

*Draft*

# Networked counterpublics and discursive contestation in the agonistic public sphere: Political jamming a police force Facebook page

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# Online discourse

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## TWO LENSES: DELIBERATION OR CONTESTATION?

### Public sphere (Habermas, 1974)

Open, equal and rational deliberations among people with different points of views. *Differences* → *Consensus*

### Agonistic public sphere (Mouffe, 1999)

**POWER:** “... members of subordinated groups would have no arenas for deliberation among themselves about their needs, objectives and strategies” (Fraser, 1990, p. 66).

Discursive *contestation* an integral aspect of political discourse to ensure the “multiplicity of voices” and their claims in a pluralist democracy

*Subaltern counterpublics:* “members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs (Fraser, 1990, p. 67).

# Online discourse



## THE INTERNET AND THE AGONISTIC PUBLIC SPHERE

Three interrelated roles (Dahlberg, 2007):

1. Provide online spaces where counterdiscourses can develop and prosper  
(e.g. alternative media, radical media, social movement media, Independent Media Centre in the 1999 WTO Seattle conference)
2. Link up excluded and autonomous counter public spheres  
(e.g. role of #OccupyWallStreet to broker connections between different actors)
3. Directly contest discourse in dominant public spheres  
(e.g. political jamming dominant discourse)

Technological architectures and affordances of social media → **convergence** of public and counterpublic spheres → possibilities to contest dominant discourse by networked counterpublics

# Political cultural jamming

## TO SABOTAGE A DOMINANT PUBLIC SPHERE IN SITU

Jamming dominant discourses by subverting their meanings (Cammaerts, 2007)

Hijacking the *#myNYPD* Twitter hashtag in 2014 (Jackson & Welles, 2015)



**M.Logic** @Nycresistance · 4h  
Breaking News : Dangerous criminal attacks cop's boot with his genitals .. More at #myNYPD  
Youtube/Nycresistance pic.twitter.com/fNhpwiwdb  
⚡ Reply 🔄 Retweet ⭐ Favorite



**NYPD NEWS**  
@NYPDnews

Follow

Do you have a photo w/ a member of the NYPD? Tweet us & tag it [#myNYPD](#). It may be featured on our Facebook.



RETWEETS  
392

LIKES  
216



# The case of the HKPF FB page

HKPF Press release (Oct 5, 2015) excerpts

With a view to **enhancing community engagement** and expanding the existing communication platforms ...

The 'HKP Facebook' page would not only **promote** Force events and anti-crime messages, but also portray stories of police officers, through which members of the public could gain better understanding on the work of the Hong Kong Police.



## SAMPLE

Oct 5, 15 – Mar 31, 16

- 203 HKPF posts
- 122,949 user comments
- 17,926 unique users

## TOOL

- Facepager



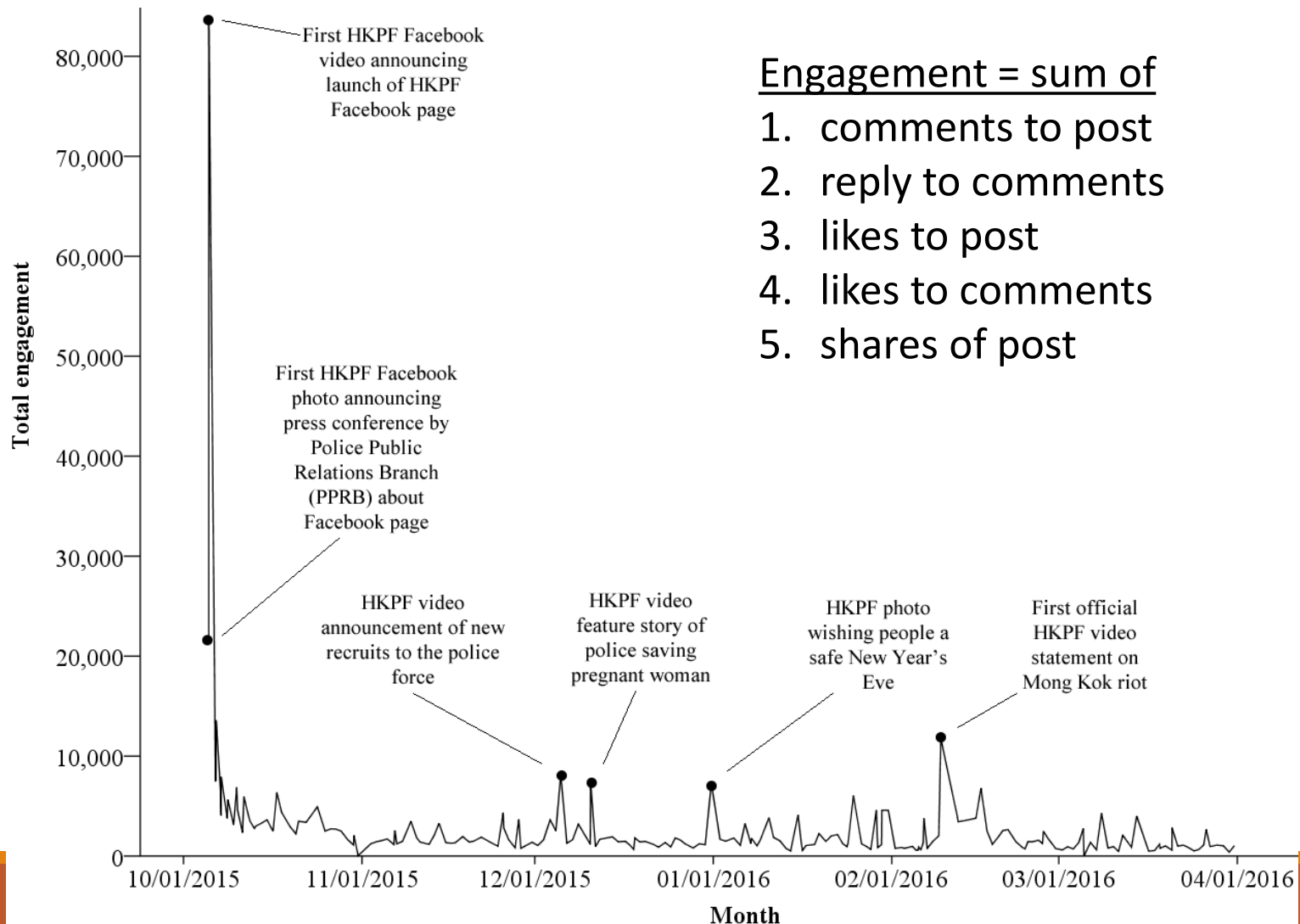
# Context

## THE HKPF AND THE RISE OF RADICAL POLITICS IN HONG KONG

- ❑ Traditionally perceived as apolitical with relatively high citizen satisfaction ratings, reaching as high as 80% in 2007 (HKUPOP, 2015).
- ❑ Perceptions of impartiality and political neutrality has become increasingly difficult because of Hong Kong's increasingly polarized society and the rise of 'radical politics' (Cheng, 2014) → e.g. *Umbrella Movement*



# Total engagement over time



# Research questions

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- **RQ1:** To what extent are counterdiscourses disseminated on the HKPF Facebook page and in what forms do they take?
- **RQ2:** To what extent do discourses and counterdiscourses draw content from networked publics and counterpublics?
- **RQ3:** To what extent are users engaged with the Facebook page over time?



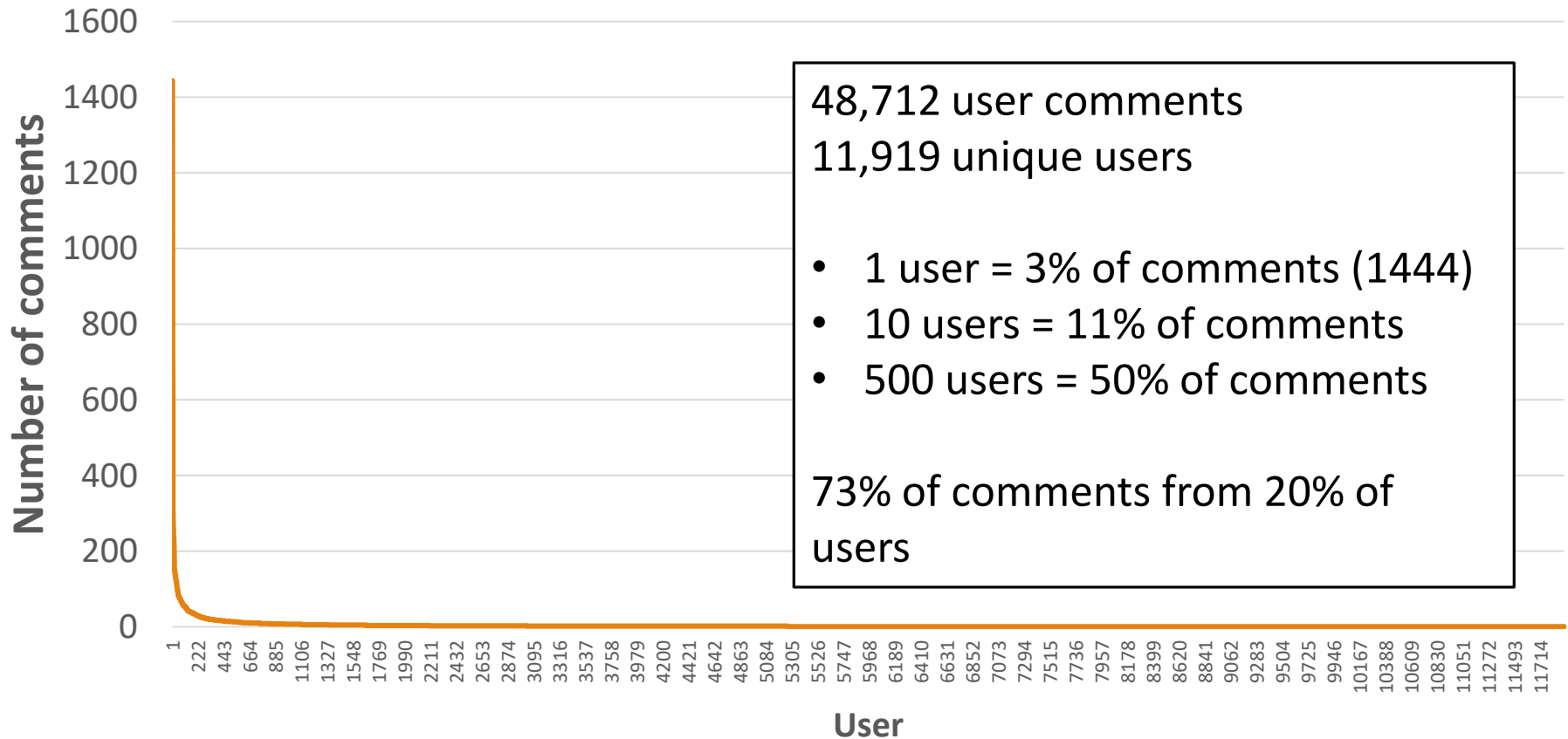
# Types of posts

Post type	Count	%	Examples
Update	67	33.0	Day to day police activities
Cautionary	61	30.0	Calls for increased vigilance against crimes and activities that affect personal safety (e.g. hiking)
Advisory	18	8.9	Traffic arrangements for special events and weather conditions
Educational	14	6.9	In-depth instruction on a specific topic (e.g. how to spot symptoms of drug users)
Human interest	12	5.9	Human-centered stories (remembrance of deceased police officer)
Recruitment	11	5.4	Activities and calls to recruit individuals to the HKPF
Statement	10	4.9	Official pronouncements on behalf of HKPF leadership
Activity	7	3.4	Facebook-related updates (e.g. updated cover photo)
Appeals	3	1.5	Request for citizen assistance in police investigations
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

			Total	%
1	Oct 5, 2015	<a href="#">(Photo) Announcement of Facebook page launch</a>	21417	3.9%
2	Oct 5, 2015	<a href="#">(Video) Announcement of Facebook page launch</a>	83434	15.1%
3	Nov 5, 2015	<a href="#">(Photo) Announcement of new media relations division responsible for Facebook page</a>	1722	0.3%
4	Nov 6, 2015	<a href="#">(Photo) Announcement of one-month birthday and frequently asked questions regarding HKPF Facebook page</a>	2551	0.5%
5	Feb 9, 2016	<a href="#">(Video) Mong Kok riot: Commissioner of Police statement</a>	11781	2.1%
6	Feb 12, 2016	<a href="#">(Photo) Mong Kok riot: Meeting of HKPF staff associations</a>	4018	0.7%
7	Feb 12, 2016	<a href="#">(Link) Mong Kok riot: Joint statement by Hong Kong's 5 disciplinary forces</a>	3427	0.6%
8	Feb 15, 2016	<a href="#">(Video) Mong Kok riot: Condemnation of violence</a>	3785	0.7%
9	Feb 17, 2016	<a href="#">(Video) Mong Kok riot: Appreciation of support from community</a>	2499	0.5%
10	Feb 19, 2016	<a href="#">(Photo) Mong Kok riot: New committee to review equipment and training</a>	1935	0.4%
		ENGAGEMENT	136569	25%

# User engagement

## User participation and number of posts for 10 Statements



# Findings (Oct posts)

## Theme #1 Post-Umbrella grievances and calls for police accountability.

### Post #3

 **香港警察 Hong Kong Police** ✓  
November 5, 2015 · 🌐

【警隊Facebook管理人員】警察公共關係科已於轄下成立一個「媒體聯絡及傳訊分課」，由一名警司帶領18名成員，負責傳媒聯絡，管理警隊社交媒體（包括「警隊流動應用程式」、「警隊YouTube頻道」以及「警隊Facebook」），及其他相關支援工作。當中「警隊Facebook」的管理主要由其中3位成員負責。

新聞公報：<http://bit.ly/1iEn8RA>

A "Media Liaison and Communication Division" has been newly established under the Police Public Relations Branch (PPRB), led by a Superintendent of Police with 18 members. This division is responsible for media relations, management of various Police social media platforms (including Hong Kong Police Mobile Application, Hong Kong Police YouTube and Hong Kong Police (HKP) Facebook) and other relevant support duties. Among these duties, 3 of the members are to manage the Hong Kong Police (HKP) Facebook page.

Press Release：<http://bit.ly/1NR3hKc>

#警隊Facebook #Facebook管理人數 #警察公共關係科 #立法會提問 #傳媒聯絡

[See Translation](#)



Like Comment Share

  856 Chronological ▾

41 shares 470 comments

 **對於在法庭俾假口供的警員，你們會有處罰的嗎？法庭俾假口供，提出起訴是警察處理的嗎，涉及刑事罪嗎？如果警察俾假口供係無罪的，市民怎樣保障自己？**  
[See Translation](#)  
Like · Reply · November 14, 2015 at 3:50pm

 **為挽回警隊公信力，請即立即起訴：**  
**胡亂以警棍毆打行人的前警司( )...** [See More](#)  
[See Translation](#)

 **【最低武力？】警司揮警棍擊打市民後頸 (DBC Multi-Media)**  
YOUTUBE.COM  
Like · Reply · November 14, 2015 at 10:23pm

 **現在的激進份子再不檢控制裁，驅逐出境，便是明日的 極端主義恐怖分子！**  
**舉報罪行，你我有責....** [See More](#)  
[See Translation](#)

 **警員涉與13歲女童性交被捕**  
(綜合報導)《星島日報報道》家境富裕的軍裝警員，竟戀上...  
HK.NEWS.YAHOO.COM | BY 雅虎香港新聞  
Like · Reply · November 16, 2015 at 10:59pm

# Findings (Oct posts)

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## **LANGUAGE: Incivility, mockery and sarcasm**

- ❑ “Black police” (黑警) (N = 2814)
- ❑ “7 police” (七警) ( N = 1987)
- ❑ “Royal Hong Kong Police force” (皇家香港警察)(N = 909)
- ❑ “Police dogs” (警犬) (N = 242)
- ❑ “Death to the police and their family!” (黑警死全家) (N = 87)



# Findings (Oct posts)

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## LANGUAGE: Rhetorical questions (Translated)

*Dear police public relations officer: Regarding the officers who gave false testimonies in court, will they be punished? If the police were the ones who raised the charges, and they were the one who gave false testimonies, does that mean this should be a criminal case? If it is lawful for police to give false testimonies in court, how can citizens protect themselves? Please reply, thank you. Also, when will the seven police officers [lists names of 7 officers and their collar numbers] be charged? Don't spend all your time deleting FB comments...take some time to reply to the general public please. I support the police's stern upholding of the law.*

- ❑ Above statement posted 2146 times by 1315 unique users
- ❑ 6779 posts with “*Dear police public relations officer: ...*”

# Findings (Oct posts)

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## LANGUAGE: Rhetorical questions (Original)

親愛的警察公關人員，對於在法庭俾假口供的警員，你們會有處罰的嗎？法庭俾假口供，提出起訴是警察處理的嗎，涉及刑事罪嗎？如果警察俾假口供係無罪的，市民怎樣保障自己？請回答，謝謝。另外柒個警員: xxx  
#xxxxxx xxx #xxxxxx xxx #xxxxxx xxx #xxxxxx xxx #xxxxxx xxx  
#xxxxxx xxx #xxxxxx 幾時會正式落案起訴? 唔好掛住刪留言  
啦，回覆下我呢啲小市民丫。支持警方嚴正執法。

- ❑ Above statement posted 2146 times by 1315 unique users
- ❑ 6779 posts with “親愛的警察公關人員: ...”

# Findings (Oct posts)

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## Theme #2 - Accusations of post deletions

“Del” and “Delete” (N = 3460)

“刪” (N = 5819)

E.g.:

□ “Hello? Where did my comment go?”

咦？冇咗我個留言嘅？

□ “Stop deleting my comments!”

請立即正式回覆，唔好delete 我嘅查詢，如果唔係會同申訴專員投訴貴處唔公開／提供資料。謝謝。

# Findings

## APPROPRIATIONS OF MAINSTREAM AND ALTERNATIVE NEWS

- 5065 external links, primarily to YouTube (N = 3544).
- Mainstream = Apple Daily (N = 110) | Alternative = Standnews (N = 25)

	Description	Duration	Published	Source	FB Links	Video link
1	Seven police officers use force against activist during Umbrella Movement	2M44S	Oct 15, 2014	Official media (Apple Daily)	1758	<a href="#">Link</a>
2	Police clearing protest area during Umbrella Movement	1M22S	Oct 14, 2014	Official media (TVB News)	190	<a href="#">Link</a>
3	Police argument with bus driver	2M14S	April 24, 2014	Official media (Apple Daily)	116	<a href="#">Link</a>
4	Coarse user commentary on police incompetence	1M13S	July 19, 2010	User-edited media (i-CABLE)	57	<a href="#">Link</a>
5	University students performing anti-police songs	3M35S	April 18, 2015	User-generated media	46	<a href="#">Link</a>

# Findings

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	Description	Duration	Published	Source	FB Links	Video link
1	7魔警濫用私刑4分鐘打不停	2M44S	Oct 15, 2014	Official media (Apple Daily)	1758	<a href="#">Link</a>
2	[2014-10-15] 警察抬示威人士到暗角並拳打腳踢	1M22S	Oct 14, 2014	Official media (TVB News)	190	<a href="#">Link</a>
3	激動Sir抄牌 網上熱播	2M14S	April 24, 2014	Official media (Apple Daily)	116	<a href="#">Link</a>
4	[極醜惡]交通差 - 紙皮塞水 - 豬咁蠢 - 戇鳩鳩	1M13S	July 19, 2010	User-edited media (i-CABLE)	57	<a href="#">Link</a>
5	血汗攻闖 - 向香港警察致敬：Fuck The Police (黑暗時代抗爭音樂會)	3M35S	April 18, 2015	User-generated media	46	<a href="#">Link</a>



# Findings (From Oct to Feb)

## DISCURSIVE SHIFT FROM 'BLACK POLICE' TO 'THUGS'

Post	Comments	民主 <i>Democracy</i>	佔中 <i>Occupy central</i>	七警 <i>7 officers</i>	黑警 <i>Black police</i>	公安 <i>Police (China)</i>	支持 <i>support</i>	加油 <i>support</i>	法庭 <i>court</i>	暴徒 <i>thug</i>
2015年10月5日	8022	17	109	509	5954	263	2123	87	4105	45
2015年10月5日	36003	59	194	3035	12091	1318	6566	224	11262	83
2015年11月5日	348	3	3	3	14	9	73	8	17	1
2015年11月6日	294	2	5	0	20	6	106	31	9	3
2016年2月9日	1764	29	13	0	27	20	393	117	8	320
2016年2月12日	602	5	6	0	15	4	123	25	0	72
2016年2月12日	708	7	5	4	35	7	166	16	2	150
2016年2月15日	433	4	7	0	13	0	88	13	2	50
2016年2月17日	282	0	4	2	14	0	95	18	2	44
2016年2月19日	261	0	3	0	10	2	61	5	0	73

- Noticeable shift in sentiment from strong negativity of police to more supportive sentiment

# Findings

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## **MORE POSITIVE SENTIMENTS FOR POLICE DURING MONGKOK RIOTS**

### Most Liked positive message (N = 659)

So grateful for the police officers' integrity and hard work on Chinese New Year's Day, upholding the law! HK will not allow such violent behavior, nor will we condone thugs (protestors) committing arson and vandalism, even throwing bricks and glass bottles at the police! Fully support the police's strict enforcement, employing acceptable levels of violence to arrest all those troublesome thugs! Don't let any one of them escape! Wish a speedy recovery to the 90 plus injured police officers and journalists! Salute to all the brave and fearless police officers who serve HK!

# Findings

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## MORE POSITIVE SENTIMENTS FOR POLICE DURING MONGKOK RIOTS

### Most Liked positive message (N = 659)

感謝前綫警員在大年初一凌晨盡忠職守，維持法紀！香港絕不姑息暴力行為，更不會縱容暴徒以爛藉口在鬧市發難、四處縱火，甚至以磚頭、玻璃瓶、雜物襲擊警員！支持警方嚴正執法，採用相應的武力拘捕所有滋事暴徒！一個也不能放過！祝願90多名受傷的警員及記者盡快康復！向所有無畏無懼為香港執勤的警員致敬！

Top 20 'Liked' messages all were positive towards police

# Findings

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## FEWER NEGATIVE SENTIMENTS

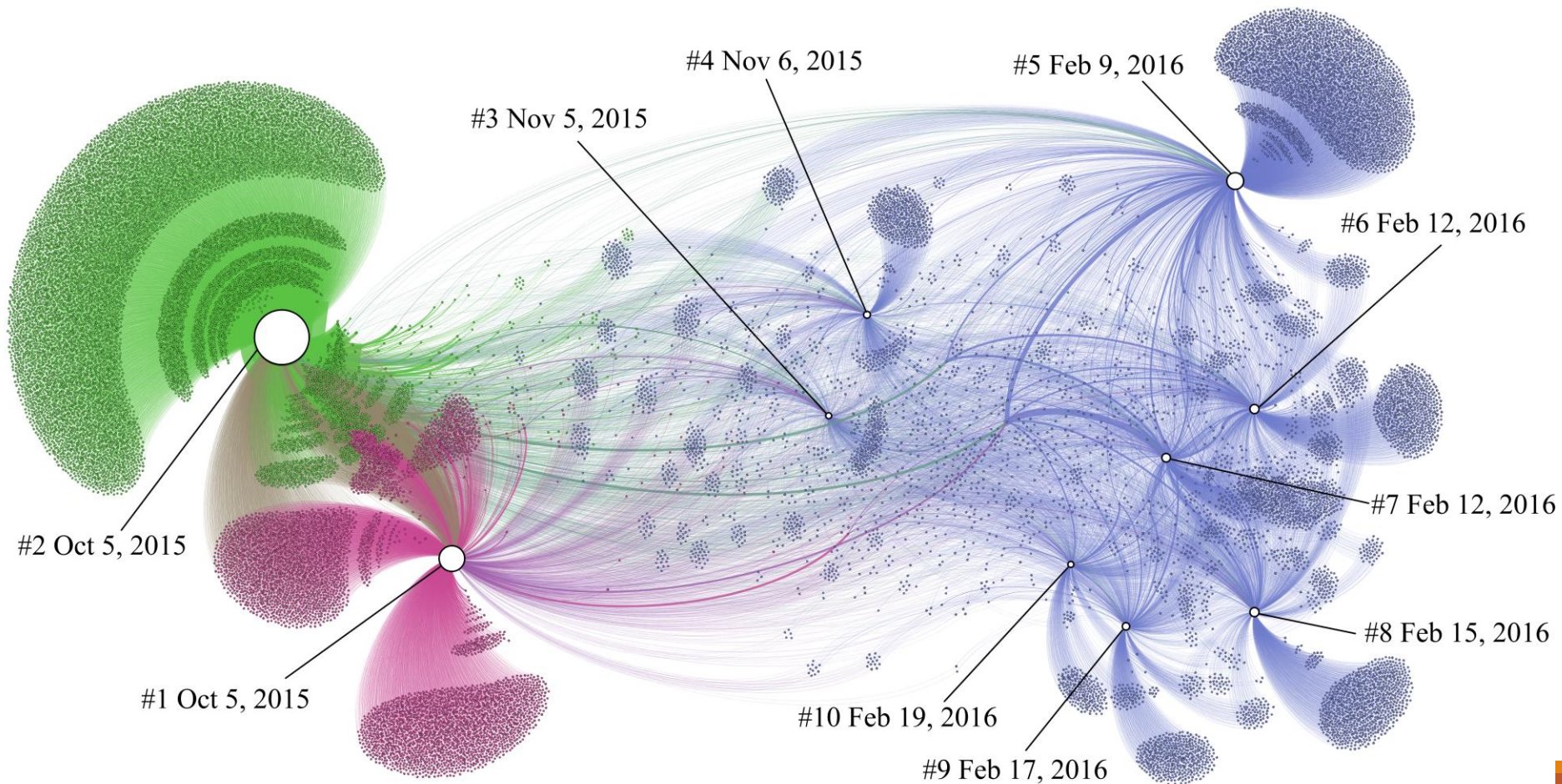
### ANTI

#### E.g.

- ❑ *You delete it, I'll post it again: How come Sun Yat-sen had to revolt all those years ago? It was because of four words: poor government, angry citizens! (N = 13)*  
再刪再POST: 點解孫國父當年要革命？只是四個字, 官迫民反！
  
- ❑ *Shouldn't the police mob that mauled a MingPao reporter be charged for assaulting and wounding? (N = 11)*  
警察圍毆明報記者係唔係要告襲擊傷人罪？

# Findings

## NETWORK STRUCTURE OF POSTS AND USERS ACROSS POSTS





# Tentative findings / implications

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- ❑ Technological architecture of Facebook allows networked counterpublics to 'sabotage' or 'disrupt' dominant discourses with counterdiscourses
- ❑ Counterdiscourses episodic rather than sustained over time
- ❑ Patterns of user engagement generally stable and 'peaceful' in the long run. Spikes and 'political jams' may occur during real world 'news events' related to HKPF (e.g. visit of Zhang Dejiang in May)
- ❑ Copy & paste activism .v. hiding posts / blocking users
- ❑ External linkages to mainstream media rather than alternative media / citizen journalism
- ❑ Technological architectures of Facebook 'posts' .v. Twitter 'hashtags': Dispersed versus centralized narratives, ephemeral .v. sustained counterdiscourses