The Way Digital Technologies Allow Networked Feminist Activism to Develop

Review of *Networked Feminism: How Digital Media Makers Transform Gender Justice Movements* by Rosemary Clark-Parsons, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2022

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As social movements begin to use digital spaces, and not just physical spaces, to evoke collective action, scholars need to understand how everyday people obtain agency, power, and awareness of injustices that mass media might overlook. Seeing feminist media not just as tools but as practices, Rosemary Clark-Parsons's *Networked Feminism: How Digital Media Makers Transform Gender Justice Movements* situates itself within the discourse of how gender justice movements are amplified and utilized through digital technology. The author focuses on practices of *networked feminism*, drawing from the concept of networked publics. These are spaces constructed from networked technologies and an imagined collective that emerges as a result of *do-it-ourselves feminism* (DIOF), characterized by the use of everyday media technologies and platforms.[1]

   One of the book's key strengths is the materials Clark-Parsons works with and analyzes. The author draws from Nick Couldry's media-as-practices

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1. Rosemary Clark-Parsons, *Networked Feminism: How Digital Media Makers Transform Gender Justice Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2022), 5,18.

framework, which focuses on regularities in people's relations to media and how these regularities encourage some types of media-related interactions and not others.[2] She utilizes this framework to inform the examination of "how U.S. feminists use networked media to organize resistance, stage protest, and build communities in ways that reflect their values and respond to challenges of their environment."[3] The book uses a multimodal qualitative methodology that centers on feminist media practitioners' voices, perspectives, and actions, and Clark-Parsons maintains this methodology across five chapters. The author engaged in a three-year ethnographic analysis of feminist media activists in the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the book also draws from textual analysis of national and transnational feminist media campaigns, in-depth interviews, and digital archive reflections from these activists.[4] This multimodal approach provides a breadth and depth to the analysis that prioritizes feminists' multifaceted contributions to the gender justice movements that they are a part of, which Clark-Parsons participated in as well.

The first chapter situates Clark-Parsons's motivation, methods, and theoretical backdrop as she evaluates networked feminism within a praxis of *do-it-ourselves feminism.* Together, chapters 2, 3, and 4 outline particular dimensions and understandings of networked feminism regarding organizing, visibility, and communities. For instance, chapter 2 examines the broad history and context that informs contemporary feminists' political vision and which mobilizes that vision within networked digital tactics. Alternatively, chapters 3 and 4 offer more detailed analyses of the organizational logic and practice found in feminists' networked visibility and community. The author examines case studies of political feminist campaigns and digital networked components that demonstrate the DIOF, which is to say it is everyday, highly mediated, and aspires toward intersectional feminism.

2. Nick Couldry, "Theorising Media as Practice," *Social Semiotics* 14, no. 2 (August 2004): 78.

3. Clark-Parsons, *Networked Feminism*, 27.

4. Clark-Parsons, 28.

The final chapter of the book reviews the "core findings of the book and discusses the implications of do-it-ourselves feminists' media practices for scholars invested in the study of social movements and digital media and for practitioners."[5]

Clark-Parsons makes her investment in this work evident through her own personal involvement in the political campaigns around gender justice movements. Not only observing the DIOF praxis but participating in it as well, the author provides an involved understanding of media not as a text but a feminist practice. By reflecting on time and labor commitments,[6] exploring the emotional and personal aspects of digital visibility,[7] and giving priority to interviews with feminist activists,[8] Clark-Parsons greatly contributes to underscoring the importance of centering the narratives and lived experiences of these activists. Additionally, her work helps in understanding how she and other scholars might navigate and be situated within the realm of feminist media practices. The book's reflexivity is a crucial aspect of the modeling the author engages in, particularly as she highlights the positive aspects of networked feminism in prioritizing feminists' media practices and their everyday lived experiences within sociopolitical environments. However, the work also reflects on potential downsides, acknowledging that this emphasis may inadvertently contribute to a sense of outsidership, even within a social movement that strives to be inclusive and progressive.

Clark-Parsons acknowledges some boundaries of networked feminism, especially regarding Black, Indigenous, and people of color and LGBTQ+ femme-identifying communities that often have been outside the visibility and organization of gender justice movements. As the author states in chapter 4, "U.S. feminists have consistently valued community-building," but this has created "politically troublesome" tensions about who is considered

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5. Clark-Parsons, 38.
6. Clark-Parsons, 59.
7. Clark-Parsons, 72–74.
8. Clark-Parsons, 98.

"community."[9] Despite focusing on the issues that gender justice movements have unintentionally created by creating unjust criteria for participation, the digital aspects of this chapter created an overview of how practices or practitioners of *networked feminism* might not be as networked as they appear or model themselves to be. This is important for scholars to consider in the conceptualization of networked feminism. Digital technology has been used as a practice for justice and progress, but there can be unintended consequences that break the formations of such networks.

To address such tensions, Clark-Parsons points out there is a consistent need to "update" traditional feminist values in ways that "incorporate more contemporary goals, such as intersectional analysis and inclusion."[10] Further, there is the need to respond to current challenges in ways that address some of the shortcomings of DIOF, such as sustainability, backlash, and being "encumbered by the structural constraints of the corporately owned social media platforms."[11] Though *Networked Feminism* is a short read, the book provides several entry points for thinking about the feminist framework and practices within a digital era and, in turn, how such engagement can impact future gender justice movements, especially in highly political landscapes such as in the United States.

Networked Feminism highlights how gender justice movements have gained strength through the practices and utilization of digital technologies in ways that support a do-it-ourselves framework. These practices highlight the systemic lack of support felt by a multitude of feminist communities in the United States, where inward community-building is now relied upon to create visibility, safety, and boundaries that allow greater mobility and action to take place. *Networked Feminism* ultimately contributes to growing conversations around digital networked practices, political activism, and marginalized groups' agency in these areas.

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9. Clark-Parsons, 98, 100.
10. Clark-Parsons, 157.
11. Clark-Parsons, 159.