Chapter 9
The masculinisation of the teaching profession or gynophobia as education policy

Abstract This chapter draws on the research conducted by the author on gender in the teaching profession over the past decade. It is informed by a broad range of data, including semi-structured interviews with teachers, statistical data analysis and policy analysis. It explores the gendered assumptions underpinning discourses of teaching. It critically engages with the claim that teaching is 'feminised' (a polysemous term), and the rather widespread view that the masculinisation of teaching is desirable. The chapter analyses the range of discourses of teaching and gender which circulate in a diversity of contexts, including in policies, the media and in schools, with specific reference to the UK (particularly, though not only, England). It reflects on the effects of these discourses on gender equality and on how these can be countered with the emergence of counter-discourses which do not invisibilise, misrecognise and devalue what and who is associated with 'femininity'.

Introduction

> Gynophobia: (ˌgaɪnəʊˈfəʊbɪə, ˌdʒaɪnəʊ-)
> Noun. A dread or hatred of women. (Collins 2019)

In the UK, where I write from, school teachers are subject to numerous and sometimes conflicting expectations. Educational policies, in the form of various documents issued by the government and various agencies and public bodies, establish and specify the content of national standards, statutory duties and employment contracts. These documents require that teachers foster the development of well-rounded children, while enabling their learning and 'raising standards'; that their practices are underpinned by creative pedagogies, while strictly following the National Curriculum and adopting 'good practices'; that they nurture the child,

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equip the future worker with skills relevant to the labour market of tomorrow, and 'empower' the citizen (DfEE 1998; DfE 2010a, 2012b, 2014a). Also worth recalling here is the fact that the now defunct General Teaching Council for England[1] regulated teachers' skills and conduct according to its Code of Conduct and Practice for Teachers (GTCE 2009). Expectations from the wider public can be equally conflicting and wide-ranging (Braun 2015; Moreau 2015), and while they may appear less coercive, they are part of a broader apparatus which regulates teachers' behaviour (Foucault 1969). This surveillance of teachers is particularly pronounced in an educational sector described for some times as a quasi market (Glennerster 1991). Decades of neo-liberal policies have increased the competition between schools and threaten schools which do not meet their objectives with closure (Mahony and Hextall 2000; Faucher-King and Le Galès 2010). In this neoliberal policy context, teachers have been increasingly held responsible for students' educational attainment (Gewirtz et al. 2019). With this in mind, it is maybe unsurprising that who takes up a positional identity as a teacher attracts many concerns, from policy-makers and the wider public. Likewise, it is maybe unsurprising that such concerns go beyond teachers' professional identities and skills, and cross over to their private personas (Moreau 2014).

Earlier research shows that this concern about members of the teaching profession is shaped by power relations of gender, class, race, dis/ability and sexuality (Moreau 2014). In this chapter, I focus on gender, in its intersections with these other identity markers. In particular, I explore how, over the past thirty years, the feminisation of school teaching has represented a persistent presence on the policy agenda and has been constructed as a 'public policy problem', in Marilyn Cochran-Smith's words (2005, p. 3), while the masculinisation of teaching has been constructed as desirable and, when achieved, as a cause for celebration. Drawing on a recent monograph on the topic (Moreau 2018), I start by deconstructing the multiple meanings of 'feminisation' and their underpinnings. Consistent with a feminist post-structuralist approach, I acknowledge that discourses are performative rather than indexical (Foucault 1969) and shape 'how we see ourselves and the world' (Litosseliti 2006, p. 9). Thus, the construction of the feminisation of teaching as a problem is not a mere rhetorical question: discourses 'matter', i.e. are significant to, and create, the worlds we inhabit. For example, discourses will lead to policies being forged, priorities being established and resources being allocated or withdrawn. In this chapter, I also explore some of the effects of these discourses and argue that the construction of the masculinisation of teaching as a legitimate endeavour and as conducive to the 'public good' – a key concern throughout this volume – needs to be read against a gynophobic policy context, with gynophobia defined as a 'dread or hatred of women' (Collins 2019, online).

[1]The General Teaching Council for England was the professional teaching body in place from 2000–2012. Sometimes referred to as the 'teaching watchdog' (Shepherd 2010), some of its functions were taken on by the Teaching Agency, joined with the National College for School Leadership in 2013, to become the National College for Teaching and Leadership in 2013, then the Teaching Regulation Agency in 2018.

Discourses of teaching and feminisation

Mentions of the term feminisation in relation to teaching in UK education policy are widespread and polysemous, yet the term feminisation is rarely defined by those who use it (Skelton 2002). Drawing on a range of sources (including interviews with teachers and headteachers, education policies, and media articles), I unpack the various meanings of this term and broadly identify three main definitions. To clearly articulate the distinctiveness of these meanings, I distinguish between three discourses of feminisation, which I refer to as the 'feminised', 'feminine' and 'female-friendly' discourses (Moreau 2018).

Discourses of teaching as 'feminised'

This discourse of teaching as 'feminised' implies that women numerically dominate the teaching profession. It can refer to a specific moment or to a process (see examples in Wylie 2000; Kelleher et al. 2011). While, in countries where such data are collected, the majority of teachers are women, their presence in teaching varies considerably across local, regional and national contexts and periods of time (Șerban 2015; OECD 2017). Adopting a socio-historical perspective also highlights some considerable variations in the proportion of women and men in teaching, with these variations linked to changes in policies and cultural norms. Most notoriously, the marriage bar in place in parts of the UK excluded married women from the profession from the early twentieth century until its abolition by the 1944 Education Act (Oram 1996; Tamboukou 2003). In the UK, as in other countries, women's presence also varies considerably across education phases, institutions, positions, subjects and roles (DfE 2014a; Șerban 2015; OECD 2017).

Numerical definitions of the feminisation of teaching are usually based on the percentage of women teachers, a rather raw indicator which fails to acknowledge the distribution of women and men across the labour market and also renders invisible women's disproportionate exclusion from the segments of the education sector associated with higher pay and prestige, itself a widespread and persistent pattern (Hutchings 2002; OECD 2017). Thus, the view that teaching is feminised in numerical terms obscures the complex distribution of men and women and the gender power relations at play in the teaching labour market. Claims relating to the feminisation of teaching as a numerical process often appear blurry and assume a steady increase in the proportion of women in teaching. Instead, in the UK as in many other countries, women's access to the profession has never been a linear process (Oram 1996). As noted above, their presence in teaching has fluctuated significantly across periods of times and contexts, under a range of economic, social, political and cultural influences. Claims of this nature are often underpinned by a mytho-poetic, anti-feminist narrative exemplified by the likes of of Steve Biddulph (1995) and William Pollack (1999), which refers to an unspecified 'golden age' of teaching

(Delamont 1999), when men are thought to have numerically dominated the profession and society at large (Roulston and Mills 2000).

Discourses of teaching as 'feminine'

In other instances, discourses of the feminisation of teaching are informed by a view of the profession as 'feminine', in the sense that teaching is thought to require some of the 'qualities' and skills culturally associated with femininity and, more specifically, motherhood (Grumet 1988; Dillabough 1999; Atkinson 2008; Gallagher and Sahni 2019; Restler 2019). Hence, the discursive focus is on the qualities of the teacher rather than numbers. However, the numerical and cultural definitions of feminisation are sometimes linked, for example, when it is claimed that as a result of the numerical presence of women in schools 'feminine values' permeate educational spaces, ultimately turning schools in an environment where girls and women are said to thrive (see the critique in Martino and Kehler 2006). This discourse is not new and, if anything, has lost currency in sociological circles since Patricia Sexton (1969) described schools as 'feminine institutions' damaging to boys and men. However, this view tends to prevail in the accounts of self-styled educational consultants (Biddulph 1995; Pollack 1999) and in the media (Pells 2016; Sellgren 2016).

This discourse of teaching work as culturally 'feminine' and close to 'motherly love' (with the female teacher constructed as a 'mother made conscious': Steedman 1985) is problematic. It naturalises and essentialises femininity. It simultaneously negates the multiplicity and intersectional diversity of women's and men's identities, taking White middle-class heterosexual identity as the norm and ignoring the fact that women's identities and aspirations are not always distinct from men's (Grumet 1988; Acker 1995; Dillabough 1999; Braun 2015; Moreau 2015). By constructing women teachers as innately caring, and teaching as an extension of motherly love, this discourse also contributes to the devaluation of women's work and qualifications. Because of this association, women risk being 'trapped inside the concept of nurturance', as argued by Valerie Walkerdine in her discussion of the gendered implications of child-centred pedagogies (1990, p. 19). This association also threatens the recognition of women teachers' professional identity in a context where educational policies are increasingly described as care-free and masculinist – a point I will return to. Last, due to its gender essentialist underpinnings which construct masculinity and femininity as fixed, universal and always distinct, this discourse assumes that the presence of women's bodies suffices to generate a cultural shift in school spaces. This masks the distinction between statistical and social domination. In other terms, numerical sameness is not tantamount to equality: when men enter a predominantly female profession, they tend to benefit more than women, despite their numerically minority status; the reverse is not true when women enter a profession in which men form the majority (see discussions in Fortino 2002, and Williams 1992). Teaching provides a befitting illustration of this point as, even in contexts where women represent the majority of the teaching

workforce, positions of power tend to be disproportionately occupied by men (DfE 2014a; OECD 2017).

Discourses of teaching as 'female-friendly'

A third discourse of the feminisation of teaching implies that teaching is 'female-friendly'. This view of teaching is underpinned by various assumptions, chiefly that it is a profession which can be easily combined with caring responsibilities, particularly mothering (Dillabough 1999; Crompton et al. 2007). In light of the long-lasting cultural association between women and care work, forms of employment and professions considered to be 'family-friendly' come to be understood as 'woman-' or 'female-friendly'. More specifically, this 'family-friendliness' is thought to derive from the alignment between the temporalities of teaching work and those of students', whether it is on the scale of a day, of the school year or of their career (for example, when teachers go part-time or leave the profession, before returning when their children are older).

Such claims are problematic and need to be unpacked. First, they naturalise and normalise the association between women and domestic work, since 'family-friendly' usually implies 'female-friendly'. Although it is often taken for granted that the presumed 'work-life balance' of teaching is instrumental in women's decision to teach, research highlights that, in that respect, gender differences are rarely significant (Moreau 2011a, 2015). This view of teaching as family- and thus female-friendly is also underpinned by a rather conventional, heteronormative and altogether narrow construction of what constitutes a family. Second, this definition ignores the intensification of teaching work which has taken place over the past decades across a number of countries, including the UK (Șerban 2015). For example, a recent survey of UK primary school teachers found that they work just under 60 hours a week on average, and often struggle to spend time with their family as a result (Shepherd 2013b), with abundant qualitative evidence corroborating this point. Looking for example at some of the many online discussions of 'work-life balance' in teaching, one poster commented: 'teaching is a career for young singletons with no life' – a far cry from the 'family-friendly' image of the profession (Duggins 2017). Third, the supposed 'female-friendliness' of teaching does not extend to women's careers. As already mentioned, women are concentrated in the segments of the teaching labour market associated with the lowest levels of pay and prestige. Moreover, those who use the flexibility measures leading to teaching being labelled as 'female-friendly' often pay a heavy price careerwise, in a societal context where professional commitment tends to be equated with full-time, continuous careers (Waters and Bardoel 2006; Crompton et al. 2007; Moreau et al. 2007).

Feminisation as a 'public policy problem'

As evidenced throughout the previous section, the meanings of 'feminisation' vary considerably. Yet, beyond their semantic diversity, these discourses concur in constructing the feminisation of teaching as a problem that needs to be tackled through a public policy intervention, with masculinisation presented as the solution. While some counter-discourses circulate, broadly described by Elina Lahelma and colleagues as 'gender equality discourses' (see e.g. Lahelma 2014, p. 171), these have rarely prevailed in recent UK education policies. Instead, as I have argued elsewhere, 'Discourses of feminisation… often constitute a challenge to gender equality as the use of the term associated with femininity is usually marked inferior' (Moreau 2018, p. 36). Statistical and cultural understandings of feminisation are drawn on to to blame the feminisation of teaching and women themselves for the low attainment of children, and of boys in particular, for the lack of discipline in schools and for the status of the profession. Suffice here to recall the words of Anthea Millett, the former Chief Executive of the then Teacher Training Agency (TTA): 'The feminisation of the [teaching] profession leads to an absence of male role models for many of our pupils, particularly those from the majority of one parent families' (Millett 1999, p. 2). The scapegoating of women teachers extends beyond the school gates, as the feminisation of school is also blamed for destabilising the (patriarchal) structures of society (see, e.g. Vine 2016). Without probing into each of these claims in detail, suffice here to note the lack of supportive evidence. And, of course, there is an irony in blaming women teachers for the low status or deprofessionalisation of the profession considering that they are disproportionately excluded from positions of power in educational policies, in unions and in schools. More generally, these narratives are informed by a deficit view of women teachers, who are deemed to lack competences, aspirations, authority, and leadership. Again, this is in sharp contrast with research showing, for example, that, across the UK, women who teach tend to have on average higher academic credentials than men, and very similar motivations and professional identities (Moreau 2015; Riddell et al. 2005).

While the 'family-friendly' discourse of feminisation is maybe more likely to be constructed in positive terms compared with its 'feminised' and 'feminine' variants, it has, however, sometimes been used to challenge the status of the profession. For example, flexible working practices have been deemed contrary to the ethos of the professions, expected by definition to be greedy on a temporal level (see discussion in Cacouault-Bitaud 2001). In the 1960s, Amitai Etzioni infamously described teaching as a 'semi-profession' because of its statistical feminisation, while also claiming that 'the normative principles and cultural values of professions and organisations and female employment are not compatible' (Etzioni 1969, p. vi). Echoes of a discourse which misrecognises those (in the main, women) trying to establish new ways of working so as to juggle the conflicting demands of teaching and unpaid work can also be found in the recent declarations of Andrew Carter, a former

government adviser and current head of an Educational Trust who described it as 'wrong and immoral' for teachers to seek reduced hours (Gibbons 2019).

The above claims have been associated with calls for 're-masculinising' teaching – a term which, like feminisation, is often left undefined and polysemous. In the main, the prevalent argument in favour of the remasculinisation of teaching has argued that bringing more male bodies in the profession will necessarily transform school cultures and bring various benefits to children, schools, their local communities, and the broader society. This narrative can be read as part of the recuperative masculinity and backlash politics often associated with conservative and neoliberal understandings of gender-based and other social inequalities (Faludi 1991; Lingard and Douglas 1999; Moreau 2018). According to this perspective, the gender order has been inverted, with men left with little but a 'crisis of masculinity' (see critiques in Lingard 2003; Arnot and Mac an Ghaill 2006; Moreau 2011b). In schools, this has often led to a 'poor boys' discourse, with calls for more male teachers justified by a 'role modelling' rhetoric arguing that being taught by men will have a positive impact on boys' attainment, behaviour and identity (see, e.g. DfES 2005), despite a growing body of evidence invalidating these claims (Francis et al. 2008).

Masculinisation as a solution or gynophobia as education policy

The increasingly fraught relationship between teaching work and femininity is maybe best illustrated by some of the teacher education programmes which have been implemented in the UK since the late 1990s. The New Labour government's arrival in power in 1997 was quickly followed by the publication of a Green Paper, *Teachers: Meeting the Challenge of Change* (DfEE 1998) which called for the 'modernisation' and 'remasculinisation' of teaching. The document draws a miserabilist picture of the teaching profession, claiming for example that 'The shabby staffroom and the battered electric kettle – which endured for so long because teachers always choose to put their pupils first – can become things of the past' (DfEE 1998, p. 13). This call for the modernisation and professionalisation of teaching takes neo-managerial undertones as with proposals for the creation of the National College for School Leadership (which became an executive agency of the Department for Education); the development of performance-based management and of evaluation procedures; and increased accountability for teachers. This managerial turn is also underpinned by a masculinisation of the profession, as care and other so called 'feminine values' hardly get any mention, and as the professionalisation and modernisation of teaching are linked in implicit ways with its masculinisation, for example when the same report calls for more men to join the profession, or when it offers some rewards to those teach subjects in which there is a teacher shortage (which happen to be subjects in which men are concentrated).

The Teach First programme[2] in particular provides a useful illustration of the association of 'new middle-class managerialism' (Apple 2001, p. 417) with the masculinisation of teaching. The narratives of Teach First participants and the programme's marketing material suggest a construction of the teacher as a high-achieving, middle class, young, male, suit-wearing and cosmopolitan professional destined to quickly become a leader (Moreau 2018; Smart et al. 2009). In contrast with the reality of the teaching workforce, the Teach First website was populated at the time of conducting the research underpinning this chapter with pictures of young men, with some of the promotional documentation listing the higher proportion of male recruits compared with other teacher education programmes as an 'added value'. Yet, since the Teach First programme made this claim, the proportion of male recruits has substantially fallen and the programme now includes some action specifically targeting women such as STEMinism (Teach First 2020).

In many respects, the Teach First programme offers some stark contrast with another teacher education which emerged shortly after its inception: Troops to Teachers.[3] Like Teach First, Troops to Teachers was imported and adapted from a US programme. Its launch was announced in a DfE White Paper (DfE 2010a), followed by a pilot in 2012 and finally the roll out of the programme in 2013. Unusually, the programme was originally opened to both university graduates and non-graduates (Price 2019). In its earlier iterations, it fed into the role model rhetoric discussed earlier and, among other things, aims to 'ensure that there are many more male role models entering teaching' (Gove 2011b, online). In contrast with Teach First, it is also part of a more conservative turn in politics and a general drive to inject a military ethos in schools. Michael Gove, then Secretary of Education, argued that 'Every child can benefit from the values of a military ethos. Self-discipline and teamwork are at the heart of what makes our armed forces the best in the world – and are exactly what all young people need to succeed' (DfE 2012b, online). The programme's low take-up (41 for the first intake, none of them graduates; 61 for the second intake, including a minority of degree-holders) led to shortage subject requirement being dropped. In contrast with the discourse of middle-classness and leadership of Teach First, Troops to Teachers may read as a return to a more traditional type of hegemonic masculinity, in a context where most recruits are men. This programme may be viewed as being part of a broader strategy to 'occupationalise' teaching in a context then characterised by renewed attacks against teachers and with a significant proportion of those in the army being in non-graduate positions. Military metaphors are deeply embedded in its rhetoric,

[2] Teach First is a social enterprise running an employment-based teacher training programme open to university graduates which involves the completion of a postgraduate teaching qualification while gaining some wider leadership skills. Teach First trainees are placed in primary and secondary schools where socially disadvantaged students are concentrated.

[3] Troops to Teachers is an employment-based teacher training programme seeking to attract members of the military into teaching. It is open to university graduates and non graduates.

with for example the inclusion of references in various policy and marketing documents to the 'front line'. This masculinisation of teaching as embodied by the Troops to Teachers programme is not as concerned as Teach First with improving the status of the profession. Rather, it may even be read as a means towards its 'occupationalisation' in a context of repeated attacks against teachers and their representative organisations. This masculinisation and militarisation of teaching are expected to bring more discipline in classrooms. In respect to this point, the 2010 DfE White Paper notes that:

> The greatest concern voiced by new teachers and a very common reason experienced teachers cite for leaving the profession is poor pupil behaviour. We know that a minority of pupils can cause serious disruption in the classroom. The number of serious physical assaults on teachers has risen. And poorly disciplined children cause misery for other pupils by bullying them and disrupting learning. It is vital that we restore the authority of teachers and head teachers. And it is crucial that we protect them from false allegations of excessive use of force or inappropriate contact. Unless we act more good people will leave the profession – without good discipline teachers cannot teach and pupils cannot learn. (DfE 2010a, pp. 9–10)

Among other objectives, the government announced its intention to:

- Increase the authority of teachers to discipline pupils by strengthening their powers to search pupils, issue same day detentions and use reasonable force where necessary.
- Strengthen head teachers' authority to maintain discipline beyond the school gates, improve exclusion processes and empower head teachers to take a strong stand against bullying, especially racist, homophobic and other prejudice-based bullying. (DfE 2010a, p. 10)

I am only seeking here to illustrate how the discourse of teaching as culturally 'feminine' is being constructed as a problem, rather than engage in-depth with the discourses of the masculinisation of teaching which characterise these two programmes. However, it is clear that there are tensions between the various discourses which circulate in UK education policy. In particular, there is a contradiction in claiming that boys need 'role models' with characteristics similar to themselves when the Teach First participants, usually middle-class, concentrate primarily in disadvantaged schools. Besides, how encouraging the deployment in schools of staff who, for some, may not have pre-existing pedagogical and subject knowledge usually required from teachers, as has sometimes been the case with Troops to Teachers, can raise standards and 'fix' disciplinary issue remains unclear. As also noted by Tarrant and colleagues, 'Troops to Teachers reinforces a particular version of masculinity associated with being tough and "macho", both physically and mentally, attributes that ironically seem to underpin a large part of the existing "problem" of boys' (Tarrant et al. 2015, p. 68).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered how the feminisation of teaching has been foregrounded on the UK educational policy agenda and consistently constructed as a problem that needs tackling. In the context of a policy rhetoric often underpinned by gender essentialism, which opposes, fixes and universalises gender categories, masculinisation is constructed as desirable. The rhetoric surrounding this topic is not innocuous. For example, discourses of feminisation and the 'poor boys' discourse (Epstein et al. 1998) often linked to these have far-ranging effects on children, schools and communities. As I have argued elsewhere, these discourses of feminisation also have a more entrenched effect as they reassert the gender binary and, more often than not, operate in ways which reinforces gender inequalities in the disfavour of women and of the men who do not subscribe to narrowly defined performances of masculinity (Moreau 2018). They also individualise and commodify gender as, in the current policy context,

> …gender and other equality matters are not constructed as social relationships of power. Instead … they are problematically subjected to processes of objectification, commodification, naturalisation and individualisation which construct these as attributes or forms of capital wielding benefits for those who hold them (e.g., for men teachers performing the 'right' type of masculinity), for those who can purchase them (schools) and for those who will be exposed to them (students). (Moreau 2018, p. 4)

Above, I have referred to two specific teacher education programmes and to how both construct different types of masculinities as 'the solution' to various educational and societal issues. Under New Labour, much concern was expressed about the status of the profession. The Green Paper *Teachers: Meeting the Challenge of Change* (DfEE 1998) was an attempt to modernise the profession through a number of way – one of which was its 'remasculinisation'. This masculinist model of the managerial teacher was maybe best illustrated by the Teach First programme. Subsequent governemnts have launched initiatives which aimed to remasculinise teaching. For example, Troops to Teachers clearly focused on a pool of potential applicants who were clearly mostly composed of men. In that case, bringing troops to teaching was seen as a way to reinstall discipline, with women presumably lacking disciplinary skills. It is worth noting here that the implementation of Troops to Teachers corresponded to a political era were the profession was constantly under attacks, most notoriously under the Conservative Minister Michael Gove. In that context, it is tempting to contrast Teach First, which attempts to appeal to middle-class masculinities and repositions teaching as a profession, with Troops to Teachers, which seems to predominantly targets, at least in its early iterations, more working-class masculinities and repositions teaching as an occupation by putting it on a par with some parts of the military. What is clear from these two examples is that in both cases, bringing more men is thought to bring some benefits: a better status with Teach First and a reprofessionalisation of the profession under New Labour, more discipline in the classroom and a military ethos, under the Coalition and the subsequent Conservative governments.

Policies calling for the remasculinisation of teaching are gynophobic, in the sense that they convey a hatred or dread of women and of everything that is associated with femininity that is both extreme and irrational, including bodies, epistemologies and pedagogies socially constructed as 'feminine' (Burke and Moreau 2020). This dread of women is often normalised, including in sectors, like education, where they concentrate. Rather than being conducive to the 'public good', one may argue that these discourses generate 'public harm', particularly against women and against those men who do not perform dominant forms of masculinity and/or concentrate in those groups which are socially disadavantaged (e.g. LGBTQ and BME groups). In reinforcing the gender binary and reasserting the superior value of masculinity over femininity (or 'valence différentielle des sexes' in Héritier's words: Héritier 1996, 2002), these discourses strengthen patriarchal norms and constitute a challenge to gender equality and other forms of social justice.

Foucault famously argued that 'Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' (Foucault 1979 [1976], pp. 95–96). This resistance is also activated by the multiplicity of discourses which coexist and, often, conflict, in a given space and time. We live in a world where a man bragging on tape about sexually assaulting women can become President of the United States; where girls across the world are deprived of an education, kidnapped or murdered, sometimes just for being girls. This is a world where 'girly swot' and 'great big girl's blouse' are the terms of choice for Prime Minister Boris Johnson to describe one of his predecessors (David Cameron) and the leader of the opposition at the time of writing (Jeremy Corbyn) (Walker 2019). However, this is also a world where after decades of assaulting women, one of the most successful Hollywood producers is now in jail; where the #MeToo movement has given a voice to women across the world; and where the current Prime Minister of New Zealand has recently given birth and shows no intention to step down. Education policies may be gynophobic, yet discourses of feminisation are contingent and fluid. The global renewal of collective mobilisation around gender equality and other social issues exemplifies how discursive reworkings always remain a possibility.

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