



YOUNG PEOPLE — AND THE — FUTURE OF NEWS

Lynn Schofield Clark
Regina Marchi

"Clark and Marchi take an unsparing look at how young people today are getting, creating, and sharing their news by-passing traditional news organizations. It's a sobering, insightful probe into four urban communities and a cautionary tale for news organizations whose very existence depends on reaching the next generation of news consumers."

Lulu Garcia-Navarro, Host, *Weekend Edition Sunday*, NPR

"Much here will be eye-opening to those who are too quick to dismiss the political consciousness of the coming generation and the future of journalism. Rather than focusing on youth news consumption as a problem, this book shows what's working about how young people share news and information with each other and what its implications are for fostering even greater degrees of civic and political participation."

Henry Jenkins, Co-author, *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism*

"In this beautifully written book, Clark and Marchi insightfully look beneath popular claims of youth apathy to reveal the multidimensionality of young Americans' engagement with the news and the potential for reconnecting them to powerful media and political processes."

Sonia Livingstone, LSE, author of *The Class: Living and Learning in the Digital Age*

"The future of democracy depends on how today's young people learn to use, share, and produce the news. Clark and Marchi offer an impressive theoretical framework and rich and insightful narratives of actual youth to diagnose the current crisis and propose solutions."

Peter Levine, Associate Dean and Lincoln Filene Professor, Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life, Tufts University

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YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE FUTURE OF NEWS

CAMBRIDGE

Young People and the Future of News

*Social Media and the Rise of
Connective Journalism*

LYNN SCHOFIELD CLARK

University of Denver

REGINA MARCHI

Rutgers University



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Young People and the Future of News

Young People and the Future of News traces the practices that are evolving as young people come to see news increasingly as something shared via social networks and social media rather than produced and circulated solely by professional news organizations. The book introduces the concept of connective journalism, clarifying the role of creating and sharing stories online as a key precursor to collective and connective political action. At the center of the story are high school students from low-income minority and immigrant communities who often feel underserved or misrepresented by mainstream media but express a strong interest in politics and their communities. Drawing on in-depth field work in four major urban areas over the course of ten years, *Young People and the Future of News* sheds light on how young people share news that they think others should know about, express solidarity, and bring into being new publics and counterpublics.

Lynn Schofield Clark is Professor and Chair of the Department of Media, Film, and Journalism Studies and Director of the Estlow International Center for Journalism and New Media at the University of Denver. She is author of *The Parent App: Understanding Families in a Digital Age* (2013) and *From Angels to Aliens: Teenagers, the Media and the Supernatural* (2005), and is coauthor of *Media, Home and Family* (2004).

Regina Marchi is Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies at Rutgers University. Before entering academia, she worked as a journalist, community organizer, and teacher. Her first book, *Day of the Dead in the USA: The Migration and Transformation of a Cultural Phenomenon* (2009), won the 2010 national James W. Carey Award for Media Research and an International Latino Book Award in the category of "Best History/Political Book."

COMMUNICATION, SOCIETY AND POLITICS

Editors

W. Lance Bennett, *University of Washington*
Robert M. Entman, *The George Washington University*

Politics and relations among individuals in societies across the world are being transformed by new technologies for targeting individuals and sophisticated methods for shaping personalized messages. The new technologies challenge boundaries of many kinds – between news, information, entertainment, and advertising; between media, with the arrival of the World Wide Web; and even between nations. *Communication, Society and Politics* probes the political and social impacts of these new communication systems in national, comparative, and global perspective.

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(continued after the Index)

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Introduction

Young People and the Future of News

It was the dawn of a chilly November morning, and a small group of adults had gathered on the sidewalk across the street from a diverse urban high school in Denver. They carried signs reading, “Fags doom nation” and “God hates fags” – visible reminders that these adults were members of the infamous anti-gay Westboro Baptist Church, recognized for its well-publicized and hateful attempts to garner attention. The word had been leaked that the group might stage something at the high school so that, in the colorful words of one of the protesters, they might “warn this wicked generation that their sins will take them straight to hell.”¹ The possibility of a protest hadn’t been covered in the mainstream media, but teachers, students, and parents had heard the rumors, and on Facebook and other social network sites in the days before the event, many had been involved in conversations about how to respond.

On the morning of the protest, the first students on the scene began texting photos to friends, who in turn texted the news to others and then rushed to the school with handmade signs. Within ten minutes after the protest had begun, three hundred people had reportedly shown up for a silent counterprotest, holding signs that read, “We were born this way,” “Spread love, not hate,” and “Why is love wrong?”

The camaraderie was palpable. Students who did not usually discuss their own sexual orientation stood alongside those who openly identified as gay or lesbian, straight allies, bisexual, transgender, or questioning. In the crowd were students from a variety of friendship circles and from differing racial/ ethnic and economic backgrounds. They stood together in

proud opposition, their phones held high to document their participation in the event for themselves and for one another.

We first learned of this event almost two years after it had occurred, when we happened to be interviewing a group of students from that school about news and social media. We'd asked the students to talk about a moment when their interactions on a social network site had helped them to become informed about events that were of importance to them. We didn't know at the time that this event would come to be one of many, as US society was then in the early days of a marked upsurge in high school and college student protest movements. A perceived increase in the suppression of youth voice and experience was building, leading to numerous protests, rallies, and acts of civil disobedience. We might date the dramatic increase in protests to the 2014–15 academic year. That was when tens of thousands of high school students and their parents participated in various forms of civil disobedience. Among other things, students opted out of mandated standardized school testing, demonstrated against related cuts to educational and community programs, protested rising university tuitions and soaring student debt, and advocated for the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act and other immigrant rights. And perhaps most prominently, students and their family members involved themselves in a variety of activities loosely related to the #BlackLivesMatter movement emerging in the aftermath of teenager Michael Brown's death at the hands of Ferguson Missouri police officers, protesting the overly harsh disciplining of youth by members of law enforcement and calling for more respect for young Black men and women.² Student protest movements continued in the 2015–16 and 2016–17 academic years in high schools from Oregon to Texas and on college campuses from the University of Missouri to the University of Washington, Clemson University and Rutgers, first in relation to disparate resources, relations between students of color and police, and poor on-campus racial climates, and later in response to hate crimes and anti-immigrant rhetoric that took place in response to the election of Donald Trump as US president, stimulating student activism across the country for "sanctuary campuses."³ Students from around the country marked their identification and solidarity with student activism through the circulation of messages with hashtags such as #StandUpFG, #ReclaimOSU, #jeffco4kids, #DismantleDukePlantation, and Rutgers' #LikeAMinority. The years 2014–2016 also saw the growth of a national movement to end sexual violence on university campuses, with hundreds of victims speaking out, pressing charges against their universities, and organizing protest events.⁴