Professional reflexivity and the paradox of freedom: Negotiating professional boundaries in a Jewish Ultra-Orthodox female music teacher education programme

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Abstract
Embracing an ethos of sharing music and practices across cultural boundaries, the multicultural vision of music (teacher) education has paid scarce attention to the paradox of freedom that arises between such freedoms and the complex politics that frame and constrain teachers’ choices and values. In this article, we explore these demands of professional reflexivity through an instrumental case study of music teacher educators working in an all-female, Ultra-Orthodox Jewish music teacher education programme in Israel. Through a thematic analysis of data generated together with six teacher educators, we illustrate how their context-responsive approaches to developing programme visions engage with processes of censorship and cultural translation, as teachers work to align their professional boundaries within established religious boundaries. This boundary-matching and hybridity required may be seen to result in intense processes of professional reflexivity that raises questions as to how all teacher education programme visions might engage with the moral order of a society and highlights the need for international music teacher education to develop a critical, reflexive awareness of how values shape professional work.

Keywords
Music teacher education, music teaching, professionalism, reflexivity, Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society

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**Introduction**

Critical attention is increasingly paid to the intensifying diversity of student populations and the related challenges of participation, access and equity; yet music education scholarship has largely neglected the complex politics and ethics that frame (or constrain) music teachers’ visions. In particular, considerations of the ways in which religion may complicate or prevent the realisation of pluralist visions of music teaching and learning have been scarce even in the literature attending to the challenges of culturally responsive teaching (cf. Westerlund et al., 2019; Westerlund & Partti, 2018). Taking into account the multifaceted diversities and the inherent interconnectedness of the contemporary world, sociologist Werner Vogd (2017) argues that professionals are ‘strongly confronted with aspects of a polycentric society that has more than one rationality, logic or locus of reflection’ and therefore need ‘to develop specific reflexive capabilities that enable them to cope with these tensions and insecurities and to reconcile conflicting expectations’ (n.p.). Although this reflexivity can enable a heightened awareness of the other and the self, it also raises the potential to disrupt the very frames through which this reflexive work is done. A paradox of freedom thus arises: how can one hold a value-based vision, such as a multicultural, pluralist vision, and at the same time be reflexive and free to cross the boundaries of what one knows and values? How can reflexive approaches change or develop institutional cultures in ways that remain viable while also bearing the potential to disrupt these same systems?

In this article, we explore the paradox of freedom of professional reflexivity through an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) of an all-female, Ultra-Orthodox Jewish music teacher education programme in Israel. Working within the deeply ingrained religious boundaries of Ultra-Orthodox society, the teacher educators of this programme are required to engage in constant reflexivity as to the ways in which their professional boundaries align with this overarching mode of existence when confronted with ‘divergent rationalities, ontologies and epistemologies’ (Vogd, 2017, n.p.). Through this case, which is one unfamiliar and exceptional to most education scholars and practitioners and particularly those working in music education, we illustrate the ways in which the processes of boundary-crossing and boundary-matching are far from reliant solely on routine and habits. Indeed, they require considerable reflexive work and engagement with complex processes of censorship and legitimization that are ‘not only silencing but productive’ (Kallio, 2015, p. 46). These processes warrant critical consideration of the ways in which the negotiation of societal values shape professional visions for music teacher education in all contexts.

The relatively recently established Ultra-Orthodox Jewish music teacher education programme aims to provide religious schools with teachers representing their own community as well as offer new career paths for Ultra-Orthodox women. The programme sits alongside other teacher education streams that certify graduates to work in state-secular Jewish Hebrew speaking, state-religious Jewish Hebrew speaking, state-Arabic, and state-funded independent schools (Miettinen et al., 2018, 2020; Volonsky, 2010). While divided by religion and language, all of these separate music teacher education programmes are expected to fulfill the academic requirements set by the Israeli higher education system. As such, teacher educators working within the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish programme are required to engage in complex boundary work (Miettinen, 2019) that may be illustrative of work in any community that wishes to develop its musical culture through academic education (with its own discipline-specific expectations and educational culture) but at the same time sustain its deep traditions, religious values and worldviews. On a wider scale, this specific case is instrumental in understanding the often subtle intercultural negotiations that take place in all polycentric societies; negotiations between expectations, values, traditions, and cultures such as those associated with academic institutions, communities, or religious beliefs (see also Westerlund et al., 2019).
Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society in Israel

Israel is constitutionally defined as a ‘Jewish and democratic state’ (Blank, 2014), consisting of a number of socio-religious groups including the Ultra-Orthodox Jews, Modern Orthodox Jews, Secular Jews, Muslims, Christians and Druze, each of which comprises considerable diversity. The Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society is the fastest growing social group in Israel comprising approximately 11% of the total population or about 900,000 people (Kalagy & Braun-Lewensohn, 2019). Ultra-Orthodox Judaism can be traced back to the early Haredim and Hasidic movements of the 18th century in Hungary, later spreading to Eastern Europe and across the globe (Finkelman, 2011). These movements emerged as a counter-reaction to the Jewish emancipation and increasing secularism of Jewish society, focusing on ‘the spiritual and religious dangers that they associated with increased freedoms’ (p. 1063). From the late-19th century onwards, and particularly in the years after the Jewish Holocaust, various Ultra-Orthodox groups gradually grew closer together forming what today is often referred to as Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society.1 By the early 20th century, Ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups existed not only in Israel but in Europe, North America and North Africa (Freund & Band-Winterstein, 2013). Despite some clearly defined sets of values, Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society is not a homogeneous and monolithic group of people, but ‘a complex, diversified and multifaceted community of differentiated groups with their own particular dynamics’ (Freund & Band-Winterstein, 2013, p. 423). Yet, common to all groups is a degree of separation from majority society and its institutional socialization mechanisms, which have been seen as related to a ‘fear of not being able to overcome the cultural “assault” of modern secular society’ (Freund & Band-Winterstein, 2013, p. 423). Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society has thus been characterized as a culturally conservative, isolationist (Kalagy & Braun-Lewensohn, 2019, p. 230) cultural enclave (Sivan, 1991).

The workings of this society are intricately related to ‘the strict preservation of Halacha (Jewish Law) [which] is the main element which approximates man to God, spiritually speaking’ (Freund & Band-Winterstein, 2013, p. 423). Six basic elements form the foundation of the society (Kalagy & Braun-Lewensohn, 2019, pp. 230–231), including the observance and study of Torah, compliance with a rabbi in all aspects of life, geographical (self-)segregation, externally identifying marks/clothing, a wish to have an economic life independent of wider society, and the existence of independent educational institutions for members of the community, which are, however, ‘often supervised by the Ministry of Education’ (p. 231). Non-Ultra-Orthodox Jewish scholars describe the society as structured along conservative, patriarchal lines (Kalagy & Braun-Lewensohn, 2019) whereby the dominant social model is that of ‘a woman that holds a job in order to support a husband that studies Torah and does not work for his living’ (Almog & Perry-Hazan, 2011, p. 275). This is not to suggest that women’s work is solely valued for its potential for financial gain, as ‘[a]ccording to official Haredi doctrine, particularly in Israel, the woman earns an equal share of her husband’s credit for his Torah study if she provides for him and the family on a material and emotional level’ (Finkelman, 2011, p. 1074). A woman’s role, in providing for one’s family, is thus also considered as an act of religious devotion. Although societal change has taken place at the economic and cultural levels (Kalagy & Braun-Lewensohn, 2019), particularly in relation to the academic training for women in the society (Freund & Band-Winterstein, 2013), there remains widespread agreement within Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society that a woman’s most important role involves ‘getting married to a man who devotes his life to the study of Torah, having children (as many as possible), and taking full responsibility for managing a Jewish household’ (Almog & Perry-Hazan, 2011, p. 274).

The new feminine model for Ultra-Orthodox Jewish education

The most important distinction for understanding the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish worldview and education, in particular, is thus deeply entwined with gender roles. The Ultra-Orthodox Jewish cultural
ideal recognizes essential differences between men and women, which are manifest through radically different social and communal roles (Finkelman, 2011) and in the ways that the society’s educational system shapes the lives of women (Almog & Perry-Hazan, 2011). Typically, female education starts at preschool and continues until 18 years of age within the ‘Bais Ya’akov’ network (p. 283).2 Whereas after primary school, boys focus exclusively on studying religious texts, girls can study a variety of subjects (e.g., languages, mathematics, computing, history, geography, gymnastics, music, and art) in preparing them for future employment and academic training. Schools are also seen to fulfil a moral function to teach students ‘how to behave in acceptable ways, how to navigate the community and the outside world, and what roles they should play as either Haredi males or females’ (Finkelman, 2011, pp. 1069–1070).

In Israel, post-secondary studies are available for women through specialized Ultra-Orthodox courses in fields such as computing, graphics, architecture, and fashion. However, research reveals that the educational and employment situation for Ultra-Orthodox women varies greatly. Studies also point out that some fields of higher education are considered safer and some ‘as potentially dangerous to the Haredi lifestyle’ (e.g., Baum et al., 2014, p. 173). For instance, Kalagy (2016) suggests that ‘[m]ost of the haredi community still boycott academic study out of fear of denial and abandonment of the religion’ (p. 325), or ‘due to the lack of adaptation of curricula to the society and its values’ (p. 327). Accordingly, post-secondary education for females is seen primarily as something done in service of the preservation and strengthening of the socio-economic structure of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish learning culture (p. 317; Baum et al., 2014, p. 170). Yet, a recent study by Feldman (2019) demonstrates through one case that the male political and spiritual leadership in Ultra-Orthodox society in Israel can encourage ‘women to acquire an academic and professional education so they will be able to fulfill themselves and make a respectable living’ despite their absent political and religious participation (p. 451). Moreover, it should be noted that many Ultra-Orthodox men work today equally as women. Nevertheless, the educational model, by which males do not work for economic gain and females pursue education as the means to ensure a degree of financial security (Almog & Perry-Hazan, 2011, pp. 279, 281), is often seen as the ideal and an essential component in the construction of what has been termed a scholars society (e.g., Bradney, 2011) with fundamental differences between men and women.

This division of labour between men and women in the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society has facilitated the creation of a ‘new feminine educational model’ (Kalagy, 2016, p. 321), which responds to employment aspirations and demands, and yet affords women with large families with the opportunity to pursue higher education without challenging educational or societal values or structures. Indeed, Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women have been described as having a fierce and unique connection to their society, expressing ‘great satisfaction in being the breadwinners and pride in the way of life they have chosen’ (Kalagy & Braun-Lewensohn, 2019, p. 241). In this way, far from being passive and restrained, women represent an active ‘agency of communal preservation’ and ‘serve to facilitate the segregation of their community from the rest of the population’ (p. 245). By manoeuvring between different societal forces and ‘playing one visibility regime against the other’ women are said to be able to challenge some of the organizational and religious norms that marginalize them and instead ‘use (in)visibility as a resource’ while maintaining their collective identities and upholding their status as worthy members of both institutions (Wasserman & Fenkel, 2019, p. 1). In higher education, the common coping tactic for Ultra-Orthodox Jewish students is to frame the studies so that it accords with Haredi values (Baum et al., 2014).

It is within these frames that the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish music teacher education programme was founded in 2004, widening the professional opportunities for female members of the society to teach music in Ultra-Orthodox settings. Representing new professional horizons for graduates in this context, and implemented within a broader non-Ultra-Orthodox university institution, the
Ultra-Orthodox music teacher education programme draws upon both insider and outsider professional and academic expertise. The achievements of the music teacher educators can be related to ‘the prominent feminist trends’ within the Ultra-Orthodox society, ‘led by women who succeeded in putting the gender issue at the top their communities’ agendas’ (Almog & Perry-Hazan, 2011, p. 293). It should be noted that the position of the programme is far from secure and requires constant efforts from the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish music teacher educators. During this research process alone, concerns had been raised with regard to the continuation of the programme, and the programme activities relocated to new premises.

Research approach

This inquiry into the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish female music teacher education programme in Israel was designed as an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995), since it was viewed as ‘instrumental to accomplishing something other than understanding this particular [programme]’ (p. 3). That is, it aimed to explore the reflexive political work that music teacher educators engage in as they negotiate professional boundaries as part of their work, including potential conflicts or tensions. Employing a single-case approach, the Ultra-Orthodox music teacher education programme was chosen as our case since it was viewed as a unique, context-specific (Rios, 1996) music teacher education in which there was reason to believe that the phenomenon under investigation would be intensely exhibited. Following Stake (1995), the programme was understood as ‘an unusual case’ which could potentially ‘maximise what we [could] learn’ (p. 4) in this respect.

With the programme selected as the case, the sampling of interviewees within this case was made with the help of an insider known to us from previous collaborations. Since we knew from previous research (Miettinen, 2019) that the boundary work experienced by teacher educators was not exclusive to those representing the Ultra-Orthodox community, belonging to the Ultra-Orthodox society was not a selection criterion. In all, six teacher educators and leaders of the programme volunteered to participate, and the data generation took place through five semi-structured and open-ended interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) conducted by the authors (one interview was conducted with two interviewees). All interviewees had considerable experience working within the programme, and the majority – although not all – identified themselves as belonging to the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society. Some of the teacher educators also had experience teaching in non-Ultra-Orthodox Jewish education contexts. The interviews (between 45 and 90 mins in duration) were conducted in English (the native language of one of the researchers, but a shared language between all researchers and some of the interviewees) with the assistance of a Hebrew–English interpreter for four of the five interviews. The interview guide covered four overarching themes: (1) The organization of the music teacher education programme and the ways that the leaders/teacher educators identified with it, (2) the purpose and ways in which the programme was established, (3) the values underpinning the programme and (4) the desired and future programme visions. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and also professionally translated from Hebrew to English by an external professional translator. The first two authors conducted two additional focus group discussions with four of the interviewees. The purpose of these discussions (between 60 and 90 mins) was not to generate data, but to involve the research participants in the interpretation process and in the deliberation of the ethical issues related to the findings, in other words to strengthen the communicative validity (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) of the research. Due to the sensitive nature of the study and the precarious position of the programme within the society and university organization, ethical issues were present in this study throughout the process, including the focus of the analysis.
Data analysis assumed a thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) whereby three main themes were abductively (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000) identified, centring upon interviewees’ descriptions of their visions of the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish teacher education programme; their processes of navigating and adhering to religious boundaries in ensuring that the programme served the needs of Ultra-Orthodox society in Israel; and their understandings of female roles and responsibilities both within the programme and society.

The study was conducted with an aim towards a non-judgemental and appreciative ethos, and due to the sensitive ethical nature of the study, we have focused on teacher educators’ own experiences and views rather than the position of the programme (or Ultra-Orthodox society more broadly) in broader Israeli politics. While of course, the relations between state policymakers and minoritized religious groups influence music teacher education (not only in Israel but also around the world), the politics attended to in this study are rather those that relate to negotiations of personal and professional identities and the exercising of agency within the programme itself. Yet, it is necessary to acknowledge that our own professional identities, personal subjectivities and political predilections as three non-Jewish women living and working in Nordic countries shaped the interpretations and outcomes of this research. The programme was identified as a context of interest as part of a larger project exploring visions for interculturality in music teacher education in Finland, Israel and Nepal (see Global visions through mobilizing networks), and represented the first personal and professional engagement any of us have had with any Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society. While we do not claim a ‘view from nowhere’ nor a positivist romanticized authentic ‘mirror reflection’ of reality (Miller & Glassner, 2011, p. 52), we believe that an outsider analysis of the case may offer key insights beyond itself into the ways in which professional reflexivity in music education is an inherently political endeavour.

Findings

The reflexive construction of professional boundaries

The participating teacher educators’ visions for what the music teacher education programme ought to be, centred upon educating music teachers and musicians in service of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society. These visions illustrate an astute awareness of the religious boundaries that the music teacher education programme operates within, and the complex reflexive work undertaken in ensuring that the curriculum and content align with these values. This is not to suggest that implementing these ideals was straightforward in practice, and teacher educators explained that they spent a considerable amount of time and effort in identifying the boundaries of propriety and learning how to accommodate the programme within existing religious boundaries. For example, one of the interviewees explained that Ultra-Orthodox society generally held Western classical music in high regard, as it related to appropriate constructs of femininity:

[Western classical music] fits in very well with how they [Ultra-Orthodox Jewish families] are raising their girls . . . as a kind of 19th century good girl construct of femininity [down] to the little details, you know, [as] if you have better luck in matchmaking and finding a better husband if you play an instrument.

However, discrepancies were also identified between particular pieces or categories of Western classical music and the Ultra-Orthodox worldview. These were most clearly seen with regard to incorporating religious music into teaching, described by one interviewee as ‘the main religious prohibition’ on educational materials used. She emphasized that vocal church music was the most problematic as it conveyed aspects of Christian faith. Another form that presented clear challenges
was opera, ‘we cannot talk about violence and [romantic] love’, topics that characterize much of the operatic genre. However, while the teacher educators were aware of the criteria upon which music ought to be flagged as problematic, this did not lead to their automatic or altogether exclusion. One interviewee felt that Bach’s vocal church music was an essential component in understanding the classical tradition, hence, in navigating the religious censorship frames that deem such music inappropriate for Ultra-Orthodox Jewish students, she adapted the music by changing the lyrics:

I found [a] song in Hebrew from the Medievals, and it suits wonderfully . . . I let them [the students] sing . . . with other words which are 100% Hebrew and with no connection to Christian material.

Interviewees noted that some courses required the constant negotiation of content, such as taking into account forbidden English lyrics when teaching popular music courses or teaching Israeli folk music being cognizant to avoid one particular folk idiom that, according to the interviewee, was ‘all about Zionism’. These curricular negotiations often took place under the guidance of rabbis and also through discussions with students, who represented different Ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups with varying levels of conservatism. In this way, these discussions also had to take into account the diversity of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society and the differing views on how religious boundaries shaped teacher educators’ professional choices:

Some girls said that we [teachers] are not religious enough and we are not careful enough, and ‘What is this and what is this? I thought that I came to a very religious place. Why do you do this and why do you do that?’

Hence, the negotiations of curricular content within religious boundaries were a communal concern. As one interviewee explained,

It is not my negotiation. I have to ask rabbis and to get permission to do this or not to do this.

Especially for teacher educators without an Ultra-Orthodox Jewish background themselves, teaching music while upholding religious boundaries was dependent on close professional networks where they could communicate with, and learn from, Ultra-Orthodox Jewish teacher educators. As one interviewee described,

[An Ultra-Orthodox Jewish teacher and I] had lunch about once every two weeks . . . and I would say ‘Well, I am thinking of teaching this, how would that work?’

The musical content shared through the programme was not the only aspect of teaching and learning that presented challenges for teachers. Interviewees also explained that Ultra-Orthodox students had limited access to books, restricted access to university libraries, and heavy restrictions placed on computer and phone use (e.g., through the application of Internet filters). This led to concerns among interviewees on how to teach academic writing, or critical thinking, within such a tightly regulated world that did not easily encourage an inquiring mind-set. Teaching research skills was seen as particularly difficult:

Today ‘academic’ means ‘research’, and to examine everything and not take things as the absolute truth. That [stands] in contrast to the religious that claim that there is an absolute truth.

Teacher educators described collating appropriate research texts for students or spending a considerable amount of time guiding them to formulate research questions that were personally meaningful
for them within their society. This careful planning was seen as essential to foster students’ development as scholars without overstepping religious boundaries or encouraging students to question the foundations of their faith.

Towards female professionalism in music education

The teacher educators in the programme described their programme development work as always requiring an awareness and mindfulness of religious doctrine and teachings. This was seen as a justification for the very existence and development of the programme, as the means to offer new vocational opportunities for young Ultra-Orthodox women to pursue in supporting their (future) husband’s holy studies and providing for their families. Yet, the programme was also seen as an arena for one to enrich the spirit without detracting from women’s societal roles, thereby aiding students to lead a fuller life, religiously and otherwise:

Music is music, it is – also a gift from heaven, this is the way to make you serve [as a] full, rich human being, and it [music] has influence, impact on how you hear, how you are talking, how you think, how you create . . . this is the message that I give to the girls that help them: not to be in contrast between their musical desire and their religious desire . . . This is a way to serve the Lord, and to be a good mother, to be a good human being. I think it helps, more than ‘do this and don’t do this’.

In considering the ways in which music education contributes towards such a full, rich existence, teacher educators were required to maintain a balance between the new and traditional, within the broader frames of religious doctrine. This was especially pertinent to non-Ultra-Orthodox Jewish teachers, who described a necessity to demonstrate enculturation as well as a sensitivity in negotiating borders between themselves and their students. This aligns with research by Miettinen (2019) where a non-Ultra-Orthodox teacher described grey areas or ‘borderline[s] where she can be playful and experimental’ yet also ‘recognizing the limits and . . . not crossing the line’ (p. 243). This balance was particularly evident with regard to female identity and the role of women in their society, as musical engagements constructed and reinforced the values and boundaries of the female musicians educated within the programme. For example, female singing was seen as an act inseparable from questions of audience, and what could be sung by women was largely dependent on questions of who for? Although guided by traditional cultural and religious boundaries that dictate, for instance, that women should not sing in the presence of men (with the exception of close male relatives such as fathers and husbands), this did not foreclose all possibilities to perform. For instance, during examinations,

The husband of each girl will come in as his wife sings and then leave . . . you see the men sitting outside, taking care of the babies and then one at a time they will come in to hear their wives.

Students also had opportunities to express themselves musically within these religious boundaries. One interviewee recalled a student who, somewhat controversially, chose to perform prayer songs that were traditionally reserved for men over the classical repertoire that had been taught to her, as representative of a musical tradition that resonated more strongly with her own identity and faith:

She began to incorporate prayer songs in her repertoire . . . she came [to a workshop] one morning . . . and she began to sing a prayer song and accompanied herself with the [Darbuka] drum, and you could see that her friends were like – there was some uneasiness in the classroom . . . She engaged her peers in [a] discussion. And when she finished her degree, she had a wonderful finale concert . . . and she did a prayer song.
Negotiations as to what was possible within the programme were undertaken with considerable caution, particularly in relation to the notion that these studies afforded new (although limited) connections to be made with non-Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society. The pursuit of further studies was seen to place you in danger ‘to leave your religion’ and was regarded with scepticism:

There is a concern that [higher education] will put the woman in front, take her out from her natural place, become an academic woman, abandon her house care duties, the hierarchy of the house – there is a concern that the academy will make a woman go out of her limits.

Considering that the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish music teacher education programme may well be perceived as such a threat to traditional gender roles and social structures, the interviewees were wary of embarking upon work that might instigate social change. In this way, the interviewees continuously reflected upon their choices to ensure that their professional choices were always in service of their society and its values.

**Positioning professional service as holy work**

Professional identity, for the teacher educators, was thus tightly interwoven with understandings of their work as in service of the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society and faith. Similarly, they envisioned graduates’ careers as distinctly communal roles, but in a sense quite unlike the performance careers aspired to by many students in other contexts. While students do receive performance training, they would experience considerable barriers to performing in public, not least due to the limitations imposed by gender roles described earlier. A performance career was generally not seen to ‘stand with the values of modesty’, and it was seen that,

Education is more important [than becoming a performer]. To be a teacher is more important, more than your ego, even [more important than] to be on the stage. It is something wonderful, you have to have a meaning of serv[ing], to bring something to people, not to serve the ego, [but] to serve God.

Teaching, and in particular the teaching of music, is thus construed as holy work, ‘because you work with souls but also with music, it is holy’. Through such work, one can also be in touch with the student’s self, not in the form of a demanding ego, but as ‘spirit’ and ‘inner voice’. For one of the interviewees, this opportunity and ability was seen as a gift:

I think one of my gifts is that I can see the girls, the spirit of the girls, the talent of the girls, maybe before she [the girl herself] sees [it] . . . I am trying to show her the reason, ‘this is yours, it is not mine, this is yours, your inner voice’, and usually I hear it, I say, ‘[do] you hear it? This is yours’. From the very beginning.

In this way, the gift of teaching was not only connected to showing a student her spirit, talent or voice, but also to be able to create a space for the spirit, and the female spirit in particular. Importantly, these spiritual connections were framed in ways that emphasize service rather than individuality, as one interviewee explained:

[It is not only a matter of] recognizing the spirituality and the spiritual agency, but putting it in its place. Putting it in its place by saying . . . I get the spiritual opening and agency from music, but I will never take it all the way in singing or playing. I will take all these emotions and now I will channel them in my prayer book, and in my silent prayer.
Thus, while ‘there is a lot of talking about spirituality and Jewish thought’, the holy work of music teacher education was tempered by the professional boundaries of propriety within the programme that are constructed ‘very carefully with the background of rabbinical [guidance]’. This was done particularly judiciously when educating students from more secular backgrounds who had recently chosen a more religiously observant, Ultra-Orthodox Jewish life and were still learning how to ‘express themselves and their art and their occupation’.

**Discussion**

The findings presented in the previous section illustrate the ways in which the professional choices and actions of music teacher educators working in the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish music teacher education programme draw upon a vision of a context-responsive programme under the auspices of an overarching religious order. Even in such a case with clear and established directives on how one ought to behave within a particular worldview or value system, these findings suggest that the limits of freedom are not necessarily clear. Thus, even in the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish context, teacher educators’ decision-making requires a high degree of reflexivity in order to ‘reconcile conflicting expectations’ (Vogd, 2017, n.p.), navigating the multiple tensions of varying social forces. Maxine Greene (1988) writes that we are free, ‘in so far as we are becoming different from what we have been’. To become different... is not simply to will oneself to change [but] being able to accomplish what one chooses to do. It is not only a matter of the capacity to choose; whatever is chosen and acted upon must be grounded, at least to a degree, in an awareness of a world lived in common with others, a world that can be to some extent transformed. (pp. 3–4)

Accordingly, while we may consider the work of most music teachers and teacher educators as enjoying considerable freedoms, this, as with the music teacher educators of the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish programme, is conducted within a context-specific and socially defined script (Cribb & Gewirtz, 2015, p. 13). The freedom to choose is, as Greene (1988) argues, ‘an achievement within the concreteness of lived social situations rather than a primordial or original possession... as an opening of spaces as well as perspectives’ (pp. 4–5). This is not necessarily a negative constraint, indeed as Kallio (2015) has argued, ‘the foreclosure... of possibility is inevitable and indeed necessary’ (p. 99) and holds the potential to also ‘develop new courses of action, new possibilities, and new resistances to patterns and habits of interaction’ (p. 101), resistances that may be seen as the heart of constructing programme visions.

The reflexive work and negotiations of the music teacher educators in this study may thus be seen to extend beyond the binary of freedom/censorship in their production of a hybrid practice that conveys ‘a temporality that makes it possible to conceive of the articulation of antagonistic or contradictory elements’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37); a practice that involves translation, prolonged rethinking, the use of imagination and the application of established principles to a new situation. In this sense, their programme visions can be conceived of as constructed upon ambiguous and highly politicized terrain, which Homi Bhabha (1994) referred to as a third space; a social articulation of difference and process of identification in which a new cultural, discontinuous mix is negotiated and legitimized in a moment of historical transformation without pre-given models (p. 3). The work of the teacher educators thus requires a constant and vigilant awareness of the ways in which professional choices are expected to construct, affirm and preserve the overarching religious mode of existence and how the programme fulfils the needs and expectations of individual students coming from diverse Ultra-Orthodox backgrounds. However, at the same time, most of the material, artistic criteria and
professional requirements are sourced from outside of the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society, and the programme is required to fulfil the academic requirements of the Israeli higher education system. Such intercultural work demands iterative processes of revision, cultural translation and reflexive negotiation with musical material in order to reconcile conflicting expectations. This may be seen to produce the inbetween space (p. 56) where female music educators serve to facilitate the segregation of their community and resist the secular influences of their surrounding world, all narrated to produce a degree of existential continuity and security that gives meaning and orientation to their work as part of life (Giddens, 1991).

According to sociologists of professionalism, teacher autonomy is produced through professional ‘path-finding work’ (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) that involves negotiation and ‘application of differing and irreconcilable logics of reflection and balancing’ them in their decision-making’ (Vogd, 2017, n.p.). Professional power then becomes part and parcel of the specific micropolitical positionings that ‘ensure that the professional decision maker’s role remains institutionally validated’ (n.p.). Also in the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish context, music teacher educators develop autonomy and professional power through engaging in such balancing acts while being ‘prepared both to recognize and to negotiate the different “modes of existence”’ in both themselves and their students ‘dialogically in such a way that autonomy and subjectivity is promoted’ (n.p.). Hence, as in any other context, professional work in the Ultra-Orthodox programme can be conceived of as ‘a “team sport” and ‘a social phenomenon’ (Cribb & Gewirtz, 2015, p. 131) that has to cohere with the society, in this case with a closed conservative society. Yet, while aiming to preserve and sustain these broader social and religious values, the pioneering work of the music teacher educators unavoidably changes the role of music education within the society, including the position of female musicians in society. The case thus illustrates the ways that music teacher education and higher music education in general work towards conservatism and preservation, while creating the conditions necessary for fundamental change (Kalagy, 2016, p. 326). In addition, this study suggests that a conservative education context demands a high degree of moral reflexivity about what is taught, why, for whom and what for. Such reflexivity may be less developed or even completely absent in contexts guided by a more open multicultural ethos of sharing and freedom, where the assumption of neutrality and secularity of teachers and students may obfuscate the political modalities of the most fundamental ethical questions (Westerlund et al., 2019).

**Conclusion**

Understanding that all educational programmes are situated within broader historical, socio-cultural, (non)religious and other frames, this study raises questions as to the extent to which we recognize the ways in which worldviews and values shape music teacher education programme visions, and how professional choices might construct, reinforce, challenge or impede the achievement of these goals. What horizons open up for music teacher criticality in a situation where the very existence of the teacher education programme is dependent on the ‘fitness’ of the programme to the surrounding mode of existence? How can a music teacher educator in the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish context choose otherwise and still be grounded ‘in an awareness of a world lived in common with others’ (Greene, 1988, p. 4)? The cultural translation and boundary-matching undertaken by the teachers of this music teacher education programme do not follow the logic of the dominant society, or the majority of music educators internationally, but rather it has constructed its own logic comprising different systems of meaning: social, cultural, religious and musical. The cultural translation required here (see Bhabha, 1994) is not one that can be done within majority-defined and maintained boundaries (in this particular case, broader Israeli society). Rather, an inbetween
logic emerges wherein languages, ideas, meanings, and cultural forms (such as those of the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish music education curriculum) are negotiated through a dialogue of difference.

Considering that the teacher educators interviewed in this study were highly conscious of their own rationales for censoring music and the preservation of values and traditions through their teachings, we may ask, What are the non-negotiable values and boundaries (explicit or hidden) of other music teacher education programmes, and why are such boundaries in place? Are we, or should we be, willing to be free from our own professional values, and how well do these align with the values of the programmes we work within? What conditions limit, or afford, our freedoms? Without a critical, reflexive understanding of the normative powers of the modes of existence within which our own values and visions for music education are produced and constrained, the prevalent multicultural aim of freely crossing boundaries may be unachievable or indeed undesirable. Although the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society here represents a unique context and one openly committed to the preservation of boundaries and isolation from others, this paradox of freedom may well characterize multicultural politics more broadly and warrants critical consideration in other contexts, including our own.

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**Notes**

1. The term Ultra-Orthodox Jewish society here refers to diverse socio-religious groups that strongly adhere to Jewish law, also referred to as Haredi or strictly Orthodox. We choose here the term Ultra-Orthodox in line with how research participants referred to themselves and the teacher education programme that serves as the case for this study.

2. The Bais Ya’akov school system was established in 1917 in Poland as a response to earlier developments where women who had received non-Jewish education made their husbands feel inferior in comparison to their well-educated wives (Almog, Perry-Hazan, 2011, p. 280).

3. This research adhered to the ethical requirements of the Finnish National Board of Research Ethics. All interviewees gave their informed consent and are not referred to using identifying names or information. The interviewees were provided with an opportunity for member-checking the full draft of this article prior to submission for publication, with translation assistance made available.

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