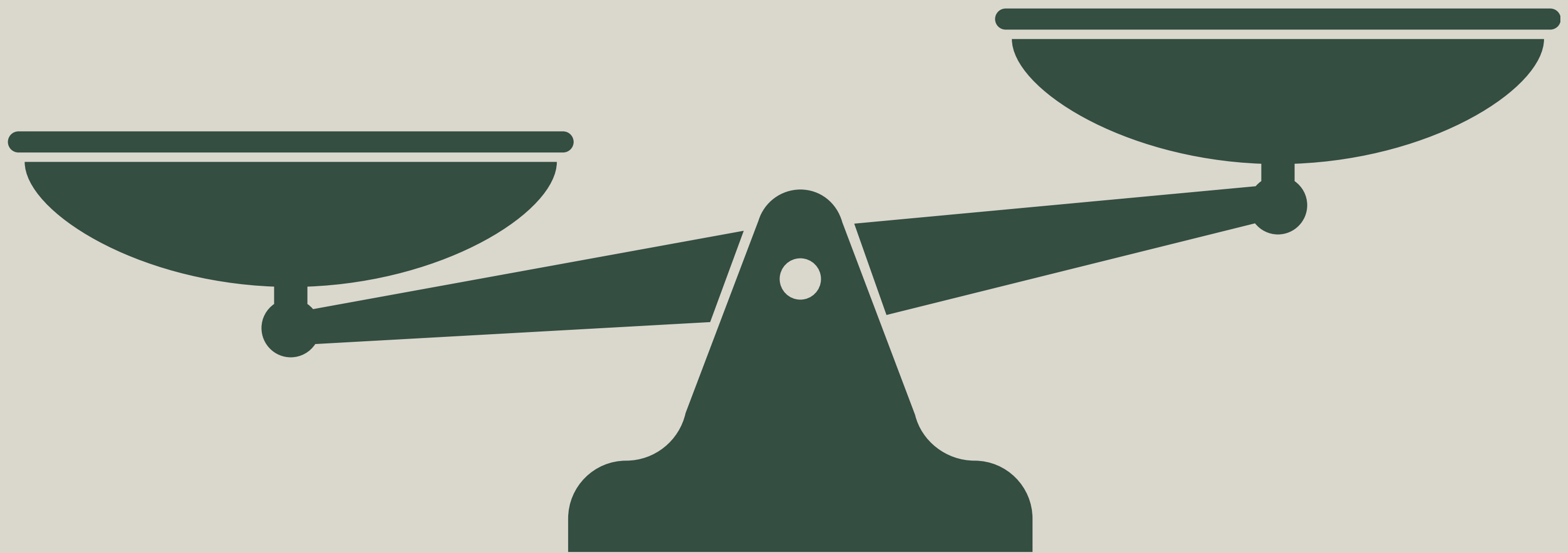


Professional Judgment and Controversial Issues:
An Exploratory, Qualitative Study of
Preservice Music Teachers

Lauren McGinley Vujosevic



IMPETUS

Narratives in Music Education



IMPETUS

Narratives in
Music Education

Personal
Experience



IMPETUS

Democracy & Education

- Requires navigating tension and competing perspectives.

(Dewey, 1956; Freire, 1996; Gutmann, 1993)

Democracy & Music Education

- Rethinking traditional pedagogies and a space for negotiating differences.

(Woodford, 2005; Tan, 2014; DeLorenzo, 2016)

Teaching Controversial Issues

- Teachers' beliefs, identities, emotions, and perceived risks shape how controversy is addressed.

(Hess, 2008; Zimmerman and Robertson, 2018; Barton and McCully, 2007)

Controversial Issues in Music Education

- Researches found preservice music teachers valued engaging with conflicting perspectives but found it challenging.

(Richerme and Miksza, 2020)

Democracy & Education

Democracy & Music Education

Teaching Controversial Issues

Teaching Controversial Issues in Music Education

Democratic music education ideals emphasize engagement with controversy, yet little is known about how preservice music teachers are prepared to navigate controversial issues in music education.

LITERATURE REVIEW GAP



Developing professional identities and beliefs.



May have limited opportunities to navigate disagreement.



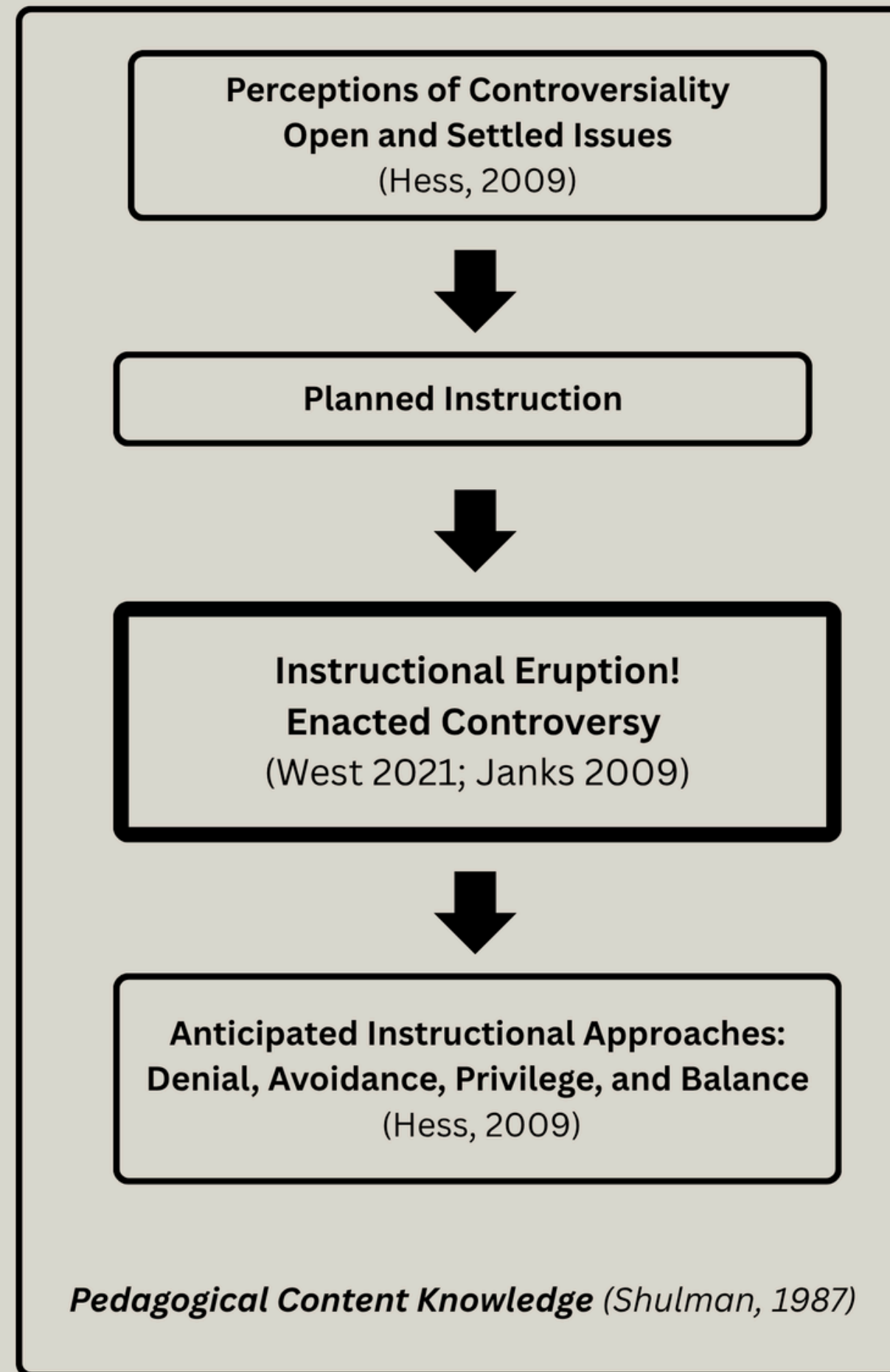
Professional judgment shapes future practice.

WHY PRESERVICE MUSIC TEACHERS?

Moments when **professional actions** intersect with tension or competing perspectives, and require a **teacher's response**.

Unlike other classroom disputes, these situations often involve questions of ethics, identity, values, or beliefs, and may not have a single professionally agreed-upon way forward.

CONCEPTUAL



FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this study was to **explore** how preservice music teachers **categorize** controversial issues and how they **anticipate approaching** and **responding** to those issues in school music settings.

PURPOSE

RQ1: What professional actions do preservice music teachers identify as non-controversial, somewhat controversial, or extremely controversial?

RQ2: How do preservice music teachers describe their approaches to controversial issues in music classroom scenarios?

RQ3: How do preservice music teachers describe their professional judgment when responding to controversial issues in music classroom scenarios?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

DISCLAIMER!

PURPOSE

Qualitative Survey Design

(Jansen, 2010)

Exploratory Study

(Swaraj, 2019)



IPEDS
(Integrated
Postsecondary
Education Data
System)



Institution
Websites



665
Institutions



665 Faculty
Contacts

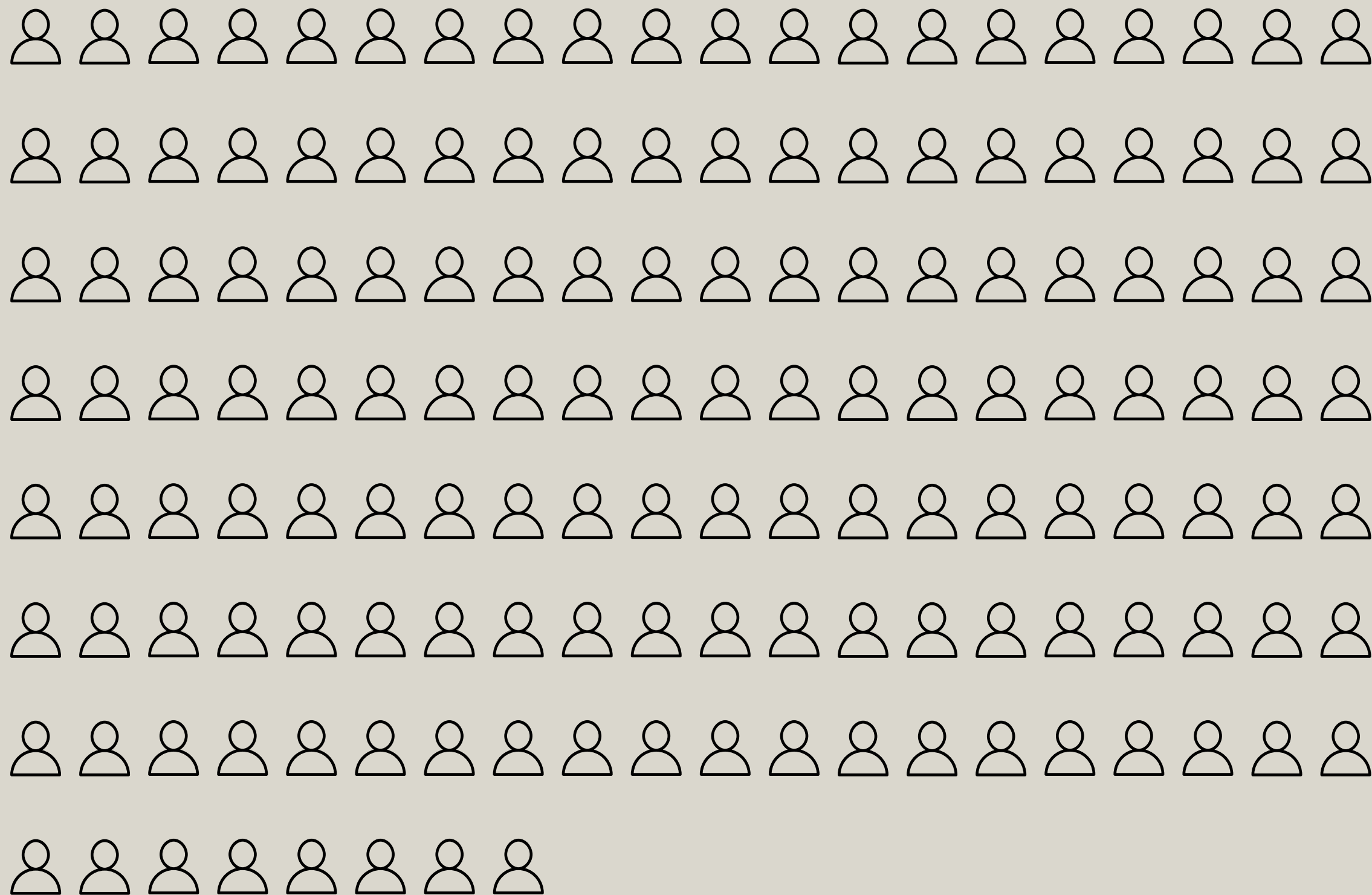


Survey sent to
665 Faculty
Contacts



Faculty sent to
preservice music
teachers

POPULATION & SAMPLING



148

**PRESERVICE MUSIC TEACHERS
COMPLETED SECTION A &
SECTION B OF THE SURVEY.**

PARTICIPANTS



64

**PRESERVICE MUSIC TEACHERS
COMPLETED THE ENTIRE SURVEY**

PARTICIPANTS

Survey Components

- Section A: Screener questions
- Section B: Perceptions of ten professional actions
- Section C: Responses to four vignette scenarios
- Section D: Participant demographics

Vignette Development

- Use of ChatGPT
- Final four topics
- Parallel versions with contrasting sources of tension

Refinement Process

- Expert Review ($n = 15$)
- Pilot Testing ($n = 11$)
- Revisions for clarity, balance, and relevance

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Example

Version 1:

You are directing a high school choir and have programmed a piece by a composer who has recently been the subject of public criticism for alleged misconduct. During rehearsal, a student brings up the controversy, asking whether the ensemble should still perform the piece. **Even after hearing this, all other students express excitement about the work and say it should stay in the concert program.**

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Version 2:

You are directing a high school choir and have programmed a piece by a composer who has recently been the subject of public criticism for alleged misconduct. During rehearsal, a student brings up the controversy, asking whether the ensemble should still perform the piece. **Most students, then, say they don't feel comfortable performing it and worry that doing so might send the wrong message.**

Section A: Screener Questions

- Descriptive Statistics

Section B: Perceptions of Professional Actions in Music Education

- Descriptive statistics
- Open & settled issues (Hess, 2009)

Section C: Response to Controversial Issues in Music Education

- Deductive coding using Typology of Teacher Approaches to Controversy (Hess, 2009)
- Inductive coding for patterns in professional judgment

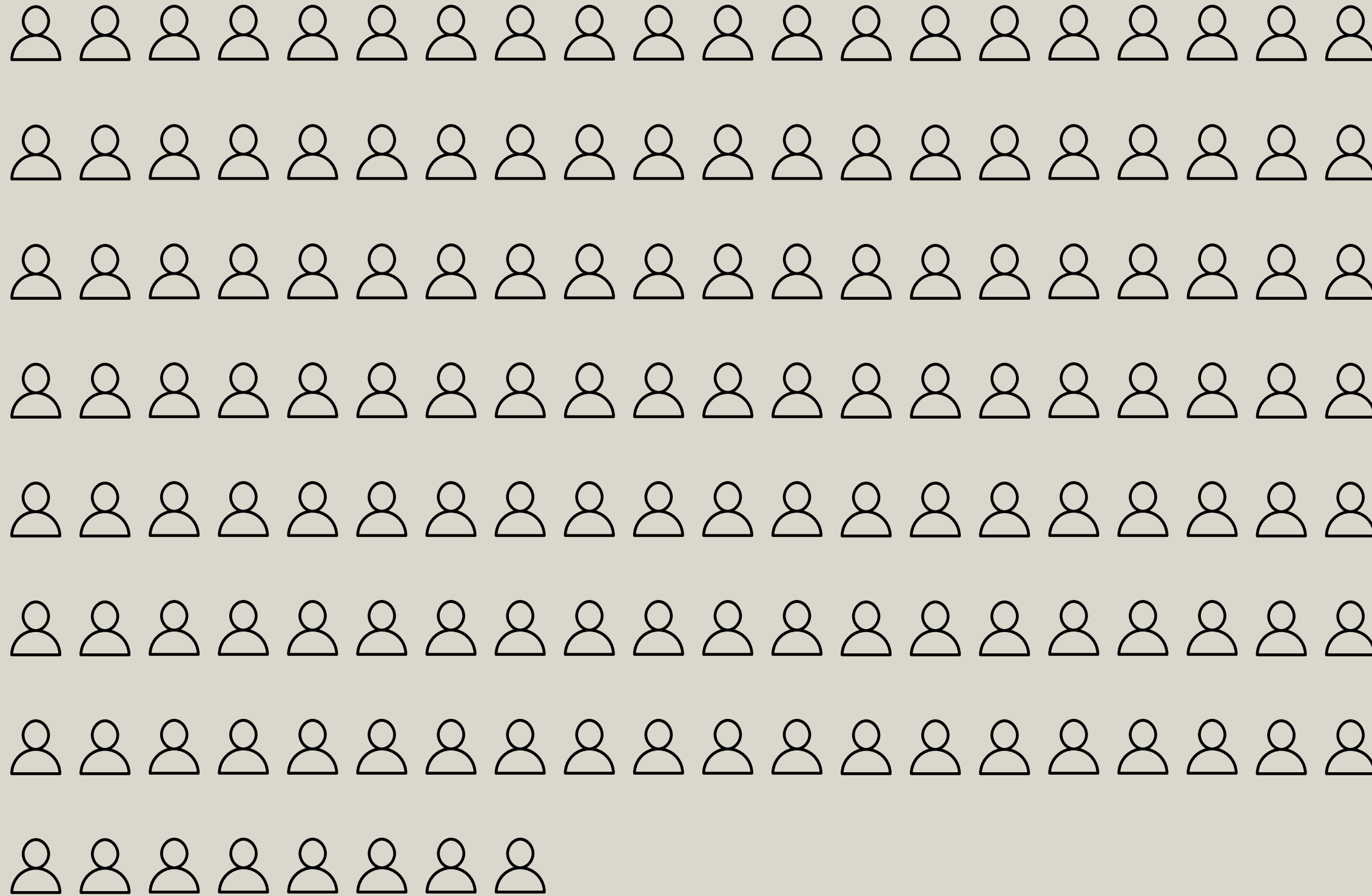
Section D: Participant Demographics

- Descriptive Statistics

DATA ANALYSIS

What professional actions do preservice music teachers identify as non-controversial, somewhat controversial, and extremely controversial?

FINDINGS: RQ1



148

**PRESERVICE MUSIC TEACHERS
COMPLETED SECTION A &
SECTION B OF THE SURVEY.**

Performing religious music

Using voice-part-based terminology

Performing patriotic music

Teaching the history of African American Music

Teaching music outside of the Western Canon

Allowing non-gendered performance attire

Ensembles reflecting the diversity of the school

Inclusion of modern ensembles in the curriculum

Separating the art from the artist

Taking ensembles to participate in competitions

FINDINGS: RQ1

Settled

Performing patriotic music

Teaching the history of African American Music

Allowing non-gendered performance attire

FINDINGS: RQ1

Settled

Performing patriotic music

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Allowing non-gendered performance attire

Boarderline Settled

Seperating the art from the artist

Settled

Performing patriotic music

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FINDINGS: RQ1



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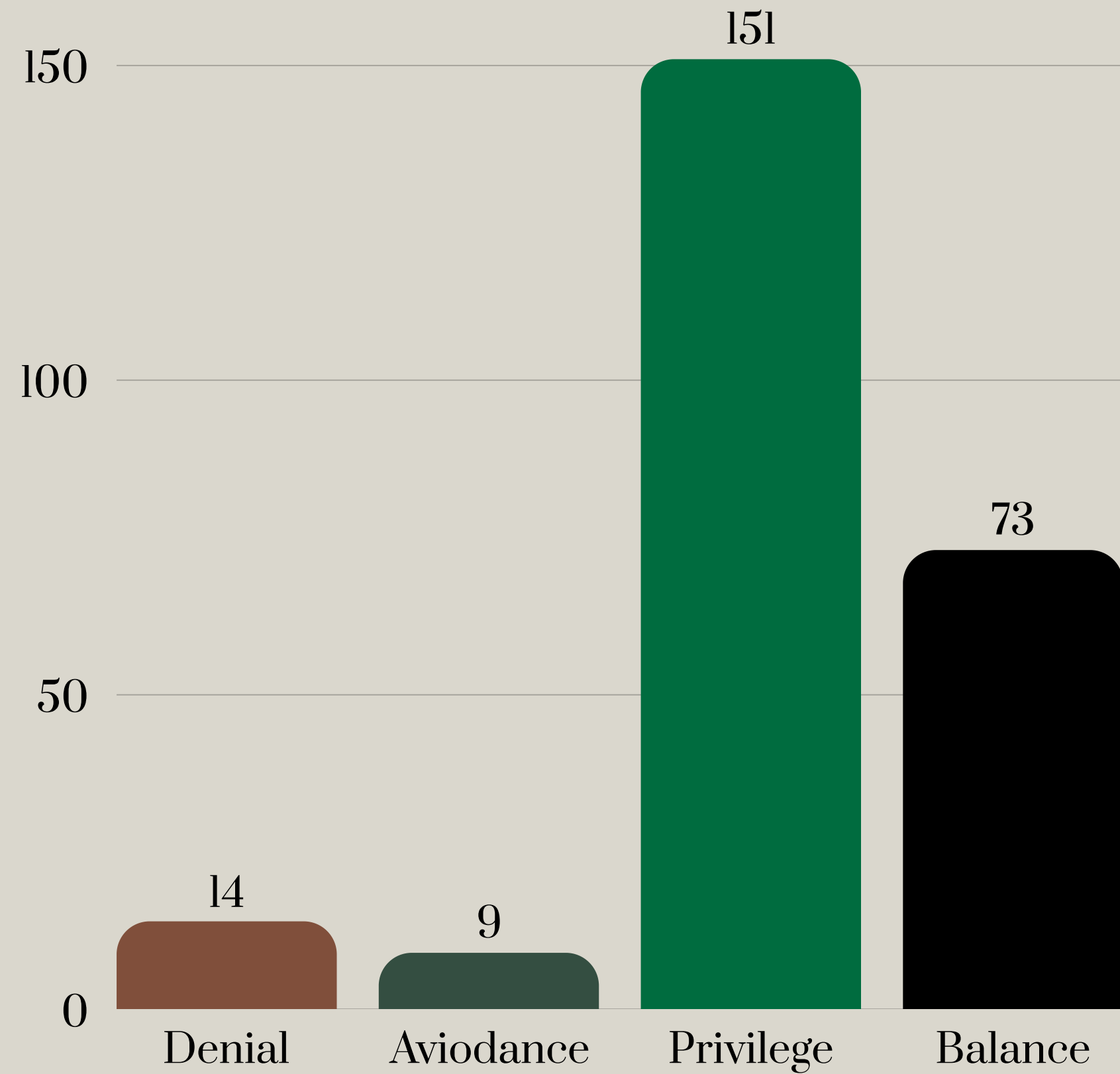
**PRESERVICE MUSIC TEACHERS
COMPLETED THE ENTIRE SURVEY**

FINDINGS: RQ2 & RQ3 SAMPLE

How do preservice music teachers describe their approaches to controversial issues in music classroom scenarios?

FINDINGS: RQ2

64 participants x **4** vignette responses each - **10** left blank = **246** responses total



How do preservice music teachers describe their approaches to controversial issues in music classroom scenarios?

DENIAL

Music doesn't care where it came from...
my choice in programming would have
many filters, but discriminating toward a
certain gender is not one of them.

Participant 48

AVIODANCE

The principal has asked the group to perform a specific piece, so there is an expectation to perform it...regardless of philosophical views.

Participant 31

PRIVILEGE

Art is great and independent of the artist.

Participant 48

Personal conduct does not negate the value of their work.

Participant 38

Keep singing [the song] because the teacher believes you can separate [the art from the artist].

Participant 9

BALANCE

While ultimately I subscribe to separating the art from the artist, if my students are uncomfortable...I am willing to work with them and find another [song].

Participant 7

Balance students' needs while fitting the requirements of the principal.

Participant 25

As a Christian, I would react differently depending on where I am teaching.

Participant 11

How do preservice music teachers describe their professional judgment when responding to controversial issues in music classroom scenarios?

FINDINGS: RQ3

Prioritization of Musical Outcomes

Student Participation in Decision-Making

Comfort as a Guiding Consideration

Cognitive Dissonance

Prioritization of Musical Outcomes

Student Participation in Decision-Making

Comfort as a Guiding Consideration

Cognitive Dissonance

Prioritization of Musical Outcomes

- **Ethical Concerns and the Primacy of Musical Value**
- **Ensemble Sound and Physiological Reasoning in Participation Decisions**
- **Contextual Knowledge as a Means of Enhancing Performance**

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Prioritization of Musical Outcomes

- Ethical Concerns and the Primacy of Musical Value
- Ensemble Sound and Physiological Reasoning in Participation Decisions
- **Contextual Knowledge as a Means of Enhancing Performance**

I would reassure them that we are playing the pieces for the experience and will only bring up the topics and discuss them if they are necessary to making the band sound that much better.

Participant 5

We would probably talk about the piece of music and the history behind it to understand what we are singing. We need to know the history before we can perform it to the best of our ability.

Participant 60

Prioritization of Musical Outcomes

Student Participation in Decision-Making

Comfort as a Guiding Consideration

Cognitive Dissonance

Student Participation in Decision-Making

- **Teacher-Directed Decision-Making**
- **Shared Decision-Making**
- **Student-Influenced Decision-Making**

Student Participation in Decision-Making

- Teacher-Directed Decision-Making
- Shared Decision-Making
- **Student-Influenced Decision-Making**

I'd probably then pull up some examples of some works made by women composers. To address the concern of the student, I would implore the students to send me works they want to do, and I'll look into them.

Participant 51

I believe it would be best to have a 1 on 1 conversation with said student if he were genuinely concerned about these issues...I would offer solutions about having him help build the next program so that he can feel included in the process since he is passionate about it.

Participant 7

Student Participation in Decision-Making

- Teacher-Directed Decision-Making
- Shared Decision-Making
- **Student-Influenced Decision-Making**

Prioritization of Musical Outcomes

Student Participation in Decision-Making

Comfort as a Guiding Consideration

Cognitive Dissonance

Comfort as a Guiding Consideration

- **Productive Discomfort**
- **Comfort as a Directive for Instructional Change**
- **Student Comfort as a Baseline Pedagogical Value**

Comfort as a Guiding Consideration

- Productive Discomfort
- Comfort as a Directive for Instructional Change
- **Student Comfort as a Baseline Pedagogical Value**

Comfort as a Guiding Consideration

- Productive Discomfort
- Comfort as a Directive for Instructional Change
- Student Comfort as a Baseline Pedagogical Value

If performing this composer's music makes the students uncomfortable, we will not perform the piece. There are plenty of pieces or selections out there that can help improve or develop the skills I was hoping this piece would. Making sure students feel cared for and respected is number 1 priority.

Participant 26

I would want my students to feel comfortable and proceed with the actions that would reflect that.

Participant 22

If there is a real issue and not just a petty one, the student could possibly do an alternate assignment, but again, it's not a democracy.

Participant 13

Prioritization of Musical Outcomes

Student Participation in Decision-Making

Comfort as a Guiding Consideration

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive Dissonance

- **Inclusion Versus Musical Priority**
- **Universality Versus Restriction**
- **Historical Context Versus Contemporary Concerns**

I would have no problem enrolling a student in the women's choir if that reflected their preferred gender. **However**, I would also want to test their voice to see if I could make it work with them as an Alto 2.

Participant 1

Lift Every Voice and Sing is a **patriotic song**. I would program both into the set list and tell the principal that we will be performing two songs. Or, I would assess my choir, if none of them or very few of them were black **I wouldn't think that our choir would be fit to perform.**

Participant 7

None of them were alive during slavery, so coming at it from an educational historical angle might help **alleviate any prejudice** in the classroom.

Participant 11

Cognitive Dissonance

- **Inclusion Versus Musical Priority**
- **Universality Versus Restriction**
- **Historical Context Versus Contemporary Concerns**

FINDING IMPLICATIONS



Prepare Teachers for Ambiguity

FINDING IMPLICATIONS



Prepare Teachers for Ambiguity



Integrate Musical & Sociocultural Goals in Practice

FINDING IMPLICATIONS



Prepare Teachers for Ambiguity



Integrate Musical & Sociocultural Goals in Practice



Rethink the Role of Student Comfort

FINDING IMPLICATIONS



Prepare Teachers for Ambiguity



Integrate Musical & Sociocultural Goals in Practice



Rethink the Role of Student Comfort



Move Democratic Practice Beyond Rhetoric

FINDING IMPLICATIONS

RESEARCH DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

Vignette-Based Designs

RESEARCH DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

 Vignette-Based Designs

 Anonymous Survey Design

RESEARCH DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

 Vignette-Based Designs

 Anonymous Survey Design

 Sampling & Response Burden

 Vignette-Based Designs

 Anonymous Survey Design

 Sampling & Response Burden

 Expert Feedback Verses ChatGPT

RESEARCH DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

To Do List:

Replication

Early-career Music Teachers

Late-career Music Teachers

Music Teacher

Professional Development

Addressing Teacher

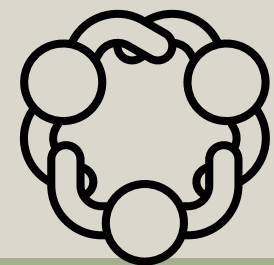
Dispositions

FUTURE RESEARCH

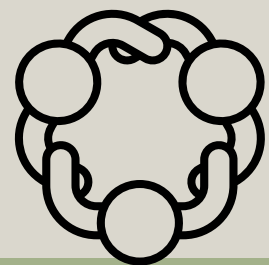
CONCLUSION



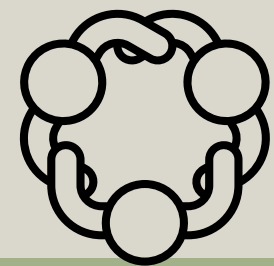
CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

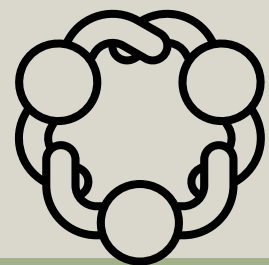


CONCLUSION



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If we truly believe that music education contributes to helping students become **better people**, then we must **prepare** teachers to **engage thoughtfully** with the **controversial issues** that inevitably accompany **musical learning**.



CONCLUSION

Thank you so much for listening!

Any Questions?