Media now talks about how men have been/are being disadvantaged by the ascendance of women and girls
Harris 2004 also talks about African American boys in school

- Daily Mail article blames rise in teenage pregnancies on the ‘ephemeral dross’ of the SG, sexualised everyday culture, suggestive clothes on sale
- Education is the most important factor influencing young women’s futures: out of reach to many black/Asian girls (Safia Mirza 1992) – study of comprehensives in South London
- “The Thatcher years and the conservative media have succeeded in de-politicising and re-individualising the terrain of sexual politics” (210)
- “The decline and marginalisation of the political discourse of feminism...coexist with the simultaneous establishment of feminist principles as part of everyday life across a range of social institutions” (211)
- “Popular feminism [is] shifting to the right” (212)
- Although old feminism has lost popularity, there has been no move, passion or organised lobby to create something new

Young Femininity: Girlhood, Power and Social Change – Sinikka Aapola, Marnina Gonick and Anita Harris (2005)

Girl Power: Representations of the ‘New’ Girl
- Two competing discourses around girlhood – GP and ‘reviving Ophelia’
- Second wave insisted on use of ‘woman’, but more recently “‘girl’ has been recuperated by young feminists, who wish to reclaim, reinvent or invert its meaning” (6)
- “The neo-liberal incitement of individualism...freedom, choice and self-realisation bumps up against discourses of femininity, creating contradictory and complex positions for girls” (7)
- Many challenges to girls’ lives: girls’ achievement at school does not translate to the workplace, “girls’ violence, self-esteem problems and propensity for self-harm” (9)
- “Young women are increasingly perceived as not simply being shaped by natural developmental forces or socially constituted as adjuncts to men” (10)

- All discourse both enables and constrains: both may leave something out
- GP is complex and contradictory
- Has been used to denote girls-only sports tournaments, theatre about young women, right-wing women politicians’ voting campaigns
- Origin: early 1990s, RG movement – largely white, young, middle class, often queer: “celebration of the fierce and aggressive potential of girls” and “reconstitution of girl culture as a positive force” (20)
- SG formed in wake of RG success
  *I think the SG capitalised on this wave of feeling as a clever creation of the company’s savvy marketing team – the books makes it sound more organic than it was
- Grrrl Power was reported on by mainstream as apolitical, dismissed as angry or rebellious, focused on clothing and appearance
- GP entered the mainstream – “not only a catchphrase for educational programmes, but a successful marketing tool for the culture industries” (26)
- Charlie’s Angels, Madonna, Buffy, Xena, Sabrina
As a result, failure is due to personal failing and lack of effort – low self-esteem, self-blame as a consequence

Contrasting discourses: ‘girl power’: friendships are fun and empowering; ‘crisis’ discourse shows friendship to be an emotional minefield where popular girls exercise power over others

Budgeon (2001): Young women recognise gender inequalities in society, but because of neo-liberalism their solutions are individually rather than collectively focused

Frequent view of feminists as “‘man-haters, lesbians, and masculine-looking women with hairy armpits and big boots” (195) – seen as out-dated

As a result, women have distanced themselves from the label

However, just because they aren’t labelled feminist doesn’t mean that women are not espousing feminist attitudes (Sharpe 2001; O’Brien 1999)

Greer (1999, 316) suggests that girls and women have been fooled by independence/empowerment which ‘conceals utter dependence on male attention’ (199)

Interest in feminine things is often seen to depoliticise a feminist cause

Young fans of the Spice Girls are seen as consumers rather than feminist agents – they buy merchandise rather than engendering political action

Types of young feminisms: Power feminism and grrrl power/DIY feminism both construct a new feminism not rooted in girl/woman as victim


Girl Power represents “the idealised form of the self-determining individual” and Reviving Ophelia “an anxiety about those who are unsuccessful in producing themselves this way” (2)


“Neo-liberal discourses have allowed postfeminist discourses to thrive” (2) – individualised, fragmented discourses destabilise collective movements like feminism

1990s – girls could be active; 2000s – expected/demanded to be “fully self-actualised neo-liberal subjects”

“The constraints of heteronormative white femininity are also firmly entrenched, although not necessarily in exactly the same versions”

Discourses of GP have unequal effects in different contexts – e.g. in the third world, it is used as a Millennium Goal to promote development. Must take into account power relations

Girl Power: Girls Reinventing Girlhood – Currie, Kelly, Pomerantz

“Reference to ‘doing’ girlhood and our use of performativity are reminders that ‘girl’ is an embodied practice and that, once brought into existence, the sign ‘girl’ functions as self-evident proof of girlhood’s prior existence” (53)

While GP culture implies that power is everywhere, they do not thus conclude that it is nowhere
- ‘Angry girl’ genre of the 1990s: teenage girl is a weapon against GBV
- Connections between angry girl and GP are not coincidental
- Asks whether there is space for girls to “articulate and own their anger” within girl power (218)
- “If we take away girls’ anger, then we take away the foundation for women’s political resistance” (Lyn Mikel Brown, 13, 1998) (218)
- Teenage girls are consumers - $84 billion in 2002
- GPs role as “heiress to the second wave feminist movement” (220)
- GP appeals to teenage girls because of its relevance to their lives: between girl and woman
- Defines GP as a feminism – “simultaneously a politics of action and a politics ultimately unconcerned with social justice” (221)

Moral Panic and the Nasty Girl – Christie Barron and Danny Lacombe

- Murder of Reena Virk in Canada by group of mostly female teens – opened dialogue on female violence
- They expose this sudden moral panic as unfounded in statistics or evidence: some numbers remain the same, but if any have changed it’s likely due to change in policy rather than behaviour
- Isolated incidents have been interpreted as girls becoming increasingly nasty
- Moral panic and risk society literature used
- They quote a Canadian documentary which says “today, other women celebrate materialism, aggressive sexuality and nasty behaviour – this places responsibility with young women rather than the magazine, marketing team, and pop culture machines that create these behaviours.
- Popular culture “becomes the source of social decline in the 1990s” (53)
- Characteristics of a modern panic: media exaggerated links between isolated acts; spread message that girl violence is a new phenomenon
- Media and academic accounts focus on individualised factors in girl crime
- Media posited girl power as cause of girl violence
- Programmes in Canada based on anger management assume individual pathology and ignore the wider social context
- The media provides one model for girls to choose from
  *In addition, girls may be seen as ‘aggressive’ but actually just stepping outside traditional norms

Post-feminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime – McRobbie

- Postfeminism = feminist gains of the 1970s and 1980s, undermined
- Popular culture is contributing to the undoing of feminism, “while simultaneously appearing to be engaging in a well-informed and even well-intended response to feminism” (11)
- Feminism is ‘taken into account’ – understood as already having passed away
- ‘Double entanglement’: simultaneous conservatism wrt gender and sexuality (Bush and chastity education), and process of liberalisation (e.g. civil partnership for gay couples in UK)
90s academics interrogate second wave – focus on ‘the problematic she, rather than an unproblematic we’ (13)

Binary of feminine and feminism is exclusionary and unhelpful

Women’s magazines touched on equal pay, domestic violence – created sense of optimism, idea of feminist successes

A disidentification with feminism began amongst young women – led to repudiation

Feminisation of popular media and simultaneous backlash can be explained by consumerisation of women and individualism

Adverts etc take into account feminism and dismiss it – objectification of women –

“Thank goodness, the images seem to suggest, it is permissible, once again, to enjoy looking at the bodies of beautiful women” (17)

Female individualisation: draws on Giddens and Beck

As old structures fade away, individuals must invent their own structures: self-monitoring (self-help books, diary) – reflexive modernity

“Choice is surely, within lifestyle culture, a modality of constraint” (19)

Giddens and Beck do not critique constraining power relations

“Young women somehow want to reclaim their femininity, without stating exactly why it has been taken away from them” (21)


General cultural fascination with girls: often focused on risk and negative trends, manifested in TV shows

“Prime time feminism” – Judith Mayne and Bonn (1994)

1980s and 1990s television have drawn on some aspects of feminism – “equality, inclusion and ‘free’ choice” – to make it seem that the battle has been won

In post feminism “the complexity of contemporary feminist heroes and activisms are lost” (15)

Debbie Stoller: in Sabrina, Buffy, Xena: “characters all share a common strength: the ability to leap over sexist stereotypes in a single bound”

“*In many way these characters are sexist stereotypes: can only display power because of their looks, whiteness, mc-ness, are non-threatening

The text offers empowering representations of independent girls but “constrains those representations within narratives that emphasise beauty, male attention and taking responsibility for others” (16)

“Sabrina’s entire world…is overwhelmingly populated with white characters” – Quiz Master and Dash are exceptions (guest stars)

Episode – Inna-Gadda-Sabrina: time travel to 1960s and Sabrina deals with sexism

Sabrina often “articulates a feminist or antidiscrimination positions” (19) – coming out the closet metaphor, mortalist

Positive women role models in Sabrina’s aunts and mother

Series creates a “utopian feminist world”

Sabrina is less concerned than her friends by her appearance or boys - *but is she able to do this because she is effortlessly attractive with a stable love interest?

Harvey is pro-Sabrina’s independence: often exhibits female-coded behaviour

They reference multiple instances where they make jokes to do with gender: “highlight gender as a constructed social category that works to the detriment of feminine people, whether female or male” (27)