Realizing the Dream of Teaching Girlhood Studies

Claudia Mitchell

A dream, dating back to 2001 when the late Jackie Kirk, Jacqui Reid-Wash, and I passed through a section labelled Girls Studies in Foyles Books on Charing Cross Rd., London, UK, was that someday there would not only be a journal devoted to girlhood studies but also a whole interdisciplinary teaching area. We talked about how students of youth studies, or childhood studies, or what was then called women’s studies might consider girlhood studies as an option in their programs or as a whole area of specialization. The dream of the journal was realized seven years later with the first issue of *Girlhood Studies* in 2008. Since then, as the guest editors of this Special Issue on Teaching Girlhood Studies highlight, there have been many initiatives including the development of courses on Girlhood Studies, and community/university activist projects. And now, finally, we have a whole issue devoted to teaching, curricula, and pedagogies of Girlhood Studies.

Emilie R. Aguiló-Pérez and Jacqui Reid-Walsh are indeed the perfect scholars to have taken this on; both research Girlhood Studies and also carve out areas in women/gender studies and education where undergraduate and graduate students are coming into contact with courses that look at popular culture, history, maker cultures, and literary studies to name only some of the teaching areas. This Special Issue captures richly the burgeoning teaching area and the ways in which it is taking on its own specializations including Black Girls Studies. What is noteworthy is that this issue also draws attention to those who teach Girlhood Studies and includes articles that are organized around autoethnography and narratives of teaching.

We know that these are risky times for Women’s Studies and Gender Studies programs, with cutbacks taking their toll, and way too much time being taken up by directors and administrators to just keep programs going
in the context of conservative agendas in many universities. It is all the more commendable, then, that so many scholars are pushing the boundaries to show the efficacy and relevance of areas of teaching Queer Studies, Black Studies, and, as we see in this Special Issue, Girlhood Studies, all of which are reaching a whole new generation of feminist students.