Everyday Networked Activism in Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement: Expanding on Contemporary Practice Theory to Understand Activist Digital Media Usages

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This article shifts attention from elite actors' Internet uses to self-joining citizens' everyday networked activism at the grassroots. Stepping beyond conventional technocentric accounts, it expands on contemporary practice theory to examine the role of digital media in recent movement protests, focusing on their embeddedness and (re)productiveness in everyday practices. Based on the case of Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement, this article investigates the ways in which activist digital media usages were enacted and retained as part of people's daily routines, work patterns, and habitual activists. It presents qualitative findings to explicate how, through the reworking of mundane routines with digital media, the ordinary engaged in everyday networked activism traversing quotidian activities and movement participation. By situating activist media in the increasingly mediated mundane, this article offers insights into the emergence and expansion of contemporary networked activism and reveals the nuanced interplay between contentious politics and everyday life therein.

Keywords: networked activism, digital media, everyday life, Hong Kong, social movement, practice theory

Whereas social movement organizations (SMOs) still function as important actors in mobilizing and coordinating collective action (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2012; Ting, 2015), "networked individuals" (Rainie & Wellman, 2012), who are loosely connected through personal networks by means of ICTs, have increasingly constituted themselves as collective actors around a wide range of personalized agendas and causes (Bennett, 2012; Shirky, 2008). Although Hong Kong lacks a tradition of civil disobedience and radical protest, the 2014 Umbrella Movement enjoyed considerable support among self-joining citizens who resisted

formal memberships of SMOs, but engaged in selected collective action by experimenting with social networking sites (SNS) and mobile technologies (F. L. F. Lee & Chan, 2015; Ting, 2017).

This article shifts attention from elite actors' Internet uses to self-joining citizens' everyday networked activism at the grassroots. Based on the case of Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement, it presents qualitative findings to explicate how activist digital media usages emerged among lay citizens and the ways in which they extended contentious politics beyond the immediate movement field. This enquiry into everyday networked activism begins with a critique of the dominant frameworks, whereby ICTs are largely depicted as isolated tools or spaces for movement mobilization and coordination (see Markham, 2014, for a critique). According to these views, the technical affordances of ICTs carry the potentials to transform the "logic" of protests (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Juris, 2012) and to allow new or alternative voices to be heard (Castells, 2009; Treré, 2015). Other frameworks conceptualize the capacity of ICTs as facilitating a private–public boundary-crossing afforded by cheaper or faster online communications (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005; Earl & Kimport, 2011; Shirky, 2008). However, these emphases on the technological aspect of digital media tend to focus on their unidirectional impact on civic–political participation (Pavan, 2014; Ting, 2016) and fails to acknowledge the complexity and indeterminacy of everyday practices (Couldry, Livingstone, & Markham, 2007; Moores, 2012).

This article expands on contemporary practice theory (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Orlikowski, 2000; Østerlund & Carlile, 2005; Rivera & Cox, 2014) to reconsider the role of digital media in recent movement protests, focusing on their embeddedness and (re)productiveness in everyday practices. Drawing on in-depth interviews with self-joining citizens who took part in the Umbrella Movement and archival research, it investigates how activist digital media usages were enacted and retained as part of people's daily routines, work patterns, and habitual activities. The main focus here is on how, through the reworking of mundane routines with digital media, the ordinary engaged in everyday networked activism traversing quotidian activities and movement participation. Although such contours of everyday networked activism cannot be completely detached from the technological aspect of ICTs, they step beyond conventional technocentric accounts and throw new light on the salience of everyday practices to the (trans)formation of activist digital media usages. By situating activist media in the increasingly mediated mundane, this article offers insights into the emergence and expansion of contemporary networked social movements and reveals the nuanced interplay between contentious politics and everyday life therein.

The following section outlines some of the key aspects of contemporary practice theory that inform my approach to activist digital media usages, particularly regarding their interrelations with daily routine practices. This approach is then illustrated through an investigation of the everyday networked activism of self-joining activists involved in the Umbrella Movement. The overall objective is to demonstrate how the study of collective action can be advanced by a practice-oriented approach.

A Practice-Oriented Approach to Activist Digital Media Usages

In recent years, many protest movements around the globe have involved intensive uses of ICTs. There has emerged a wave of "networked social movements" (Castells, 2012) made up of both digital networks and physical gatherings. Scholars of social movement and Internet studies have widely examined

the ways in which ICT uses may enable individual users to stay in touch and participate in mediated networks, making them more "mobilizable" for civic–political different causes (Gil de Zúñiga, 2012). By providing the backbone for horizontal networks, SNS and mobile technologies, in particular, are conceived to accelerate the formations of collective action. Specifically, they may reduce the time and cost required for the development of weak ties among activists in the absence of traditional avenues (Walgrave, Bennett, van Laer, & Breunig, 2011). It is argued that the proliferation of digital media may result in "flash mobilization," as collective action is nowadays so inexpensive that it allows atomized individuals to spontaneously take part in and contribute to networked activism (Bimber et al., 2005; Earl & Kimport, 2011; Shirky, 2008). By magnifying the capacities of individuals to engage in overlapping social networks, ICTs may therefore amplify the scale and speed of movement mobilization (Bennett, Breunig, & Givens, 2008).

Although extant research provides some insights into how digital media could help mobilize and coordinate networked activism, these accounts concentrate on their technical features, and neglect what people actually do with digital media and how such media practices anchor and/or alter the ways people perform other social practices in everyday life (Couldry, 2009, 2012). By erasing local action contexts, they tend to treat new ICTs as exogenous forces and separated from the sociohistorical processes in which they are embedded (Diani, 2011; Melucci, 1996; Ting, 2016). In stark contrast, contemporary practice theory starts from the premise that understanding technology uptake and utility involves analyzing their enactment and evolvement in broader routine practices, such as those at home and in the workplace (Orlikowski, 2000; Pink & Mackley, 2013; Rivera & Cox, 2014). Rather than predefined technological affordances, contemporary practice theory advocates to conceptualize ICT uses as "shared technologies-in-practice" (Orlikowski, 2000, p. 410), that their affordance is acquired in relation to a bundle of collective understandings and common ways of doing things within particular settings (Gherardi, 2009).

According to contemporary practice theory, the utility and uptake of ICTs depend on "the site of the social" that is the "immense mesh of practices and orders" (Schatzki, 2002, p. 155) in which people, artifacts, organisms, and things are interconnected through practices. Rather than isolated technological events, the enactment and evolvement of ICT uses occur within a bundle of social practices and cultural orders and are shaped by the diverse nonmedia activities connected to these sites in the complex web of practices (Orlikowski, 2000). In this view, activist digital media usages involve an array of different elements such as "forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 250). Notably, these include not only the cognitive and rational elements, such as digital knowledge, but also noncognitive and embodied elements such as the style, desires, preferences, and affect attached to the objects and artifacts of digitally enabled practices (Gherardi, 2009; Reckwitze, 2002).

A practice-oriented approach therefore differs from the dominant frameworks of digital media uses in social movements, which tend to treat the mobilizing capacity of ICTs as a "fixed essence" (Eglash, 2004) analytically separated from their sociohistorical contexts. Conversely, it "places everyday practices as the locus for the production and reproduction" (Østerlund & Carlile, 2005, p. 92) and locates the investigation of ICT uses within a wide range of sociocultural patterns. Moreover, rather than individual preferences or desires, ICT uses are informed and shaped by collective understandings (Schatzki, 2002) and "ways of doing things together" (Gherardi, 2009, p. 547). Orlikowski (2000) defines sociotechnical practice as a "recurrent,

materially bounded, and situated social action engaged in by members of a community" (Orlikowski, 2000, p, 256). As a "collective, situated activity" (Gherardi, 2009, p. 538), it requires repeated and shared understandings, rules, emotions, and actions to be realized and sustained (Schatzki, 2002). Invoking contemporary practice theory thus allows for a more comprehensive account of activist digital media usages as it highlights their sociohistorical constituencies that have been overlooked (Couldry, 2015; Fenton, 2016).

Albeit rooted in everyday routine practices, ICT uses not only reenact behaviors and relations of the past but also create new patterns and identities (Nicolini, 2011) as actors carry out routines in practice. Although ICT uses are guided by daily routines and patterns, they are continuously revised within real-world activities, of which actors do not always have full control (Østerlund & Carlile, 2005). Drawing on Latour's (1986) analytical distinction between the ostensive and performative aspects of action, Feldman and Pentland (2003) have been particularly insightful in explaining this ongoing movement of practices "between the reproduction of historically constituted structures and the production of new innovative practices" (Østerlund & Carlile, 2005, p. 102). In their view, practices consist of two aspects of action—namely, ostensive and performative. Although the ostensive aspect provides standard schema, expectations, and artifacts as stabilized resources for human actions, it requires performative improvisation to be realized in specific situations. Furthermore, variations or deviations that emerge in practical performance may in turn revise and alter the ostensive routines, as they "add to the opportunities for different understandings of the actions people have taken as well as the appropriate next action" (Feldman & Pentland, 2003, p. 104).

Although the ostensive aspect informs our sociotechnical practices by indicating that what we perceive is the norm, the performative aspect represents our inherent improvisation to adjust our ICT uses to changing contexts and to attend to relevant others in real-world activities. On the one hand, we draw on "technologies-in-practice [that] are the sets of rules and resources" (Orlikowski, 2000, p. 407) from past digital media routines to deal with a situation in the present. On the other hand, new experiences and effects arising from our immediate usages may in turn modify and/or alter our understandings of what future routine practices ought to be. In this way, alternative "practical identities" (Nicolini, 2011, p. 915) and new "future orientations" (Ting, 2017, p. 242) may emerge along with the new sets of routine practices through the process of "selective retention" (Feldman & Pentland, 2003, p. 113).

These insights provided by contemporary practice theory advance our understanding of activist digital media usages in recent networked activism. First, it sheds light on the importance of mundane provisions in the investigation of ICT uses, calling attention to their broader sociohistorical constituencies rooted in everyday routine practices. Rather than isolated technological events, the enactment and evolvement of activist digital media usages occur within a bundle of real-life activities. Instead of mere technological transactions, they involve an array of everyday routiness attached to (the objects and artifacts of) the digitally enabled practices. Second, contemporary practice theory—Feldman and Pentland's (2003) work, in particular—offers a dialectical vision of how activist digital media usages may evolve and in turn transform daily routine practices as users' understandings of usages unfold in real-world activities. As such, rather than focusing on the efficiency and effectiveness of ICTs per se, we may gain more insights into the manifestations and repercussions of contemporary networked social movements by examining the ways in which users engage and negotiate their everyday activities with digital media at large-scale protest movements.

The following sections trace two sets of everyday networked activism in Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement. The empirical findings explicate the users' everyday practices and mundane experiences that informed their activist digital media usages. They also illustrate how these usages incidentally resulted in new daily routine practices that extended contentious politics into everyday life.

Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement and This Study

A few years after the handover of Hong Kong in 1997, the mainland Chinese government demonstrated its opposition to the democratization of Hong Kong when it impeded the introduction of universal suffrage for electing the chief executive (CE). On August 31, 2014, the Chinese National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee issued a white paper as an election reform to set guidelines for the 2017 CE election in Hong Kong. The so-called 831 decision allowed only two to three preselected candidates for the final runoff. The NPC decision thus escalated tensions, as democracy supporters saw the decision as a blatant denial of "genuine universal suffrage."

Shortly following the issuing of the white paper, secondary and university students in Hong Kong jointly launched a boycott of classes starting on September 22 against Beijing's decision. As the Hong Kong SAR government showed no willingness to engage in dialogue, students decided to storm the Civic Square, the front yard of the government's headquarters, in Admiralty. However, the students were met with a tough response from the police, who used pepper spray to repel them. This created a "moral shock" (Jasper, 1997) among thousands of citizens, who then self-mobilized to join in protest. The rally of the self-joining activists was again met with pepper spray, which protesters repelled with their umbrellas, thus giving the movement its name.

Once the violence had occurred, more Hong Kong people came to join the movement, upset about the violent response to peaceful protests. On September 28, the police fired 87 rounds of tear gas against the protesters. The violent reaction by the police led to a backlash and a significant increase in the number of protesters who began occupying the streets. Eventually, about 200,000 people joined together to block major roads and streets. The occupation protest soon spread from Admiralty to other major commercial districts in the city, including Mongkok and Causeway Bay. As such, the 79-day Umbrella Movement took shape as a result of series of unexpected contentious activities triggered by police violence and improvised by self-joining activists, who actively used SNS and mobile technologies during the Umbrella Movement.

The empirical findings discussed in this article came from in-depth interviews and archival research. In summer 2015, in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 networked activists in Hong Kong, recruited through purposive and snowball sampling. Most of the informants ranged in age from 20 to 40 years. Twenty of the informants were men, and 10 were women. The interviews lasted from 1.5 to 2 hours. They were guided by a set of open-ended questions, which probed the development of the activists' activist digital media usages, the roles of their usages in their networked activism, and other related practices and experiences in the Umbrella Movement and their everyday lives.

Apart from the in-depth interviews, archival research was conducted to collect empirical materials and to triangulate and complement the interviews. Specifically, news coverage of the occupation protest by

major local and international news media was considered. In addition, online records of the protest events released by the SMOs and activist groups, as well as materials from the personal narratives of the networked activists were examined. This article particularly draws on edited volumes of the activists' stories published in the aftermath of the movement, and on the interviews the press conducted with the self-joining citizens.

The empirical materials collected from in-depth interviews and archival research were examined and analyzed to answer specific research questions (see Ting, 2019). They were coded thematically (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) following an inductive approach (Denzin, 2010). During this process, a broad framework of preliminary themes progressively emerged. Subsequently, through dialogical data generation (Carspecken, 1996), the preliminary themes were repeatedly compared with major empirical materials to gradually refine and narrow down the key themes. Comprehensive analysis was then conducted by grouping all of the empirical materials under the key themes to construct meaningful discourses for illustrating the research findings. Although none of the informants requested anonymity, all names were changed to preserve confidentiality.

Everyday Networked Activism in the Umbrella Movement

This article now turns to two major sets of everyday networked activism undertaken by self-joining citizens involved in the Umbrella Movement. The two sets of so-called connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013)—namely, networked frontline activism and mediated support provision activities—have been dealt with before, but certainly not in the way as they are addressed here. The following sections explicate how a practice-oriented approach can help to illustrate the ways in which activist digital media usages were embedded in and in turn (trans)formed people's everyday routines and orientations. Although the mobilizing potentials and movement consequences of these activist usages deserve discussion, the empirical findings aim to illuminate the obscured dimensions of the two sets of everyday networked activism.

Networked Frontline Activism Among the Ordinary

The Umbrella Movement involved numerous frontline activities undertaken to confront police officers and deal with countermovement crowds. As in other post-2010 social movements, networked activists in the Umbrella Movement drew on digital media and mobile technology for instant coordination and other improvisatory acts (see Figure 1). In Hong Kong, the chat applications and photo uploading functions of Facebook and WhatsApp made the applications particularly suitable and popular for such real-time connective action.

Figure 1. A sea of lights coming from the glowing screens of mobile phones held aloft by tens of thousands of self-joining citizens in Central, Hong Kong.[2] (Source: Wu, 2015)

These activist digital media usages have been known as "e-mobilization," referring to protest situations in which "the web is used to facilitate the sharing of information in the service of an offline protest action" (Earl & Kimport, 2011, p. 13). However, such activist usages were not automatically generated from the technical features of SNS as technocentric accounts tended to imply. In fact, most of the networked activists interviewed for this article did not update protest information at random. When asked about how and with whom they came to adopt activist media, they admitted that they selected information only from certain people and online news media. As self-joining networked activist John (male, age 39, theatrical technician) elaborated:

> Back then, information on the police and the protest itself was chaotic. I remember reading a message on the two SNS [Facebook and WhatsApp] saying that the police were already authorized to open fire on the protesters. . . . Another widespread soundtrack on WhatsApp indicated that the police planned on charging into the campus of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts to arrest the protesters there. The soundtrack was never verified. Until today, we still don't know whether it was true or not. . . . You couldn't just take on whatever people said on the Internet. You had to listen to your [SNS] groups and online news media. You knew what kinds of [SNS] friends and groups you could trust. You picked those that had been honest and avoided those who had tended to exaggerate things.

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[2] See the YouTube video of the protesters waving their lit-up cell phones in singing "Raise the Umbrella," composed by Pan Lo, written by Xi Lin, and sung by Anthony Wong, Kay Tse, and Deanie Ip in support of protesters during the movement (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Laak5RunCWk).

Apparently, the uptake of activist media usages involved other practical issues beyond technological affordances. Specifically, the (potential) downside of e-mobilization compelled networked individuals to make certain media choices in real time. However, like many other informants, John was unable to fully clarify in the interview about how he came to verify his information sources and determine who he deemed "trustworthy." This may be in part because such practices of activist usages involved the experiential, normally unspoken elements of daily routines (Pink & Mackley, 2013), such as people's "sensible knowledge" (Strati, 2007) of whom they should trust and their "taste" (Gherardi, 2009) for what they should do to participate in the movement. At times, everyday digital media uses and experiences served as a "guide . . . in the sense that we may use the ostensive aspect of routines to check up on ourselves (or others) as we go about our activities" (Feldman & Pentland, 2003, p. 106).

Moreover, networked individuals contingently drew on their day-to-day usages and mediated experiences to take part in frontline activism, despite the unforeseeable consequences of their media choices. In this process, they invoked "routinized ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 250) to enact activist digital media usages in practice. Everyday routine practices therefore helped legitimate and "account for" the people's activist usages by connecting them to more familiar practices (Feldman & Pentland, 2003). Sally (female, age 31, merchandiser) depicted how her everyday uses and experiences performed such a retrospective sense-making function when she undertook citizen journalism for the movement on the ground:

> I uploaded photos that I took and reported on the protest events, for example, whenever I saw someone who was beaten by the police. I updated on those things regularly [on my SNS]. . . . I guess that wasn't something unusual for me to do, since I often did similar things in my life. Whenever I saw things that I felt were unfair, I would just take a picture and post it on Facebook with captions. You know, things like people jumping the queue, able-bodied people occupying the priority seat, etc. . . . Not all of my [SNS] friends were encouraging about what I did [in my everyday life]. Some of them thought that I was just blowing things out of proportion and told me not to make a fuss of everything. But I don't think so. I do care about social justice, and I guess that's just who I am.

Sally's story was not an exception, but a recurrent theme in some of the interviews. For instance, Sunny (male, age 25, secondary school teacher assistant) mentioned his habitual uses of digital media in relation to his networked activism as he combined his hobby of digital photography with e-mobilization:

> I have a hobby[3] of taking photos with a [digital] camera and uploading them to Facebook, so I also came to do that during my participation in the Umbrella Movement. Wherever I went, I brought my camera with me, expecting to capture some rare moments. . . . I went to Admiralty for a few days in a row, until I shifted my participation to the occupation site in Mongkok. I recorded other activists' contentious activities and movement artifacts that I found creative and meaningful, and posted them on Facebook for the people in my circle to

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[3] Sunny used the Cantonese term *hing ceoi* in the interview. The term can mean both "hobby" and "interest" in English, depending on the degree of attachment.

see, so that they could get to know more about the spirit of the movement. . . . I would like to tell more people that they should come to support the movement, or they should at least come to learn more about our desire and the reason why we took part in the movement. . . . I updated these photos on Facebook very often. I hoped that people would feel something strong in them and eventually join the Umbrella Movement.

While the daily routines of networked activists increasingly intertwined with their movement participation, activist digital media usages also came to (re)constitute a significant part of the activists' daily routine practices. As the self-joining activists could not be physically present at all times because of the limitations of what McAdam (1986) calls "biographical availability," they came to rely regularly on activist media to sustain their participation. This particularly occurred after the police fired 87 rounds of tear gas into the protesting crowd on September 28, influencing the Umbrella Movement to attain a scale and scope much larger than expected. As Eric (male, age 23, financial investor) illustrated:

Back then, the crowds were thin during the daytime as the movement was prolonged, and as people needed to go back to work and their lives. The police then tried to remove some of the roadblocks and metal barriers quietly, and to retrieve some of the occupation sites . . . . Every evening, we needed to find out what happened in the streets during the daytime and what we should do accordingly. So every evening when we left work, we immediately got on Facebook and WhatsApp to figure out where we should go to [re]converge and what we should do to [re]occupy the streets.

As such, over time, a new ostensive aspect of activist digital media usages was created and maintained through recurrent practices. This new ostensive aspect informed the people's everyday routines not only instrumentally but also emotionally (Gherardi, 2009). Although a detailed discussion of the mental and emotional dimensions of movements participation is beyond the scope of this article (for discussions, see Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001; Jasper, 1997; Yang, 2000), Christine's (female, age 18, secondary school student) interview captured her attachment to the routine usages of activist digital media as a result of her continuous involvement in the networked frontline activism:

The more frontline activism I undertook, the more I used Facebook and WhatsApp. Every time I undertook a protest action, I started to pay more attention to people's SNS pages and joined some of their WhatsApp groups for both protest information and personal experiences. . . . Later on, in the Umbrella Movement, the first thing I did every morning, even before brushing my teeth and whenever I had time, was login to my Facebook account to see what had happened in the field through these people's Facebook pages or WhatsApp groups.

Much of the self-joining activists' usage of digital media in the early stage of the Umbrella Movement has to be understood as a series of (trans)formations of everyday practices, through which lay citizens came to exploit their media routines and user experiences in real time. As the Umbrella Movement was prolonged and turned into a 79-day occupation protest, ad hoc usages were routinized and became part of the people's everyday activities. This becomes more obvious when we come to consider another set of everyday networked activism.

Mediated Support Provision Activities in the Mundane

Frontline activism facilitated by digital media usages was no doubt fundamental to the creation and preservation of major occupied areas. Yet, apart from frontline activism, self-mobilized citizens undertook a series of support provision activities by using SNS and mobile technologies throughout the Umbrella Movement. Likewise, many of these mediated support provision activities were intimately rooted in the everyday practices and mundane experiences of networked individuals with digital media.

The Umbrella Movement brought together multiple waves of networked individuals from all walks of life. Many self-joining activists came from and/or were part of different professional institutions. As they found their immediate referent for aggregation in these institutional settings, they began to invoke preestablished patterns and ways of doing things to undertake mediated support provision activities for the Umbrella Movement. The mediated support provision activities offered by students at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) were a prominent case in point. As mentioned, particularly in the early stage of the movement, rumors were everywhere on SNS as a result of impeded networked activism among loosely connected individuals. At that time, a group of HKU students established a Facebook page named "LIVE: Verified updates" (see Figure 2) and took part in the Umbrella Movement by carrying out investigative journalism on protest information in support of the movement:

> Gloria, a student of Journalism at HKU, complained on her Facebook page about the widespread rumors on SNS. She commented that those who had experience in the profession of journalism should step in to help verify protest information for the networked activists. Lydia [another student in the Journalism and Media Studies Centre at HKU], who also shared a similar goal, sent Gloria a Facebook message after reading her status update. Lydia suggested that, as journalism students, they should establish a Facebook page to provide such services. Soon, KY and Isaac also came to join the Facebook page [as key organizers]. . . . Within a few days, their Facebook page accumulated more than 100,000 "likes" and was widely used among networked activists. . . . Although they did not mention HKU on the Facebook page, the volunteer journalists working on the Internet and in the streets for the Facebook group were all Year 1 students in Journalism at HKU. (Tse, 2015, pp. 71–72)

In this incident, the ostensive aspect of routine practices not only provided stabilized resources such as peer networks and (semi)professional knowhow but also served "as a [moral] guide to what actions ought to be taken" (Feldman & Pentland, 2003, p. 105) for the HKU students to initiate their mediated support provision activities. In fact, the four organizers of the Facebook page noted the following about the media ethics they practiced and upheld as new media-savvy journalism students as their prime motives for carrying out investigative journalism online:

> Lydia expressed that she "just wanted to tell people the truth" . . . when she observed that the poor-quality judgments of the crowds about facts in the time of crisis, especially when she witnessed how rumors were populated among relatives, teachers, and peers on "928." . . . [The four of them] worked together to instantiate what they had learnt in their first journalism class. [As they advocated in the interview:] "VIA–Verification is to confirm

the accuracy of information. Independence is to be free from the connections to interested parties. Accountability is to be accountable for the validity of news. That was why we came to verify information sources [in the first place]." (Tse, 2015, pp. 72, 74)

Although their everyday networked activism was turned into relatively stable and popular practices, their real-time performance in the Centre at HKU created "deviations," which "may be regarded as desirable, or not, by key individuals, such as managers and administrators [and] may or may not get accepted as legitimate alternatives to existing practice" (Feldman & Pentland, 2003, p. 108). In this case, fortunately, the variations emerged from their activism were retained and incorporated into the organizational routines and daily operations of the Centre and therefore the ostensive aspect of the institute:

Later on, the Centre knew about the existence of the Facebook page and its intention. They decided to offer its common room for the students to set up a news center to verify protest information for other networked activists. . . . As Isaac excitingly explained, "The Centre had never issued any HKU press pass before, and yet we obtained two passes from the Centre and two seats for media representatives in the Legislative Council." . . . Soon thereafter, more people joined to work with them. During peak hours, there would be about 40 journalism students working together. (Tse, 2015, pp. 72, 74)

Figure 2. The Facebook page of "verified updates" managed by the HKU students.

The transportation services provided by volunteer drivers on Facebook comprise another similar contour of everyday networked activism that further illustrates the ostensive-performative interplay.[4] Simpson, who was the key organizer of the Facebook group, recalled the following:

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[4] See a short YouTube video clip of the volunteer drivers working in the Umbrella Movement (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeK0g9veAdM).

Initially, we were a group of van drivers on the same Facebook page as our industry.[5] It was the night of September 26, the night that students and citizens entered the Civic Square and were surrounded by the police. Just like many other angry and saddened citizens, one of our van divers [in the Facebook group] did not want to sit there and do nothing. He then called for people to donate supplies to the protest area at the Civic Square in the [Facebook] group. . . . The next day, we gathered a dozen drivers and three vans to transport and distribute supplies to the people at the square. Later on, as we met the members of Scholarism and the Hong Kong Federation of Students in the field,[6] we started our volunteer transportation services on a regular basis. We left our contacts for the people there, and if citizens wanted to donate any supplies, we would pick them up and get them to the occupied protest zones as soon as possible. The first dozen days were the peak period. During that time, I think we helped provide about six tents, 300 boxes of bottle water, and food. (Y. M. Lee, 2015, p. 291)

Although the routine practices of the Facebook group offered "technology-in-use [that] are rules and resources" (Orlikowski, 2000, p. 407) for the van drivers to enact their everyday networked activism, the drivers selectively engaged with some but not all of the ostensive aspects in practice. In the incident, while the volunteer divers purposively retained the "resources" of their Facebook group, they altered the "rules" of their digitally enabled mode of (co)operation, as they implicated the technological properties of a different set of social meanings and practices. Yet even these newly enacted activist usages were inherently capable of endogenous change. Simpson continued to depict how this occurred in their support provision activities:

I remember that night. It was too late for me to catch the last train to get home [after working as a volunteer van driver in the occupation protest], so I had to take a minibus from Wan Chai to Mongkok. But then, I saw that the fare was doubled that night, and I had no choice but to pay 30 [Hong Kong] dollars for the trip. Later on, I had even heard that they [the minibus drivers] charged people 50 [Hong Kong] dollars at that time. Since we were so pissed, we [the volunteer van drivers in the Facebook group] tried to expel these minibuses and drive them out of business. . . . Although our Facebook group was the minority among all the van drivers in our industry, we were still able to mobilize around 50–60 vans to provide free transportation for the people. Before the movement, we were far from unified. But because of what we did in the movement, we have gathered a group of passionate van drivers who work closely together. Strong emotions and ties have been created among us. (Y. M. Lee, 2015, p. 293)

As such, the volunteer drivers further modified their mediated support provision activities as they continuously reflected on the broader implications and wider possibilities of their everyday networked

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[5] Accordingly, it was an informal Facebook group operating outside the trade union or the like.

[6] They were the two major student SMOs that attempted to storm the government's headquarters on September 26.

activism in action (see Figure 3 and Figure 4).[7] Eventually, the collective performance of their mediated support provision activities reaffirmed the solidarity within the Facebook group and reconstituted their work patterns and norms for future participation.

Figure 3. Simpson, the organizer of the volunteer drivers' Facebook group, and his van.
(Source: Lo, 2017)

Figure 4. The logo of "righteous van" that Simpson put on his van. (Source: Lo, 2017)

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[7] A documentary—*Van Drivers*—was produced by Kanas Liu and then screened in the 2015 Chinese Documentary Festival in telling the story of these volunteer drivers. See the trailer of *Van Drivers* on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RNmwZX_SKCU).

Examining the recursive movements between the ostensive and performative aspects of activist digital media usages provides us a way to conceptualize their development and change, not as a static result of technological proliferation but rather as ongoing reflections on the day-to-day activities and mundane provisions in which these usages are embedded. During the Umbrella Movement, while activist digital media usages spread widely across the massive population of networked activists, local Facebook feeds and WhatsApp groups were subsequently turned into battlegrounds for warring opinions for and against the movement. As a result, surging social media memes provoked "unfriending," an innovative form of everyday networked activism in which people "unfriended" a friend with different political views on SNS and in the real world.

Notably, around 30% of the protestors "unfriended" other people on Facebook during the Umbrella Movement (F. L. F. Lee & Chan, 2015), sometimes even including their family members (Hui, 2015). In particular, many police officers, who took part in suppressing the occupation protest, were "unfriended" and shunned by friends and relatives both on- and off-line (Dearden, 2014). The most vivid example was a popular YouTube video—"Today, I Unfriended My Mum"—of a female networked activist (see Figure 5) who purportedly unfriended her mother (Hui, 2015). These incidents are mentioned not to show how activist digital media originally used for frontline activism could trigger prefigurative politics in mundane domains but to highlight how they could take on a life of their own to transform people's day-to-day activities and real-world relations, as networked activists engaged in reflective self-monitoring in everyday networked activism.

《今天，我把媽媽unfriend了》

Figure 5. The YouTube video "Today, I Unfriended My Mum."[8]

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[8] See the YouTube video of "Today, I Unfriend My Mum" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HByqSTCv-5g).

Conclusions

Treating new media technology as an independent, self-driving force for public deliberation and social change limits our understanding of contemporary networked social movements, as it takes for granted the sociohistorical roots and everyday action contexts in which activist digital media usages emerge and evolve, and neglects the subterranean ways in which they negotiate with and (trans)form daily routines and mundane activities. Alternatively, this article suggests that contemporary practice theory provides useful insights for considering activist digital media usages as both derived from and generative of broader ordinary practices, and is the foundation for this article's enquiry into the relationship between digital media and contentious politics. It is contended that the key to a better understanding of the latest forms of networked activism is not the isolated technological affordances of SNS and mobile devices, but rather their everyday embeddedness and (re)productiveness in the increasingly mediated everyday life.

By investigating a series of everyday networked activism practices among self-joining activists in Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement, the empirical findings of this article reveal a range of sociohistorical constituencies and mundane provisions that were contingently enacted and selectively retained from past routine practices, exceeding conventional technocentric accounts. They also illustrate how these (trans)formation of everyday routine practices extended contentious politics beyond the immediate movement field by (re)constituting new patterns and alternative understandings of digital media usages in everyday life. Thus, rather than a one-time boundary-crossing from the private to the public driven by more effective and efficient ICT, this article highlights that activist digital media usages should be regarded as ongoing movements by which today's networked individuals simultaneously exploit and rework their daily activities and orientations in real-world encounters.

By invoking contemporary practice theory to conceptualize activist digital media usages as (trans)forming part of everyday routine practices, this article enriches our understanding of both the manifestations and repercussions of those usages, and reveals the productive interactions between contentious politics and everyday life therein. During the Umbrella Movement, whereas self-joining activists improvised and invented activist digital media usages by drawing on heterogeneous elements of everyday life, their everyday routines were in turn modified or altered by the recurrence of newly emerging/revised practices, as activists reflected on their and others' activities. Therefore, this article aims to not only show that contemporary networked activism consists of both more visible aspects of street protest and day-to-day forms of citizen action but also to offer a more nuanced understanding of activist digital media usages by situating their (trans)formation within a complex web of everyday routine practices.

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%E9%96%8B%E7%9D%80%E5%AE%A2%E8%B2%A8%E8%BB%8A%E8%88%87%E6%89%8
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