked on completing the last part of their module, which included watching and reading spoken poetry. To prepare me for her class, Nia provided me with her lesson cycle, poetry transcripts, and links to the spoken word poems used in her class (see appendix). Nia did not provide me with a traditional learning objective; however, the package of work samples and other materials, previously mentioned, provide a sequence of her lesson.

Nia established her definition of CRTs as text "that encompasses multiple texts together by a variety of authors from a variety of backgrounds, not just geographic locations. But I mean, we could say nationality ethnicity, in return to say socioeconomic status, which plays into a lot of different cultures." Nia's definition was developed by her experience working at UHS and

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another secondary school with a high level of Caucasian students: "working at two different high schools, one predominantly populated by students of color, and then another predominantly populated by Caucasian students really helped me build any working definition of a culturally relevant text". She goes on to add that her definition was further developed by her" relationships with my students, and peers that are people of color and people that are Caucasian." Additionally, Nia affirmed CRTs in the classroom as important, highlighting that all contents should use CRTs to allow students to " see that people from the same places that they've been in next door, and [the] next city over and can do these things just as well as anyone else can."

When asked how she used CRTs in the classroom, Nia stated that she uses CRTs in a variety of ways, specifically by allowing students to read lyrics, poems, and other forms of fiction, while completing dialectical journals or jigsaw activities. In her observation, Nia had student interact and reflect on three poems. Along with the poems, student engaged in a writing activity that encouraged them to reflect, revisit idea, and discuss key components.

When I asked Nia about CRTs and their impact on her learning space and classroom community, she mentioned that this year, with COVID, she has to focus on a hybrid learning model that involved social distancing protocols and students learning from home. However, in the past, she was able to create learning spaces conducive to the sharing of knowledge. Nia further described that when using CRTs, her students facilitate better discussions because "they [CRTs] are more relatable to students in their everyday lives, and the things that they have experienced." During both interviews, Nia classes where a combination of virtual and face to face students. Nia worked with both groups and encouraged her virtual students to participate more in the discussion. Even though most of her virtual students used the chat feature, there were a few students willing to unmute and answer or ask questions about the text. Thus, despite the

hybrid model, Nia displayed her ability to create a learning space "conducive to the sharing of knowledge."

Nia continued our interview by outlining that her students do not seem "fazed" by her attempts to use CRTs; however, this year (COVID year), she was unable to introduce several texts that she normally attempts to introduce in the class. Additionally, her focus was diverted due to the amount of time taken by students to complete assignments; however in the past she has witnessed students buy-in if the text was deemed "pop culturally relevant". To clarify what she mean by "buy-in", Nia provided me with this insight: "it's when they think it is more relevant to them, then there's more buy in and engagement, I guess, engagement is the better word to do, whatever analysis that I'm asking them to do, and then follow up with whatever activity comes after that." Nia also added that throughout her career she has experienced student apathy and lack of comprehension. When I asked Nia to clarify student apathy and lack of comprehension, she mentioned that at times students "do not want to engage in the text or in a discussion about the text, or read it at all", and when it comes to comprehension, Nia stated "I think part of that is the system kind of beating students down standardized tests, beating students down when they don't pass them so many times, they just think that they can't do it. So they don't want to try."

When asked about how CRTs have helped shape her perspective towards student lives and their learning, Nia revealed that reading CRTs made her "be more mindful of being more open and introducing different parts of like, current events and things like that into the classroom, and, and different authors as well, as far as culturally relevant text." As for student learning, Nia's perspective has not changed, she revealed that using CRTs "access their ability and their potential. It makes it a little bit easier, I guess, in many cases." My observation of Nia's

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class aligned with her response to the question on her perspectives. For example, after her students viewed the spoken word poem "My Name", Nia asked her class "has anyone mispronounced your name?" This question led to a brief conversation on names and race, and although a few students shared their insight, Nia reminded her students that it was "okay to correct people if they messed up your name." The second poem Nia played was entitled "Black Privilege", again Nia instructed her students to have a brief conversation and ask questions. When given the opportunity, one of Nina's students asked the question "why was she so loud." This question allowed Nia to address the class and have a conversation about race concerns in America. Although the conversation was short, students were given the space to share their ideas.

To conclude our interview, Nia described to me that she would use a focus group, insight from a group of teachers. She would also research the book, the author, what the "district cautions against", and how the characters relate to her students, specifically she would look for whether characters are "are relatable to my students."

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Findings of Research

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This study is a qualitative case study developed to identify teacher perspectives towards using CRTs in their classrooms. As a qualitative research study, the results of this study outline the insights and practices of 7 ELAR teachers working at Urban High School (UHS). Thus, it is noted that the context of this study reflects a general group of participants and not the entire ELAR department at UHS. However, commonalities and patterns appeared throughout the interview and observation process of each participant; thus, providing details on key factors that align with each research question.

Research Question 1

What factors, if any, interfere with a teacher's ability to utilize culturally relevant texts in their classroom at urban high school (UHS)?

Through our interview each participant outlined various factors that interfered with their ability to use CRTs in their text. Among these factors, two of the seven participants alluded to limited availability of text. Toni, for instance, revealed to me that one of her biggest challenges when using CRTs is finding texts that support the needs of all her scholars. Toni expounded that

> "one of the biggest challenges is finding the Text you know, you really don't know about the lack of diversity that's within our text until you actually go search… or if you have your Asian American student who comes to you and say Miss, I noticed that you do a lot of African American text or Islam or Hispanic text, but what about me"?

Michael also alluded to limited availability of text when he stated "but I do think that the available choices for more open culturally relevant text should be in larger amount. I don't think there's enough."

Another concern described by two of the seven participants was a lack of teacher resources designed to help teachers navigate CRTs. For example, Rikke described the "lack of resources or already made lessons or activities for certain texts, or certain books", as a challenge when it comes to using CRTs in her classroom. She further acknowledged that having the resources acted "as a starting point, especially if you've never taught a text before just to see what other people have done…" Michael on the other hand revealed his disappointment with lack of resources by describing that the resources provided to him by

district "don't always have you know enough choices". Michael also felt that he needed "more options" when it comes to both the availability of CRTs and teaching resources.

Additionally, Rikke and Nia expressed student and teacher testing obligations as an inhibitor when it came to using CRTs in their classrooms. From Rikke's perspective, the COVID year has presented a unique challenge when it comes to her classroom, she specifically expressed having "struggled to find a balance between our Springboard curriculum, the on level curriculum, and meeting standards for tests and whatnot". In our interview, Nia expressed during her experience as a reading teacher students exhibiting an unwillingness "to engage in the text or discussion" due in part to "the system kind of berating students down standardized tests, beating students down when they don't pass them so many times."

Throughout the study, participants described student reluctance and apathy as an ongoing challenge when it came to using CRTs in their classroom. Participants used terms and phrases such as *some students, apathy*, and *dig* to describe the difficulties they experienced when implementing CRTs in their classrooms. From her years as an educator, Evelyn conveyed an intriguing outline about how she would need to "dig" to get students to engage and interact, even when using CRTs. Evelyn's frustrations are evident when she explained to me that "we had class discussion, I was kind of pulling it out of them a little bit." Rikke also recognized a level of reluctance in some of her students, even when introducing CRTs in her classroom. Rikke described that despite introducing CRTs in her classroom "some of her reluctant students were not as engaged with the text." Nia, like Evelyn and Rikke mentioned a lack of engagement as an obstacle to using CRTs in her classroom. In our interview Nia revealed that her students displayed apathy by "not wanting to engage in the text or in a discussion about the text, or read it at all." In addition to a lack of engagement and apathy, Nia adds the term

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comprehension, which according to Nia added to her struggles when it came to teaching her "reading classes" in the past.

The global pandemic that occurred during the spring of 2020 presented several challenges across the world. These challenges were also evident in the educational sectors. During my interview, three of the seven participants described the global COVID pandemic as an obstacle. Evelyn, for example, outlined her frustrations with students and their lack of effort, due to the struggles of "this year". As stated by Evelyn, only "20% of my students actually literally doing whatever it is I assign." This admission caused Evelyn to reflect on the previous years that she used CRTs in her classroom. Additionally, Rikke put it eloquently when she described this year as an "anomaly" , and because of this "anomaly" she is finding it difficult to balance the demands of teaching a "hybrid classroom" (note a hybrid classroom is a combination of face to face and virtual scholars). For Nia, group and partner work is a hallmark in her classroom; however, because of the pandemic "group work isn't quite the same." Nia goes on to say "I used to do a lot of partner work, I really prefer that but having to have students socially distance from each other, that's a little bit hard to do." Savannah major challenge with COVID/ hybrid learning involved students reading CRTs at home and "talking about them...over a computer". In contrast to Evelyn, Rikke, and Nia, Savannah saw the COVID pandemic as a way for students to use CRTs to bring up "more questions" as they make critical connections to the world and the text.

One common factor identified that impeded most of the participants' efforts to use CRTs on their campus was district regulations on curriculum standards and text selection. Evelyn, as the most experienced teacher, provided a passionate soliloquy about district standards and curriculum. From her perspective, Evelyn lacks the autonomy, in her current role,

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to "just really make my own decision on text. So it's pretty much district chosen or team driven. It's not really me, I don't really get to choose what my students read, I really don't get, and I really don't get a choice in it." Toni vehemently shared her concern by insisting that "the curriculum is not changing. The backgrounds of our kids are not changing, you know, and they're real quick to tell you the demographics in your interview (when using the term interview, Toni is referring to hiring interviews)." Rikke, like Toni, expressed frustrations with the text options utilized for her honors students stating that the "Springboard texts specifically are not very, I would not consider them very culturally relevant at all. In regards to our specific kids, the springboard texts are not in tune with UHS students at all." Rikke mentioned a concern with having "a strict adherence to curriculum", which limited her ability to be flexible with selection of a given text. Nia's primary concern with district guidelines and restrictions involved text selection, and as she pointed out, "I know we have to follow certain guidelines for the district. And even sometimes, even if we request something, it may be denied, depending on whatever reason." Additionally, Michael expressed his concerns when he stated that "the challenges are always going to be that, you know, sometimes it's not what the district might, this might not always be what the districts want you to use."

Lastly, three of the seven participants mentioned language and or content as a factor that interfered with their abilities to use CRTs in their classrooms. Evelyn explained that "there are always challenges, especially if it's a text that has inappropriate language." Evelyn also noted a challenge with language other than English. Evelyn describes an encounter where she "didn't want to mispronounce the words at all, because I didn't' feel comfortable", so instead of reading the text she and her class "listen to the audio so that it would be pronounced in the Spanish correctly." Savannah's experience with CRTs and language/ content differed in the

sense that she is undeterred in using CRTs in her classroom to guide students through difficult task; however, she did share an example in which students felt that "things weren't necessarily the most appropriate or that I was landing one way." These very comments allowed Savannah to reflect on her practices and develop safeguards which allow her to "pull it back to where they feel a little bit more comfortable." Finally, Ashley, the third of the seven participants who mentioned language and content as a factor, shared her past experiences with CRTs at the college level. As a college professor, Ashley stated that on many occasions, students would push back because of the language and content in a given CRTs. Ashley recalls watching one of her students get "visibly angry" after listening to a song that she felt demanded law enforcement. In contrast, Ashley mentioned that her students in UHS do not have a similar reaction to such context, in fact, Ashely recognizes "that those are the words that are going to draw them in."

Table 10 outlines the factors identified by participants that interfere with their ability to use CRTs in their classroom. Further analysis of the data revealed several factors identified by participants that interfered with their ability to use CRTs in their classrooms. Among these factors, several of the participants alluded to district guidelines/ restrictions as and hindrance; additionally, the presence of COVID-19 introduced several barriers, including, but not limited to text access, technology access, and barriers between students and teachers, which are normally mitigated during a traditional school year. I was intrigued to see that only four teachers shared language or content as an interfering factor. I would be curious to obtain more insight on this factor to determine if more teachers have concerns with language or content. I am further intrigued to understand the impact that campus level teams, as mentioned by Evelyn, may have on the selection, distribution, and usage of CRTs in ELAR classroom at UHS.

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Accordingly, the data does suggest that more research is needed to understand the full extent of the factors mentioned by teachers. The dialogue mentioned in this section provided powerful insight into barriers teachers recognize as factors that interfere with their ability to use CRTs in their classrooms at UHS. The details shared will help develop an initial conversation, but I see that more research is needed to capture more varied perspectives.

Table 10

Factors that interfere with the use of CRTs at UHS

Participants	Evelyn	Toni	Rikke	Savannah	Ashley	Nia	Michael
Availability of Text		X					X
Lack of teaching resources			X				X
Testing obligations			X			X	
Student apathy/ reluctance (lack of student engagement)	X				X	X	
Covid/ hybrid learning	X		X			X	
District text guideline or restriction (curriculum, text selection, PLC requirements)	X	X	X			X	X
Language or content	X			X	X		

Research Question 2

What practices/ resources are used by ELAR teachers, at UHS, to implement CRTs?

Throughout the study, participants described various teaching practices and resources that they utilized in conjunction with CRTs. The practices/ resources mentioned in the study were

also on full display in the classroom, especially when it came to students using questions (teacher or student created) and participating in whole, small, and hybrid-based discussion groups.

In more than one way, five of the seven participants described the various ways they pair CRTs with writing activities in their classrooms. Evelyn used dialectical journals to help students engage with the text. Each year, Evelyn "would have students keep a dialectical journal". In comparison to Evelyn, Toni would use journals and writing activities to help students activate "prior knowledge." Additionally, Toni allowed students to practice writing on topics and themes presented in CRTs by allowing them to use the Precis method to write about topics that they feel passionate about. As an advanced placement teacher, Savannah paired John Lewis' letter to American with a "rhetorical analysis paper." Ashley, on the other hand, elected to bypass a traditional essay assignment and allowed her students to write a short story after reading "Their Eyes Were Watching God." Ashley described the rationale behind her decision was to allow students to "do their own short story that was sort of in the style of folk narrative the way that novel is written with sort of like dialect and slang." Nia, like her colleagues, used activities ranging from dialectical journals and jigsaw groups as activities to help students navigate CRTs. Nia also added that she "could sit here for 10 minutes and not be done listening to things that I could do in my classroom with cultural text."

A practice mentioned and witnessed throughout the study was the manifestation of a safe classroom conducive to helping students feel comfortable when interacting with CRTs. It is apparent that teachers at UHS acknowledge the needs of their students, for terms such as safe, open, respect, trust, were commonly used when I asked about the classroom setting they created when using CRTs. For example, Rikke revealed to me that her goal as a teacher was to use CRTs to promote evidence driven discussions in her class. Rikke insists that her classroom is "open for

whatever you want to say as long as you can articulate it and back it up." To enhance a sense of trust and respect in her classroom, Nia worked to create an environment where students "feel comfortable enough...to share whatever they feel like sharing." As for Toni, using CRTs in the classroom means "creating a safe space for your children." Additionally, Toni added that "you can't create a safe space for them if they don't feel like they can't be themselves." Toni displays this example when she encourages/ provides students with the opportunity to speak Spanish when doing a group discussion over a CRTs in her classroom. Similarly, Evelyn described to me that when using CRTs, she aimed to "create an environment where ... students feel comfortable." Additionally, she worked to "provide an environment where it's safe for them to voice their opinion." To ensure students have an environment to read, analyze, and discuss controversial topics in CRTs, Michael mentioned his room is "more of a safe space." Similarly, Ashley created "safe spaces" to help her students feel comfortable to discuss difficult themes/ topics presented in the CRTs that they read. Finally, Savannah recognized that she gives her students a "safe space to say what they think."

One practice utilized by three of the seven participants involved using CRTs to give student's autonomy in their classroom. Toni mentioned that adding CRTs to her class empowered her to apply practices that allowed her to "stand back and let them make the discussion and make the decision." Additionally, Toni encouraged her students to further their knowledge by creating their own question via Socratic Seminars. Savannah offers her students the ability to select and use CRTs, specifically novels, based on their decisions. According to Savannah, when students "get choice. You get more buy-in." For Ashley, freedom of choice comes when students are able to take topics/ themes discussed in CRTs and create unique final

projects. She described that in one of her higher level courses, were able to research current events and create a "call to action poster."

The final practice mentioned by two of the case study participants was the ideal of using anticipation guides to activate prior knowledge. Rikke relied on anticipation activity to help her students. Reflecting on her pre-Covid experience with CRTs, specifically "The Other Wes Moore" Rikke says, "We did a really great job with all the priming activities like the anticipation guides and discussions." Evelyn, who also used past experiences to provide insight, mentioned that she used "anticipatory things, activities that try to get students to connect more with the novel."

For research question two, participants provided intriguing insight into the skills and practices they commonly implement while using CRTs. Table 11 outlines these specific skills. In conjunction with the participants' responses, observation notes on their practices yield additional resources and practices applicable to the use of CRTs. As observed, all participants with this case study had to adapt to multiple forms of communication to help students engage. These forms of communication included using in class discussions, virtual chat rooms, Canvas discussion boards, and Google meet chat features. Moreover, all of the participants used various forms of discussion questions to engage students in conversations about themes and topics presented in the text. More specifically, participants Ashley, Toni, and Savannah, allowed students to create their own questions and led discussion. Another practice observed during my semi-formal observation of each participant was the use of technology such as Google meets, Canvas, and Pear Deck. These various forms of technology were used to interact with students who participated from home. Lastly, six of the seven participants provided me with and learning objective. The learning objectives at UHS are a requirement, but teachers have the ability to

create their learning objectives to align with the needs of the students. Each objective was paired with an essential question. Although one of the teachers did not provide me with a traditional learning objective, she did give me a detailed outline of the lesson cycle and other materials used throughout her lesson. The addition of this artifact showed that teachers took the time to prepare lesson that aligned with using CRTs in their classrooms. The details from my observations of each participant is located in the appendix section of this study.

Although question two of this study is answered, for this moment in time, I would like to obtain more detail on how these practices are applied in a traditional, non-Covid classroom. Despite the subtle walk down memory lane provided to me by most participants, I would be curious to see how these practices translate in our traditional classroom settings. Moreover, I am curious to see how more student-led or student-created practices, as identified by Toni, Ashly, and Savannah would translate in other ELAR classrooms that use CRTS, specifically, I am curious to see the attributes a teacher would need to facilitate this level of student freedom. Finally, when it comes to safe zones or safe classrooms, I would be interested in knowing how teachers create and maintain a safe setting throughout the year, and if changes in policies, whether political or environmental, may alter how they develop their classroom environment.

Table 11

Outline of practices/ resources are used by ELAR teachers, at UHS, to implement CRTs

Participants	Evelyn	Toni	Rikke	Savannah	Ashley	Nia	Michael
Writing activities (dialectical journals)	X	X		X	X	X	
Safe zone/ safe classroom	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student-led (freedom of choice, autonomy to make		X		X	X		

decisions; student created questions)						
Anticipation guides	X		X			

Research Question 3

What are teachers' perspective towards using CRTs as an instructional tool in their classrooms?

The final research question of my study asked participants to reflect on their perspective towards using CRTs as an instructional tool in their classrooms. Using several open ended interview questions, participants were able to reveal several key details.

During our interview, all participants conveyed to me their insights on how CRTs impact the level of discussion that occurred in their classrooms. Participant Rikke noticed that CRTs made her students "more open to talking about things" which resulted in her and her class having discussion on topics from the text that related to their lives. Nia, like Rikke, sees the benefit of CRTs in helping students "open up more discussion and better discussion, because they are more relatable to students in their everyday lives, and the things that they have experienced." Toni mentioned that her CRTs "open up doors for discussions and for them to feel empathy towards their peers." Evelyn, like the other participants in this case study, mentioned that when using CRTs her students were "more likely to have discussions." As for Michael, using CRTs "opens the door for more conversation." Ashley described that using CRTs allow her students to "talk about something a whole lot more and feel more comfortable talking about things when they're presented with something that they can identify with." Furthermore, participant Ashley stated that CRTs in the classroom lead to "students having discussions about the questions that they have", which is important "because they're able to have those voices."

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Another interesting perspective mentioned by two of the seven participants was the ideal of student buy-in in relation to the use of CRTs in the classroom. In our interview, Michael mentioned "that using culturally relevant text increases their buy in" He also felt that "if the lesson is more relevant to the culture of the students, they're more bought in and they're more apt to take in stride to be able to increase their learning." Savannah's sees CRT as an ideal way to give students choice, and "when kids get choice you get more buy in."

Six of the seven participants in this case study acknowledged that using CRTs engaged students due to the student's ability to relate to the text. Evelyn, for example, insisted that "the more they see themselves...the more likely they are to be engaged and want to, you know, want to read it." Similarly, Toni recognized an increase in her student engagement when she introduced a CRTs poem that connected to her Latin X students. Toni expressed that introducing this poem allowed her students to "have more of a personal connection", which made them "excited to do whatever project that was waiting for them." Rikke attested that CRTs in her classroom "made them more open to talking about thing because we naturally have discussion about whatever they read in the text and students typically related to their lives...and it makes more kids engaged, which is obviously a positive thing." Savannah, like her colleagues, said that CRTs engaged her kids "because...they can relate to it." Nia revealed to me that in her classroom "when they think it is more relevant to them, there's more buy-in and engagement." Michael also expressed witnessing a different level of engagement with his students when he used CRTs in his classroom. In our interview, Michaels stated that "it was a story that they were really connected with, and it had characters in it that they could relate to and I felt like they were um they were very much engaged."

Each participant in my study was passionate about the needs for CRTs to represent the cultural significance of their scholars. Key terms used by many of the participants included represent, mirror, relate, and connect. Several of the participants provided me with an eloquent definition of CRTs, which encompassed a passion and respect for their students and their cultures.

Evelyn highlighted in our interview this very notation when she said that CRTs must "represent your ethnicity and your background." For Toni, representation matters because as an educator, she wants her kids "to see themselves in the stories and the fiction and nonfiction things that we read in the class." Additionally Rikke understood that "when you have students like ours...culturally relevant text, is typically not old white dude text, but is something that relates to the younger audience." One of the most powerful quotes came from Savannah who as an honors teacher mentioned that "I want my library of what we read in class to mirror what's walking through the door of my classroom...because that's more important to me, then you know, reading what all the eight other AP teachers read." An equally powerful statement came from Ashley who shared with me the notion that "the decision to use such texts as teaching tools is also a mode of encouragement in itself, for many students, as they feel seen and heard in an arena that has for so long shown them only materials that come from an entirely different point of view." From Nia's point of view, CRTs must contain character and circumstance that "are relatable to my students...sound like my students, and [go] through similar situations in life." Michael added an important sentiment to the idea of representation when he said that "if there's no connection, then they are not going to get anything out of the text."

An interesting insight mentioned in the interview of three of the seven case studies involved preparing, acknowledging, and helping students deal with emotional reaction when

using CRTs in the classroom. The aspect of student emotional needs and concerns was an inviting piece of data. For example, Toni recounted a situation where reading a CRT led to one of her students "started crying in class." In response to her students crying, Toni "invited her to go to the restroom", and when the student preferred not to go, another student "just gave her a hug." For Rikke it is important to provide students with a "general disclaimer" when it comes to dealing with difficult topics or themes presented in CRTs. As a veteran teacher, Ashley is aware of the needs of her scholars, and when it comes to CRTs, she understands when a text may be "too intense" for the scholars.

Each participant in the study revealed that using CRTs in their classroom enabled them to learn from their students. An interesting trend presented in the data is the ideal that CRTs helped the participants to shape their knowledge of their students. For instance, participant Evelyn recognized that she "learned thing about students" after they read CRTs in her classroom. Additionally, Toni verified that she learned a valuable lesson about colorism when she shared CRTs with one of her class. She details this encounter when she said "until he mentioned that you know until he said within his own community just because he was lighter skin he's not Hispanic." Rikke says using CRTs aided her in "anticipating things that students will or will not relate to"; moreover, it allows her "to think about those situations that they could be dealing with in their lives." After a personal journey reading CRTs (for her personal and professional growth) Nia learned that she can be "more mindful of being more open and introduce different parts of like, current event and things like that into the classroom, and different authors as well as far as culturally relevant text and informational and literature." Savannah described that using CRTs helps her, as a teacher, learn more about her students and their culture. In our interview she highlights that "every time I bring in something that's not my own personal culture, but I know

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that I have students in there who will identify with and know that culture, I learned something about that culture." Moreover, using CRTs has encouraged Ashley on multiple levels. Firstly, it has made her more of an empathetic teacher. Secondly, Ashley shared that working with her students and using CRTs helped her "to examine my own place in life and examine what my viewpoint is on how I see people and how I treat people." Lastly, when it comes to CRTs Michael said "you find out more about your students because of the way that they react to certain texts. And I think that's what the whole basis of it is getting to know your students in a way that they can continue to provide them with the best education to make them the most successful." Finally seven out of seven of the participants realized the value of text selection practices centered on selecting CRTs that are relatable, well vetted, all encompassing, and involves teachers acting as advocates or allies for their students. Rikke adheres to the notion of selecting text that relates to her students when she said "if I have that flexibility I think it's just a general increased awareness of what my students might relate to it either with their experiences or cultures, or whatever the case is." Nia, like Rikke affirmed that text selection for her would involve vetting the text to understand the author's background, understanding what district "cautions against", and finally selecting text with "characters [that] are relatable to my students, where they sound like my students, and they're going through similar situations in life." Toni planned to "use surveys" to gage the interest of her students before introducing new CRTs in her classrooms. Evelyn displayed her passion for students when she stated selecting CRTs involved a need to "fight for my students sot that they can see themselves in the novels, because if you can see it, you can be it." Michael confirmed that text selection would be as simple as vetting CRTs by reading the text. Ashley introduced an interesting point when she stated that she would "workshop or whatever, with some other people I with who identity differently from me" before

selecting CRTs for her classroom. Lastly, Savannah mentioned that text selection for her would involve being an ally for "different cultures and different groups", and understanding what her students are dealing with.

The multiple layers of insight revealed in this study provides several answers to the third research question. As seen in table 12, these insights are varied; however, on several occasions, teacher responses are aligned. The details provided to answer question three will further serve in the development of artifacts (see appendix) to help guide teachers in shaping their perspective when it comes to using CRTs in their classrooms.

Table 12

T*eachers' perspective towards using CRTs as an instructional tool in their classrooms*

Participants	Evelyn	Toni	Rikke	Savannah	Ashley	Nia	Michael
Led to classroom discussion (or conversations)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Buy-In				X		X	X
Student engagement (Students relate/ mirror text)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Embrace and acknowledge Student emotional reactions		X	X		X		
Teachers connect or learn more from their students	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Text selection (Student related; research driven; vetted through collaboration)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Interaction between the Research and the Context

Due to strict district protocols and procedure brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, participants were interviewed using the Google Meets feature. Each participant agreed to adhere to the guidelines originally set further in the TAMU research protocol guideline, and signed consent forms thereby, allowing me to record our interviews. Copies of consent forms were provided to participants per request, with three of the seven participants receiving their copies via email. Moreover, consent forms were stored securely in a locked office located on site at UHS. Each participant agreed to keep their camera on during the duration of the semi-structured interview, and six of the seven participants conducted their interview in the comfort of their classrooms. During the interview process, I outlined each step of the process, reminding participants that I will use pseudonyms to protect theirs and the school's identity. After conducting the interviews, I observed each participant's class. Observations occurred throughout the month of April and May, and due to heavy testing schedules were limited to 45-50 minutes.

Finally, after transcribing the initial interviews, I provided participants with a Google document version of the interview. Five of the seven participants agreed to the accuracy of the content, and the two of the participants made subtle changes before agreeing to the accuracy of the transcript.

How the Context Impacted the Findings

Since I had close connections to the participants, the school, and the students who will be impacted by this study, I informed and reminded each participants during the interview and observation process that I planned to gather and analyze their insight to further understand how and why they use CRTs in their classroom. I would describe my relationship with each participant as mutual and cordial, for we have worked together in the same department for three years. While conducting portions of this project, I acted as the instructional coach for the ELAR department, which gave me insight into the teaching methodology of the teachers in this study. During the study, I was mindful of these factors, and while conducting interviews, I reminded participants that I was conducting interviews to obtain their perspectives. As for the observations, I stated to each participant that I was not coming in as an evaluator, but rather as a learner. Additionally, the member check process gave teachers the ability to review their interview transcript and make comments/ corrections as needed. As previously stated, I used the semi-structured interview process, periodically adding follow questions to obtain deeper insight into the participants initial response, and after the interview, I conducted unstructured observations of each participant. While conducting the interview and observations, I maintained detailed notes of participant responses and their actions. The original goal of this study was to interview participants who taught students in on-level courses; however, individuals previously asked to participate preferred not to be a part of this study. As a result, only one of the seven participants currently teach an on-level or intervention class, with the other six participants currently teaching an honors or college prep class.

The seven study participants expressed sincere interest in participating. During the interview and observation, participants provided informative insight. Several of the participants

responded positively to the questions and mentioned to me that the questions really made them reflect and think about their current practices. Additionally, I was fortunate to have all seven participants conduct both portions of the study, which included the semi-structured interview and the observation.

How the Research Impacted the Context

As the final step in the data collection process, participants were provided copies of their interview transcripts via Google documents. Each participant agreed to the accuracy of the transcript with only two of the participants deciding to make subtle stylistic changes to the content. The insight provided by each participant will result in the development of professional development presentations and a rubric/ checklist capable of helping guide teachers interested in adding and or using CRTs in their classrooms.

Although two of three questions were answered based on the insight provided by participants, questions still remain when it comes to research question 1 (What factors, if any, interfere with a teacher's ability to utilize culturally relevant texts in their classroom at urban high school (UHS)? I am specifically interested in understanding how the global pandemic, which was a factor mentioned by several participants, will have a lasting impact on the teachers ability to use CRTs. Additionally, I am curious to see how other factors, such as district influence and testing obligations may continue to impact a teacher's ability to use CRTs in their classrooms. In the future further studies should include the voice of teachers who work with students normally not represented in honors or college prep classrooms.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

The qualitative case study investigating the insights of seven ELAR teachers serving students at UHS to determine their perspective towards using CRTs in their classroom. The

seven participants in this case study outlined several obstacles that interfered and in some cases prevented them from using CRTs in their classroom. Among these obstacles, district influence, testing, availability of text, and student reluctance were mentioned as key factors. Participants also added the impact of virtual learning, due to pandemic restrictions, as a key hurdle in their ability to CRTs in their classroom. A key practice mentioned by all participants, when it came to CRTS in their classrooms was the idea of a safe class environment or as several of the participants mentioned a safe class, showing that teachers valued a setting conducive to both the academic and social needs of their students; additionally, teacher valued students input and utilized multiple forms of communication to help students share their insights. Along these lines a common practice shared by all participants was a well-designed lesson cycle that incorporated discussion questions (student or teacher created) as a guide to help students expand their understanding of themes or topics mentioned in the text. For all participants CRTs was viewed as a tool to help with classroom discussion and encourage classroom discussion; furthermore, all participants showed transparency by insisting that CRTs invite them to connect and or learn from their students on a profound level.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

Summary of findings from Chapter 4

The qualitative case study on the perspectives and practices of seven English Language Arts teachers who use CRTs at UHS has revealed several intriguing factors capable of positively impacting future practices at UHS. Synthesis of interview responses, notes taken during semi-formal observations, and lesson artifacts revealed compelling details on the seven participants and their willingness to identify CRTs as a useful learning tool in their classrooms. As depicted in the results, each participant has crafted a functional definition of CRTs that aligns with helping students feel seen in their classroom. Particularly interesting is the notion that each participant crafted a definition that emboldened their stance as educators who are passionate about recognizing, acknowledging, and preserving the cultures of the students in their classrooms. The case studies also revealed insightful details on factors that interfered with teachers using CRTs in their classrooms. Among these factors, several participants alluded to testing obligations, availability of text, student apathy, and district influence on curriculum and text selection as a hindrance. An additional, and perhaps unintended interfering factor mentioned by participants was the impact of COVID-19 on their instruction. In other words, participants had to address adjusting from a traditional classroom setting to a hybrid (virtual and face to face teaching) model interfered with their common practices.

From the standpoint of teaching with CRTs, participants mentioned writing or journaling, anticipation charts, student-led classroom setting as important pedagogical practices. Participants additionally mentioned creating safe classrooms as a pivotal to their abilities to properly implement and use CRTs in their classrooms. Another common practice among each participant was the usage of discussion questions to engage students and craft various forms of

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conversations in their classrooms. These conversations enabled students to share their cultural knowledge and experiences. Along these lines, each participant adapted to COVID-19 concerns by providing students multiple ways to engage in conversation about themes and ideas presented in CRTs. Such flexibility gave students multiple opportunities to interact with the text, their teachers, and their classmates. Another commonality between all participants was the ideal of creating a safe classroom for students to explore and discuss CRTs in their classroom. For participants a safe classroom entailed building trust, acknowledging student cultures, and providing students avenues to discuss and question critical topics within a given CRTs. A final valid point obtained through the study is the process participants plan to take to select CRTs for their classrooms. Each of the participants recognized the importance of selecting CRTs that are vetted, relatable, and encourage diversity in the classroom. Several participants alluded to text selection practices that includes researching and vetting appropriate text, obtaining student insight, reviewing district guidelines, and working with other teachers to select text appropriate for the students in their classrooms.

In the study participants crafted their perspective of CRTs as text that led to classroom discussion, impacted student buy-in and engagement, and created opportunities for teacher to embrace and or acknowledge student emotional reactions. From the study, each participant perceived CRTs as a text that helped teacher engage students in various from of discussion, Moreover, all participants concluded that CRTs provided opportunities for teachers to connect and or learn more about their students and their cultures.

Discussion of Results in Relation to the Extant Literature or Theories

The goal of this record of study was to understand teacher perspectives and practices when it came to using CRTs (culturally relevant texts) in their classrooms. The study revealed

several nuanced ideas which aligned with concepts previously outlined in the literature. The use of safe zones, student relating to the text, teachers as learners, text selection, and instructional practices (specifically, discussion, reading, and writing) are findings from my study that align with the literature.

Safe Classrooms (Safe learning environments)

As previously discussed each participant in this study recognized the benefit of creating a safe classroom or safe learning environment for students to navigate and explore CRTs. In their research on RTI (response to intervention) Graves and McConnell (2014) affirmed that a positive learning environments makes students feel comfortable and capable of participating in class. Idrus (2014) sheds light on the value of a safe classroom in a research study on culturally relevant teaching and student identity in Malaysian classrooms. A specific factor of the study included teachers using a CRTs (Ah Khaw Goes to Heaven) in a stress-free space to promote collaboration between students and teachers, freedom, and creativity (Idrus, 2014). Clark and Fleming's (2019) qualitative research on teacher usage of CRTs in 13 preschool to third grade classrooms highlighted the two specific points about classroom spaces. Firstly, using CRTs, for the purpose of reading and discussing, can aid in the cultivation of classroom spaces in which students experiences are "explored, supported, and nurtured" (Clark & Fleming, 2019, p. 26). Secondly, Clark and Fleming (2019) support the idea that "classrooms can become spaces in which children from non-dominate social groups are welcomed upon arrival as competent and at capacity rather than "at risk" (p. 26). While this study outlines with the insight of the participants in this study, the focus aligns with teaching practices at the elementary level. Similarly, the Idrus (2014) study did not specify a specific grade level, but rather reflected on teaching practices. Graves and McConnell's (2014) article reflected on secondary intervention practices, but pointed

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to the impact of a positive and affirming classroom environment. Nonetheless, these practices align with current practices implemented by participants in this study who all mentioned the importance of a safe classroom environment in conjunction with the use of CRTs.

Furthermore, participants in this study understood the value of creating a safe learning environment for students to explore, engage, and discuss CRTs in their classrooms. In particular safe zone as discussed by Clark and Fleming (2019) suggested that teachers, students, and CRTs can create spaces where students and their backgrounds and welcomed and nurtured in the classroom. Moreover, Fletcher and Nicholas' (2016) research on students in New Zealand suggested that students "valued learning to read in a safe and respectful learning environment" (p.481). The Fletcher and Nicholas research does not emphasize CRTs, but from a standpoint of classroom practices, it does align with ideas shared by participants who mentioned a safe classroom as a valuable part of their induction of CRTS in their classrooms. A critical component of this study is the aspect that teachers must do more than implement CRTs in their classrooms, they must be proactive in creating safe learning environments. Thereby, as seen in Iwai's (2019) study recognizing the immediacy of creating bias free classroom.

In essence, the research depicted in this section aligns with teacher practices currently in place. For example results yield from observations and interview responses show that teachers have created safe, student centered learning environments conducive to the implementation of CRTs in their classrooms.

Students Relate to the Text (See themselves)

Each participant recognized the importance of CRTs in helping students use their culture and experiences to relate to the text. In essence, each participant understood and valued the importance of such representation in the classroom. Research on interventions using culturally

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relevant writing and reading supported the idea that learning is better suited when teacher value their students' knowledge, which includes their lived experiences, cultures, and languages (Stewart, Walker, Revelle, 2018). Verden's (2012) research on culturally relevant literature and students with behavior concerns established the idea that students can use culturally relevant literature as a way to identify and relate the text to their lives and situations that impact their behavior. Clark's (2017) research on the effects of CRTs on struggling African American readers outlined the harmony between students using their knowledge to connect with the text and build deeper inferences. Research by Christ and Sharma (2017) showed that when properly selected and paired with proper pedagogy practices, CRTs can aid in motivating, engaging, and crafting student identity. Clark and Fleming (2019) highlighted that when students can relate to the text, they can use their knowledge to make connections. Osorio's (2018) study reflects on multicultural literature, and how these text, like CRTs, must be used as tools that teachers use to help students be heard and seen in their classrooms. One valuable piece of literature missing is aspects on CRTs leading to more engagement. Nonetheless, when it comes to CRTs as seen in the literature and this study, students must have the opportunities to connect with the text, and as established throughout this study have the latitude to see themselves in the text.

Teacher learners (learn about their students)

      A powerful piece of data unveiled in this study came from the commonality between each participant who felt that CRTs gave them a valuable opportunity to learn more about their students, which in turn, allowed them to adjust their practices and provide equitable learning opportunities for their scholars. As seen in the literature, teachers should seek and apply professional development that allows them to learn more about their student's culture; thereby applying this knowledge to text section and pedagogy strategies to help with implementation of

CRTs (Christ & Sharma, 2018). Moreover, in Verden's (2012) study teachers adjusted their practices after using culturally relevant literature to learn more about their students and their situations they experience. Similarly, Colby and Lyon's (2014) research on increasing the awareness of multicultural literature concluded that teachers who are thoughtful and aware of their personal belief systems can have a profound benefit on student of diverse backgrounds. Although the Sharp and Johnson's (2016) study does not explicitly focus on teachers using CRTs to learn about their student and their situations, it does harken to the fact that teachers must adjust and develop their teaching practices and methodology as a way to advocate and use culturally diverse literature in their classrooms, a practice that seems to be a hallmark of the participants in this study. Osorio's (2018) article on multicultural literature highlighted the importance of teachers switching roles by creating opportunities for scholars to share their knowledge while the teachers became active learners, which aligns with statements and practices of several of the participants in this study. From the perspective of my study, the Osorio (2018) study, reflects on practices currently implemented by several participants who implied that CRTs provided them with the opportunity to learn from and experience their students" culture in a unique and powerful way. An important conclusion outlined in Kibler and Chapman's (2019) established that teachers must obtain insight on themselves, their students, and the communities in which their students live. Thus, as advocates and allies of their students, participants in this study described and showed the value of CRTs in helping students relate to the text and make connections based on their backgrounds and lives.

Text Selection

From the study, teachers provided various insight on how they would select CRTs for their classrooms. Many participants in the study outlined their text selection process to involve

reading, researching, and vetting text that aligns with the cultural needs of their students. Other participants mentioned the collaborating with others as a way to select and verify appropriate CRTs for their classrooms. Participants also outline the importance of selecting text that is relatable and reflective of the students and the situations that their students go through. From the literature presented in this study, Adam and Harper's (2016) research on assessing and selecting culturally diverse literature in Australian classrooms outlined the importance of selecting text that encompasses multiple cultural and does not focus on a single set of literature to represents their students and their cultures. These findings align with participant who viewed text selection as a means of obtaining community insight and encompassing various forms of cultural representation. Scullin's (2020) research on middle school African American students and selecting CRTs showed the importance of allowing students to share their insight when it comes to selecting text relevant to their personal interest and cultures, which is consistent with participants who plan to use surveys to pair CRTs selection with student interest. Furthermore, Sharma and Christ (2017) highlighted five steps that teachers must take to incorporate CRTs in their classroom. Among these steps, they highlight the need for text selection that aligns with instruction and derives from teachers having a robust understanding of their students and their academic needs (Sharma &Christ, 2017). Sharma and Christ (2017) provides similarities to participant insight by placing teachers in charge of understanding the needs of their students, which is a consistent theme presented by each participant in this case study. It is clear that participants in this study see the value of text selection that aligns with the needs of their students, but creating a systematic approach to selecting and using these text will be pivotal.

District influence

One critical factor revealed in this study was the advent of district curriculum and text guidelines as a factor that interfered with participants using CRTs in their classroom. Although this factor does not align with the literature within this study, Research conducted by Myers (2019) show the value of teachers advocating for students by using culturally relevant teaching practices to push back on mandated curriculum. In other words, the Myers (2019) study counters findings in this study by showing how teachers can use culturally relevant teaching to advocate for students and work within specific requirements passed down by district expectations. This quote is relevant for participants such as Evelyn who at time feel that PLCs and district requirements lead to the selection of older less contemporary text. Not to say the literature advocate defiant behavior, but for teachers struggling with district requirements on curriculum and text selection, the study justifies teachers finding unique ways to advocate for the needs of their students.

Instructional Practices (Reading, Writing, and Discussion)

Stewart, Walker, Revelle (2018) survey of ESL students depicted that teachers should value student and their voices, especially when it came to what students wanted to read and write about. This article is a valuable piece of literature because results were gathered after teachers introduced culturally relevant literature and writing practices in their classrooms (Stewart, et. al, 2018). In some form or fashion, teachers in this study stated that the use of CRTs led to various forms of discussions in their classrooms. This ideal aligns with Clark and Flemings (2019) who recognized in their study that "integrating discussions of CRTs into the literacy curriculum may simultaneously promote identity affirmation and facilitate ways of thinking and talking about texts that can support reading comprehension development" (p.43). Middle school teachers in the Verden (2012) used read out-loud, discussions, and journaling with students in behavior

classrooms to build relationships and understand students and their situations. The Verden

(2012) study differs base on grade-level and classroom setting, for student in Verden where in

behavioral classroom, but connects with insights shared by participants who used journaling and

discussions in conjunction with CRTs to allow students to share their ideas. Dong (2005)

outlined several techniques that teachers can use when using multicultural literature. This

culturally response approach to teaching included the use of practices such as discussions,

reflection, and exploration of cultural values (Dong, 2005). DeNicolo and Franquiz (2006)

emphasized a valid point about the use of multicultural literature and discussion practices.

According to their research, reading and discussion in classes using multicultural literature is

predicated on a student's ability to take deep-dives into uncomfortable issues, share their insight,

and collaborate with others (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006). From a practical standpoint,

participants in this study reflected on allowing students to feel safe in their classroom in order to

take these proverbial deep dives and explore various issues.

Implications for Practice

Connections to context

For the participants in this study, using culturally relevant texts is an important way for

them to engage students, learn about their students and their cultures; thereby, creating

opportunities for their students to be recognized and acknowledged in their classrooms. Along

the lines of the classroom, teachers in this study recognized that CRTs are effective when

students are in a safe classroom environment. Furthermore, with the ongoing influx of student

from various cultures and backgrounds entering their classrooms, these participants, are

advocates and allies for a group of students who are commonly not represented through literature

and text. From this study, participants outlined the value of culturally relevant text in helping students discuss key concepts and topics as seen in a given text. These perspectives aligned with practices witnessed via my classroom observation of each participant, and were valuable in the development of the READ CRTs text selection guide and CRTs Professional development outline that will help guide future practices at UHS. An intriguing concern mentioned throughout this study, was the role of district in the process of teachers selecting, obtaining, and using CRTs in this classroom. Without a doubt, such details deserve further investigation, and perhaps warrants dialogue between campus and district advocates who value the voices of students of color. It is to be noted that during the process of writing this study (July, 2021), I discovered that the district delivered several sets of CRTs to the UHS campus. The delivery of these text is a critical first step and further justifies the use of the READ graphic organizer and the PD outline, which will aid teachers as they select and use CRTs in their classrooms.

Overall, this case study showed that CRTs are valuable instructional tools for students at UHS; however, for perspective to align with practice, teachers will need insight on how to select and use the text in their classroom. Moreover, teacher must be aware of their ability to create safe classrooms and show a willingness to immerse themselves as learners. Therefore, the artifacts included in this study will act as an opportunity for teachers to effectively utilize CRTs in their classrooms.

Connect to field of study

This qualitative case study on the perspective and practices of teachers using culturally relevant texts at UHS will create opportunities for teachers, in the English department at UHS, to reflect on their practices and make proper adjustments. It is clear from my interviews and observations that the participants appreciate CRTs as an instructional tool capable of helping

students share their experiences in a meaningful and relevant way. For example, each participant utilized instructional practices such as allowing students to discuss and write about themes and topics discussed in CRTs. Participants in this study also valued their students and their cultures and were insistent on creating a safe and nurturing classroom environment conducive to providing students with an equitable opportunity to share their insights and reflect on difficult themes and topics presented in CRTs. These driving factors make it clear that schools, specifically UHS, must continue to advocate for student of color to be well represented in the curriculum and instructional tools that teachers use, specifically in ELAR classrooms. Additionally, the insights shared by participants show the value of teachers creating safe learning environments that are welcoming to students and the cultural backgrounds. From this perspective, it is ideal that all teachers, not only teachers in the UHS English department, to create learning environments that embrace the cultural differences of their students and invites students to be a valuable part of their learning experience.

Another valuable aspect revealed in this study was the use of CRTs as a transfer of knowledge between students and teachers, which implies the need for teachers to be a willing participant in listening to their students as they share and make connections with CRTs in their own unique way. As for text selection and implementing CRTs in the classroom, it would behoove teachers to find texts that are relatable to their students, and the situations that their student go through outside of school. Furthermore, to optimize the use of CRTs in the classrooms, teachers must vet and identify CRTs that encompass vast cultural identifies; thus offering students with a deep dive into various nuances within their cultures and the cultures of others. While each factor plays a pivotal role in teachers using CRTs in their classroom, it is important to note that the participants, despite their obstacles, where willing to use CRTs as a

tool to help their students of color be known and recognized in their classroom. From a practical standpoint, this level of advocacy will help teachers as they select, implement, and fight for the use of CRTs in their classrooms.

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Discussion of Personal Lessons Learned
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Lessons Learned

This study has taught me several important lessons about how I perceive the roles that educators play in the lives of our students. Originally, my goal with this study was to focus on helping teachers use CRTs to help students prepare and pass standardized assessments; however, as I begin recruiting participants, the study took a direction that I did not expect; as such, I am deeply humbled to have discovered the passion and perseverance that teachers at UHS take in using instructional tools, such as CRTs to help student evolve from students to teachers. As I progressed through this study, it was amazing and heartwarming to see teachers and students, despite many difficulties (specifically issues with COVID-19 protocols), take deep dives into the CRTs and have thought-provoking conversations that left me speechless. At times, the conversations that I witnessed in these classrooms were so good, that I wanted to interject; however, I restrained myself from adding my insight, and I, instead, became a student and a listener. Moreover, this study has taught me the value of hearing educators, not merely acting to correct or redirect, but actively listening to educators as they shared their insight about CRTs. When I first entered this study, I initial thought I would find teachers who would fear implementing into their classrooms; I even had the thought that many of the teachers would have biases that would prevent them from attempting to use CRTs in their classroom. To my surprise, the interviews conducted in this study where the complete opposite of my original thoughts, which taught me the importance of subjectivity and trusting the process. These interviews also

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taught me that despite everything I know about society and education, there are teachers who are

genuine and are willing to fight for their students. Over and over again, this study has taught me

that despite race, ethnicity, and sexuality, educators play a pivotal role in advocating for their

students. As for culturally relevant text in the classroom, I learned that although teachers may

vary on their definition, they all see CRTs as a pivotal instructional tool for student of color to

have a voice in their classrooms. This lesson is valuable, for it will help drive my career as I

continue to advocate for student of color to be recognized and heard in all classrooms.

Recommendations

This record of study included the insight of seven teachers working in the English

Department at UHS. The participants in this study included one male and six females. Missing

from this group of participants are the insights of males and females from diverse backgrounds

(i.e. Latin X, Asian, etc.). Among this study, six of the participants had backgrounds teaching

pre-advanced or advanced placement English Language Arts classes at the secondary or high

school levels. Further study must seek the insight of teachers (males and females) from diverse

backgrounds, along with the insight of teachers who teach regular or on-level ELAR classes at

the secondary level. Since this study took place in what is considered an urban setting, it would

be telling to obtain the insights of teachers who teach at rural or suburban based schools.

Introducing these perspectives would present more insight on how teachers who teach in

primarily White setting define and use CRTs in their classrooms. Throughout the research,

several participants alluded to district curriculum norms and guidelines of text selection as an

obstacle, so hearing from district representative would be another added layer of data to consider.

In the process of writing this ROS, several political changes where implemented that may have

an impact on teachers and their use of CRTs in the classroom; therefore, adding the insights of

political leaders will help further the ideas presented in this study. As such, it would be interesting to see the post-impact of the global pandemic on the instructional practices of teachers who used CRTs. In other words, will teachers continue to use hybrid learning model? Or will they switch back to traditional pedagogical practices? It would also be interesting to see the longitudinal effects of CRTs on student engagement and achievement outcomes. Moreover, opening this study to hear the insights of the students would be imperative, especially since several of the participants wanted to include student insight before selecting CRTs for their classrooms. A final recommendation for this study is to outline the need for teachers to be culturally responsive. As established throughout this study, simply using a CRTs is not advantageous to a student unless a teacher is culturally responsive and willing to be an active participant in the process of using CRTs in their classrooms. Participants in this study established through their perspectives and practices that a teacher must be responsive to fulfil the demands of promoting and introducing CRTs to a diverse group of students; therefore, it is imperative that a teacher examines their motives and predilections towards students and race before introducing CRTs in their classroom. In essence, although CRTs are integral, their usefulness in a classroom is predicated on a teacher's ability to recognize and appreciate the diverse cultures in their classrooms.

Although this study was originally created for students in "regular classroom", observing and obtaining insight from teachers with backgrounds in Pre-AP, Honors, AP, and reading intervention led to the creation of two artifacts that will help drive CRT text selection and instructional practices at UHS. The first artifact is the READ graphic organizer and text selection checklist. The READ graphic organizer and text selection checklist, which stands for (Recognize, Enhance, Advocate, Demonstrate), will help teachers reflect on their current

practices and select text based on the needs of the cultural needs of their students. The second

artifact is a CRTs PD presentation outline. The CRTs PD will provide opportunities for teachers

to review the benefits of CRTs, practice instructional methods that align with adding CRTs to

their classrooms, and allow them to work with other teachers in selecting appropriate text for

their classrooms.

Closing Thoughts

The goal of this Record of Study was to understand the perspectives and practices of

teachers who use CRTs in ELAR classrooms at Urban High School. Through the use of

interview questions and observations, it became apparent that participants valued the use of

culturally relevant text as an instructional tool capable of helping students in various ways.

Moreover, it was apparent that participants in this study valued their students and used CRTs as a

way to learn from their students while simultaneously helping their students grow as learners.

Additionally, it was obvious that participants respected and valued the diversity that their

students brought to their classrooms, and as a result, each participant prescribed to crafting a

learning environment that acted as a safe zone for students to explore, discuss, and use CRTs in a

productive manner. Details from this study resulted in the discovery of barriers that interfere

with teachers using CRTs in their classrooms. These barrier, which included district guideline

and protocols, COVID hybrid learning where relevant among several of the participants, but

nonetheless, participants value CRTs, and overall, see them as a benefit in their classrooms.

From the standpoint of practice, participants saw the value of pairing CRTs with instruction that

is rich in discussion, writing activities, and multiple opportunities for students to express their

opinions (more choice). Participants in this study also place emphasis on CRTs selection as a

process that is student centered with teachers taking he time to research and vet text before

introducing them to the classroom. These details show the value of teachers in ELAR working to use and embrace CRTs as advocates for their students.

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APPENDIX A IRB EXEMPTION LETTER

A͙T͙M | TEXAS A&M
U N I V E R S I T Y

NOT HUMAN RESEARCH DETERMINATION

February 18, 2020

Type of Review:	Initial Review Submission Form
Title:	URBAN Secondary English Language Arts Teachers and Their PERCEPTIONS ON USING CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEXT IN THE CLASSROOM
Investigator:	Mary Margaret Capraro
IRB ID:	IRB2020-0142
Reference Number:	105885
Funding:	
Documents Received:	IRB Application (Human Research) - (Version 1.0)

Dear Mary Margaret Capraro:

The Institution determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by DHHS and FDA regulations. Data gathering efforts are intended only for the student's record of study and will not yield generalizable data.

Further IRB review and approval by this organization is not required because this is not human research. This determination applies only to the activities described in this IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made you must immediately contact the IRB about whether these activities are research involving humans in which the organization is engaged. You will also be required to submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Please be aware that receiving a 'Not Human Research Determination' is not the same as IRB review and approval of the activity. IRB consent forms or templates for the activities described in the determination are not to be used and references to TAMU IRB approval must be removed from study documents.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Administrative Office at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636.

Sincerely,
IRB Administration

APPENDIX B HRPP INFORMED CONSENT FORM

_____

Project Title: Urban ELAR teachers and their perspectives on using culturally relevant text in the classroom

Investigator: Durell Thompson

Supported By: Texas A&M University

Researcher Contact: dlt007@tamu.edu

Why are you being invited to take part in a research study?
You are being asked to participate because you are an English Language Arts teacher at UrbanHigh School in Garland ISD.

What should you know about a research study?
- The researcher will outline the research study to you
- You have the discretion to participate or not participate in this project
- You have the option not to participate in this study
- You have the option to begin the research study and drop out if you change your mind
- You are free to ask question before, during, and after the process

Who can I talk to?

Feel free to contact Durell Thompson at dthompson@garlandisd.net or dlt007@tamu.edu , Dr. Sharon Matthews sharon.matthews@tamu.edu, or Dr. Radhika Viruru viruru@tamu.edu, if you have questions, concerns, or comments, or complaints. The research study has been approved by the Texas A&M Institutional Review Board (IRB). Feel free to contact them via email at jrb@tamu.edu or toll free at 18557958636 if you concerns about the research study or process.

Note: For questions about your rights as a research participant, to provide input regarding research, or if you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) by phone at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636, or by email at irb@tamu.edu. The informed consent form and all study materials should include the IRB number, approval date, and expiration date. Please contact the HRPP if they do not.

Why Is This Study Being Done?
The purpose of this study is to understand teacher perspective toward using culturally relevant text as a learning tool in their classrooms. Since 2018-2019, UrbanHigh School has work diligently to

implement culturally relevant text in English 1 and 2 classroom, and with the addition of new TEKS the use of CRTs is set to become a norm across the campus. The research will determine teacher perspective on CRTs and help inform how teachers utilize CRTs in their classrooms.

How Many People Will Be Asked To Be In This Study?
For this study, I expect to recruit and enroll 5-9 English Language Arts teachers.

What Will I Be Asked To Do In This Study?
For this study, the researcher will conduct the following procedures:

Procedures	Description	Length of Time	Window for procedure	Where the procedure will take place	Interactions with others
Vet ROS questions	Participants will be provided with a copy of the ROS questions for the process of vetting/ redevelopment if needed	25-30minutes	December2020-January2021	Urban High School (teacher classroom or Google meets)	Durell Thompson
Conduct ROS interview using vetted questions	Participants will answer 5-8 open-ended questions	25-30 minutes	January-March2021	Urban High School (teacher classroom or Google meets)	Durell Thompson
Observations/ follow up interview	Researcher will observe teachers as they actively use CRTs in their classrooms	45mint-1	March2021-June2021	Urban High School	Durell Thompson
Follow up interviews	Follow up with teachers to check questions	25-30 minutes	March 2021-June2021	Urban High School	Durell Thompson

Will Photos, Video or Audio Recordings Be Made Of Me during the Study?

The researchers will <mark>make an audio and/or video recording</mark> during the study so that information is accurately recorded only if you give your permission to do so. Indicate your decision below by initialing in the space provided.

_____ I give my permission for <mark>photographs/audio/video recordings</mark> to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

_____ I do not give my permission for <mark>photographs/audio/video recordings</mark> to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

What happen if I do not want to be in this research?
You have the option/right to leave the research project at any time.

What happens if I say "Yes", but I change my mind?
You have the option/right to leave the research project at any time.

How will this study benefit me?
There are no guaranteed benefits from this research study.

What happens to the information collected for the research?
All efforts will be made to minimize the use of your personal information.
We will take all necessary action to protect your privacy.

Your signature will document your permission to be a participant in this study.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Printed Name   Date

_____   _____
                                                                              Date
**Signature of person obtaining consent**

_____
Printed name of person obtaining consent

APPENDIX C PARTICPANT ACTIVITY GUIDES AND STUDENT WORK

1. Reading Guide For Michael's Classroom Discussion

2. PowerPoint of Evelyn's CRT Learning Activity

3. Toni's CRT Learning Guide for "The Invisible Man" (Silent Socratic Seminar)

4. Rikke's Learning Activity For "The Other Wes Moore"

5. Savannah's Learning Activity (Literature Circle)

6. Savannah's Learning activity

7. Nia's Learning Activity

When using CRTs (Culturally Relevant Text) remember to R.E.A.D
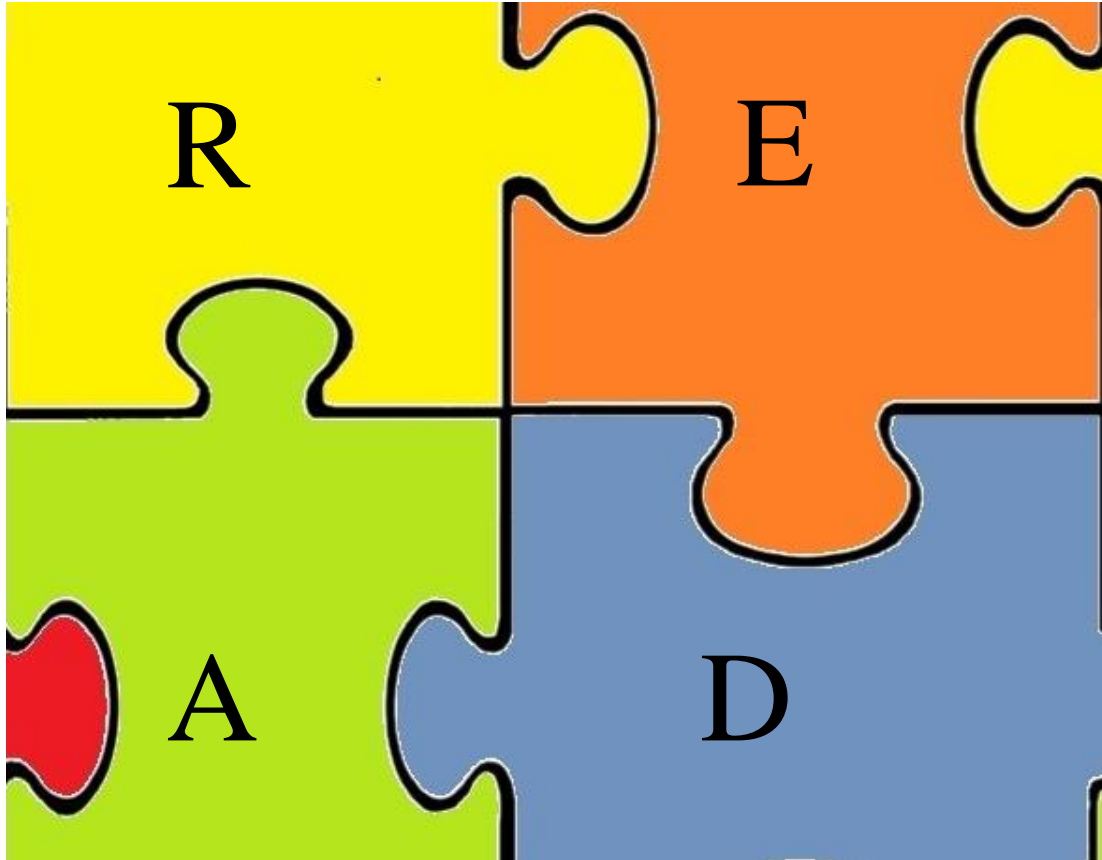
R. Recognize
- Recognize **ALL the cultures** within your classroom and align your text selection in a manner that acknowledges, appreciates, and celebrates these cultures in your classrooms.
- Recognize your perspective towards these cultures and prepare yourself (through PD/ research) to use CRTs as an academic tool

E. Enhance
- Enhance your classroom in a manner that is welcoming and inviting. Students must feel comfortable to navigate the text and have conversations about difficult themes and topics (presented in CRTs) within a safe classroom environment.

A. Advocate
- Advocate for students to have CRTs in their classroom libraries. Be fearless in voicing your concerns if all students are not represented through the literature.

D. Demonstrate

- As an educator demonstrate your willingness to actively learn and grow with your students as you all read and explore CRTs.

The R.E.A.D. Checklist for Selecting Culturally Relevant Text

Use the R.E.A.D checklist to select and use CRTs your classroom.

READ	Items to Consider	Phase	Comments/ Possible Text
R. Recognize Recognize **ALL the cultures** within your classroom and align your text selection in a manner that acknowledges, appreciates, and celebrates these cultures in your classrooms. Recognize your perspective towards these cultures and prepare yourself (through PD/ research) to use CRTs as an academic tool	• Do my students relate to this text? • Does the Text relate to themes/ topics that my students are correctly dealing with? • How does this text align with the cultures in my classroom? • How will my students react to the themes/ topics within this text? • How should I prepare to ensure students are prepared to talk about these themes?	Consider this step during the text selection phase.	
E. Enhance Enhance your classroom in a manner that is welcoming and inviting. Students must feel comfortable to navigate the text and have conversations about difficult themes and topics (presented in	• How do I ensure that my classroom is safe and conducive to the academic and societal needs of my scholars? • What measures should I take to enhance student's willingness to collaborate and	Consider this step before selecting a text. This step should continue throughout the process of using CRTs in your classroom	

CRTs) within a safe classroom environment.	converse about themes and topics in the text? • How do I ensure that my students feel comfortable enough to have conversations?		
A. Advocate Advocate for students to have CRTs in their classroom libraries. Be fearless in voicing your concerns if all students are not represented through the literature.	• What support do I have at the campus and district level when it comes to selecting and using CRTs in the classroom? • What resources do I need to properly educate myself on the cultural and societal needs of my scholars?	This step is ongoing and should continue throughout the course of a teacher's career.	
D. Demonstrate As an educator demonstrate your willingness to actively learn and grow with your students as you all read and explore CRTs.	• What PD or novels am I reading to help me prepare? • Throughout the class am I listening to my students? Am I an active learner? • Do I acknowledge my willingness to learn more about my students and the nuances of their cultures?	Ongoing	

APPENDIX E ARTIFACT 3: PROPOSED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Using Culturally Relevant Text in the Classroom

Objective: Outline the challenges and benefits of adding culturally relevant text in your classroom.

Goals:

1. Discuss the role of culturally relevant text in the classroom
2. Discuss research on CRTs and culturally relevant teaching practices
3. Discuss the benefit and challenges teachers my face when adding CRTs in their classroom
4. Discuss the R.E.A.D. process
5. Create a list of CRTs that we can add in our classroom libraries
    a. Silent Sustained Reading
    b. Literature circles
    c. Novel Studies

Presenter: Durell Thompson

Phase I: (Benefits and Challenges)

- Conduct a book walk (have teachers review and discuss CRTs)
- What are the benefits of CRTs?
- What challenges do teachers face when implementing CRTs in their classrooms?
    o As seen by participants in this study
    o As seen in research practices
    o As seen from person experiences
        ▪ Activities
            • Turn and Talk
            • Share outs
            • Gallery Walks

Phase II: (Research on CRTs and Culturally Relevant Teaching practices)

- What does the research say about CRTs and culturally relevant teaching? How do we take these findings and make them applicable to our practices?
    o Pull research from my ROS
    o Share these findings through
    o Have teachers take a deep dive into
    o Articles through a Jigsaw activity.

Phase III: (Present the READ chart and discuss)

- What is the READ chart and why will we use it
  - Teachers will review the READ chart
  - Teachers will work with team levels or PLC groups to select text books for their classrooms

Phase IV: (Closing)

- Reflect on the learning
- Outline next steps and goals
- Begin develop action items to complete