

## **“It’s Not My Immediate Instinct”: Perceptions of Preservice Teachers on the Integration of Popular Culture**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Popular culture curricula integration provides educational benefits for students (Morrell, 2002; Petrone, 2013); bridging students’ out-of-school popular culture knowledge with their in-school literacies promotes learning, engages students, and values students’ background knowledge (Dyson, 1993, 2021; Marsh, 2006; Morrell, 2002; Petrone, 2013). Therefore, teacher educators may consider the addition of popular culture education into preservice teacher’s preparation for teaching (Petrone, 2013). In this qualitative study, researchers were interested in asking the following questions: What popular culture texts did preservice teachers consume as children and adults? and How does preservice teachers’ previous popular culture text consumption factor into decisions to include or exclude popular culture texts in the curriculum? Preservice teachers in a graduate teacher education program participated in surveys and interviews about their popular culture text consumption (e.g., podcasts, television shows) as children and adults. Additionally, participants were questioned about the affordances and constraints of integrating popular culture texts into the curriculum. Data were coded using In Vivo coding (Saldaña, 2013), and analyzed through a sociocultural lens (Vygotsky, 1978). Themes that were generated from the findings were: 1) popular culture text consumption as both social and shared; 2) popular culture text integration as a way to entice and engage students in learning; 3) popular culture texts as engaging and relatable; 4) popular culture as digital texts; and 5) popular culture texts as unknown or unimportant. Although all participants spoke about the benefits of popular culture text integration, the preservice teachers who consumed more of them as children and adults spoke more favorably about including popular culture texts in curricula.

**Keywords:** Literacy/reading; preservice teacher education; qualitative research; popular culture

Fiber artists create beautiful tapestries by weaving weft and warp threads together. Similarly, Dyson (1993, 2021) theorized about a permeable curriculum, weaving students' out-of-school literacies (e.g., reading, writing, and talk) into the threads of traditional school learning and expectations. In 2013, Petrone described the permeable curriculum "as one that allows and creates spaces for students to draw on their own popular culture frames of reference to access, learn, and develop academic literacies" (p. 252). Importantly, weaving popular culture into the curriculum may spark students' critical thinking (Dyson, 1993, 2021; Petrone, 2013). As Dyson (2021) noted, "When children's interests, knowledge, and passion *do* permeate the official world, they may become more conscious of their collectivity and thus their responsibilities to be respectful, even caring, of others" (p. 141). Of significant interest, researchers have determined that some pre-service and in-service teachers do not perceive popular culture texts (e.g., books, music, television) as valuable lesson components (Author, 2018; Gerber & Price, 2013; Lambirth, 2003; Marsh, 2006; Tanis, 2010). As a result, many preservice teachers do not integrate out-of-school literacies into in-school literacies (Marsh 2006; Petrone, 2013), reducing the opportunity for a permeable curriculum (Dyson, 1993, 2021).

We were interested in exploring preservice teachers' popular culture text consumption as children and adults and determining how this may influence their beliefs about integrating popular culture texts into the curriculum. As Tanis (2010) noted, "...little research has explored how teachers use popular culture outside of the ELA classroom and whether or not that personal practice supports or hinders the use of popular culture in the classroom" (p. 112). Our research questions were: 1) What popular culture texts did preservice teachers consume as children and adults? and 2) How does preservice teachers' previous popular culture text consumption factor into decisions to include or exclude popular culture texts in the curriculum? We surveyed and interviewed preservice teachers concerning their popular culture consumption as children and adults, and we asked if and how preservice teachers integrated popular culture into their planning and instruction. We were interested in how, why, and if preservice teachers create permeable curricula (Dyson, 1993; Tanis, 2010).

## **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this section, we define popular culture and discuss the permeable curriculum (Dyson, 1993, 2021), popular culture integration (Lambirth, 2003; Petrone, 2013), and Marsh's (2006) studies of preservice teachers' experiences with popular culture text integration. Finally, we present our theoretical framework of socioculturalism (Vygotsky, 1978).

### **Popular Culture Texts Defined**

Popular culture definitions are abundant; Fiske (1989) defined popular culture texts as almost anything consumed or experienced in our daily lives (e.g., a beach, a billboard, or even a shopping mall). Storey (2001) proffered six definitions of popular culture: 1) Popular culture as simply that which is desired; 2) popular culture as what is left after the upper class culture has been determined; 3) popular culture as "mass culture" (p. 8), manufactured or produced for and revered by the masses— mass culture gives no thought to value or quality; 4) popular culture as grassroots culture; 5) popular culture as one of hegemony; and 6) popular culture as a transcendent of class—there is no perceived "high" and "low" culture. For the purposes of this research, we used the lens of Storey's (2001) first definition: that which is desired.

### **Permeable Curriculum**

Dyson (1993, 2021) spent many research hours in classrooms, observing and noting children's and teachers' interactions as they read, wrote, talked, listened, and learned together. In a conceptual paper presented to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), Dyson (1993) described the social interactions and writing of several Black children in a kindergarten and first grade multi-age classroom in the San Francisco area. During these observations, the children conversed constantly with their peers while reading and writing,

bringing their out-of-school popular culture knowledge into their classroom reading and writing. Dyson (1993) described the affordances of the popular culture schema that the children discussed as they wrote and read. As Dyson (1993) wrote:

... It is to suggest that those materials are of no use unless they engage children with the social and cultural worlds they know best and, moreover, to suggest that both child worlds and school worlds would be considerably enriched by the interplay made possible in a permeable curriculum (p. 28).

According to Dyson (1993), three criteria are necessary for a permeable curriculum; 1) student writing, (e.g., providing a setting where children are free to compose and share by talking, collaborating, and performing writing); 2) respect for “cultural diversity” (p. 28) (e.g., encouraging children to bring their knowledge of popular culture into the classroom); and 3) the teaching (e.g., the teacher’s open invitation to bring popular knowledge into writing and classroom conversations emanating from a desire to get to know the students better).

Therefore, teachers who intentionally welcome popular culture knowledge into the classroom, may create a permeable curriculum where students’ schemas are valued.

### **Popular Culture Integration**

Drawing on Dyson’s (1993, 2021) permeable curriculum, Dickie and Shuker (2014) surveyed and interviewed New Zealand teachers about their popular culture knowledge and curricula integration. The teacher participants exhibited extensive knowledge about the popular culture consumption of students in their classroom. Additionally, most teachers reported that, based on their knowledge of the children’s out-of-school literacies, they did indeed integrate popular culture texts into their lessons.

Petrone (2013) examined a number of peer-reviewed popular culture research works and reflected upon personal experience with popular culture as a secondary teacher and a literacy educator. In doing so, Petrone (2013) synthesized understandings about popular culture as 1) meaning making; 2) identity making; and 3) political/critical/sociocultural thinking and urged teachers to become ethnographers as a means to examine students’ lives to determine their funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) about popular culture. Funds of knowledge, Petrone (2013) noted, “...refer to the linguistic, cultural, and intellectual resources, skills, and frames of reference found within students’ families, homes, and communities” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 250). Although some students may not excel in academics at school (Petrone, 2013), they may possess vast amounts of popular culture knowledge (Author, 2018). Indeed, teachers and researchers have successfully used students’ popular culture funds of knowledge as a bridge to academic achievement (Dyson, 1983; Morrell, 2002; Petrone, 2013). Petrone (2013) suggested that popular culture integration serves three purposes: 1) to build a bridge between out-of-school and in-school literacies; 2) to encourage critical discussions about popular culture; and 3) to connect popular culture discussions with critical social justice issues. Further, Petrone (2013) argued that the study of popular culture belongs in teacher preparation programs. Finally, Petrone (2013) surmised that preservice teachers fall into three camps: 1) future educators who anticipate integrating popular culture into the classroom; 2) future educators who may be afraid to integrate popular culture in fear of getting in trouble with peers or administration and/or worry about censorship; and 3) future educators who do not value popular culture and do not see its importance.

#### **Teachers’ Perceptions About Popular Culture Texts**

Researchers have examined preservice and in-service teachers’ perceptions of the value of popular culture texts and the value of popular culture text integration (Lambirth, 2003; Marsh, 2006; Tanis, 2010). Studying elementary preservice teachers’ beliefs about the integration of popular culture into the literacy curriculum, Marsh (2006) interviewed preservice teachers during their teacher education program. Employing

a qualitative study, Marsh (2006) coded and analyzed the responses of three participants using the theoretical framework of Bourdieu's concepts of pedagogic action (PA): habitus, field, capital, and doxa. Although many of the preservice teachers indicated an interest in popular culture integration, most followed the teaching direction of the mentor teacher and the school curriculum. Marsh (2006) reported that many of the preservice teachers did not question the status quo, or the habitus, "a set of dispositions created in an individual over time and shaped by structural elements in a society, such as family or schools" (p. 164). Further, Marsh argued that when preservice teachers' experiences aligned with the academic culture of the campus, they rarely challenged the curricula. Marsh (2006) contended that education programs may invite critical conversations about teaching, stating, "Perhaps the most important work teacher education programs can do is to provide students with opportunities to analyze the sociocultural, economic, and political restrictions on their practice" (p. 172).

Lambirth (2003) met with a focus group of teachers in England with the purpose of exploring ways to develop teachers as proficient writers. Interestingly, teachers voiced their negative feelings about integrating popular culture texts into writing lessons, even when their own childhood experiences with popular culture were positive. Lambirth (2003) reported, "Many felt that it was not the school's place to highlight popular culture texts like these because *'they get enough of that at home'*" (p. 9).

Exploring educators' beliefs about popular culture integration, Tanis (2010) employed a combined phenomenological and narrative inquiry, meeting with three practicing secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers for focus groups and individual interviews. Interestingly, the participants were former graduate students of secondary teacher education in their third year of teaching, and the researcher was their former reading methods instructor. Tanis (2010) was curious whether the popular culture perspectives of the teachers changed over their years of teaching. During the study, Tanis (2010) also explored the personal popular culture consumption of each of the three teachers, interested in how that consumption may have affected the integration of popular culture materials into their curriculum. Tanis (2010) found that although the participants varied slightly in their perspectives about popular culture, their use of popular culture texts in the classroom was limited. That is, despite beliefs about the importance of teaching popular culture texts, the participants integrated few popular culture texts into their curricula.

Tanis (2010) acknowledged that in addition to learning about the participants' perspectives, they learned very important insights about their own perspectives on popular culture texts, noting, "I would argue that hearing the teachers talk about their tensions with culture and popular culture provoked me to consider my own perceptions about culture, popular culture, and English (teacher) education" (p. 178).

### **Sociocultural Theory**

Sociocultural theory (Davidson, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978), aligns well as a theoretical framework and lens for our research. Socially and culturally constructed knowledge must be valued and taken into account when assessing literacy development (Davidson, 2010). That is, teachers who understand that investigating, encouraging, and valuing students' out-of-school literacies are embracing a sociocultural perspective (Davidson, 2020; Tracey & Morrow, 2012). According to Davidson, (2010), "From the sociocultural perspective, therefore, children's literacy development is understood by exploring the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which the children have grown" (p. 249).

### **METHODOLOGY**

To determine how preservice teachers' previous experiences with popular culture factor into popular culture text integration in the classroom, we conducted a qualitative, multiple case study by Yin (2014), which consisted of a popular culture survey (Dickie & Shuker, 2014) and interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The popular culture survey was adapted with permission from Dickie and Shuker (2014) and was administered

using Qualtrics software. After the survey was administered, the researchers interviewed the participants remotely, recording via Zoom and completing written transcripts. Surveys and interviews were coded and analyzed using In Vivo coding (Saldaña, 2013), searching for categories and themes. Themes were further developed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) wherein the researcher infers meaning using codes and themes (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) and keywords-in-context (KWIC) analysis (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). KWIC can be defined as creating a simple concordance and a word count of every unique word in a document. Additionally, we employed the use of reflexive, analytic memos written during data collection, data analysis, and the data interpretation stages. Analytic memos are a tool for qualitative researchers to journal about reflections and questions through the research process (Miles et al., 2014). Finally, member-checking was employed by sharing interview transcripts with participants (Miles et al., 2014).

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were graduate students in a Master of Science in Teacher Education program at a university in the northeastern United States. The graduate students were enrolled in a K-8 reading methods course in the fall of 2020 and a K-12 writing methods course in the spring of 2021. During the 2020-2021 school year, graduate students taught or interned in K-8 classrooms while taking education classes at the nearby university. Seven out of 16 graduate students agreed to participate in the study. It is important to note that of the seven participants, five participated in the survey, and five participated (with pseudonyms) in the interviews. It is not known if the five who participated in the survey are the same five that participated in the interviews. For this reason, the participants in the survey are numbered (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2), and participants in the interview provided or were given pseudonyms. The five graduate students who participated in the interviews were (pseudonyms): 1) Alex, who originally attended a small liberal arts college; 2) Marion, who received a degree in political science from a public university in the northeastern United States; 3) Veronica, who graduated from a northeastern university with a degree in psychology; 4) Sarah, who obtained a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in both sociology and English; and 5) Alice, who graduated with a BA in environmental planning and policy. Of the five participants in the survey, all identified as of Caucasian/European descent, four identified as between 30-39 years of age, and one participant identified as between 20-29 years of age. Although the participants were preservice teachers obtaining their Master of Science in Education, three of the participants reported having three to five years of previous teaching experience, one participant reported less than two years of teaching experience, and one participant reported having no teaching experience.

### **Data Collection and Analysis: Survey**

Five participants completed a popular culture survey adapted with the permission of Dickie and Shuker (2010). In the survey, we asked about popular culture text consumption as children and adults and included a Likert survey based on popular culture beliefs. To analyze our survey data, we individually read the survey responses several times, jotting analytic memos about the responses. Once this work was completed, we met via Zoom to share analytic memo writing. In a similar manner, we individually conducted In Vivo coding (Saldaña, 2013) on the survey responses, and met via Zoom to discuss possible themes and connections from the surveys. Later, we met to review survey responses and discuss possible themes and connections.

### **Data Collection and Analysis: Interviews**

Following the completion of the survey in Fall 2020, interviews were conducted via Zoom in the spring of 2021. Participants either selected their own pseudonyms or were given pseudonyms by the researchers. Employing In Vivo coding (Saldaña, 2013), researchers examined the five interview transcripts, line by line, jotting down reflexive memos and possible themes. Once the coding was complete, a Keywords in Context (KWIC) (Bernard, Wutich, & Ryan, 2017) concordance was created, examining word frequencies and sentences

using "popular culture" and "pop culture." According to Bernard and Ryan (2010), "...these methods can help us identify core ideas in a welter of data" (p. 65). Following the keywords-in-context (Bernard & Ryan (2010) study, the six phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) were employed. For this analysis, we 1) familiarized ourselves with the data by rereading; 2) generated codes; 3) read and analyzed codes for themes; 4) reviewed and revised themes; 5) named and created definitions for themes; and 6) constructed and revised this research. In the next section, we discuss our findings.

## **FINDINGS**

We now examine the findings of the survey, interviews, and reflexive memos. Following this exploration, we organize our findings by the themes generated during data analysis. Our research questions were: 1. What popular culture texts did preservice teachers consume as children and adults? and 2. How do preservice teachers' previous experiences with popular culture texts consumption factor into decisions about the inclusion or exclusion of popular culture texts into the curriculum? In our survey, we asked participants about the popular culture texts they consumed as children and as adults. Of the five participants in the survey, all identified as of Caucasian/European descent, four identified as between 30-39 years of age, and one participant identified as between 20-29 years of age. Survey participants' popular culture consumption can be found in Table 1 in Appendix A and Table 2 in Appendix B. Additionally, we administered a series of belief statements about the integration of popular culture texts using a Likert survey question. Of the five participants, all either strongly agreed or agreed with statements about the affordances of integrating popular culture texts in classrooms. When asked if reading and writing standards discourage teachers from integrating popular culture, two participants somewhat disagreed and three somewhat agreed.

### **Interviews**

Once the survey was administered, we interviewed and recorded the participants remotely using Zoom, asking questions about their education, their popular culture text consumption as children and adults, and their beliefs about integration of popular culture into their lessons. Additionally, we asked for examples of popular culture integration. In the next section, we provide our findings about the five participants who were interviewed.

#### **Alex**

When asked about knowledge of popular culture texts, Alex replied, "I don't think I know a lot. I don't know celebrities. I don't follow popular storylines..." The popular culture texts that Alex consumed as a child were video games, comics, and musicals. The texts they reported consuming as an adult were podcasts and YouTube. When asked their thoughts about integrating popular culture texts in the curriculum, Alex replied that although their mentor teacher modeled instruction using characters such as Yoda and Voldemort in language lessons, using popular culture is "...not my immediate instinct; I'm not going out of my way to use popular culture." Later in the interview, Alex added that popular culture texts were a "useful tool."

#### **Marion**

When asked to define popular culture texts, Marion replied, "...I think of one that is current, that is referencing things that are written in relatable language, that is sort of like everyday youth would realize." Elaborating, Marion suggested *Persephone* as a popular culture text. When asked about popular culture consumption as an adult, Marion replied:

I would say podcasts are big. I think that I often find with friends being like, 'Did you listen to that?' We consume music in such a different way now; it's almost like who can find like the newest thing that no one's heard because it's so easy now to find that new

thing that no one's heard of...Everyone's like, you know, hitting on refresh all the time.

Reflecting on integrating popular culture into the curriculum, Marion expressed great interest, explaining that a popular culture reference in a lesson may hook students, and that “it's not going to in any way inhibit their learning.” Marion then described how their mentor teacher integrated popular culture into a Hero's Journey unit and a science lesson, where they used the popular soccer player, Lionel Messi, as an example to teach about heart rates.

### **Veronica**

While pursuing their graduate degree, Veronica worked in special education in a kindergarten classroom. Upon the question of what they knew about popular culture, they stated that they were not able to share a lot of knowledge. Their interpretation of popular culture was related to any literature that becomes popular. Veronica added, “I got hooked on *Goosebumps*.” They also mentioned that other popular series, like *Amelia Bedelia* (Parrish, 1963) and *Boxcar Children* series (Warner, 1989) were not particularly appealing to them as a child. Veronica also found that “incorporating popular culture into the curriculum... hooks people.” In addition to books, Veronica also pointed out video games as a medium of popular culture, and being in high demand with children, could engage children in terms of literacy learning. In their future classroom plans, Veronica wanted to include short video clips from a movie or television show, to engage children in their upcoming adventures unit. They valued the real-life connection between popular culture and the unit: “it helps to make things stick when you tie it to something relatable to the kids”. Additionally, Veronica mentioned age as a factor that influenced their decision on utilizing popular culture texts. According to Veronica, the importance of keeping children engaged with interesting popular culture texts increases with age. Their overall view confirmed the idea of diversifying interesting trade books for individual readings and read-alouds that tie into current class units.

### **Sarah**

Sarah considered their experience growing up in a predominantly White suburban East Coast neighborhood and going to a regular K-12 public school a positive one and elaborated on what popular culture impacted them as a child. They remarked on the impact of music channels like MTV and VH1 and television shows such as *Will and Grace* [TV series] (Mutchnik et al., 1998-2006 – 2017-2020) and *Gilmore Girls* [TV series] (Sherman-Palladino et al., 2000-2007). When asked about their definition of popular culture, they mentioned that any popular book such as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling, 1998) can be considered popular culture once it gains popularity. Upon the question about what popular culture impacted them, they mentioned that some popular culture could be a “gateway to more popular culture.” Apart from Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, they spoke of podcasts as a daily interaction with popular culture. Sarah remarked on the podcast *Keep It* [Podcast] (Long & Martinez, 2017- present) stating that they valued the fact that it “tries to look at pop culture through like a queer lens.” Sarah then shared the observation that the majority of E! news and E! entertainment had an aspect of Whiteness. Additionally, Sarah stressed the importance of connecting children's interests to the class work and starting a conversation with the children via popular culture: the value of integrating a Pokémon character into a math lesson or a persuasive essay could impact the students' engagement in the lesson. They concluded that whatever the children choose to read would increase their literacy and most likely, the selected books would be popular culture texts.

### **Alice**

Alice reported that it was challenging to define popular culture. An avid reader, they consumed book series such as *Little House on the Prairie* (Wilder, 1953) and *Baby-Sitters Club: Kristy's Great Idea*: (Martin, 1986) as a child. Even though Alice considered them not the most well-written books, they considered those stories to be interconnected and attention-getting for children. Alice read popular culture books to their

children and remarked that *The Adventures of Captain Underpants: The First Epic Novel* (Pilkey, 1997) was a great graphic novel for hooking children into reading. They mentioned that their son, who had challenges learning how to read, was able to succeed eventually due to the series' catchy nature. They concluded that they would include popular culture in the classroom when the opportunity arose. Alice indicated a strong belief that children should have choices when it comes to reading and suggested that peer pressure was another factor that contributed to finding material to read.

## Themes

Based on the data analysis of the surveys, interviews, and reflexive memos, the following themes were derived: 1) Popular culture as social and shared; 2) Popular culture as a way to hook kids; 3) Popular culture integration as engaging and relatable; 4) Popular culture as digital texts; and 5) Popular culture as unknown and unimportant.

### Theme 1: Popular Culture as Social and Shared

Throughout the survey and interview responses, the theme of popular culture as social and shared was prominent. Many times, participants reported that a sibling, a best friend, a group of friends, or a parent shared popular culture texts with them. As an example of parents inspiring a love of popular culture, Participant 3 reported in the survey:

Our dad took it upon himself to educate us as well about comedy, starting with movies like *Uncle Buck*, and *Vacation*, and *Young Frankenstein*; he loved Chevy Chase and Mel Brooks, and anything directed by John Hughes. Both my parents loved classic rock and helped inspire my love for all kinds of music.

Similarly, Participant 2 responded in the survey that they remembered receiving a toy that they wanted because their friends owned one:

I grew up fairly poor but I remember that one year I got two Webkinz's (stuffed animals with website pass code to play on a virtual world) and I was so excited because all my friends had accounts and I didn't."

During the interviews, the theme of social and shared persisted. In fact, participants reported that searching for the latest and greatest popular culture to share with friends and family was of high importance. For example, Marion, when discussing the podcasts that they consume now, responded: "It's almost like who can find, like the newest thing that no one's heard of because it's so easy now to find that new thing that no one's heard of."

### Theme 2: Popular Culture as a Way to Hook Kids

During the interviews, there were many mentions of "hooking" readers by providing popular culture texts as choices for reading or for lessons. That is, participants indicated that finding interesting popular culture celebrities, sports figures, or media characters to incorporate into lessons engaged students. For example, Alice explained, when discussing their own child's exploration of popular culture texts: "And it was the *Captain Underpants*, like the silliness of it, but also like the incorporation of illustration with text. . . . It was like the first book that he actually, I think, felt excited to read by himself." Similarly, Sarah, when discussing the texts they read as a child, said, "Definitely, my big thing was *Goosebumps*. I got hooked on *Goosebumps*. That's what got me hooked on reading." Concerning the integration of popular culture texts into the curriculum, Marion asserted, "And if it's something that can be taught well, with a popular culture reference or activity then the kids are going to be hooked and it's not going to in any way inhibit their learning."



### **Theme 3: Popular Culture Integration as Engaging and Relatable**

In the popular culture survey, we asked participants if they agreed with several statements about popular culture integration. One of the statements was: “Incorporating aspects of popular culture helps children to make sense of literacy in literacy programs.” Of the five participants, three strongly agreed and two agreed with the statement. Alice, when asked about integrating popular culture into lessons, responded, “I feel very strongly that they should be incorporated into the curriculum. Or at least think, yeah, at least be given like an option.”

Indeed, most participants indicated that integrating popular culture texts into the curriculum was important for engagement and relatability.

### **Theme 4: Popular Culture as Digital Texts**

Digital popular culture was mentioned many times, particularly in texts that participants reported consuming as adults. Indeed, some participants indicated that they searched for digital popular culture texts to consume. They reported seeking out the newest, edgiest, and most political podcasts and social media. For example, Sarah described an interesting new podcast titled *You’re Wrong About* [Podcast] (Marshall, 2018-present) and continued: “I think Twitter is my go-to for most pop culture, it’s so digestible and just that a 180 characters or whatever they have up to two.”

In another example of digital popular culture text consumption, Participant 3 mentioned:

Podcasts are important. “The Daily”, we went through a big “Pod Save America” phase. Books still hold a place, but I find that I read less now than ever, maybe I’ll get back into it! Also, social media has really taken hold. I scroll through Instagram every day.

In sum, the popular culture texts that the participants consumed as adults were largely digital texts such as podcasts.

### **Theme 5: Popular Culture as Unknown or Unimportant**

In their interviews, some of the participants were unclear about defining popular culture and its usefulness in the classroom. Veronica suggested that popular culture texts were more important for older children: “Yeah, I think the biggest takeaway is like I feel like it becomes more important as they get older, they get I think it becomes more and more and more important.” Veronica went on to explain:

I’m just trying to make sure they have popular books that they want to pull out like, they want to get out of their browsing box at this age is just a little bit different because they’re not, they’re still emergent readers, right?

Alex, when asked about popular culture texts, responded that they knew very little about popular culture texts, saying, “I don’t think I know a lot. I don’t know celebrities. I don’t follow popular storylines. I don’t watch movies. I’m not a tv watcher.” When queried further about integrating popular culture texts into the curriculum, Alex continued, “I see it as a useful tool...it’s not my immediate instinct.”

### **Findings in Relation to Research Questions**

The first research question focused on the materials that the participants consumed as both children and adults. Sarah, Marion, and Alice reported an abundance of popular culture consumption as children and adults. Indeed, they mentioned that, as children, they loved toys, music, television, movies, and books. As adults, they consumed many podcasts and some music, movies, and television. In contrast, Alex and Veronica reported consuming a smaller amount of popular culture texts as children and adults.

The second research question concerned how preservice teachers’ previous popular culture text consumption factored into decisions to include or exclude popular culture texts in the curriculum.

Interestingly, Sarah, Marion, and Alice, who reported the largest consumption of popular culture as children and adults noted that popular culture text integration was of prime importance. Alternately, Veronica and Alex, who reportedly consumed smaller amounts of popular culture texts, discussed the integration of it with some hesitation. For example, although Veronica mentioned upcoming plans to incorporate short videos into instruction, they responded that with younger students, popular culture integration was less important than with older students. Additionally, Alex noted that integrating popular culture is "not my immediate instinct."

## DISCUSSION

During the interviews, all five participants reflected on the importance of sharing popular culture with family and friends, providing a concrete example of the theme of popular culture as social and shared. Additionally, the theme of sharing popular culture provides an example of sociocultural theory in practice (Davidson, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978). Indeed, in their 2010 study, Tanis discussed the importance of sharing popular culture with one of the three participants: "While most critics of popular culture talk about the isolated, individual consumption of popular culture, May talked about sharing experiences with teammates, boyfriends, and friends... May reflects on the value of the shared experience of popular culture consumption" (p. 149).

Decisions about popular culture integration may be connected to participants' understanding of popular culture texts. Just as diverse definitions of popular culture abound in the literature (Storey, 2001), participants' responses ranged from Alex's brief reply, "I don't think I know a lot," to more extensive descriptions. Indeed, while four of the five interview participants provided their own definition of popular culture texts, they all indicated that they were not completely clear on the definition of popular culture.

Most participants reported observing some popular culture text integration into their mentor teachers' instruction. Although four of the interview participants indicated that they planned future instruction incorporating popular culture texts, none of the participants mentioned fear of administrators' or other teachers' disapproval or negative reactions. Importantly, no participant discussed the negative effects of popular culture integration (Brooks, 2008; Taylor, 2010). Therefore, in light of Petrone's (2013) three kinds of teachers, more participants indicated that they valued popular culture texts and may integrate these texts into instruction in the future, and two participants indicated that, although they thought it was important, they may not integrate popular culture texts into their future lessons.

When teachers listen respectfully to children's talk and provide the freedom and space for children to bring their knowledge of popular culture into their reading and writing, when teachers look for ways to bridge home and school literacies, the curriculum becomes more permeable. When teachers are open to teachable moments when the student teaches the teacher, true, contextual learning can occur, and a tapestry of permeable curriculum is woven (Dyson, 1993, 2021).

## LIMITATIONS

We now turn to the limitations of this research. We selected convenience sampling (Miles et al., 2014) because the research took place in 2020 when COVID 19 concerns canceled in-person learning in universities and schools across the country and the world. The participants in this research were preservice teachers enrolled in masters-level reading and writing methods courses. Importantly, of the seven graduate students who agreed to participate in the study, the five participants who completed the survey may not be the five participants who completed the interviews. Still another limitation may be confirmation bias: the threat of a researcher's prior beliefs or convictions impeding any of the stages of data collection (Greenwald et al., 1986). For example, the instructor's prior knowledge of popular culture texts may have threatened the integrity of the research process.

## IMPLICATIONS

We now explore the implications of this qualitative research. Based on the benefits of popular culture text integration for students (e.g., connecting home and school literacies, and supporting critical literacy discussions) (Petroni, 2013), teacher education faculty may consider creating courses in popular culture education; incorporating more popular culture texts and discussions into literacy and content methods courses; sharing examples of how popular culture texts build bridges between students' in-school and out-of-school knowledge; and supporting students' developing critical literacies. Preservice teachers can be encouraged to incorporate popular culture texts into lesson plans and units of study and reflect on that implementation. Educators and preservice teachers may be encouraged to become popular culture ethnographers (Petroni, 2013) to examine how their own consumption of popular culture as children and adults may transfer into classroom teaching. Future research may include interviewing preservice teachers who are enrolled in a popular culture education course and who plan, implement, and reflect upon lessons that integrate popular culture texts.

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**APPENDIX A**

**Table 1**

*Survey Participants' Popular Culture Consumption as Children*

<b>Survey Participants' Popular Culture Consumption</b>	<b>As Children</b>
Books	<i>Harry Potter</i> <i>His Dark Materials</i> <i>Goosebumps</i> <i>Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark</i> <i>The Berenstain Bears</i> <i>Anne of Green Gables</i>
Television Series	Disney Channel <i>Will and Grace</i> <i>Queer Eye for the Straight Guy</i> <i>Full House</i> <i>Saved by the Bell</i> <i>Unsolved Mysteries</i> <i>Hey Arnold</i> <i>SpongeBob</i> <i>Little House on the Prairie</i> <i>Rugrats</i>
Movies	Disney Movies <i>Uncle Buck</i> <i>Young Frankenstein</i> <i>Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer</i>
Music	New Kids on the Block (NSYNC) Madonna Michael Jackson Boyz II Men Kids Bop Backstreet Boys Ricky Martin Pink Christina Aguilera TLC
Toys	Webkinz ViewMaster Skip-It Bedazzler Barbie My Little Pony Polly Pocket Pogs Furbies
Games	Clue Scattergories Pictionary

Survey Participants' Popular Culture Consumption	As Children
Video Games	<i>Mario 1</i> <i>Mario 2</i> <i>Mario 3</i>
Sports	Softball Field Hockey Baseball Red Sox Patriots

**APPENDIX B**

**Table 2**

*Survey Participants' Popular Culture Consumption as Adults*

Survey Participants' Popular Culture Consumption	As Children
Websites and Social Media	<i>Vulture.com</i> <i>Instagram</i>
Movies	<i>Marvel series</i> <i>Goonies</i> <i>Back to the Future</i> <i>Beetlejuice</i> <i>Home Alone</i>
Books	<i>Harry Potter</i> <i>Diary of a Wimpy Kid</i> <i>Warriors</i> <i>Dog Man</i>
Podcasts	<i>My Favorite Murder</i> <i>Bananas</i> <i>Terrible, Thanks for Asking</i> <i>The Daily</i> <i>Pod Save America</i>
Music and Music Blogs	<i>Underground Indie</i> <i>Sound</i> <i>Pitchfork</i> <i>Stereogum</i>
Television	<i>Last Week Tonight</i> <i>Parks and Rec</i> <i>Schitt's Creek</i> <i>The Office</i> <i>Seinfeld</i> <i>Cheers</i> <i>Curb Your Enthusiasm</i> <i>Stranger Things</i> <i>Unsolved Mysteries</i>