Inter-discursive strategies, resistance and agency the case of poverty in Hong Kong media

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Inter-discursive strategies, resistance and agency
The case of poverty in Hong Kong media

LO Wai Han

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Principal Supervisor: Prof. HUANG Yu
Hong Kong Baptist University
June 2015
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work which has been done after registration for the degree of PhD at Hong Kong Baptist University, and has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation submitted to this or other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

Signature: __________________________

Date: June 2015
ABSTRACT

This study uses Foucauldian governmentality as a framework to examine the interplay of neoliberal and place-based discourses, as well as the political rationalities aimed at governing citizens. It identifies neoliberalism as an ideological project and different parties play a role in the facilitation and circulation of neoliberalism as a form of governmentality. The possibility for accommodation of the two mismatched theoretical position, poststructuralism and Marxism, is also discussed. This study not only focuses on the apparatus of technologies of domination, but also responds to a recent call to recognize the creative possibilities and freedom of an individual. This study addresses how neoliberalism shapes our understanding of reality, and how the citizens are being governed.

A geneology of poverty and welfare discourse is examined in this study through a complementary combination of qualitative coding analysis and quantitative content analysis of 20 years of Hong Kong newspaper articles. Seventy in-depth interviews with poor people, social workers, and volunteers, and participant observation were conducted in three NGOs for one year. Five central governing practices among poverty news articles supporting neoliberal rationality and mentalities were found. They are individualization, distancing government from citizens, promoting social mobility, the creation of a decent subject, and the
fragmentation of society. Four oppositional claims are also found. They are exercising human rights, fighting for social justice, anti-stigmatization, and seriousness of poverty issues. Three major shifts in discursive strategies were identified as coinciding with the major socio-political changes in Hong Kong. The result shows that the mobilization of moral panic prompted a shift in the discourse regarding poverty from a story-like form of social citizenship to rational language of economic citizenship. Then, following a rise in the anti-neoliberalism movement, the basic arguments in public discourse began taking social justice into account. The public discourse has shifted the focus to sensationalized language of political citizenship.

In this, news media use their institutional power to determine the legitimate way to discuss poverty. Faced with journalism preference of scientism, rationality, and extraordinary stories, social actors and government officials use survey, official statistics, rational language and demonstrations to attract media attention. Journalists condition the audience to act as good citizens by repeating the self-reliance project. The individuals are either conditioned to behave themselves or to monitor the behavior of others in economic terms.

This study further examines how the society in terms of power and knowledge constitutes subjectivity. It first illustrates how gazes might transform social relations in our everyday lives. Individuals might submit to power as technology of domination
under constant surveillance. Three types of gazes were identified as prominent in the gatherings among poor people. These three different types of gazes determine the normal, acceptable behavior and traits of those deserving help: they cannot meet their basic material needs, use resources well, and have good work attitudes. At the same time, poor people accomplish goals and actualize themselves as technology of self. The study shows technologies of self can be identified in five domains: they are engaging in volunteer work, enrolling in retraining programs, fighting for social rights, fulfilling social roles, and modifying the appearance of identity via technology. Technologies of self provide spaces for self-regulation and better understanding of poverty. All these technologies have been used to illustrate the different ways in which the self has been changed by their self’s consciousness. The poor shape their lives by exercising their power to choose what activities they want to engage in and turn these technologies into ongoing identity work. This study on one hand illustrates specific processes that the knowledge system of poverty brings about a specific ethic of self-discipline, which forces an individual to fulfill a moralistic obligation. On the other hand, it also acknowledges the potential for oppressed groups and the poor themselves to create their own identity, regain their subjectivity, and struggle against domination.
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1. Introduction

A large number of people in the world are still living in poverty. Given the poverty line of living on $1.25 a day, about one in five of the world’s population are poor (Chen & Ravallion, 2008). Although the above measurement only reflects the material aspects of life, such as food, shelter, clothing, among others, they are also frequently related to other aspects of life. Poor people are usually more vulnerable to sickness and depression, and they are more illiterate. Although the poor suffer while living in poverty, they are negatively stereotyped as the burden of society (Bauder, 2008; Kofman et al., 2009, Tannock, 2009). Moreover, poverty is not only a sad event for an individual, but also for a society at large. It is linked to corruption, ethnic conflict, crime, and violence (Banerjee, Bénabou, & Mookherjee, 2006). Poverty is particularly severe in developing countries, but it is not limited only to those countries. Many developed countries and societies also have high rate of poverty and inequality, including the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States (Babb, 2005; Morisette & Zhang, 2006; Pasma, 2010, Redden, 2011). Thus, poverty is not merely a concern in the less economically developed world but also in advanced countries (Lee, Wong, & Law, 2007; Sassen, 1998). Poverty in the developed world is caused by economic restructuring, which emphasizes the role of global capitalism and information (Castells, 1989; Ross & Trachte, 1990). Large, advanced cities put focus on service-oriented markets. Inequalities of income, job loss, and poverty become serious
problems in these global cities (Fainstein, Ian, & Harloe, 1992).

The question of poverty has been studied from a wide range of perspectives and within a number of fields of study. Nevertheless, poverty is a contested and polysemic concept (Sallila, Hillamo, & Sund, 2004). It has different meanings in various contexts. Gordon and Townsend (2000) state that there are at least three definitions of poverty: first, it can be defined as situation in which people do not have the materials that the general public believes are basic necessities; second, poor people can be seen as those who are incapable of doing things that others take for granted; third, they are socially excluded and are not able to live their lives in a manner deemed normal.

Poverty is usually conceptualized as a relative rather than absolute concept. In this, poor living conditions are not interpreted as an absolute lack of resources. It is a socially determined relative situation and is always related to class structure (Sallila, Hillamo, & Sund, 2004). For example, the growth of the middle class leads to changes in consumption patterns; it also redefines the definition of basic necessities. Sen (1992, p. 110) argued that, “Poverty is not a matter of low well-being, but the inability to pursue well-being precisely because of the lack of economic means.” To Sen, poverty is defined in both economic dimensions and social dimensions. In other words, lack of income is an important factor of depravity. However, lack of money does not
necessarily bring social exclusion and depravity.

Many countries classify poverty in monetary terms. The poor are defined as monthly household income lower than a certain percentage of the mean rate, such as 50% (Duncan et al., 1993; Mitchell, 1991; Ritakallio, 1994). However, the percentage of the mean is an arbitrary figure. The meaning of having an income below the median income is different in various contexts (Hallerod, 1996). Other studies may define poor on the basis of social security systems (Gustafsson & Lindblom, 1993). However, using measurement of income to define poverty may be problematic. Lack of money is not identical with poverty. It may indicate that people are living in poor conditions. Previous studies show that there is a mismatch between measurement of income and living conditions. Individuals who have low income are not necessarily deprived (Mayer, 1995; Nolan & Whelan, 1996; Ringen, 1987). It is because different people meet their ends at different costs and with various resources. At the same time, income data is not reliable. The reports do not always reflect what they really earn. Individuals may also have get non-monetary rewards from many different ways (Hallerod, 1996), but it is fair to say income indicates capabilities to improve living conditions. Relative income measures can serve as an indicator of the poor among countries (Sallila, Hiilamo, & Sund, 2004).

History demonstrates that the understanding of poverty changes over time.
(Lister, 2004). The definitions and the strategies for tackling poverty are closely linked with the dominant social, economic, and political thoughts and practices of a particular time period. This, in turn, influences how the issues of poverty are interpreted and how individuals and governments deal or do not deal with it (Jøgenson & Philips, 2002; Lister, 2004). Not surprisingly, the definition and causes of poverty varies over a wide spectrum. This is linked to the role of state and market on the distribution of resources. Through description, classification, and legibly knowledge, some individuals are socially recognizable to receive public assistance, and some are not (Lister, 2004). The media has played an important role in the above process. Some scholars argue that mass media limits the interpretation and topics the public discusses (Gamson, 2004; Gamson & Wolfsfield, 1993) and thus limits the possible political choices and actions (Tuchman, 1978). Individuals, in particular those who do not have direct experience with being poor, depend largely on the media to learn about the issue (Reutter et al., 2005, 2006). News media discourse has great influence on individuals’ responses and actions (Davis, 2010; Fenton, 2010). At the same time, news media is contested platform. The government officials want to project a hegemonic picture while the leaders representing poor people and activists also resist stigmatization, attempting to make their voices heard in the media (de Young 1998; McRobbie and Thornton 1995; Ungar 2001). But, still, news stories are
more likely to reflect the interests and beliefs of the dominant class and disvalue and stereotype inferior groups. The news media is in the hand of a few giant corporations (e.g., Bullock, Wyche, & Williams, 2001). Journalists are more likely to share and reinforce cultural values (Burke, 1961; Hoffman & Slater, 2007).

Media scholars has produced large amount of research about poverty, these studies mainly focus on media representation of the poverty and its relations with the public’s understanding of poverty (Bullock, Wyche, & Williams, 2001; McKendrick etc., 2008). Past research indicated that poor who receive public assistance are portrayed as lazy, disinterested in work, and dependent in mass media. Their behaviors are described as a form of social threat, such as crime, drugs, and gangs (Entman, 1995; Greer & Jewkes, 2005; Piven & Cloward, 1993). Mass media stresses the relationship between poverty and ethnicity or gender. African Americans are often depicted as poor (e.g., Gilens, 1996; Quadagno, 1994; Clawson & Trice, 2000), and welfare mothers are portrayed as immoral and neglectful (e.g., Ajzenstadt, 2009; Atkinson, Oerton, & Burns, 1998; Thomas, 1998). Negative images of the poor fuel anti-welfare sentiments and reinforce racism and sexism (Gans, 1995; Gilens, 1999). Additionally, stories about the poor are rarely reported in news media. The audience fails to get a comprehensive understanding of poverty issues due to the lack of media exposure (Kemshall, 2005). The news media examines the cause of poverty as
personal faults, rather than structural economic causes (Entman, 1995; Kemshall, 2003). Mass media fails to tell the audience the structural cause that influences the inequality (Bullock, Wyche, & Williams, 2001; Haynes, 2005).

In general, the above studies of media representation tend to study the prevalence of stereotypical images of the poor, and discuss the relationship between stereotypical images and audience’s perception, although some studies also examine the ideologies that provide justification for the stereotypes (e.g. Bullock, Wyche & Williams, 2001). However, such approach fails to take consideration of power struggles, cultural diversity and complex social contexts (Liselott & Pal, 2011). In contrast, this study attempts to use a governmentality approach to examine the poverty and welfare media discourse as a complex aggregate of a wide variety of knowledge and political rationalities aimed at governing citizens. It is complementary to previous studies of media representation. It investigates the strategies of and conditions for the operation of neoliberal governance, namely the discursive constitution of the poverty, and examines poverty and welfare discourse in terms of what Foucault called “micro-politics” that involves the political techniques and subjectivities. This study not only focuses on the apparatus of technologies of domination, but also responds to a recent call to recognize the creative possibilities and freedom of an individual (Duncan, 1994; Markula & Pringle, 2006; Thorpe,
It contributes toward a better understanding of poverty and dynamics between media, government and citizens. This study addresses how neoliberalism shapes our understanding of reality, and how the citizens are being governed. It examines the ways in which power is contested in construction of poverty media discourse and study how poor people make sense of multiple and contradictory mediated discourses of poverty. In this study, a discourse analysis of 20 years of Hong Kong newspaper articles, 70 in-deep interviews with poor people, social workers, and volunteers, and participant observation were conducted.

The aims of this study are as follows:

1) To determine through what kind of governmental strategies are deployed in poverty and welfare discourse; and examine the specific socio-spatial factors that influence the discourses. The relations between media communication, power and social actors is discussed.

2) To examine how an individual apply self-techniques as practices of limited freedom.

I begin in the following chapter by arguing that poverty and welfare discourse is best examined under the notion of governmentality. Such approach provides an alternative to the present media studies and provides a better conceptualization of poverty and welfare comparing to the existing Foucauldian research. The literature
review starts with discussion of notion of governmentality. It illustrates the limitation of Marxist theories of power and explains why this article theorizes power with the notion of governmentality (see Section 2.1). The discussion then moves on to contextualize the rise of poverty discourse policy within the complex power relations. It is argued that neoliberalism can be identified as both a hegemonic project and as governmentalities, and suggests that the political economy approach is not at all incongruent with Foucault’s inspired concept of governmentality. It asserts that neoliberalism as a hegemonic project is infused with three other prevalent place-based discourses, including the Hong Kong success story, and images of new Chinese immigrants and Chinese works ethic, that functions as a form of governmentalities (see Section 2.2)

After discussing the spatial and temporal factors, this paper analyses a moral panic mobilized by the Hong Kong Government, targeting the poor who have to rely on welfare assistance. It shows the moral panic was conditioned by wider socio-cultural contexts and a neoliberal regime (see Section 2.3). The discussion then moves on to examine the relationship between the media, knowledge, and power, especially the role of news media as an institutional power in conditioning the social actors and audience (see Section 2.4).

The last part of this chapter examines how the society in terms of power and
knowledge constitutes subjectivity. It first illustrates how gazes might transform social relations in our everyday lives. Individuals might either submit to power (as technology of domination) or to accomplish goals and actualize themselves (as technology of self) under constant surveillance (see Section 2.5).
2. Literature Review

2.1 Why Governmentality Approach?

The governmentality approach developed in this study challenged the ways that poverty and welfare are conceptualized from Foucauldian perspective in recent research. In recent years, a number of scholars start to examine poverty and welfare policy from a Foucauldian perspective. They draw heavily from Foucault’s development of the micro-physics of power. Foucault makes remarkable contributions to the understanding of power. He argued that power does not mask the truths in the mechanism of ideology or hegemony but believed that power produces truths. Individuals are subjects to power through meaningful actions (Huspek, 1997, Foucault, 2003b). His analysis shifts the interests of the macro-perspective of the ruling class to the microphysics of power and strategies of institutions and groups (Lemke, 2001a). Power is excised in multiple ways through techniques of classifications, objectifications, and normalizations in various discursive and institutional fields. To Foucault, power is not something that is held and produced by particular groups of people or institutions, such as the state, and it is not hegemonic. Power exists everywhere, as it is produced and flows through the society by a multiplicity of relations (Foucault, 1978, 1988; Dillon & Neal, 2008).

Foucault’s ideas enable us to connect the operation of power with knowledge, for example, in the system of knowledge, heterosexuality is regarded as normal, while
homosexuality is objectified and classified as “other.” Foucault’s notion of bio-powers offered an interesting alternative to Marxists’ understanding of poverty and welfare policy (Donzelot & Gordon, 2008; Rose, O’Malley & Valverde, 2006). Unlike false consciousness and hegemony, Foucauldian perspective constructs knowledge as a claim of objective truth after a careful examination of objects. False consciousness implies that there are hidden truths, while hegemony is reached through dispelling disqualified knowledge and winning consent. However, in systems of knowledge, there are only truths. In *Discipline and Publish* (1979), Foucault reconceptualized the notion of power and argued that we should cease to understand the effects in negative terms, such as exclusion, repression, and censorship, etc. Instead, power produces rituals of truths and reality. The individual gains knowledge of the truths that belong to this production. Foucault examines these productive aspects of power through the study of the relationship between the development of human science, knowledge systems, and a technology of power. He suggested that a systematic knowledge of punishment emerges through the observation, examination, classification, and surveillance of individuals. The knowledge contributes to the development of modern social science, such as psychology, criminology, and sociology. Those individuals become a common object of study across various institutions and fields, and the knowledge developed is used to legitimize the exercise of control over people. The
objects of study become subjects to various disciplinary mechanisms through institutional practices and discourse (Foucault, 1972). Foucault reveals us the relationship between power and knowledge, saying that, “There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (1979, p. 27). These ideas help us to approach the analysis of power from different directions. Rather than examining the question of why power exists, we study how the power operates—the ways and strategies through which power is being exercised.

Under Foucault’s influence, many researchers and scholars within poverty and welfare policy studies draws the insight of Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*. These studies argue the construction of knowledge system about poverty and welfare policy produces constitutional forces and examines the dynamics between power, knowledge and agency (e.g. Brock, Cornwall & Gaventa, 2001; Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Haynes, 2005). Some argue that those who are receiving public welfare are portrayed as undeserving poor and others as deserving poor. The binary category has both constitutive and disciplinary functions. They are used to classify individuals and apply regulatory and legislative technologies over the people (Ismael, 2006). Poverty becomes an identity project. The social welfare net and public generosities are extended only to those who are classified as the “deserving poor” (Jeppesen, 2009).
Poor people are pooled into categories that are reductionistic. They are being objectified and disempowered (Myers, 2005).

However these studies concentrate on the analysis of disciplinary power and technique of power/knowledge; they simply attempt to show that all social systems produce and extend social control on individuals (e.g., Biggs & Powell, 2001; Cooper, 2008; Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Haynes, 2005). It put too much emphasis on micro-techniques and objectification makes the analysis diminish to the study of strategies of social control and domination. It implies that all the movements and social reforms are just another deepening of penetrations of disciplinary power under the Foucauldian perspective. Critics of Foucault argue that Foucault abandoned the concept of agency and rejected humanism and rational self (Allen, 2000; Davidson, 2001; Giddens, 1984). Historian Garland (1986) criticized the concepts developed in *Discipline and Punish* without consideration of subjectification. He argued that although Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* tells the story of objectification of human beings through the use of power-knowledge, and its critique of power and society is largely an extension of this imagery of dehumanizing domination (1990 p. 169–170). Although Foucault contended that power must operate as a point of control and resistance at the same time. However, as Lacombe (1996) in a review of Foucault’s ideas stated, while Foucault asserted that individuals do resist, he did little work to
explain how the resistance happens in the book *The History of Sexuality*. What mechanism allows individuals deploy the strategies to reverse the discourse and power relations? The constitution of subject can best be understood under the concepts of governmentality and self-techniques, which allow us to examine the complex relationship between structure and agency, while study developed from these two perspectives is still under-theorized (cf. Gros, 2005; Vintges, 2012).

In the following sections, I examined the notion of governmentality and subjectivity developed by Foucault in later year and discussed how this notion can be used to study the poverty and welfare discourse. This paper argues that neoliberalism as governmentality is the process of becoming. The role of the government and news media in constructing the discourses is discussed.

2.2 Governmentality

Foucault was the first scholar who developed the notion of governmentality. In his lecture on “governmentalization”, Foucault (2007) illustrated what constitutes the macrophysics of power and state power. He contended that “how to govern” became a central question among various fields in the sixteenth century. Beginning with the eighteenth century, an employment of governmentality of the state happens through the development of knowledge practices, such as statistics. To put it simply, governmentality is about the way government transform the behaviors of individuals
(Marston & McDonald, 2006). To Foucault, the concept of government exists in a comprehensive sense, which is not only discussed in political tracts, but also in a more general context, such as philosophical and religious texts. Government not only signifies the state’s control, but also management of household, family, and self. Foucault defines governmentality as the conduct of conduct (Lemke, 2001).

The concept of governmentality does not put politics and knowledge together but articulates power with political knowledge and “discover[s] which kind of rationality they are using” (Foucault, 1981, p. 226). Government is, more or less systematized, regulated and reflected modes of power (a ‘technology’) that goes beyond the spontaneous exercise of power over others, following a specific form of reasoning (a rationality), which defines the telos of action or the adequate means to achieve it. (Lemke, 2001a, p. 5)

In his essay “What is Enlightenment”, Foucault (1984) argues that some aspects of enlightenment recognize the rational autonomy over conformity. It acknowledges the potential for oppressed groups to create their own identity, regain their subjectivity, and struggle against domination (Philip, 1985). The focus of analysis is no longer on how individuals are objectified via practices, but on how individuals make their choice and exercise a degree of autonomy within the network of power relations (Best & Kellner, 1991). It implies that the oppressed and
marginalized individuals may articulate their own identities as self-constituting subjects and contest power within identity politics in the pursuit of autonomy (Fung, 2002). As Dean said, government is a more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests, and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes. (Dean, 1999, p. 2)

This definition of government puts emphasis on the multiplicity and diversity of outcomes. It helps us to understand the formulations of governmentality come out of various political forces. These forces compete with one another and produce unexpected results and alignments. Larner (2000) argued that that post-structuralists literature needs to make explicit “contested representations within what are putatively singular or common cultures.” The contestation within and between hegemonic groups need to be explored and elucidated. Individuals are endowed with autonomy and freedom. They decide and get what they want in their lives. The concept of “entrepreneurial self” inspires many scholars to study how neo-liberalism can govern lives at a distance through granting freedom for individuals to exercise their autonomy and self-control (Dean, 2002; Lemke, 2001b; Rose, 1999).
This study deploys Foucault’s unique conceptualization of governmentality to explore the way in which power is enacted and contested in media. Past studies working within the tradition of governmentality have not paid a great deal of attention to analyses of specific projects (Larner, 2000). Despite the fact that the governmentality literature attempts to distance themselves from other grand theories, many previous studies put the focus on broad governmental themes (e.g., Rose, 2006; Walters, 1996), but largely ignore the messy actualities and thus run the risk of producing generalized accounts of history. Frankel (1997) criticizes the studies of advanced liberalism as an analysis of a totalizing concept. To recognize the complexities, the contradictions, and inconsistencies that characterize neo-liberal projects, this paper analyzes the discourse of newspaper articles. It is different from a large body of past studies that tend to analyze official documents and government policy. Past studies emphasize official discourse, neglecting the discourses of oppositional groups as well as those of hegemonic groups (Larner, 2000; O’Malley, 1996). In contesting hegemonic knowledge and power, counter-hegemonic knowledge is produced by social activists, academics, and political leaders (Burawoy, 2003).

At the same time, although some scholars have started to engage in examining the media as an “apparatus of technologies of domination” and how media has become “the discourse of discipline” (Cole, 1993; Duncan, 1994; Markula, 2003;
Markula & Pringle, 2006). However, these researches put too much focus on the “discourse of dominance”, which result in pessimistic views of agency and change (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 48), and the research about agency and change is under-theorized (Thorpe, 2008; Vintges, 2012). In contrast, this dissertation not only studies the techniques of domination made through or by the media, but also analyzes the creative resistance, contradictions, and agency made through media and by individuals. By reconceptualizing neoliberalism within Foucauldian media discourse, this dissertation wants to reconstruct the linkage between the domination and the possibilities of making a difference. In the following section, it explains how the neoliberalism can be conceptualized as governmentalities and discusses the limitations of such conceptualization.

2.2.1 Neoliberalism as governmentality and hegemonic project

Foucault asserted liberalism and neo-liberalism as forms of governmentality. Liberalism set limits on the state and governs the society through multiple strategies and fields oriented at the “management of freedom” (Foucault, 2008, p. 63). Liberalism required market freedom, freedom of expression, and so on. As Foucault put it, “Liberalism is not acceptance of freedom; it proposes to manufacture it constantly, to arouse it and produce it” (p. 65). Neoliberalism is not only about the management of freedom, but the construction of the economic individual as the
“entrepreneur of himself” (p. 226). Neo-liberal strategies invite individuals to consider themselves as individualized and active subjects who have responsibility to enhance their own well-being. These strategies of rule exist in diverse arenas, including schools, offices, and welfare organizations. It encourages people to work on themselves. Rose (2006) argued that this new formula of rule provides a basis for a welfare state to have policy reform via the political technologies related to marketization. The government does not govern welfare organizations directly from above, but through technologies, such as subsidies control and accountancy. Consumer demand and market competition have replaced the norms of public service. At the same time, individuals are defined as active agents who have autonomy and responsibility to make choices.

However, the above analysis ignores the fact that neoliberalism can be examined as monolithism. In the globalization era, some have argued that we should pay attention to the principal characteristics of neoliberalism as a global project (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Peck & Tickell, 2002). Neoliberalism as a concept allows scholars to connect similar patterns of poverty and inequality experience across multiple areas. Overly concrete analysis of local phenomenon may undermine efforts to maintain a shared purpose of resistance across multiple spaces (Kohl, 2006; Springer, 2011b, Willis, Smith, & Stenning, 2008). Peck (2001) argued that
neoliberalism should be conceptualized as a global and hegemonic project that requires the examination of interchangeable force between both local and extralocal levels. Some have mentioned that elite actors and dominant groups across multiple sectors are able to circulate a hegemonic view of the world onto other individuals. It is a matter of winning a certain degree of consent, rather than mere subordination to coercive force (Harvey, 2005; Peet, 2002; Plehwe et al., 2006).

Massey (2005) and Springer (2011), on the other hand, believe such claims fail to recognize the spatial and temporal factors. It is important to acknowledge multiplicity, complexity, and contextual specificity and understand the roles that individuals play when we study neoliberalism (Peck, Theodore, & Brenner, 2010; Purcell, 2008; Springer, 2011a). When neoliberalism is understood as governmentality, it stresses the complex processual character where knowledge of neoliberalism is produced via the ensemble of governmental strategies, techniques within diverse practices, and relations. It involves endless successes and failures in constructing a “common sense” that facilitates governance at a distance (Foucault, 1991b; Larner, 2003; Lemke, 2002).

Such criticisms have triggered scholars to develop a new term: neoliberalization. This phenomenon is understood as a process, not an end-state (Plehwe & Walpen, 2006). Ong (2007) developed notions of “big N Neoliberalism”
and “small n neoliberalism”. The former refers to a concept with fixed characteristics, while the latter operates differently in diverse political contexts. Neoliberalization is regarded as a process that a series of hybridized forms of neoliberalism emerges. There are increasing calls for middle ground inquiries that recognize these divergent and hybridized conceptions of neoliberalism (Gilbert, 2005; McCarthy, 2006; Raco, 2005). To achieve such divergent theorization, it requires recognition of a political economy perspective of hegemonic ideology and a Foucauldian perception of governmentality, while scholars have to examine the relations between them (Springer, 2012).

Neoliberalism should not be either merely studied with top-down approach or a bottom-up approach; it can be understood as a temporal-spatial transformation (Hudson, 2006; Sayer, 2001; Springer, 2012). Springer (2012) suggests that recognizing neoliberalism as a hegemonic project in a political economy approach is not at all incongruent with Foucault’s inspired concept of “governmentality.” As England and Ward (2007) argue, hegemony in political economy is usually understood either as unitary or monolithic, but such interpretation overlooks the possibility of understanding it with contingencies and contradictions in the Gramsican sense. The embodied participants face various forms of governance strategies and resistance; therefore, construct their common sense of neoliberalism (Carroll, 2010).
At the same time, various thoughts from different systems come together to become one ideology that constructs common sense to govern people at distance (Laclau & Mouffe). In this, neoliberal discourse circulates in various ways that interact with political economic situations and local culture. The understanding of neoliberalism is not merely an effect of a hegemonic project or state strategies (Barnett, 2005), but it is the result of combination of different thoughts from the state, oppositional parties (Springer, 2012), the media (Bordo, 1993), and the state dependent upon cultural and historical contexts (Peck & Tickell, 2002). This study does not deny the hegemony of neoliberalism, but suggests seriously considering the fact that political projects emerge out of complicated political struggles and infusion of different place-based ideologies.

Following Ward and England (2007) and Springer (2012), neoliberalism can be understood as circulated discourse. This study argues neoliberalism is identified as an ideological project (Spohrer, 2011) and different parties play a role in the facilitation and circulation of neoliberalism as a form of governmentality. The change of discourse is the result between hegemonic projects, socio-temporal factors, and resistance force. Identity subjectivities emerge out of these struggles and interactions between different discourses. For example, males are not recognized as the sole breadwinners, while family agencies and government now recognize diverse family
forms and perceive women as individuals in their own right. This is the consequence of the interplay between neo-liberal claims and neutral gender claims. I adopted the term “interdiscursivity” to explain this situation. Interdiscursivity refers to how a discourse borrows a concept from other discourses or genres in text (Bhatia, 2010). A discourse borrows the features of other discourse and formulates a strategy to govern the behavior of citizens (Koskela, 2013). Gill’s (2013) study illustrates neoliberalism alone does not account for the dominant position of entrepreneurial discourse. The neoliberal governmentality is bound with the deep-seated beliefs of the self-made man and ideology of the “American dream.” Gill (2013) studied a 10-year span of business periodicals and discussed how other historically-situated archetypes are mobilized alongside neoliberalism. Gill and Larson’s (2014) study is another example. They illustrated that occupational identity for entrepreneurs is intersected with other discourses, including gender, class and, race/ethnicity. Their work demonstrated that place plays an important role in shaping entrepreneurial identity. The work of Trethewey and Nadesan (2000) has adopted Foucauldian approaches to analyze neoliberal regimes and illustrated how the publications govern readers at a distance through creation of knowledge. Their findings suggest the women’s popular success publications construct a discourse that promotes masculine entrepreneurial ideals, which serve as a basis for the reader’s critical self-reflection and ultimate ideal. Many
women feel compelled to construct a professional and successful identity, and believe they can achieve the entrepreneurial ideal through the active process of transformation. Holmer (2001) illustrates how *Fortune* as a popular global magazine promotes the idea of neoliberalism and leads readers to believe entrepreneurial success is the ultimate goal one has to pursue.

The above studies show how the contemporary discourse of neoliberal regime articulates with other discourses that constitute an individual entrepreneurial self. This study follows this line of thought and examines how the socio-temporal factors play a role in constructing a discourse that constrains and constitutes individuals as entrepreneurs of the self and allows governance at a distance. This process of becoming through the technology of domination is shown in Figure 1. In order to understand how the discourse of neoliberalism is formulated within particular socio-cultural contexts, the following first points out the common features of liberalism and neoliberalism as hegemonic projects across multiple areas, and discusses the relationship between neoliberalism and the Hong Kong welfare system. It then illustrates how other prevalent place-based discourses intersect with other discourse of neoliberalism as a form of governance. The possibility for accommodation of these two mismatched theoretical position is also discussed.

2.2.2 *Liberalism and neoliberalism as hegemonic project*
Liberalism is a contested concept in economic, political, and ideological discourse. It posits that all kinds of relations are best arranged via the free choices of rational individuals because they will seek to maximize their interests in society. It endorses a free market economy that involves the free exchange of products and many social practices with limited state intervention (Jessop, 2002). Neo-liberalism and the associated discourses are the resurgence of economic liberalism in the twentieth century. It emerges as a new economic and political project that introduces a new mode of governance and produces a fundamental change in the way institutions operate in the twentieth century (Olessen & Peters, 2005).

Neoliberalism is the key factor that influences contemporary poverty politics worldwide. Neoliberalism dominates in the form of a method of thought and rationality. It suggests criteria for individuals to make decisions (Foucault, 2008), and its influence extends to every aspect of our lives (Brown, 2005). It is an economic discourse which holds a hegemonic position in Western nation states. In the 1970s, the major characteristics of neoliberalism emerged in the United States due to stagflation and the collapse of the Bretton Woods system of monetary management, which led to the introduction of an economic policy that abolished capital controls by Ronald Reagan—and by Margaret Thatcher in Britain (Mishra, 1999; Stiglitz, 2002). It is hegemonic because it has already become part of our common sense that influences
how we understand the society and take action (Harvey, 2007).

Neoliberal thought sets constraints on our imagination to recognize anti-democratic forms of power and limits an individual agency (Giroux, 2008). Market-oriented rationality now dominates our ways of thinking and closes us off from alternative ideas (McGuigan, 2005). To sum up, all of the above observations suggest that neoliberalism has become a dominant and pervasive way of thought, and it is reinforced through discourse and practice. As a hegemonic mode of thought, the neoliberalism mentality influences how individuals understand and respond to the discourse of poverty. At the same time, the way poverty is approached and presented also reinforces neoliberalism.

The central tenet of neoliberalism is that the market-oriented mentality should guide all human actions. This philosophy asserts that freedom is more important than justice and equality (Dean, 2009). Neoliberalism holds that the power of the state should be limited. Instead, market as a site of truth should regulate the state (Foucault, 2008). Foucault (2008) argued that the birth of neoliberalism begins with the changed attitude towards the market. In the 17th century, the regulation of the market was recognized in society in order to protect individuals from risk and crime. Beginning from the 18th century, the market was regarded as a truth and a natural mechanism, which could lead to the formation of true price (Redden, 2011). Furthermore, some
liberals argued that individuals are rational and should be free from constraints (Dean, 2009). In the early 20th century, the above ideas were replaced by neoliberalism, which asserted that rational market behavior is not natural, yet constructed by law and institutions. It is important to have political intervention (Brown, 2005). Rational and free individuals are regarded as ones who can act and react according to economic incentives and disincentives (Dean, 2009). There are two streams of neoliberalism, namely Austro-German and American neoliberalism. The latter is adopted by Canada, Britain, and some other societies, such as Hong Kong (Redden, 2011; Tang, 2000). Both traditions argue that market freedom should be protected and ensured (Lemke, 2001). The role of state is to provide regulatory principles to make sure that the market mentality is applied in both social and economic spheres. It leads to new markets in other areas, such as health, education, and public administration (Klassen, 2009). Dorey argued that government officials must meet the demands of multinational corporations or risk “flight of capital” (2005, p. 225).

Hay (2004) argues that the operation of globalization and the threat of capital flight serve to make neoliberal logics appear sensible and necessary. As a result, the government reforms the welfare system and labor market so as to attract more capital. However, it is based on the false assumptions that the market operates in a way that promote its best interest, and all forms of capitals have full mobility that can move
from one city to another.

It is also necessary to make a distinction between liberalism and neo-liberalism, although neoliberalism shares the central presupposition of classical liberalism, in particular classical economic liberalism. Below are the shared central tenants:

First, individuals are regarded as economically self-interested subjects who are rational and act on the basis of their interests. Second, free market economics is the best mechanism to allocate resources. Third, state power should be limited because the market can regulate itself better than other forms of governance. Forth, it endorses the ideas of free trade, such as abolition of trade control, or any form of subsidies and state-support. The state should maintain open economies and a floating exchange rate. Although liberalism and neoliberalism share many similarities, they cannot be regarded as identical. Classical liberalism holds negative perceptions of state power. In this, individuals are considered as objects and should be freed from state interventions. It characterizes individuals as autonomous subjects who can exercise free choices (Burchell, 1996). In neoliberalism, the state plays a positive role in producing an appropriate market. It has the responsibility to provide conditions, laws, and resources that are necessary for a market to operate. The state helps to create a competitive entrepreneur. In other words, the individuals are not autonomous and can
practice freedom in nature. Instead, the state provides assistance in achieving the end goals of consumer sovereignty and free choice via inscription of techniques and of accounting, auditing, and all forms of expertise (Barry et al., 1996). Marketization has become a new technology by which the state enhances performance of public sectors (Olessen & Peters, 2005).

2.2.3 Neoliberalism and welfare system in Hong Kong

In the West, the neoliberal state emerged as a new mode of governance. The state endorses the market principle for the regulation of its public sectors in the name of efficiency, better management, and market rationality (Chen & Pun, 2007). Neoliberalism puts emphasis on market values, individual choice, freedom, flexibility, and responsibility for self (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001; Foucault, 2008; Harvey, 2007; McGuigan, 2009). Wacquant (2009) suggested there is a decrease in the size of the welfare sector and increases in punitive treatment of the poor in recent decades, accompanied by the policies targeting street delinquency and those who are not adapted to the new economic order. Government practices submit to the logic of a free market and individual responsibilities in all aspects of life in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada (Redden, 2011). A neoliberal turn of the state is justified in the way that the state faces fierce global competitiveness and reduces welfare benefits (Chen & Pun, 2007).
As a postcolonial society, the policy of Hong Kong is greatly influenced by the United Kingdom. Hong Kong’s welfare policy is characterized by a rationality of neoliberalism. In Hong Kong, neoliberalism began to take root in the late 1980s, and the process sped up in the post-1997 era (Chen & Pun, 2007). As a capitalist society, Hong Kong endorses liberal and free market ideologies (Chan, 1998). It has restricted the development of a welfare regime. In the early days of British administration, the Hong Kong Government was required to embrace a conservative fiscal policy, small government, market principles, and fewer regulations of the labor market. Low intervention is the central government economic strategy (Goodstadt, 2004; Ngo, 1999). Colonial bureaucrats who were in charge of Hong Kong economic policy implemented the policy of low taxation and were dedicated to a balanced budget and fiscal reserve as aims of high priority (Endacott, 1964; Rabushkga, 1976). Individuals are supposed to be self-reliant and solve problems by themselves, while the most disadvantaged groups receive minimal support from government (Chan, 1996, 2002, 2003a; Chau and Yu 2003; Wong et al., 2002).

However, Hong Kong did not simply adopt an economic model of laissez-faire, a completely hands-off approach. Instead, former Financial Secretary in 1971 invented the term “positive non-interventionism.” The fiscal policy is characterized by a sudden surge in public spending on housing, education, and welfare in the 1970s,
after the *laissez-faire* in the 1960s (Chung & Pun, 2007; Lai 1998). This policy is in sharp contrast to the Keynesian model, which prioritizes economic prosperity over fiscal self-sufficiency (Tang, 1994). The government facilitated the market by providing physical infrastructure, stable legal system, and developing public institutions (Schiffer, 1992), but the intervention of the Hong Kong Government over the market was inconsistent and *ad hoc*. For instance, the government initially reclaimed the land to support the development of the industrial sector but then sold it through public audition and pushed up the price (Wu, 1992).

The government strategically subsidizes several sectors, while individuals achieve self-reliance through employment and private retirement schemes (Chan, 2003). The Hong Kong Government openly object to the ideas of a welfare state and are not willing to put many resources into welfare programs, such as old age pension and unemployment insurance (Tang, 2000). Although the expanse of welfare increased after the riots in 1966–1967 (Tang, 2000), some scholars criticize the total social welfare spending is still maintained at a third world level (Goodstadt, 2013). As such, Hong Kong’s welfare regime is based on the principles of neoliberalism, rather than principles of human rights (Chan, 2004).

Later, the above ideas became golden principles and standard practices for the Hong Kong Government (Chan, 1998). The Hong Kong Government embraced the
value of laissez-faire philosophy (Goodstadt, 2000; Ngo, 2000). The above principles were further legitimized by the Basic Law. The policy imposed low tax rates (Article 107), a balanced budget (Article 107), free trade (Articles 114 and 115), and no control on the flow of capitals and foreign exchange (Articles 112–115) (HKSAR, 2013). Unfortunately, the acceleration of globalization resulted in the rise in unemployment. Since the 1980s, the manufacturing industry has moved to China, and Hong Kong has been transforming into a financial and logistics center. Hong Kong low skilled labor suffered from this transformation, which leads to drastic pay cuts (Chiu & Lui, 2009).

Since the handover of Hong Kong to China, Hong Kong has experienced hardships, particularly after the Asian financial crisis. It has led to drastic pay cuts of low skilled labor (Chiu & Lui, 2009). In response to this crisis, the government has mobilized moral panics via stigmatization of the poor and accelerated the neoliberalism process by subcontracting and privatizing public assets (Chen & Pun, 2007). The government has attempted to balance the budget through a series of pay cuts, voluntary retirement as well as privatization of public assets, outsourcing of government services, and competitive bidding on government contracts among private organizations and NGOs (Chan, 2004; Ma, 2011). At the same time, ideas, such as self-reliance can be found in policies concerned with subsidizing low-income earners
with travel grants and cash as well as in policies providing a wide variety of training courses and lifelong education (Commission of Poverty, 2015; Employee Retraining Board, 2014; Labour Department, 2015). The rationale of these policies is to make an individual fit for a knowledge-dependent labor market. There is a call for increasing the aspiration and enhancing the education level for a changing labor market.

This accelerated process of neoliberalism has catalyzed increased job insecurity among the middle class. People have started to question the grounds of the liberal market approach and beliefs of social mobility (Zheng & Wong, 2006). The number of self-employed and part-time workers increased from 132,700 in 1990 to 2002, 700 in 2001 and from 67,800 in 1994 to 130,900 in 2002 (Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government, 2003a; 2003b). The statistics indicate that income equality has increased with the Gini Coefficient rising from 0.467 in 1991 to 0.525 in 2001. The number of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) cases rose from 91,875 in 1993 to 283,823 in June 2003 (Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government, 2003c). There has been a rise in job insecurity among the middle class. It is more difficult for small business to survive due to the monopoly. People have started to question the grounds of the neoliberal approach and beliefs of social mobility (Zheng & Wong, 2006).

The current neo-liberal type response resulted in the increased social
polarization between rich and poor. Various figures assert that large numbers of Hong Kong people live in poverty. There were 60,000 people, or about one tenth of the population, living in poverty between 1994 and 1996 (MacPherson & Lo, 1997; Mok & Leung, 1997). In 2013, Hong Kong set its first poverty lines as half of the city’s median household income. One in five of its population, which is about 1.3 million people, live in poverty, based on this definition (Hu & Yun, 2013).

Alleviating poverty is now becoming one of the major goals of Hong Kong Government. Hong Kong has seen an increasing number of debates regarding social inequality and poverty over the last few years. The debates are accompanied by initiatives aiming to promote self-reliance and improve the employability of unemployed individuals (Social Welfare Department, 2014a; 2014b). Various policies and projects have been implemented, for example, the Commission on Poverty and the Community Care Fund were set up in 2005 and 2011, respectively. A number of life-long educational and retraining programs have been launched since 1997; however, low-skilled and less-educated people are still marginalized (Lee, Wong, & Law, 2007).

2.2.4 Poststructuralism and Marxism

Neoliberalism in this section is identified as discourse that accommodates two mismatched theoretical positions, poststructuralism and Marxism. Discourse is an
assembly of statements that belong to a single system (Foucault, 1972). Some scholars may not be convinced and insist that these are two epistemological positions and cannot be regarded as interwoven strands. They may criticize from a poststructuralist perspective that the combination of these two concepts recognizes the hierarchy behind them; thus, one cannot move beyond structure. However, poststructuralists destabilize hierarchies of meanings, categories, and classifications because they want to challenge entrenched assumptions (Belsey, 2002). Deconstruction provides evidences that hierarchies can be found in any social text, where power is excised via exclusion, subordination of other potential meanings (Lamont, 1987). This indeed recognizes the existence of a certain structure, although it does not recognize it as natural material realities and perceives it instead as abstractions existing within sign systems (Lacan, 1998). Moreover, Marxism has a substantial influence on Foucault, whose entire project emerges from the reflection on Marxism (Peters, 2001). Poster (1984) suggests that Foucault’s intellectual discussion bears parallels to that Marxism until the early 1960s. As a critique of political economy, Foucault nevertheless affirms a critical view of domination. He contends that production of knowledge cannot separate from power and social relations. Foucault (1988a) admits his approach is parallel to political economy. As Rancie’re (2006, p. 2) argues, “critique acknowledges something’s existence, but in order to confine it within limits.”
Foucault acknowledges that discourse has close relations with practice, and he studied how discourse is influenced by practice, without considering class struggle as the most important form of practice. Foucault did not agree with Marx about the notion of historical materialism and argues that discourse is not subordinated to material practice (Olssen, 2004). In contrast, Foucault (1972) suggests human destiny is not determined by one single factor, but it may be different depending on the relative importance of different non-discursive factors based on relative temporal and spatial factors (Olssen, 1999).

Foucault’s approach shed an insight on understanding neoliberalism dependent on culture and history. Given the increasing studies on the studies of neoliberalism in terms of time and space, the notion of neoliberalization is better than neoliberalism in explaining the social phenomenon in practice (Springer, 2012). Neoliberalism intersects with the local culture and political economic circumstances and thus functions in various ways in different sociocultural contexts to construct the reality. It does not mean that the “reality” is determined by the hegemonic project or governmental rationalities (Barnett, 2005), but the understanding of the “real world” cannot contradict symbolic connotations of sign systems (Lacan, 1977/2006). It does not mean to deny materiality, but to acknowledge the materiality is the refraction of discursive practice. In this, the “neoliberalism in general” as hegemonic project is the
representation of discourse, and it articulates with other place-based discourse in the process of neoliberalization, where the social actors play a vital role in government policy, political environment that constitute the process of socio-cultural change.

2.2.5 A genealogy of poverty and welfare policy in Hong Kong

Foucault offers a way to reconstruct the history starting from Ancient Greek to modern neoliberalism (Foucault, 1997). His analysis is not an abstract shift of ideology, but is the result of a historical transformation in governmentality. It indicates the transformation of neoliberalism principle under different conditions (Lemke, 2001). His later work on the genealogy of modern subjects inspires many scholars to conduct historical investigation. This study follows this line of thought and employed a genealogy to examine the technology of power with an analysis of political rationality underpinning poverty and welfare discourse. Foucault (1972) in *Archaeology of Knowledge* used the method of archaeology to examine the science of human beings as a discourse. He used the terms “discursive practices” as a set of statements that guides individuals on “what can be said, who can speak and what statements are allowed” (p. 49). The worldview in that particular historical period governed the rule of discourse and how ideas could be perceived. As such, Foucault examines how the truth claim is formed and used by studying the serious discourse of academic disciplines used (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983). Unlike the archaeological
method, with which Foucault mainly studied the discursive rules of discourse, genealogy allows researchers to examine the role of non-discursive practices that set limits to a particular discourse (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Suber, 1998). There are struggles in non-discursive fields in which resistance is formed. Power legitimizes some things and delegitimizes “others” at the same time. To maintain its hegemony and existence, power creates something to act against through classification, study, and investigation. Resistance lies on the work of counter-discourses to legitimize the others, but power continues to silence and disqualify the counter-discourse.

To Foucault, genealogy is used to examine discontinuities and dispersion of truth claims. Traditional historical methods attempt to search for the account or origins of the present conditions and continuous development of meanings about particular situations. Foucault rejected the idea that past events could be taken as a true account for current phenomena since interpretation can often be replaced by other truth claims. Instead of discovering a true past, genealogy studies how interpretations and explanations become objective truths (Chambon, 1999).

Genealogy is a form of history that can account for the constitution of knowledge, discourses, domains of objects, etc., without having to make reference to a subject that is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history. Histories, stories, and common
knowledge are made understandable through institutional practices and networks of power relations that impose, regulate, control, and suppress meanings. Genealogy thus helps us to understand the relations between knowledge and power, as well as how individuals are constituted as objects and subjects (Foucault 1980, p. 117).

The state and other institutions produce knowledge that may not force individuals to do something, but tell them what will be rewarded and punished. For example, poor people who rely on social support may face discrimination. Discourse operates as part of the disciplinary mechanism by normalizing some identities and practices as well as de-legitimatizing others. The operations of power are revealed by examining the historical contingency that contributes to the construction of social norms (Price, 1995).

With genealogical methods, we can ask how the history of poverty came to be studied in a specific manner. What is the historical formation that makes poverty understandable in a particular way and not another? Genealogy reveals to us how knowledge resides and is created in the “relation between forms of discourse, the historical struggle in which they are immersed, the institutional practices to which they are linked, and the forms of authority they presuppose” (Tamboukou & Ball, 2003, p. 4).

2.3 Moral panics and Governmentality
The analysis of governmentality indicates political rationality was employed in the construction of poverty knowledge, and it may involve the mobilization of moral panics. The concept of moral panic (Cohen, 1972) was developed in the sociology of deviance. It identifies social control and law enactments as the result of wider social and political struggles, embedded in complex political and social contexts (Cohen, 1985; Hall et al., 1978). Past studies examine the relationship between the use of the logic of risk and new modes of governance that aim to better control and civilize the population who have undesirable behaviors (Feeley & Simon, 1994; Simon, 1995). They argue that the new forms of regulation create the autonomous, self-regulated, enterprising self within the neoliberal regime (O’Malley, 1992; Rose & Miller, 1992). This section, on the other hand, examines the linkage between neoliberalism and the use of moral panics, and the techniques of rules and governance. It responds to the call to examine the neoliberalism as a political rationality, and new modes of governance produce new discourse about crime control, social regulation, and population management (Ajzenstadt, 2009; Garland, 2008; Hier, 2008).

2.3.1 Moral panics and new modes of governance

According to Cohen, societies appear to be subjected, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person, or groups of persons emerges to
become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians, and other right-wing people (1972, p. 9). The moral panic can be used as a symbolic crusade (Gusfield, 1963) to change the perception about social and political rights, and the appropriate modes of governance. Mass media, rumor, and other institution works together to make individuals panic about crime. As a result, people agree to implement a more stringent law and order measures to be taken (Stabile, 2001). Moral panic always arises when there are social changes and transformations. The normative framework of society becomes morally ambiguous, and various groups negotiate their social status during these periods. Moral boundaries are negotiated and classified by different activities of moral claimers (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). Moral panic is engaged in a struggle between different ideas about social, political, and cultural issues at particular historical moments (Hay, 1995) and becomes part of wider social and political symbols and ideology (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994; Thompson, 1998).

The operation of moral panic during late modernity is related to the ideology of neo-liberalism and the notion of governmentality. As mentioned above, neo-liberalism is a doctrine that favors the idea of free markets for dealing with societal and economic issues, and a political ideology, which serves as a tool for
implementing a new mode of governance. In the neo-liberal regime, the discourse of
governmentality underscores self-control and an individual’s responsibilities to make
decisions on the basis of risk calculation (Critcher, 2008; Kelly, 2001). The
responsibility for managing one’s own risk does not rely on a collective, state-based
risk management system, but on one’s own risk management skills. Individuals are
supposed to act rationally and care for their own well-beings (O’Malley, 1992). In late
modernity, societies are filled with fears and anxieties. Emerging infectious diseases,
environmental hazards, and terror attacks pose a threat to the world (Beck, 1992;
Giddens, 1991). The degree of anxiety increases when individuals find that the
traditional social order has been destroyed. Social institutions are no longer able to
give them a feeling of security and stability (Culpitt, 1999). Individuals tend to lose
their trust in social institutions, and they question the ability and willingness of
authorities to help them (Taylor-Gooby, 2000). As such, the aim of governmentality
discourse is to restore mutual trust between the government and citizens. The
government asserts that their strategies can minimize risks and identify dangerous
situations (Kemshall, 2003). Some scholars state that definitions of risk and danger
are never fully objective, as risk is a social construct embedded with specific social
and cultural imperatives. The identification and management of risk never exist
outside pre-existing knowledge and belief systems, which are contextualized by
specific socio-historical meanings (Lupton, 1999; O’Malley, 1992). Hier (2003) asserts that moral panic is a governing technique in risk management activities. Moral panics play an important role in identifying irresponsible groups and individuals who are considered threats to society (Young, 1999). The authority thus restores public trust by legitimizing their regulation to manage dangerous situations that a responsible, rational individual should avoid (Critcher, 2008; Hier, 2008).

However, past research seldom incorporate issues concerning neoliberalism as a new mode of political rationality into the analysis of the dynamics of moral panics. As such, there is a need to examine how the moral panics operate in the wider context of a neoliberal regime and how the terms of citizenship change as a result of the mobilization of moral panics. New notions about citizenship emerge and replace traditional views about individual and group’s social responsibility (Ajzenstadt, 2009).

Citizenship is a contested concept. Past research indicates that there are three main historical traditions of citizenship. The first approach defines the citizenship in terms of one’s values of productivity in society. It focuses on individual’s freedom, autonomy and self-sufficiency. Their contribution to the state is dependent on their participation of workforce. Individuals are self-governing and able to choose, they are responsible to themselves (Hirsto, Katila, and Moisander, 2014). The second approach defines the citizenship in terms of traditional obligations, and family duties. For
example, the lives of women were defined by their function as mothers, wives and daughter. They were entitled to the government’s welfare as long as they fulfil their traditional roles and society’s expectation (Ajzenstadt, 2009). In the third approach, social rights, education and welfare are emphasized. They are the prerequisite for equal and democratic society. Individuals have to right for employment to fulfil their role of ideal citizens (Sim, 2000).

Hong Kong is a good case study to examine how the mobilization of moral panics change public discourse. As argued above, moral panic was mobilized in late 1997 during the economic downturn and political transition. By presenting the poor as deviant and lazy in the new neoliberal regime, the moral panics served to legitimize the political rationality of neoliberalism (Chen & Pun, 2007). How is the discourse of poverty constructed within complex power relations? Do the shifts in discursive practices come alongside changes in socio-economic environments and mobilization of moral panic?

2.4 News Media, Knowledge, and Power

In order to theorize the relationship between media, knowledge, and power, it is important to understand why Foucault distinguishes the relations of power from relations of communication. Foucault (1982) argues that a communicative relationship is about how the message is transmitted through symbolic medium and system of
signs, and power relations “are the immediate effects of divisions, inequalities and
disequilibrium which occur” (Foucault, 1978, p. 94). Communication plays a central
role in mechanisms of regulative functions (Foucault, 1982). Disciplinary power
operates through continuous mechanisms of surveillance and normalization. In doing
so, power not only subverts reciprocal social relations, but also disrupts symmetrical,
reciprocal relations of communication (Foucault, 1979). As Johnson (1997) argues,
disciplinary power imposes an unequal social relation by destroying symmetrical
communicative relations. The communication relations in prison, the army, and the
workplace are characterized by asymmetry and inequality. Johnson suggests that
Foucault spells out the normative significance of the communication relations by
stating that communication work does influence social and political relations and
plays a role in regulative function.

As a form of communication, news media certainly not only transmits
information, but also plays a crucial role in determining social relations. As Foucault
(1978) argued, knowledge is a source of social control. It is an object of social
productions and a subject with regard to other social actors and institutions. In spite of
the fact that news media does not have direct and physical control of the viewers, it
generates knowledge that sets the parameters of acceptable and unacceptable behavior.
As such, journalism applies disciplinary mechanisms over the audience and reinforces
its status of social authority to define what would be acceptable behaviors (Foucault, 1980).

2.4.1 Journalistic discourse as part of knowledge system

Given the fact that Foucault has made a great contribution in examining the role of power in defining what the truth is, it is somewhat surprising that Foucauldian works in journalism studies are rarely seen. Andrejevic (2008) argues that it may be the result of the antipathy between French tradition and more empirical forms of Anglophone tradition. It may be also because Foucault criticizes the underlying principle that journalism is founded upon. This includes the principle of objectivity and neutrality. Foucault’s work is a largely unexplored area for journalism studies, although it appears occasionally in cultural studies and analysis of journalism. News coverage of poverty in newspapers paints the picture of the poverty problem. It defines normal or deviant behavior and tells the audience how to behave. It asserts the role of the government and market forces, and coverage sets the criteria to distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor. From a Foucauldian perspective, news as a source of power creates a knowledge system and asserts their authority to define the poverty discourse and create a knowledge system. As such, journalism disciplines the audience and suggests what causes poverty and how to deal with it. At the same time, the news is an economic and political product subject to the power relations.
Political actors, reporters, and many other social institutions play a vital role in the presentation of poverty in the media.

Journalism is identified as a social institution (Entman, 1995; Redden, 2011), which plays a crucial role in the representation of poverty and its related policy making. Its status is legitimatized among scholars and practitioners by the fact that journalistic discourse is recognized as a standard compared to other “alternative” media formats (Edy & Snidow, 2011).

In Foucauldian terms, journalism as a social institution creates knowledge. It also defines the legitimate way of knowing about poverty and the poor. Journalism exerted its disciplinary power in the following ways. First, it reinforces its legitimate position to define the meaning of “normal” and disciplines deviant behavior in the construction of “normal” poverty discourse. News media creates and produces dominant and subjugated knowledges when it exercises its disciplinary power. These subjugated knowledges emerge as a form of resistance against dominant knowledge (Foucault, 1980). Second, the mechanism of journalistic practices is similar with the operation of panopticon, in which news media as a source of control can stay invisible when those are not in authority remain visible and are open to the gaze of reporters. Those who subject to power internalize expected behavior and discipline themselves (Foucault, 1978). Journalistic norms ask the reporters to observe and report the issues
without “being present” in their own articles or news programs. In response to the poverty problem in the social world, they observe and publicize the behavior of the poor and audiences. Journalism serves as a socialization mechanism, which forces the subject to discipline themselves.

2.4.2 Disciplining the social actors and operation of resistance

Foucault argued that resistance emerges at a point where power is exercised while subjugated knowledge is always a by-product of the development of dominant knowledge. From a Foucauldian perspective, the challenges to news media authority can be viewed as purposeful rejections of journalistic norms. Reporters uphold certain scientific values. They values objectivity and empirical observation (see Zelizer, 1992), as well as quantification (Herbst, 1993). The ways journalists acquire knowledge are similar to scientific techniques (Carey, 1987). Journalists also create objective and rational discourse that is largely different from moral and persuasive discourse (Glasser & Ettema, 1989; Jones, 2001). The latter one always adopts a language of “should” and “ought”, rather than a scientific language of “is” and “will”.

The government, political actors, and social activists may want to engage in moral and persuasive discourse of poverty, but those discourses have to be transformed into news discourse by using scientific language and fitting the journalistic way of knowing. For example, some anti-poverty activists use statistics or
alter their language to fit the journalistic norms to get news coverage (Redden, 2011). Since the above transformation distorts the original meanings of persuasive and moral discourse, the social actors may resist journalistic way of knowing by presenting in other forms of media. The tendency for social actors to make their voice heard in other media can be viewed as a form of resistance to the knowledge produced by reporters. Here again, the knowledge generated from alternative media is considered subjugated knowledge because it does not adhere to the existing standard of poverty discourse. News media reinforces its authority to generate poverty knowledge and discipline the social actors. However, it may open up a space for alternative representations of poverty. Resistance originates from a point where power is exercised.

2.4.3 Disciplining the audience and practice of freedom

Carey (1987) argued that if there is no public, we do not need journalism anymore. The public is the audience who needs to gain the knowledge that the reporter produces. Journalism defines the knowledge of poverty by drawing on the hegemonic power of ideologies and institutional sources. These institutional sources include government officers, political actors, and culturally sanctioned experts. Similarly, the free market ideologies and Hong Kong’s prevalent discourse also play a key role in constructing the knowledge system of poverty. However, the knowledge of
poverty may exist in the form of negative stereotypes that have been used to deny the rights to social welfare. Journalism disciplines the audience by establishing normative working ethics and renders problematic working status and attitudes that deviate from the acceptable standards. For example, welfare recipients were stereotyped as lazy and dependent. As such, the media disciplines the audience by inviting them to internalize these normalized cultural ideals of working ethic and problematize the deviations. In Foucauldian terms, individuals may have experienced a disciplinary gaze, as a type of social control. Under this condition, the individuals have a feeling of being under constant surveillance, even though they are not observed by others. The disciplinary gaze is diffused throughout our knowledge system. It tells us how we should behave and categorize a person as hardworking, lazy, dependent, and so on. It also generates feelings of anxiety or guilt when individuals find that they deviated from the standards. As such, news media disciplines the audience to govern their attitudes, behavior, etc.

In Foucault’s earlier work, he is more pessimistic about achieving freedom, but he later started to change his point of views. Foucault (1988) states that an individual may reflect on and engage in care for the self as an ethical project. Miller (2007) argues that self-care is about a self-reflection over the relations with oneself and others. An individual achieves the freedom because he/she chooses to transform
the self in order to care for the self or others. In the case of poverty in Hong Kong, the poor may also move toward ethical care of the self by reflecting on power and relationships with others. Individuals choose to work hard for a living, as they care for the reputation of their family members. As such, an individual exercises freedom through reflection on the relationship between power and the self.

2.4.4 Ways media exerts disciplinary power

As Foucault (1980) argues, the exercise of power equates to the production of knowledge. As journalists play a vital role in disseminating information and influencing the ways in the reality is portrayed (McCracken, 1987), journalism disciplines the audience to reaffirm the exiting norms via the generation of knowledge. The journalism shapes the discourse of poverty through realization, selection, and valuation (Humphreys, 2010).

Realization is the practice of making something a valuable event or information that is worth attention (Humphreys, 2010). Journalists play a vital role in disseminating information about poverty or welfare policy and influence the disciplinary process through topic selection. By reporting the news, journalists make a reality known and “factualized” to audience (Tuchman, 1978). Selection is the process in which reporters choose what information is included in the news. Selection is different from realization. Selection is the practice of deciding what should be known
about this reality, while realization is the process to determine if this piece of reality should be known or not. Valuation is the way to present a topic as either consistent or inconsistent with existing norms or not through language choice (Ettema & Glasser, 1988). Reporters use valuation as a moral tool to assess the policy, comments, and events. Valuation is different from selection in that reporters color the perception of the reality through their description.

2.5 The Power of Observation

The above literature illustrates how the discourse of neoliberalism infuses with other prevalent discourses that construct the knowledge system of poverty and discusses the impact of moral panics and role of the media in this process. In this section, I attempt to discuss how such knowledge transforms social relations in our everyday lives. By drawing upon Foucault’s ideas of governmentalities, disciplinary gaze, and technology of self, this section illustrates how individuals came into the way they do. The following section reveals the economy of power within social assistance service and how the assistance service worked as a mechanism of disciplinary power. It is different from a socio-functionalist perspective that regards the assistance as a method to solve individual’s difficulties. It examines the specific process that shapes the type of self-discipline that the poor desires to assert over their lives.
2.5.1 Sociocultural process and normalization via gaze

Surveillance means oversight and has a close relation with supervision. Observers exert power over those under their gazes (Mortenson, Sixsmith, & Woolrych, 2013). Power can be exercised in positive and negative terms. Authority exercises its power to monitor and motivate citizens to take actions for the common good, while some groups may monitor or control others for their own ends (Mortenson et al., 2013). To Foucault, power is regarded as “a relationship, which was localized, dispersed and typically disguised through the social system, operating at a micro, local and convert level through sets of specific practices” (Turner, 1997, p. 11). The power relations are closely related with and contained within other relations (Foucault, 1980).

The culture at large establishes conceptions of normative behavior of good citizens and problematizes any behaviors that deviate from acceptable standards. Both mass media and experts play a major role in establishing these normalized cultural values and ideals (Bordo, 1993). Disciplinary gaze (or panopticism) ensures individuals have a feeling of being under constant observation by others even though they are not actually under surveillance. In this, the individuals conform to normative cultural values and become a subject of social control (Foucault, 1979). The origin of the concept “panopticism” can be traced back to the prison design advocated by
philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century. In this design, inmates were monitored from a central observation point. Each inmate stayed in individual cells and could not tell they were actually under surveillance. The inmates as a result became their own monitoring agents (Foucault, 1979). The disciplinary gaze is a major mechanism in governing our behaviors, dictating our bodies in the contemporary world (Foucault, 1980). It is objectifying and exists everywhere and nowhere. The disciplinary gaze is diffused throughout our knowledge system that tells us how we should behave. It influences how one categorizes an individual as good, bad, responsible, and so on. The disciplinary gaze makes people feel guilty and anxious when they have deviated from a disciplinary norm (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). Each individual is his/her own overseer and exercises self-regulation (Foucault, 1980). The normative standards provide necessary information for individuals to determine acceptable behaviors and promote self-regulations. In this case, the home visit and gatherings represents an example of the disciplinary gaze over poor people. Both Foucault and Goffman explain how gaze can induce self-discipline, but dramaturgical presentation of self is not the same as disciplinary gaze (Goffman, 1959). It assumes that an individual’s behavior is based on a public stage of roles and impression management. Individuals (like actors) monitor their actions (performance) to present a desirable image and maintain a good impression (Goffman, 1971). The disciplinary
gaze, on the other hand, is more about avoiding guilt and other forms of emotions caused by being portrayed as deviant.

### 2.5.2 Technology of self and neoliberalism

To understand how autonomous individuals are governed, many studies have used the concept of “technologies of self,” which Foucault developed in relations of the notion of “governmentality.” He argued there are

Techniques which permit individuals to perform, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in such a way that they transform themselves, modify themselves, and reach a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity of supernatural power, and so on. (Foucault, 2007b, 154)

As stated above, Foucault (1977) constructs the concept governmentality to illustrate the relations between government, power, and discipline. The state attempts to control individuals’ behaviors to attain desirable outcomes (Rose, 1997). It includes both technologies of domination and technology of self. Technology of domination refers to individuals’ actions are determined by and submit to certain power or domination. Technology of self allows people submit themselves to their own means or with the help of others. Power is decentered, and individuals play active roles in transforming and governing themselves to attain a certain state of happiness and perfection.
(Foucault & Martin, 1988).

Some suggested that Foucault’s discussion of technology of self implies an important change in his theoretical orientation (Tully, 2008), shifting from a view of power as domination to power as dynamic relations (cf. Senellart, 2007). However, as Thompson (2003) argued, the notion of self-techniques is embedded in agonistic struggle and under the influence of governance. The individuals in such power relations can only exercise minimal freedom. The current governmentality studies explore this type of limited freedom by studying the way neo-liberalism controls people behaviors in indirectly through imposing technology of self, so that individuals can be self-entrepreneurs and design their own lives. For example, Miller and Rose (2008) examine the procedures of domination using the concept of technology of self.

This study exemplifies how the population is being molded and over-determined by governing practices.

Since 1980, Foucault has put emphasis on the study of ethical self-techniques, which can be found in Greek and Roman antiquity. At that time, individuals applied self-techniques like meditation and writing exercises to attain ethical self-improvement so that they could be good citizens, friend, etc. To Foucault, ethical self-techniques allow an individual to attain a relatively autonomous status of self with moral codes as guidelines and a background. An individual uses one’s freedom to
create oneself through ethical self-inventions and self-creation so as to acquire an ethos. As such, self-techniques can act as practices of freedom. For Foucault, individuals react and make sense of “moral” codes around them when they do not necessarily change those codes (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Foucault argues that there is a type of ethics functioning as a foundation of one’s existence in modern society (Vintges, 2012). However, ethics of concerns is not entirely created and suggested by an individual; it is proposed, suggested, and imposed by one’s culture and society (Foucault, 1997a). Foucault (2005) further discussed this point of view in The Hermeneutics of the Subject and referred to these ethical concerns models to some religious groups and philosophical schools in antiquity. Individuals freely develop their ethos by applying tools and techniques that are developed in one’s culture and society. This ethos is not embedded in one’s thought, but is practiced in one’s action and life. Foucault suggested that a moral system in each of the cultures tells you “the kinds of relationship you ought to have with yourself” (Foucault, 1997b). Individuals then constitute themselves as moral subjects based on the moral system.

Through the study of ethics, Foucault found individually implemented ethical freedom practices in Greek antiquity; he stressed that this ethical self-formation in the classical sense should be updated, which transforms into something new (Foucault, 1997a, 1997b). In the study of governmentality, self-techniques are impoverished and
over-determined by governing practices, but it can be transformed into ethical self-techniques that have relative autonomy with governmental programs and statistics. How then can this transformation be done, especially if it involves the change of the institutions (cf. Thompson, 2003; Vintges, 2004)? As Foucault (1997a) put it, no one can exist outside power relations. However, individuals can test the limits of one’s culture through step-by-step changes. Foucault (1983) asserted that individuals should first be able to problematize the moral codes that guide their behaviors. Individuals can only work over in the ethical work and practice of freedom after the above problematization (Markula & Pringle, 2006). After understanding the rules of play and an ethics of practice, individual can reduce the effects of domination over oneself within the power relations (Foucault, 1988; Maguire, 2002). There is a long Western tradition of confessional practices. Individuals redeem themselves through acknowledgement of perceived violations of the moral code (Foucault, 1979; Spitzack, 1990). The individuals then attempt to constitute themselves as ethical subjects, and this process is political, as it involves both the care of self and others (Pringle, 2005). By critically reworking the present self-techniques, individuals invent new subjectivities and push over the limits of one’s cultures and moral systems (Vintges, 2012). Foucault’s concept of agency transformed from a subject with limited freedom under governing practices to a relatively autonomous moral subject.
concerning self-formation. On the contrary, it does not imply that agency acts in terms of intention or origin of meaning, but in terms of self-practices, which constitute subjectivities within power relations. However, the rules of moral systems can be changed in the case of freedom practices.

Neoliberalism serves functions of domination and liberation. On the one hand, government strategies like individualization, stigmatization, surveillance, and databases are disciplinary mechanisms that turn heterogeneous needs into standard, homogeneous situations, such that individuals can be transformed into responsible citizens. On the other hand, the empowerment of individuals, as a technology of self, may manifest themselves when they find that the logic of workplace does not deliver on its promise of actualizing themselves. Alternatively, individuals self-manage via rational choices (Du Gay, 1996; Shankar, Cheerier, & Canniford, 2006). As a good citizen, people are encouraged to change their lives by being responsible, self-reliant, and autonomous individuals to make sense of their existence, by maximizing their quality of life in the workplace and delivering a positive subjectivity. Individuals like being good citizens. Foucault (1980) suggests that people are self-aware subjects who are subject to influences of cultural beliefs and normative values that determine which aspects of lives they have to control. These influences come from explicit statements of culturally sanctioned experts (such as social workers and psychologists about the
advantage of work) to subtle social pressures. It is impossible to escape the logic of neoliberalism. Individuals search for spaces of emancipation, resistance, and empowerment within such logic (Kozinets, 2002). As Foucault argues, “Where there is power, there is resistance” (1978, p. 75); people may choose to act in a way that breaks the normative assumptions of neoliberalism.
To summarize, this study first deploys Foucault’s notion of governmentality as a specific form of analysis of poverty and welfare discourse. It argues that media representation reveals how government defines a discursive field in which the exercise of power is justified. It indicates a set of arguments that rationalized government’s action and decision. In this, government provides certain strategies for governing the individuals. Neoliberalism governs lives of the poor at distance through granting freedom for individuals to exercise their autonomy and self-control. Neoliberalism becomes the doctrines of Hong Kong welfare policy and is constructed as an essential element for prevalent discourses of Hong Kong. It is, therefore, interesting to examine how entrepreneurialism rooted in neoliberalism taps into already formed cultural ideologies. Therefore, the first research question is asked:

**RQ1:** What governmental strategies are employed in the construction of poverty knowledge? What are the oppositional claims of poverty discourse that emerge out of complicated political struggles? How are the discursive strategies of neoliberalism infused with other prevalent discourses in Hong Kong?

This study moves on to argue that mobilization of moral panics is employed as new mode of governance. Past studies indicate the state uses the logic of risk to better control and civilize the population who has undesirable behaviors (Feeley & Simon,
1994; Simon, 1995). They argue that the new forms of regulation create the autonomous, self-regulated, enterprising self (O’Malley, 1992; Rose & Miller, 1992). However, past research seldom incorporate issues concerning neoliberalism as a new mode of political rationality into the analysis of the dynamics of moral panics. Therefore, this study examine whether discursive practices come alongside changes in socio-economic environments and mobilization of moral panics

**RQ2:** How do the themes and terms of citizenship change in public discourse as the result of moral panics?

This study then follows Foucauldian tradition, arguing that news is a source of power that create a knowledge system and assert their authority to define the poverty discourse (Entman, 1995; Redden, 2011). News media defines the legitimate way of knowing about poverty and the poor, and creates dominant knowledge to exercises its disciplinary power. Journalism serves as a socialization mechanism, which forces the subject to discipline themselves. Therefore, the following question is asked:

**RQ3:** How do journalists define poverty discourse? What are the legitimate ways of knowing about poverty? How are the social actors, government officials, and audience being disciplined?

After the discussion of news media as institution which creates the poverty knowledge. This study draws the ideas of disciplinary gaze, and technology of self,
attempting to illustrate how individuals came into the way they do. It is argued that on one hand, disciplinary gaze (or panopticism) ensures individuals have a feeling of being under constant observation by others even though they are not actually under surveillance. In this, the individuals conform to normative cultural values and become a subject of social control (Foucault, 1979). On the other hand, individuals are able to problematize the moral codes that guide their behaviors, and engage in the practice of freedom. Individuals then constitute themselves as ethical subjects via technology of self, and this process is political, as it involves both the care of self and others. They launch a process of subjectivation and derive their own subjectivity from power and knowledge, which involves critical self-awareness. This study attempts to illustrate both the process of domination and process of subjectivation. The following question is asked:

**RQ4**: What are the expected normative behaviors within the context of surveillance? How do the poor people behave under constant observation? In response to the poverty discourse, which domains are technologies of self?
2.6 A Theoretical Framework

This framework (Figure 1) represents the transformation from abstract cultural meaning to the specific media experiences, and then to particular personal experiences. McCracken (1987) suggests that the abstract level of meaning such as beliefs and values becomes particularly real when they are incarnated into media images, icons or specific activities. I suggest that all the particular aspects of frameworks mutually support one another. For example, neoliberalism characterizes every aspect of the framework, however, it has different interpretations at each level of the framework.

The top level of the framework is the first understanding of neoliberalism. It identifies neoliberalism as a global project (Brenner & Theodore, 2002a; Peck & Tickell, 2002). Neoliberalism is a larger conversation that connects similar patterns of poverty and inequality experiences across multiple sites (Springer, 2011b; Wills, Smith, & Stenning, 2008). This understanding suggests that the dominant groups have the power to project a hegemonic image of the world to others. The adoption of this in particular is not merely on the basis of coercive force, but also of a degree of consent. This level framework reflects the common conceptual understanding of neoliberalism across spaces (Plehwe et al., 2006; Springer, 2012).

The second level refers to the second interpretation of neoliberalism. It identifies neoliberalism as governmentality. The understanding of neoliberalism
focuses on its processual character. Neoliberalism is articulated with other existing prevalent place-based discourses, including the Hong Kong success story, the social exclusion of Chinese immigrants, and Chinese work ethic. This is the focus of the first part of this study, which illustrates power as a complex form of knowledge production via the ensemble of governmental strategies, techniques of moral panics, and rationality of different social practices, such as media practices, that constitutes a pervasive way of understanding the poverty in Hong Kong. The abstract understanding of poverty knowledge is embodied in many different facets of life, social practices, cultural customs, and media representation, etc.

Media representation is the central focus of this paper. As shown in the following paragraph, the embodiment of an abstract system of thought into specific media messages involves a process of power struggles over time. In the system of knowledge, different fields (economics, social work, politics, etc.) work with other institutions (government, business sectors) to produce discourse of poverty, defining normal and deviant behavior. By examining the evolving patterns of discourses traceable across newspapers, this study examines how the government and media express the abstract idea to construct discourses that produce truth and counter-truth. In this part, Foucault’s idea about power/knowledge and the micro-physics of power is employed to illustrate how the knowledge system of poverty is generated through a
struggle over power. A genealogy of poverty is conducted in this part of the study.

The bottom level of the framework illustrates specific process that shape the type of self-discipline that the poor desires to assert over their lives. The knowledge system of poverty brings about a specific ethic of self-discipline, which forces an individual to fulfill a moralistic obligation. Foucault (1980) suggests that an individual has a sense of being a purposive subject and believes he/she can demonstrate self-disciplines. The underlying assumption is that people have a high level of self-awareness. This self-awareness is a result of socialization in one’s attitudes, beliefs, and values that determine the aspects of life an individual should control. Therefore, self-awareness is influenced by a multiplicity of forces, such as experts’ comments, government’s statistics, and subtle pressure to conform to social practices. In this part, Foucault’s idea of disciplinary gaze, governmentality, and technologies of self are utilized to understand how power is exercised over an individual. They illustrate how individuals regulate themselves and turn themselves into subjects within the complex power relations of society. The central idea of governmentality is that individuals govern and shape themselves to fit the social and governmental purposes. Power is exercised over individuals not through coercion, but through a constitution of subjects who choose to change themselves to align with larger social values. This transformation is operated through specific normalization
processes, such as disciplinary gaze. It also reflects how individuals present themselves in response to the gaze of others in different settings.

Moreover, this part of framework also uses Foucault’s later work about technology of self, which illustrates how individuals exercise their freedom. Individuals move beyond subjects who change themselves to match the social goals. They reflect on power and struggles towards the possibility of leading a moral life. Ethnography is used to illustrate this part of framework.
2.7 Significance of the study

This dissertation attempts to make a few modest contributions. Theoretically, this dissertation draws on Foucault’s concepts of discourse and the legacy of Marxist ideas of hegemonic projects to examine the change in poverty discourse. It contributes to past research by identifying neoliberalism as a discourse that accommodates two mismatched theoretical positions, poststructuralism and Marxism.

Second, it responds to the call to conceptualize the notion of governmentality as a more complex concept (Larner, 2000; O’Malley, 1996). This article argues that the discourse around poverty and self-reliance in Hong Kong emerged out of complicated political struggles. This paper demonstrates that the formation of the entrepreneurial man is not ahistorical. The formation of the entrepreneurial man in poverty discourse is articulated with other place-based discourses (Gill, 2013; Spohrer, 2011). It starts with realizing that discourses around poverty interplay with other Hong Kong discourses, including Chinese work ethic, images of new immigrants, and the Hong Kong success story. Specially, past research examines the media representation of the poor, yet most past research was conducted in Western countries (Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Golding & Middleton, 1982; Lister, 2004; Redden, 2011), and little is known about the role of traditional cultural values in structuring the perception of poverty (Bang et al., 2000; Pfau-Effinger, 2005). Previous research did not determine how different cultural values and specific histories are strategically
presented as part of the investigated discourses. A great deal of empirical research and comprehensive analysis are needed to understand poverty outside Europe and United States. For example, many poverty studies, particularly sociological studies in the United States, the UK, and European countries, discuss social exclusion based on social and biological characteristics, such as sex, race, and ethnicity (e.g., Emigh, Fodor, & Szelenyi, 2001). Hong Kong as a Chinese society yet provides an interesting context to study. Hong Kong is greatly influenced by Chinese traditions and values. This study contributes to past research by understanding how cultural values become a part of a disciplinary mechanism, which is used to discipline an individual. It is particularly important because the governmentality theory is seldom applied in the study of welfare policy research (Larsson, Letell, & Thörn, 2012). This study provides new knowledge to the substantial body of welfare research (see Sections 2.2, 4.1, and 4.2).

Third, this dissertation studies the trends of poverty discourse in Hong Kong and recognizes the impact of temporal factors. This part of the study contributes to past research via examination of the mobilization of moral panics, which emerged at a critical moment of economic downturn and political transition when Hong Kong was facing the pressure of acceleration of the neoliberalism process due to a fiscal deficit. This analysis helps us to understand how new modes of governance are established
and how resistance arises within complex power relations (see Sections 2.3, 4.3, and 4.4).

Forth, a large body of literature discusses the role of media in defining the poverty discourse. Past research examines media as a contested platform, in which the government officials, political leaders, and activists all attempt to make their voices heard (de Young 1998; McRobbie & Thornton 1995; Ungar 2001). This study, in contrast, considers how journalism asserts its authority and legitimacy in defining the poverty discourse. This article applies Foucault’s (1980) theory of knowledge and power in examining how institutional power (including journalism) is maintained over time (please see Sections 2.4 and 4.5).

Fifth, this study deploys Foucault’s unique conceptualization of power to explore the way in which power is enacted and contested in poverty issues. Since the early 1990s, many scholars have started to engage in examining the media as an apparatus of technologies of domination and how media becomes the discourse of discipline (Cole, 1993; Duncan, 1994; Markula, 2003; Markula & Pringle, 2006). In 1980s, Foucault had developed the concept of self-techniques, governmentalities and agency; however, the above research is under-theorized (Thorpe, 2008; Vintges, 2012). Some scholars have critically stated that research puts too much focus on the “discourse of dominance”, which results in pessimistic views of agency and change.
(Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 48). This dissertation studies the techniques of domination made through or by the media and also analyzes the creative resistance, contradictions, and agency made through media and by individuals. Reconceptualizing within Foucauldian media discourse, this dissertation wants to reconstruct the linkage between domination and the possibilities of making a difference (please see Sections 2.5, 4.6, and 4.7).

Practically, Ma (2011) argues that HK people have become more skeptical about low-interventionist government due to the political and social change in recent years, yet little is known about the change in the perception of the welfare system and poverty. By analyzing the change of media discourse and people’s perception, it may help the government to formulate and implement policies in the future.
A framework of the socialized self

Neoliberalism as global hegemonic project

Governmentality

Neoliberalism  HK prevalent discourses

Normalization via disciplinary gaze  Subjectification via self-reflection

Technology of domination  Technology of self

First Part Analysis: Genealogy

Second Part Analysis: Ethnography

Social actors  Citizens

State  Media
3. Methodology

3.1 Organization of Data Collection

The data collection is divided into two parts. The first part examines the influence of changes in government practices, social structure, and cultural values over time on the meaning of poverty outlined in media discourses, as highlighted by the blue arrow in Figure 1. A genealogy is adopted in this study. A discourse analysis of newspaper articles about poverty from 1994–2013 was conducted. This part argues that a shift in the stories of poverty alongside changes in institutional practices, social structures, and cultural values. The role of news media and the government in the change of discourse are discussed.

The second part analyzes how the poor accommodate and resist against the discourse of poverty. The influence of disciplinary gaze is examined. Ethnography is used to study how poor people make sense of the discourse of poverty, as highlighted by the red arrow in Figure 1.

3.2 A genealogy of poverty and welfare discourse

In order to understand the power struggles over the discourse of poverty, I will map the trends of mainstream mediated discourse over the past 20 years and examine how the discourse is changed through institutional practices and social structures. Mass media may take a central role in contributing to this misperception since some Hong Kong people may not have direct experience or any specific background
knowledge of this issue. The change in the discourse is articulated with both policy and institutional practices. This study later analyzes how the discourse is strategically deployed and becomes part of discipline, and how those strategies contribute to the change in discourse over time. This method is adopted from past research of genealogy (Haynes, 2005; O’Connell, 2010). Using a quantitative approach to qualitative concerns, this section studies Foucault’s problem empirically through a complementary combination of qualitative coding analysis and quantitative content analysis so as to understand the shifts in discourse over time. To study the change in newspaper discourse about poverty, I choose to evaluate the shifts in newspaper discourse about poverty from 1994–2013. This time period were chosen because of its correspondence with important dates in the history of Hong Kong political system and economic situation. On July 1, 1997, China resumes its sovereignty over Hong Kong. It marks the most significant change in political system, ending the 150 years of colonial history. Since then, Hong Kong has experienced drastic economic recession, because there is an outbreak of economic financial crisis and outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in late 1997 and 2003. The first Chief executive, Tung Chee Wah, resigned on the grounds of “leg pain” in 2005.

The analysis involves the following steps: newspapers about poverty from 1994–2013 were examined. A key word search was conducted on “poverty”
(pinqiong), “poor” (qiong), “welfare” (fuli), and “Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA)” (zong yuan) in Chinese from three newspapers: the Oriental Daily News, Apple Daily, and the Hong Kong Economic Times. These newspapers are the three most popular papers in Hong Kong. They have the largest circulation. Newspapers and popular media publications are likely to have interpretive and agenda setting functions for poverty discourse that shape the understanding of citizenships, the relation between state and individuals, and welfare policy. Through the news stories, images, and commentary, the media publications have profound influences on readers’ preferred identities and expectations (see e.g., Hirsto et al., 2014; Holmer Nadesan, 2001). Newspapers, as cultural objects, reflect and influence public discourse (Humphreys, 2010). News is “the sense-making practice of modernity” (Hartley, 1996, p. 21). News articles have been used by media scholars to examine collective meanings (Gamson, 1992; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). Journalists are equally influenced by the socio-cultural environments, and the representations of newspapers play an important in constructing a general interpretation of the poverty issue (Humphreys, 2010). It is, therefore, important to explore popular newspapers as a medium for disseminating particular point of views about poverty.

One constructed week (seven days) was randomly selected from the newspapers each year. It is argued that this is sufficient to represent the population
(Song and Chang, 2011). After the keyword search, articles within the 20 constructed weeks were retrieved and then screened on the basis of the following criteria. First, at least one third of the story must cover the issues of Hong Kong poverty or welfare policy. Second, the formats of the news were news, feature stories, opinion articles and letters to the editor, excluding episodes of novels and fiction. A total of 610 articles were selected for analysis.

In the first reading, this study draws on the insights from policy analysis (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Willig, 2008) for examining discursive features, which includes studying the strategies for the construction of “objects” and “subjects” in media tests, understanding the definition of “problems” and “solutions,” and the logic of the arguments. The study also pays great attention to contradictions and absences in the articles. The findings were then synthesized so that the “discursive strategies” could be identified (Carabine, 2001); this step helped to understand how a society makes sense of a “problem” at a particular time (Mills, 2003).

All of these articles were analyzed with several other sources of data, which provide the context for analysis and enhance the researcher’s sensitivity to current issues. These include archive analysis of policy documents such as speeches, financial reports, policy address, and press releases from 1994-2013. Public opinions about the
government and Chief executive\textsuperscript{1} over last 20 years were also examined.

Articles were qualitatively coded using Nvivo software with a procedure of open and selective coding (more details are illustrated in Section 3.3). Theoretical coding is employed until interpretation reaches stability (Altheide, 1996; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This methodology is adopted from previous communication research that has performed textual analysis with structuralistic and poststructuralistic approaches (Chow-White, 2006; Humphreys, 2010; Thompson, 2004). The texts of previous studies include advertisements and newspapers (Belk and Pollay, 1985; Humphreys, 2010; Thompson, 2004).

A quantitative content analysis was conducted after articles were qualitatively coded. It was done to systematically map the historical trends of the poverty discourse. Two independent researchers who were fluent in Chinese coded 610 news articles. A preliminary subset of about 60 news items was selected for coding training. The two coders met to compare and discuss the results of the training set, and discussions continued until both coders were comfortable with the coding process (Holsti, 1969). About 20\% of the news articles (120 samples) were randomly selected and coded by the two coders simultaneously.

The unit of analysis was each news item. The governmental strategies and its

\textsuperscript{1} The survey polls are conducted regularly by the University of Hong Kong since 1992. Retrieved from \url{http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/index.html}
oppositional claims were qualitatively coded using Nvivo software (Tables 1 and 2). If there were more than one strategy being employed, the dominant frames with the largest proportion or appearing in the lead paragraphs were counted. A distinction was also made by the categorization of news formats, including reports, editorials, and news commentary (Table 3). Regarding news reports, a distinction was made on the basis of the topics, such as political stories, demonstrations, crime, accidents, charity, and human interest (Table 4). The categorization is modelled after Curran et al. (2009). In political stories, a distinction was made between policy comments, surveys, official statistics, and demonstrations (Table 5). A distinction is also made between Chinese and ethnic minorities among charity news. Using Cohen’s (1960) kappa formula, the reliabilities for the following items were determined: governmental strategies and oppositional claims \( k = .85 \), media formats \( k = .90 \), media topics \( k = .84 \), strategies \( k = .85 \), identity \( k = .87 \).

3.3 Ethnography

The aim of this study was to explore how poor people accommodate and resist the image of poor in the discourse of poverty. Three NGOs providing service for the poor were regularly visited. Two of them have provided service for the poor for more than 20 years, and one has fewer than 10 years. These three organizations serve all different types of grass roots, including new immigrants, elders, drug addicts, working
class, homeless, mentally disabled, single parents, and so on. They were chosen to ensure that all different types of poor people formed part of the study. The author took part as a participant observer between March 2014 and February 2015. The data were collected via interviews and through participant observation in social gatherings, fellowship, and home visits. The author joined the activities of these three organizations over 100 times.

In total, 70 participants were interviewed, including 60 poor people, as well as 10 social workers and helpers. All of the interviews were face-to-face interviews, which were semi-structured, tape-recorded, and transcribed. The interviews were conducted via general conversation in Cantonese during home visits, lunch, and dinner, which lasted for one to two hours. The poor people who were chosen to be interviewed met at least three criteria: 1) they are counted as poor in terms of being below the poverty line set by the Hong Kong Government; 2) they do not have any property assets; 3) and they have received the services provided by the above organizations.

In light of previous studies on culture, ethnography was chosen as the method of data collection and was also used to describe the findings. Studies of particular cultural groups have long been associated with ethnography. Ethnographers conduct

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2 The poverty line is defined as half of the median monthly household income of all domestic households in Hong Kong (Hu & Yun, 2013).
research based on three important principles: (a) every cultural group has its own reality and shared culture, (b) their culture is usually taken for granted, and (c) there is more than one cultural perspective in each social situation (Spradley & Mann, 1975).

In an ethnographic approach, the researchers are the main instruments for data collection (Raguca, 1972); they participate as insiders to observe the activities, people, and environment of the cultural group.

Participant observation has been employed in many ethnographic studies of individual’s lives because it has greater potential to engage individuals actively with the research. However, there can be variation in the degree of participation. Like Pollard and Filer (1996), the author adopted a more fluid and conventional participatory approach.

A second issue was related to the consent for access. The author gained the consent for interviews and participant observation from the informants and organizations. From my observation, the informants felt comfortable and spoke freely in front of me. To ensure my understanding of the findings was as accurate as possible, the investigator will triangulate the informants’ interpretation of their own individual experiences with their friends and social workers’ interpretations and my observations in the natural environment and compare this with the larger social and cultural experiences of Hong Kong Chinese people. However, an ethnographic study is a
construction. In other words, the writer renders his/her view of what is happening in the participants’ world (Geertz, 1973); thus, poverty as experienced by the people presented in this study is the author’s own interpretation. To honor the informants’ right to confidentiality, their names have been altered.

3.4 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was selected as the specific research method in this study, thus allowing the development of a theory of poverty that is grounded in the data itself. The software Nvivo is used to facilitate a grounded theory approach (Hutchison, Johnston, & Breckon, 2010). The choice of method was also based on Grossberg’s (1995) and Lo’s (2014) view that a theory cannot be assumed to travel across any context, but should be contingent and have a context specific. As a researcher, intending to use grounded theory generally starts without a specific theory; any theory emerging from the data should be contingent on a specific context. The following explains this point further.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed the grounded theory method in the 1960s. According to Corbin and Strauss (1998), grounded theory is a research method that develops theory inductively from the ground up, through a systematic process. Glaser and Strauss (1967) invited their readers to use grounded theory in a flexible way. The process does not begin with a well-defined theory; the theory emerges from the data
(Corbin & Strauss, 1998). This approach attempts to understand the experiences of individuals who identify with a certain phenomenon, using a systematic set of procedures (Charmaz, 2006).

Charmaz (2006) points out that theory development does not take the form of prejudgment. In particular, it is not a linear process. There should be a constant interplay between the data and ideas throughout the analytic process. This approach involves three major types of coding (open, axial, and selective) that continue throughout the analysis. Open coding refers to the process of categorization by examining, comparing, and conceptualizing the data. At an early stage, the author picked up general terms from the interviews, such as shame, volunteering, and lazy, which helped me to understand the participants’ meanings or actions and then placed the data into categories. Then, the researcher attempted to reassemble the data in new ways by relating the categories to the context and conditions. Open coding was used to sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data and reassemble them in new ways (Creswell, 1998), and to explore the relations between categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). A theoretical framework was then formed and hypotheses generated through the process of axial coding. Finally, using selective coding, the investigator selected a core category, related it to the other categories, and then validated those relationships (Hovater, 2007).
The process of analytic induction (Figure 2) first involves defining the phenomenon and investigating a particular case of the phenomenon and its potential explanatory features. A hypothesis is formulated on the basis of the data analysis. The phenomenon is continually examined, reformulated, and redefined as new cases continue to confirm the validity of the hypothesis (Hammersley, 1989).
Glaser and Strauss (1967) highlighted that theoretical sampling involves collecting, coding, and analyzing data that has proven its theoretical relevance to the evolving phenomenon.
theory. Conrad (1982) stated that the process of theoretical sampling means that a primitive theory emerges by delineating a set of concepts. When no additional data emerge in a category, theoretical saturation is reached (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The development of a category is complete once all of the relationships between the categories are well established and validated (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The data were collected through interviews and through participation in fellowship, social gatherings, and home visits, based on the relevance of the data to the emerging theory of communication. The use of open sampling and systematically chosen sites allowed subtle differences and the relationships between categories to be uncovered.

3.4.2 The Role of the Researcher

The researchers joined in the process of gathering data and developing the concept (Clarke, 2005). Grounded theory is highly related to social constructivist philosophies. A constructivist approach to grounded theory emphasizes the context in which the research is being performed, the researchers’ values, and the collaborative efforts made by the researchers and participants. The researchers joined the participants in their subjective world and constructed a grounded theory based on the observations, interactions, and materials gathered in the process. An interpretation of the researchers’ perspectives and the participants’ experiences of the phenomenon also
influenced the emergent theory (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.4.3 Theoretical Sensitivity

What is required in this study is theoretical sensitivity which is the ability to recognize what is important in the data and give it meaning. It generates a deep understanding of the phenomena through the analytical process. It can be acquired through familiarity with the literature and continual interactions with the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1998).

As a Hong Kong local, the author is familiar with the government policies and the culture of the society. Her personal experience contributed to her knowledge base of the subject and enhanced her sensitivity to the understanding of poverty in Hong Kong. As a researcher, her existing knowledge of research methods guided her in information gathering and concept development.

Unlike a quantitative research approach, constructivist grounded theory does not prescribe concrete methods. The research process was guided by principles and philosophies. The investigator’s flexibility maximized her ability to gather rich and detailed data from the participants while maintaining credible research practices. She continually checked her own assumptions and biases by grounding her concepts, themes, and theories throughout the study.
4. Analysis of Findings

To answer RQ1, this study identified five central governing practices among poverty news articles supporting neoliberal rationality and mentalities throughout the past 20 years. They are individualization, distancing government from citizens, promoting social mobility, the creation of a decent subject, and the fragmentation of society. Four oppositional claims are found. They are exercising human rights, fighting for social justice, anti-stigmatization, and seriousness of poverty issues. This study found that the first two governing practices are infused with the discourse of the Hong Kong success story. The next two are related to traditional Chinese work ethic and the stigmatization of Mainland Chinese people.

4.1 Five Discursive Strategies

4.1.1 Individualization

Individualization is the most frequent discursive strategy found in newspaper articles (46%). The issues of poverty are individualized and constructed as problems relevant to a small group of individuals who failed to tackle their personal problems. The newspapers articles usually depict the poor as innocent and deserving pity. The poor look vulnerable in the articles and are not to be blamed for their misfortune. Most articles start with describing the socially disadvantaged individual’s personal misfortune, which leads to a loss of work and thus to unfavorable economic situations.
The following quotations represent the typical articles found in the charity narrative (about 40%) across all three newspapers (see Table 1).

“Jian Yue Fang came to Hong Kong to visit her sister 10 years ago, but she found that her sister had migrated to Canada. Jian, aged over 50, had to work to earn her own living...She worked as a receptionist in a Chinese restaurant when she was 60. A few years later, she lost her job when the restaurant closed. Jian, now aged over 70, is too weak to work.” (Oriental Daily News, March 30, 1995)

“Li aged over 80, has been in Hong Kong for more than 10 years. She earned her own living until she became ill and weak in recent years...She came to Hong Kong in 1981 to meet her son; however, her son was addicted to gambling. He was lazy and good for nothing and didn’t provide any financial support to Li.” (Oriental Daily News, June 14, 1995)

The articles highlight the misfortune and tragic situation of the poor in order to arouse empathy and generosity from the audience. There are many reasons why the tragedies occur, such as illness, accidents, or old age, but no one is to be blamed for

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3 Romanization of Chinese proper nouns throughout this study is based on the han yu pin yin method, which is the official system for transcribing Chinese characters in China. The names of Chinese authors and participants are also Romanized within this system unless they have other better-known names in English.

4 All the quotations from the newspapers are the author’s own translations.
the situations, and no policy is to be problematized. The logic of the articles suggests that poverty is a personal misfortune. Poor people are hardworking and have tried their best to make their own living. They are innocent and deserve help from the audience. They are small groups of people, and the government only provides support for the most vulnerable person. These articles also echo with the discourse of the Hong Kong success story. Hong Kong has a long reputation for its free and open economy worldwide. According to the Index of Economic Freedom, an annual index created by The Heritage Foundation and The Wall Street Journal, Hong Kong has had the world’s freest economy since 1994 among 177 economies (Heritage Foundation, 2014). Hong Kong also leads the globe with the highest level of economic freedom in the world, according to the Fraser Institute’s annual *Economic Freedom of the World* report (Fraser Institute, 2013). Central to these claims are the strategies of minimal government size, a high level of labor freedom, and a highly motivated workforce (Heritage Foundation, 2014).

The *laissez-faire* viewpoint has readily found support by government officials. John Cowperthwaite, Financial Secretary of Hong Kong, claims that it is better to leave individuals to exercise their judgment in a free economy than leave the government to make centralized decisions (HKSAR, 1966). Philip Haddon-Cave (1980), Financial Secretary in the 1970s, spelled out that “positive
non-interventionism” is the corner stone of Hong Kong’s economic strategy.

Since the Chinese Government resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997, the nature of Hong Kong capitalism has changed very little (Chan, 1998). The previous liberal market ideologies still have influence on the social welfare system. The government only provides support for those who cannot support themselves or subsidizes the non-government organization (NGO) to provide services for the needy (Morris & Scott, 2003). The government attributed the economic success to keeping to the above principles and practices. As a result, the liberal market, free economy policy was not only considered as desirable, but as a means towards a better and more prosperous future (Morris & Scott, 2003; Sutherland, 2002).

The following quotation represents a typical argument in other types of news articles. It is a quote from social welfare department official warning legislators not to send out an unreasonable request:

“"The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance is neither a retirement fund nor an unemployment subsidy, but is a safety net, which gives funds to the needy to meet their basic needs” (Apple Daily, November 3, 1996).

It echoes with the basic value of neoliberalism: individuals are recognized as active subjects who are responsible for enhancing their own well-beings. The individuals should be self-reliant and do not seek government support. The needy are
portrayed as exceptional individuals, and the society should not sacrifice the benefit of the whole for a small group of people. Although unfortunate material realities, including poor living conditions, financial hardship, and restricted access to private medical services, among others are mentioned in many articles, the request for the government’s help is seldom seen. Poverty is described as exerting its impact, which can be alleviated through charity and family support. The tendency of the poverty debate is to focus on the misfortune of the poor and the generosity of the public. These comments echo with the discourse of the Hong Kong success story, which asserts that Hong Kong economic success emerged out of a free-market mechanism with limited government intervention, and few labor laws and that individuals are responsible for their own successes and failures. The implementation of a free market has long been regarded as the foundation of Hong Kong prosperity. The dominant image of Hong Kong as a *laissez-faire* state stems from colonial times (Ma, 2009). The formulation of this image can be traced back to Milton Friedman’s famous quote:

> We may well ask whether there exist any contemporary examples of societies that rely primarily on voluntary exchange through the market to organize their economic activity and in which government is limited...Perhaps the best example is Hong Kong...Hong Kong has no tariffs or other restraints on international trade...It has no government direction of economic activity, no
minimum wage laws, no fixing of prices. (Friedman & Friedman, 1981,54–55)

To many neo-liberal economists, Hong Kong has been hailed as a successful example for a free-market mechanism with limited government intervention and few labor laws. David Aikman (1986) said that Hong Kong is a good demonstration of American notions of a free market economy. Haggard (1990) and Deyo (1987) highlighted that Hong Kong’s laissez-faire system successfully promotes export-led economic growth.

4.1.2 Promoting social mobility

About 11% of the news articles emphasized that individuals can get a job and achieve a social position. This argument draws on the ideas of economic necessity and social mobility. This idea is consistent with the values of neoliberalism, which encourages people to work on themselves. Individuals have a responsibility to maintain their livelihoods. All of these articles argue that education is the key element for increasing social mobility and urge individuals to undergo continual training and education. The following quotations typify arguments found in these news articles.

“We not only need to help the poor, we have to help them to get out of poverty. The key question is whether we can provide an effective policy to increase the employment opportunities and help the unemployed to find a new job again.
The social welfare department now provides financial support (21 million dollars) to the poor family for the child care service... so that the single parents can join the retraining programs and enhance their abilities to support themselves.” (Oriental Daily News, August 8, 2000)

“Hong Kong should avoid being a welfare society and cultivate an environment that allows knowledgeable workers to grow. For example, the education system could be reformed so that students who have talent of technology skills could receive appropriate training when they are studying in primary or secondary schools.” (Hong Kong Economic Times, July 2, 1999)

These news articles argue the lower-skilled and less-educated workers have to receive training and education in order to climb up the social ladder. However, the news articles vary in what they believe to be the ideal way for individuals to adapt to new economic environments. Some, like the above articles, aim at enhancing the competitiveness of the labor with education; others stress that it is important to raise people’s aspirations to participate in higher education.

“The new generations have more opportunities to receive education, and their living conditions are much better...yet with higher-level requirements in many different aspects. The poor economic environment may raise aspirations of the new generation and strengthen their ability and thus help them to better realize
their potentials” (Apple Daily, January 26, 1999).

Promoting the ideas of self-reliance not only fits the aim of meeting the labor market demand, but also presents a solution to social inequality. The debates on social mobility discourse and discourse of social justices come together. It is a technology of discursive conflation (Gillies, 2009). By individualizing the problem of social mobility, the lifetime education agenda comes in the guise of debate about unequal working opportunities (Radnor et al., 2007). The supporters of neoliberalism emphasized that a rational individual has the responsibility to adjust to the market demand and that the government would only provide minimal intervention and assistance. One newspaper article explicitly stated that “employees should take initiative to enhance their competitiveness and not only rely on the government’s arrangement” (Oriental Daily News, March 3, 2000). These comments echo with the discourse of the Hong Kong success story, which asserts that everyone can succeed in Hong Kong if he/she works hard and keeps up with the pace of society. Indeed, the surveys in the 1980s indicate that individuals generally believe they can improve their living standards via hard work and education. Hong Kong is a land of opportunities with the open choice of upward mobility (Lau & Kuan, 1990; Wong, 1991). The implement of the neoliberal regime coexists with low employment rate (Chan, 2004), as well as “equal opportunities” and the “chance of upward mobility” (Ma, 2011). The
economic stability further legitimizes the discourse of the Hong Kong success story (Chan, 2004).

On the surface, non-interventionist policy takes on many forms in Hong Kong policies, but some scholars argue that it is too simplistic and inaccurate to consider the Hong Kong Government as non-interventionist in colonial times (Goodstadt, 2004; Ma, 2009). There are many hidden subsidies in the realm of allocating resources. For example, Schiffer (1991) and Youngson (1982) stated that the colonial government provided subsidies on food and imposed a rice control scheme. Almost half of the population in Hong Kong lives in Public Permanent Housing, including 30% and 17% of the population in Public Rental Housing and in Subsidized Home Ownership Housing, respectively (Hong Kong Housing Authority, 2013). The Hong Kong Government is also a major provider of education and medical services, and most education and medical services are either free of charge or incur a relatively low fee (Hong Kong Government, 2014). Ma (2009) underscores that the promotion of the free market ideology was part of the legitimization strategy of the colonial state. As such, the colonial government could refrain from using public resources to subside private sectors.
4.1.3 The creation of a decent subject

Stigmatization of the poor as an economic burden is the other governmental discursive strategy. Welfare recipients are stigmatized as an economic burden of society. About 15% of the news articles use this discursive strategy. These articles argue that a responsible individual does not ask for public help, and only those who are selfish and lazy receive government welfare.

All of these articles either suggest self-reliance is a good virtue or identified the poor as deficient. The following quotations are the best examples that represent the arguments appearing in these articles. The news articles explicitly suggest that self-reliance is a virtue of Chinese people: “Hong Kong people, who embrace the good moral goodness of Chinese people, will not seek help from government unless they are in a hopeless situation. They would like to rely on their own capabilities” (Hong Kong Economic Times, September 14, 1996). Some articles link jobs with dignity. Others mentioned that people found that “they can live with dignity if they have a job” (Hong Kong Economic Times, June 14, 1995) and they “feel ashamed when they receive welfare benefits from the government” (Oriental Daily News, June 2, 1998). “They were satisfied if they relied on themselves despite facing hardships” (Hong Kong Economic Times, June 18, 2004).

In contrast, those who failed to get a job were identified as deficient and burdens on society. The negative stigmatization was elaborated by two major methods:
listing the figures and reporting the abuse cases. For example, the government listed
the recent GDP and public expenditure figures stating that

“Public expenditure is out of control; this situation will last for one to two
years at least. Kay Lam, from Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, said
we have to improve this situation through controlling the expanse of public
welfare.” (Hong Kong Economic Times, March 4, 2000)

The government also cites suspected welfare fraud:

“There were 300 suspected welfare fraud cases reported in five days; citizens
are concerned with the abuse of the welfare system” (Apple Daily, August 9,
1998).

This negative stigmatization was also developed by news articles that
uncovered that certain welfare recipients were millionaires. For example, “Cai jing
ming 蔡晶明 , a hidden millionaire, who owns 180 million yet receives welfare
assistance from government” (Hong Kong Economic Times, December 18, 2003),
and that the poor were committing crimes, such as robbery, sex-related crimes, family
violence (e.g., Apple Daily, September 20, 2000; Oriental Daily News, April 19,
2001).

The poor are depicted as folk devils, and the logical conclusion is to change
the poor’s work attitudes. This standard is normalized in taken for granted living
conditions from healthy backgrounds. This cultural value is consistent with the
philosophy of neoliberalism, which stresses that a rational individual is free to choose
from various options (Patterson, 2005). An individual is able to make an independent
analysis about the benefit and cost of the choices in all sphere of life, including job
type, types of friendships, and relationship (Crompton, 2006). The rationale of this
ideology, which is intrinsic to neo-liberal forms of governmentality, promotes one’s
responsibility for his/her own activity and career path. One should not rely on others
or pre-arranged and paved promotion paths (Larner, 2000). The poor are said to pose
a threat to society and abuse the welfare system. This argument is embedded with
cultural values, emphasizing the ideal type of people in Chinese society: an individual
must be hard working and rely on his/her capabilities to make a living rather than on
the government. Indeed, over 94% of total population is ethnic Chinese (HKSAR,
July, 2013), and thus government policy is closely related to Chinese culture. Chinese
people are always regarded as tireless workers (Harrell, 1985). The diligent behavior
of Chinese people appears in all aspects of life including study and work (Unger,
1982). Hard work is regarded as an important virtue in many different contexts. They
believed that the virtue of hard work will bring them success (Madsen, 1981). A study
by Chinese Culture Connection indicated that China ranks first among 23 countries on
their family if they are successful in their work. Chinese people are willing to take up extra work responsibilities and assignments. The cultural norms of collectivism further justify this work ethic. Being hardworking is deemed as beneficial to the family as well as the community and the nation. As such, working hard for the company is not a selfish desire for the pursuit of one’s own career, but a sacrifice for the family in the pursuit of the family’s prosperity and honor (Redding, 1993). Such rationale makes many Chinese people put their work at a high priority. At the same time, individuals have the responsibility to take care of their family members and relatives and contribute to the society based on Confucian tradition. The Confucian family ideology further legitimizes the small size of the welfare program. White and Goodman argued that, in the West, neo-liberals point to East Asian success in achieving high levels of popular welfare, without high levels of government expenditure or a large bureaucracy, and laud the spirit of individual and group responsibility and the crucial role of the family in providing social welfare and social services (1998, p. 4). The Confucian ideology serves as justification of the limited assistance from the government. The social security welfare system is the last resort (Tang, 2000).

4.1.4 The fragmentation of the society

Another technique of governmentality frequently used is the establishment of
a distinction between responsible and irresponsible citizens, especially through class
division. About 6% of the news articles use this discursive strategy. The welfare
recipients are described as abusing the system; thus, law-abiding, tax-paying
individuals were forced to financially support the lazy and unproductive people. This
differentiation and classification can be understood as what Foucault called dividing
practices. Individuals are objectified and disempowered by practices, such as
classification and labeling (Foucault, 1979, as cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983).
Dividing practices can be interpreted as a particular way of exercising power and
influence on the way people perceive themselves. The following quotations represent
these types of articles:

The government keeps getting bigger. Scholars warned that the expenditure on
social welfare has increased drastically in recent years; however, the middle
class bears an increasing tax burden. If the condition does not improve,
dissatisfaction among the middle class will grow. In fact, the middle class also
suffered from hardship after the financial crisis. (Hong Kong Economic Times,
March 4, 2000)

These types of articles argue that Hong Kong middle class works night and
day, is self-reliant, and earns a reasonable salary, but they are not eligible to apply for
public housing and have used up all their savings to buy a flat.
It argues,

“A small group of people do not make any contribution to Hong Kong; they receive public assistance, live in public housing, and their Mainland wives and children come to Hong Kong and thus move to a bigger house. Are these practices fair to others?” (Hong Kong Economic Times, September 20, 2004).

The quote illustrates the way poverty is ethnicized. It reflects the general trend in the poverty debate to focus on the othering of Chinese Mainlanders, who are poor and have lower education levels (Flowerdew, Li, & Tran, 2002). Mainlanders are described as deficient individuals who come to Hong Kong for welfare benefits only. It is also stated that there may be an influx of low-skilled individuals from Mainland China who pose a threat to the existing labor market. As a result, the citizens were organized into categories of “deserving” and “undeserving” and “good” and “bad” according to their identities, mirroring the existing hierarchical structure and cultural values of Hong Kong society. In fact, it was always the case that immigrants are negatively stereotyped as burdens on society and blamed for the rising unemployment rate and worsening economy (Bauder, 2008; Kofman et al, 2009; Tannock, 2009; van Dijk, 1989). Hong Kong is by no means an exception. Although Hong Kong is an immigrant society with its large influxes of Chinese immigrants, mainlanders are always negatively stereotyped (Chou, 2012; Kennedy, 2012). According to the report
of Census and Statistics Department (2011), 32.1% of the Hong Kong total population (about seven million) was born on the Mainland, and 60.5% of them in Hong Kong. Prior to 1950s, Hong Kong was a relatively open refugee society where the influx of Mainlanders was largely unchecked (Wong, 1988). A reach-base policy is introduced as a step forwards to implementing the regularization in the 1960s, and the immigration policy finally shifted to full control in the 1980s (Ku, 2004). Mainlanders can come to Hong Kong through the one-way permit scheme and other schemes. Under the one-way permit scheme, 150 permits were granted on a daily basis, which aims to facilitate family reunion. A government report showed that there are now more than 300,000 new immigrants (defined as those who have resided in Hong Kong fewer than seven years), 70% of whom came from Mainland China (Census and Statistics Department, 2011). However, the new immigrants are one of the most vulnerable and impoverished groups in Hong Kong. The median monthly income for new immigrants was Hong Kong $7,500 in 2011, which was about 62.5% of the median monthly income (Census and Statistics Department, 2011). Besides lower monthly incomes, newcomers have a lower education level than that of the whole population. Most of the new immigrants got a job from low-skilled service sectors (38.1%) and elementary occupations (27.3%) in 2011 (Census and Statistics Department, 2011).
Law and Lee (2006) argued that the social exclusion of Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong society emerged with the economic boom of the late 1970s. Hong Kong people differentiated themselves from Mainland Chinese in a more rigid way after 1997 in order to sustain their inherent identity (Fung, 2001). They marked their distinction in terms of their culture and political expectations (Cao, Chen, Huang, & Lo, 2014). The negative stigmatization is also elaborated by the “right-of-abode” controversy and “anti-locust” campaign as well as the media report of marriage fraud in the late 1990s (Lau, 2014).

4.1.5 Distancing authorities from citizens

Another discursive strategy of governmentality was the distancing of the authorities from the citizens via a knowledge-based social engineering, which suggest that particular experts are needed to identify and address the problem (Elam & Gunnarsson, 2012). About 1.5% of the news articles use this discursive strategy. It advocates that the society is a system that should be acted upon by both politics and science. Expert knowledge provides guidance for politicians to make decisions. It helps to discover problems, articulate solutions, and develop methods to implement them. Social engineering in that sense is a professionalization and standardization of individual control (Larsson, 2008, as cited in Larsson, Letell, & Thörn, 2012). The arguments posed by the experts strengthen the legitimacy of governments or political
leaders (Ajeznstadt & Rosenhek, 2000). The following quotations represent this governmental strategy. The government interprets the issue of poverty in scientific terms and states that it has accurate knowledge and correct data regarding the situation of poor people and welfare expenditure.

“According to the Hong Kong Government, the growth of Hong Kong population is decreasing, and the working population will become smaller in the year 2018… they will encourage more elders and mothers to join the workforce” (Oriental Daily News, March 21, 2013).

The government may also reclaim the authority to interpret the issue by setting up a working group to examine the issue. For example,

“The government announced that they will establish an inter-departmental working group to examine the problems of cubicle apartments” (Oriental Daily News, December 15, 1999).

To conclude, both neoliberalism and three other prevalent discourses contribute to the knowledge of poverty and welfare policy. Foucault deploys the notion of governmentality as a specific form of analysis. Foucault’s work links the mode of governing and modes of thought. It indicates that scholars have to study technology of power with a study of political rationality underpinning them. A
political rationality is not neutral knowledge that represents the world, but it functions as politics of truth. On the one hand, the media representation reveals how government defines a discursive field in which the exercise of power is justified. It indicates a set of arguments that rationalized government’s action and decision.

As shown above, the discursive strategies identified in the newspaper on poverty share several characteristics with the discourse of neoliberalism, the Hong Kong success story, Chinese work ethic, and of negative images of Mainlanders. It is based on the idea of individuals who are autonomous and take responsibility in maintaining their well-being and participating in society in economic terms. At the same time, poor people are depicted as deficient by asserting that their poor economic situations are the results of low aspirations and bad work ethic. Tentatively, we might argue that the findings illustrate the discursive struggle between Chinese work ethic, historical Mainlander stigmatization, and more recent neoliberal individualism. On the one hand, neoliberalism appears to support hard work, perseverance, work-focused aspects of deeply rooted Chinese cultural values. On the other hand, this discourse presents an ideology that helps Hong Kong people to differentiate themselves from Mainland Chinese people and acquire an elite, individual sensibility. This discourse of poverty meshes long-standing Chinese ideologies of work and identity with neoliberal individualism and social exclusion of Chinese immigrants.
Neo-liberalism governs lives of the poor at distance through granting freedom for individuals to exercise their autonomy and self-control. Neoliberalism becomes the doctrines of Hong Kong welfare policy and is constructed as an essential element for the economic success of Hong Kong. At the same time, beliefs of Hong Kong success are bound alongside Chinese work ethic and differentiation from new Chinese immigrants. The ideas of entrepreneurialism rooted in neoliberalism taps into already formed cultural ideologies.

4.2 Four Oppositional Claims

The oppositional claims include exercising human rights, fighting for social justice, anti-stigmatization, and seriousness of poverty issues. All of these oppositional claims come across three newspapers. Struggling against the discourse of neoliberalism, political leaders propose social justice as an oppositional claim and argue that there is serious inequality and social injustice in Hong Kong. They state that the gap between rich and poor is widening; the citizens cannot share the fruits of economic prosperity. The following quotations represent these articles.

“The overall economy of Hong Kong has recovered this year, however, the working class has been deprived of their rights. According to the labor organizations, there were top 10 miserable situations of labors in 2006… Leung Yiu Chung, a legislative councilor, criticized government
policies are skewed towards the big corporations, and the gap between rich and poor is getting wider.” (Apple Daily, December 27, 2006)

“The poor is getting poorer and the rich is getting richer. This phenomenon is unjust and abnormal. It is the result of government policy mistakes. The government did not listen to the voice of people.” (Oriental Daily News, January 1, 2008).

Protestors also launched an anti-stigmatization campaign stating that “on the surface, the pressure of the medical system, welfare, education and housing would decrease if fewer Mainland Chinese came to Hong Kong, but this impression is wrong. On the contrary, new immigrants have made a great contribution to Hong Kong society. They are major sources of Hong Kong population growth, while Hong Kong women are not willing to have children”. (Oriental Daily News, August, 28, 2008).

The activists also address it as an issue of human rights. They argue in the newspaper that “the living conditions of vulnerable groups in past few years are miserable …..the living standard of the poor in Hong Kong is as poor as those living in a third world country, although the economy growth of Hong Kong is not bad….Hong Kong lacks human rights protection” (Apple Daily,
February 18, 2002).

Some organizations and experts produce counter-discourse and want to reclaim the right to interpret the knowledge about poverty. They stress that poverty is a serious problem in Hong Kong and present a miserable situation to the public via statistics.

A survey about the living conditions of elderly showed…. About 80 % of elderly felt unwell, and half of the elderly stated that they did not have any friends or family visit them. Listening to radio and walking around the town alone are their entertainments. (Oriental Daily News, June 6, 1994)

The above quotations typify the arguments of oppositional claims. On one hand, the news articles underscore that the wealth gap is a concern. The Hong Kong Government should balance the interests between poor and rich and respect human rights. On the other hand, these articles stress that the problems of poverty were not only exceptional cases, but they represented a large population, and arguing that the poor has been stigmatized.

4.3 The Shift in Poverty Discourse

To answer RQ2, a genealogy of poverty and welfare was conducted. Five discursive strategies and four oppositional claims as stated above were found in the 20-year sample period. Moreover, three major shifts in discursive strategies were
identified as coinciding with the major socio-political changes in Hong Kong. The two political and economic changes outlined herein occurred in 1997 and 2005, and both marked a critical moment in which discourse shifted. Before 1998, the strategies of individualization dominated the discussion of poverty and oppositional claims were seldom seen. The mobilization of moral panic in 1998 prompted a shift in discursive strategies from individualization to the other three strategies. They are promotion of social mobility, fragmentation of society, and stigmatization. Starting from 2005, the discourses against government have gained a more dominant role. More than 30% of news articles examined support oppositional claims (please see Table 2). It is because the first Commission on Poverty and the Community Care Fund were set up in 2005, and more data is provided and raise the awareness of poverty problem. At the same time, the dissatisfaction about government is growing after 1997 (see figure 3 & 4).

Overall, the result shows that the mobilization of moral panic prompted a shift in the discourse regarding poverty from a story-like form of social citizenship to rational language of economic citizenship. Then, following a rise in the anti-neoliberalism movement, the basic arguments in public discourse began taking social justice into account. The public discourse has shifted the focus to sensationalized language of political citizenship.

Table 1. Distribution of news reports by topics
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/No of article (%)</th>
<th>Charity (%)</th>
<th>Crime (%)</th>
<th>Accidents</th>
<th>News report (%)</th>
<th>Editorials &amp; Commentary (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994-1997</td>
<td>46 (75.4%)</td>
<td>5 (8.1%)</td>
<td>2 (3.3%)</td>
<td>4 (6.6%)</td>
<td>4 (6.6%)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-2004</td>
<td>95 (42%)</td>
<td>17 (7.5%)</td>
<td>14 (6.2%)</td>
<td>61 (27.0%)</td>
<td>39 (17.3%)</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2013</td>
<td>97 (30.0%)</td>
<td>40 (12.4%)</td>
<td>25 (7.7%)</td>
<td>115 (35.6%)</td>
<td>46 (14.2%)</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Accidents include suicides, car accident, and fire accident, etc.
4 News reports include both policy news and human interest stories.

Table 2. Distribution of news reports by governmental strategies and oppositional claims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/No of article (%)</th>
<th>Discursive strategies</th>
<th>Oppositional claims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distancing authorities</td>
<td>Fragmentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individualization</td>
<td>Promoting mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stigmatization</td>
<td>Social injustice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94-97</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52 (85.2%)</td>
<td>1 (1.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 (6.6%)</td>
<td>1 (1.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 (1.6%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-04</td>
<td>3 (1.3%)</td>
<td>13 (5.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>121 (53.5%)</td>
<td>25 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43 (19.0%)</td>
<td>4 (1.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 (2.2%)</td>
<td>2 (0.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-13</td>
<td>6 (1.9%)</td>
<td>23 (7.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>102 (31.6%)</td>
<td>40 (12.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44 (13.6%)</td>
<td>52 (16.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 (6.2%)</td>
<td>8 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.1 1994–1997: The poor as miserable people

Poverty as individual personal misfortune (85.2%) is the dominant discursive strategy present in newspaper articles between 1994 and 1997 (see Table 2). The discursive strategies of promoting social mobility (1.6%), of labeling poor people as criminals (6.6%), can also be found in the newspaper articles in this period, but the
frequencies of appearance are far fewer than that of the individualized-related discourse (85.2%) because poverty is not a popular concern at that time. Most of the articles (75%) about poverty appear in charity narrative stories (see Table 1). In the charity narrative, the issue of poverty is individualized as a personal problem. Poor people are portrayed as innocent people and deserve pity from society. Their misfortune is neither the government’s faults nor individual wrongdoings, but it is their fates. The direct help and assistance from the government is not encouraged and is regarded as a last resort. Instead, the news articles asked for public help and donation. The experience of the poor was narrated in a story-like form, which is very touching and readable. About 7% of newspapers use discursive strategies of stigmatization in this period (8.2%) since the poor are inevitably stigmatized as criminals or portrayed as misfortunate persons in crimes and accident news.

Regarding the counter discourse, only four articles (6.6%) focus on the oppositional views (see Table 2). They argue that poverty is a serious problem in Hong Kong. Two news articles asked the government to balance the advantage between the working class and commercial sectors, and protect the human rights of the poor, respectively. The columnist stated that “the government officials should not make decisions on the basis of the interest of industrial and business circles only (Hong Kong Economic Times, June 27, 1997).
Newspapers provided a limited space for poverty news before 1997. There is far less reporting about poverty in the earliest period than that in latest period (see Table 1). On average, about 15.25 articles are related to poverty each year from 1994-1997, while there are 44.4 related articles each year the next five years, and 35.4 articles on average each year from 2005-2013. Again, there are a far smaller proportion of news reports, commentary, and editorials in the first period (13.2 %), than that in second period (44.3 %) and in the third period (49.8%). Words related to “the disparity between the rich and poor” and to “favoring the rich and commercial interests” are rarely seen. Only 6.6% oppositional claims are seen from year 1994-1997 (Table 2). According to Foucault, the power relationship that is involved can be discovered by identifying the absences in the discourse. As Lemke (2007) put it, the state is a site of strategic action. The strategic selectivity is determined by the inner structure and character of the state (Jessop, 1990). As Jessop believes the following:

Particular forms of state privilege some strategies over others, privilege the access of some forces over others, some interests over others, sometime horizons over others, some coalitions possibilities over others. A given type of state, a given state form, a given form of regime, will be more accessible to some forces than others according to the strategies they adopt to gain state
power. (Jessop, 1990, p. 10)

In other words, a particular state makeup is more suited to some strategies over others, but it does not determine whether the strategies they adopt succeed or not. The impact is the result of the interactions between different political forces and the state. Therefore, the absence of poverty discourse and oppositional claims before the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong can be explained by the fact that poverty was not a popular topic of discussion before 1997. It does not mean that poverty was not a serious problem that needed to be addressed. Lee (2005) asserts that the working class lives in extremely poor conditions at that time, poor people can hardly afford to buy a house and a family needs to wait for seven years before they receive public housing.

4.3.2 1998–2004: Poor as folk devils

The analysis of newspapers showed that the Hong Kong Government mobilized a moral panic, which emerged at a critical moment of financial crisis, when the process of neo-liberalization in Hong Kong sped up. Between 1998 and 2003, Hong Kong experienced a serious economic recession; the findings suggest that the strategies including creation of decent subjects (5.8%), promotion of social mobility (11.1%) as well as fragmentation (19%) are three most dominant discursive strategies appearing in newspapers in that period, if we exclude the discursive strategies of individualization (see Table 2). The governmental strategies of individualization
appear frequently in newspaper articles because the charity narrative is still the
dominant form of news reports about poverty in this period.

The strategies of social mobility frequently appeared in the news articles. New
articles frequently reported the official statistics showing that the unemployment rate
was rising, and it was the employers who were responsible for acquiring new working
skills to maintain their competitiveness. Many commentators, government officials,
and experts promoted learning beyond traditional education and throughout adult life,
when the society was facing the challenges of globalization and economic
transformation. They believed the best solution to promote social mobility is
providing retraining and education for the working class and unemployed. Below is
the typical quotation represents those arguments.

“They have provided a series of suggestions to help the poor get out of poverty.
It includes providing job seeking advices for young people, establishment of
retraining center. It helps those who are less educated and have fewer skills to find a
job.” (Apple daily, September 20, 2000).

At the same time, the successful self-transformation stories were highlighted
in human interest stories. For example, a news article described a young people,
called Vincent, who grows up in a very rich family. His grandfathers are businessman.
He managed his family business after he graduated. However, he almost went
bankrupt under the financial crisis. He did not give up himself but worked as a taxi
driver and waited for opportunity to climb up the social ladder again (Hong Kong
Economic Times, April 7, 1999)

The Hong Kong success story was also mentioned again. “Li Ka-Shing (a
billionaire) said, he himself came to Hong Kong in 1940s and did not graduate at high
school. He also suffered from lung disease, but he did not give up, he worked hard at
work and continued his further study at the same time.” (Hong Kong Economic Times,
October 15, 2001)) The above article represents the typical working philosophy
hidden in all these stories: people can achieve success with hard work, perseverance,
and confidence.

The creation of decent subjects and fragmentation of society are the other two
frequently used strategies. These two discursive strategies echo the mobilization of
moral panics. In the discursive strategies of creating decent subjects, poor people were
stigmatized as posing an economic burden on the society. By presenting official
statistics that the expenditure on social welfare was increasing rapidly, poor people
became the cause of budget deficits. The following quotation is a typical example.

“The application for CSSA (Comprehensive Social Security Assistance)
increase continually. The funding for the CSSA may not be enough and the
government has to apply for extra funding in legislative council….It increase pressure
of the welfare system.” (Hong Kong Economic Times, July 18, 1998)

At the same time, the poor are stigmatized as individuals who fail to govern themselves and make the news by committing crimes (Apple Daily, July 27, 2001). Individuals are responsible to their own failures and career paths. They must take personal responsibility and should not rely on the government for a very long time (Apple Daily, August 9, 1998).

The other strategies of governmentality advanced by the mobilization of moral panics are distinguishing between deserving, responsible people and those who are abusing the welfare system. The distinction was made between the lower working class and the middle class. The middle class are net givers. They are portrayed as hardworking people who rarely enjoy welfare benefits; while poor are burdens of the society because they consume all social resources. The financial burden falls onto the shoulders of other citizens (Hong Kong Economic Times, March 4, 2000). The comments showed the discontent of the general public over the activists, political leaders, and the poor. Rationalized language and statistics were frequently used in news reports to assert their authority as experts in dealing with this economic crisis.

4.3.3 2005–2013: The poor as victims

Starting from 2005, there has been a major change in the media discourse on poverty and social welfare policy. More newspaper articles have depicted the poor as
victims of the economic structure. The activists, politicians, and protestors have
drawn more support from the general public. Generally speaking, more than 30% of
news articles support the arguments proposed by protestors (see Table 2). If we
exclude the charity narratives, crimes, and accident news, more than 60% of the news
reiterates oppositional claims. They include presenting the seriousness of poverty,
launching anti-stigmatization campaigns, fighting for human rights, and blaming the
government for social injustice and the wealth gap. Among these news articles, a
media discourse on the discontent over social injustice plays the most prominent role
among these news articles (16.1%). It sets out to demystify the new wave of
neoliberalism, arguing that a certain group of people is left out in sharing the benefits
of economic success.

A news report states that “The social division is serious in Hong Kong, a large
proportion of population cannot enjoy the fruits of economic success; discontent is
continuously accumulating and like a warehouse of gunpowder” (Oriental Daily News,
December 27, 2006). Another newspaper columnist argues that “The gap between
rich and poor is getting wider, a scholar warns us the situation has reached the serious
level. The lives of poor are difficult and are close to the third world standard.”
(Oriental Daily News, June 19, 2007). The activists list the statistics that show the bad
working and living conditions of poor people (e.g., Apple Daily December 27, 2006).
The individual cases of poor people are also featured and highlighted in human interest stories to illustrate that the poor cannot benefit from the recovery of the economy. For example, a new article describes a single mom living in cubicle apartment with her son and working hard as a laborer to make ends meet (Oriental Daily News, June 19, 2007). The cause of poverty is now attributed to the imbalance of the economic system, rather than to personal failure (Hong Kong Economic Times, March 25, 2010). Many articles mention that there is collusion between the government and the rich and that the government ignores the needs of the poor (e.g., Oriental Daily News, June 19, 2007). They ask that the government not only aim at achieving fiscal balance, but also spend money to support the needy (Oriental Daily News, January 1, 2008). The reporting style is sensational to draw support from the general public.

Moreover, the oppositional claims of human rights also appear more frequently in this period. Journalist reserve a space for reporting on different demonstrations. For example, an NGO fought for retirement protection for women (Hong Kong Economic Times, March 6, 2006), new immigrants participated in demonstrations and asked for a repeal of the seven-year residency requirement for new Chinese immigrants to apply for welfare benefits (Oriental Daily News, January 1, 2008), and the working class fought for the implementation of minimum wage
August 25, 2008, Oriental Daily News). The welfare recipients urge the government to provide subsidy for children so that they can take up extra-curricular activities and buy books. At the same time, the columnists and activists claimed in news commentary that welfare recipients were stereotyped and discriminated. In order to attract media attention, they presented the miserable situation of the poor and engaged in demonstrations. More sensational language is used to describe the situation.

4.4 Changing Terms of Citizenship

The mobilization of moral panic sparked negotiation about citizenship in Hong Kong society. As the government wanted to control the expanse of CSSA, self-reliance was proposed as new theme of the scheme in late 1997. The shift in theme symbolized a mobilization of moral panic by the government and a change in citizens’ roles.

In this process, the old relationship between the government and individuals was replaced with another type of relationship. The condition of inclusion altered from a focus on family roles to individual work ability. The resistance rose and the relations between the government and citizens changed again. The notion of political rights surfaced. The shift in citizenship and how the new citizenship emerges within complex power relationships are discussed in the next section. The findings of archive analysis of policy documents and past literature, as well as discourse analysis of
newspaper articles, are presented in this section.

4.4.1 1994–1997: social citizenship

In Hong Kong, the poor are expected to be supported by family members, while formal support for poor people from the public sector and non-government organizations are poorly developed (Chow, 1992a, 1997; Kwan, 1997; Phillips, 2000). In the 1990s, Hong Kong people still believed in hard work and improving one’s livelihood through personal effort. Relying on the government was regarded as shameful. Government assistance is deemed as a last resort (Wong, 2009). Instead, individuals are encouraged to help the disadvantaged, as they still hold a belief in Confucianism, which emphasizes self-cultivation and fulfilling self-duty, rather than fighting for their own rights (Chow, 1995). Participation in philanthropy is deemed as one of the paths to fulfill one’s duty and build up a reputation. The charity narrative is the dominant news formats of poverty news before 1998. The condition of inclusion focuses on a family role and social responsibility (see Table 1).

The discourses of poverty and the income gap in the media before the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong were rarely seen (see Tables 2 and 3). It can be explained by the structure of colonial government. It has been argued that the political system of Hong Kong is a form of “bureaucratic hegemony” (Morris, Kan, & Morris, 2000). The elites from the business community cooperated effectively with the
colonial government because they had been appointed to be the executive and legislative councilors and so on (King, 1977).

In the 1980s, Hong Kong experienced rapid political and economic change. The colonial government introduced partial election and kicked off gradual democratization. The power structure of government became more pluralistic; thus, there were increasing political pressures and demands for welfare (Ma, 2009). The process of democratization initiated in the transition period (Cheung, 1992; Lee, 1998). At the same time, the manufacturing industry moved to China, and Hong Kong began to transform into a financial and logistics center. Hong Kong’s low skilled labor suffered from this transformation, which led to drastic pay cuts (Chiu & Lui, 2009). To find a new basis of legitimacy, the colonial government introduced a Public Sector Reform in 1989. The ethos of this reform came from a state-led marketization drive that focused on marketization the use of private management methods in government, and so on. Public concern could be changed from political responsiveness to government efficiency (Cheung, 1992).

Financial Secretary Hamish MacLeod, between 1991 and 1995, coined the term “consensus capitalism” to illustrate the economic policy in Hong Kong. Although the Hong Kong Government still stressed a low tax rate and small government, it marked a difference from the policy of laissez-faire and positive
non-interventionism. The new ideology suggested that it is important to “help those less able to compete.” The Hong Kong Government had acknowledged its role in providing assistance to help the underprivileged, although the government downplayed the problem of wealth disparity. Donald Tsang, Financial Secretary in 1996, stated that the income gap between the rich and poor is inevitable in a capitalist society. Education and skills training allow people to move upward in a dynamic society. People still believe that everyone can succeed and move upward in Hong Kong with hard work. As such, the government made light of the problem of the wealth gap by stressing the beliefs of Hong Kong dream. It explains why poverty and wealth disparity were not trendy topics for discussion at that time.

In the course of time, the traditional values began changing and more people began embracing Western ideas of individualism and individual rights (Wong, 2009). The Hong Kong Government was also forced to be more interventionist and provide more welfare to the needy in response to the changing economic environment and political pressures after the 1980s (Ma, 2009). Therefore, oppositional claims are found in public discourse, although the governmental strategies still hold a hegemonic position (see Table 2).

4.4.2 1998–2004: Economic citizenship

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5 Hong Kong: The 1995-96 Budget, p. 1.
6 Speech by Financial Secretary Hamish Macleod, in a motion debate on wealth disparities between the rich and the poor in the Legislative Council on 2 June 1993.
7 Speech in the 1996 budget debate in the Legislative Council on 3 April 1996.
As mentioned previously, the moral panic was mobilized in Hong Kong in the post-1997 period during an economic recession when Hong Kong was moving towards an advanced market-oriented mode of governance. By presenting welfare recipients as frauds and deviants, the moral panic legitimized the social exclusion and new rationality of governance (see Table 2). Past research about moral panic argues that the government produced a new discourse about crime control, new governmental methods, and law-making targeting undesirable behaviors (Feeley & Simon, 1994; Garland, 1990). This discourse educates and civilizes the citizens. This new style of regulation creates self-governed, autonomous individuals with the use of logic of risk (O’Malley, 1992; Rose & Miller, 1992). Past research suggests that moral panic plays an important role within complex societies (Cohen, 1999; Hier, 2003; McRobbie & Thorton, 1995), while some scholars believe that the nature of moral panic should be examined within the regime of neo-liberalism and its governance (Ajzenstadt, 2009; Garland, 2008; Hier, 2008).

Before 1997, Hong Kong people embraced the ideology of a free market, but the ideology was not entirely adopted, as the Hong Kong Government does provide assistance to the general public in many different aspects, such as health care, public housing, and education. The pressure for the government to speed up the neoliberalization process has increased because of the financial crisis of 1997 (Chen
& Pun, 2007). Hong Kong officials have constructed a discourse on the Hong Kong spirit, which serves to create a myth that Hong Kong’s success is based on the free market ideology and the principles of self-reliance and hard work (Lee, 2005). The discourse of social mobility is highlighted. Hong Kong’s economy is undergoing economic transformation, which may involve the painful process of adjustment and worsening unemployment situations. Individuals are urged to be highly flexible and keep adapting to the changing requirements of a new economy. The government is expected to move towards privatization and introduce market mechanisms into social service, which involves raising fees on selected social services, privatizing public assets, and subcontracting public services (Chen & Pun, 2007).

At the same time, the Hong Kong Government mobilizes a moral panic, presenting welfare recipients as lazy and undeserving. Their tendency toward dependency brings a tremendous threat to the economic and social future of Hong Kong. One government official once stated that there the dependency culture is growing; Hong Kong people have been spoiled by prolonged economic success. They once did not rely on the government and did not blame themselves for their plight. Now, they put the blame on the government. A former member of the Executive Council openly remarked that Hong Kong people are lazy and have lost the old

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8 Donald Tsang, Chief Secretary for Administration, made his comments. (Ming Bao Bian Ji Bu, 2001: 205-207)
migrant work ethic. The spirit of self-help and perseverance are presented as the pillar of Hong Kong’s past success. A top government official quoted a popular piece of Cantonpop under the Lion Rock Mountain to illustrate the need for Hong Kong people to revive an old Hong Kong spirit that will help them to survive in even tougher times like in the old days. The position put forward is that individuals can tackle the economic downturn with the same strong will and a spirit of self-reliance (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2002). Welfare recipients are demonized and stigmatized as heavy burdens on society. The government blames them for increased government spending. This moral panic discourse has been orchestrated with the increasing number of suspected welfare fraud case (Lee, 2005). Therefore, promotion of social mobility, creating responsible citizens, and fragmentation of society are often found in news reports as governmental strategies (see Table 2). The government report openly made a remark that welfare payments are overgenerous; thus, individuals have become lazy and dependent. The comments about the huge influx of new Chinese immigrants also shamed new Chinese immigrants and made them the face of the financial burden on society (Law & Lee, 2006). The Hong Kong Government created a moral panic by demonizing the welfare receipts, new Chinese

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10 For the Report on the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme in December 1998, the number of the cases of CSSA increased 146% from 1993 to 1998, and the expenditure also increased almost three times during that period. The payments for a family of four or more people each month was better than some low-end job salaries.
immigrants, and their demands so that they can expedite the neo-liberalization process.

The official discourse attained hegemony, and the activists who fought against the privatization and stigmatization in 2004 gained a very little support from the public (Chen & Pun, 2007). The moral panic as a result gave a new definition for good citizenship within Hong Kong society, privileging values of working ability and participation in the job market. As such, the fragmentation of society, promotion of social mobility, and stigmatization appear frequently in newspapers in that period to urge citizens to distinguish between folk devils and good citizens under a new definition of citizenship (see Table 2).

4.4.3 2005–2013: Political Citizenship

Faced with the pressure of socio-economic change, Hong Kong adopted societal reform via privatization and cost control, and set the moral panic in motion, but it is questionable that the official discourse on policy change can always achieve a hegemonic position. The media discourse on the poverty and welfare policy are influenced by the public outcry over collusion between government and business. In fact, the resistance to the latest wave of a new market-oriented mode of governance started since 1997.
人民對香港特區政府的信任程度（年報）
People’s Trust in the HKSAR Government (annually published)

(7-12/1992 - 1-6/2015)

%of Untrust is presented as "negative % of Trust"
市民對政治、經濟及民生現狀的不滿程度 - 綜合圖表（半年報）

E's Dissatisfaction with Current Political, Economic and Livelihood Conditions – Combined Charts (half-yearly average)

(7-12/1992 – 7-12/2014)

The words used before the June 2016 survey were "social problems" and "social condition". We take them to mean the same as "livelihood problems" and "livelihood condition" in the survey context.
The survey polls conducted by the University of Hong Kong show the discontent over government increases after 1997. People’s distrust in government increases dramatically from 9.7% in late 1997 to 42.8% in early 2003. People distrust in government keep at high level in recent decades, although it has decrease and maintain at less than 10% between 2006 and 2008 (see figure 3). The survey about people’s dissatisfaction with current political, economic and livelihood conditions also show us a more detail picture. People’s dissatisfaction with economic conditions reached its highest level between late 1997 and 2003, but people’s dissatisfaction with economic conditions generally maintained at low and moderate level between 2004 and 2013. However, people’s dissatisfaction with livelihood and political condition increased continually since early 2006 and reached at high records in 2013 (see figure 4). These two figures indicate people’s distrust in and dissatisfaction with government increase after 1997 and the dissatisfaction with political and livelihood conditions still maintained at high level, although the dissatisfaction with economic conditions drops in these ten years. It echoes with past research that the old myth of the “Hong Kong dream” that everyone has an equal opportunity and will succeed with diligence and perseverance has been shattered (Lee, 2005). A public outcry over government and business collusion has led to a new reflection on the influence of market oriented policy. The first Commission on Poverty and the Community Care Fund was set up
by Hong Kong Government in 2005. The sentiment includes the discontent over the
development of the cyberport project, the Disneyland project, and the privatization of
government assets, such as the establishment of Link REIT (Chen & Pun, 2007). The
outrage against government-business collusion can be explained by several factors.

First, the elite structure of the political system changed after the transition. There has been an expansion of a Pro-Beijing network since the mid-1980s. Conservative business people and professionals are incorporated into this web, while the businesspeople are also eager to gain political influence and extend their mainland connections (Ma, 2009). This new elite structure creates a new pressure for helping the government intervene in individual sectors. The neutrality of interests of governors and civil servants or at least a perception of it vanished at the end of the post-colonial age. The first Chief Executive, Tung Chee-Wa, was unlike the colonial governor or British top officials who had no personal connection with local capitalists before they came to Hong Kong and always left Hong Kong after retirement. Tung is a shipping tycoon and has been repeatedly criticized for favoring the interests of business elites. Top retired civil officials have also been involved in scandals that favored certain business elites in exchange for top positions in private enterprises after retirement.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{11} C. M. Leung, the former Director of Building Services, is one of the examples of an individual being criticized for favoring a developer. He made a decision that allowed the developer to earn millions in extra profit. It was revealed that Leung was given a position in that developer’s enterprise with an
brought more private-sector elites into the political structure. The business elites and supporters of the government were nominated as bureau secretaries, deputy secretaries,\(^{12}\) and political assistants\(^{13}\) and incorporated the interests of their respective sectors and class into the bureaucracy. Local business elites have ample representation in both the 800-member Election Committee and “functional constituencies.” The election committee is responsible for electing the chief executive, and almost half of the legislative council seats are elected by functional constituencies. The close alliance between capitalists and the Hong Kong Government is, or at least is interpreted as, a way to ensure that the interests of the business community are made top priorities (Lee, 2005).

Second, the acceleration of the neo-liberalism process during the economic downturn has created a new wave of resistance towards the government. The anti-neoliberalism is different from previous Hong Kong social movements in two ways: 1) most of the social movements were mobilized separately in the past, but different camps are now linked up together under the same banner of anti-neoliberalism (Chen & Pun, 2007). For example, low-wage service workers, public housing tenants, and business tenants joined together to protest against the privatization of public housing assets in 2004 and 2005. 2) The social movements

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\(^{12}\) The political appointment system was extended to include the position of deputy secretaries in 2008.

\(^{13}\) The political appointment system was extended to include the position of political assistants in 2008.
have moved from a struggle either against a single business corporation or the state to against a businessperson and the government. The strikes against the privatization of government assets after 1997 and the dock strike against the giant monopoly Hitchison and Whampoa in 2013 are some prominent examples (Chan, 2013). The new mode of governance creates multiple modes of resistance and new space for different parties to form alliances and coalitions, as well as new social movement agendas. They struggle against the notion of economic citizenship, and strive for welfare rights. As such, the image of the poor in public discourse has changed from folk devils to victims of economic structure. The oppositional claims appear frequently in newspaper articles and have obtained a hegemonic position (see Table 2). More voices have asked for solutions of income disparity and claims for welfare rights. It requires the government to look for structural problems within the economic system. Citizenship is no longer defined by the participation of the workforce, but in terms of the human and political rights.

Third, there are more data about poverty available for public. In response to the public concern over poverty issues, the Government established the Commission on Poverty to address the challenges of income gap and unemployment of low-skilled workers. The commission was dissolved in 2007. Over those two years, the Commission of poverty provided a set of indicators to illustrate the situation of Hong
Kong poverty, and proposed some solution to address this issue (Commission on Poverty, 2005a, 2005b). These data raise the awareness of poverty problem. At the same time, Hong Kong Government has submitted the first report and second report in the light of International Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights to United Nations between 1999 and 2005. These reports focus on continuing spread of poverty, inadequate housing and lack of effective access to social services. It highlights the hardships and social exclusion of marginalized and underprivileged groups (HKSAR, 2015). These reports attract media attention and in turn influence audience’s perception over poverty issues.

The above findings show that the statements emerged in the moral panic, which negotiated the discourse of poverty, and defined the attitudes towards poor people. The moral panic was shaped and supported by neo-liberalism. First, the content of discourse was not driven by a desire to punish the so-called deviants or provide individuals a chance for rehabilitation. Instead, it developed mechanisms and rationalities, which aimed to manage and normalize the citizens. Second, the individuals who were defined as deviants are not criminals, yet poor people. The discourse indicates that poor people put themselves in a risky position if they insist to go against the social norm, that is, adhere to the logic of neoliberalism. Third, the
content of moral panic set by the Hong Kong Government is different from the classic characteristics suggested by past studies (Cohen, 1972; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). It is not based on law and regulations and keeping the whole population away from the threats of criminals. It is about defining the new terms for deviants relevant to neoliberal regimes. Poor people are presented as an economic burden to society. It sets the new criteria and definition of good, autonomous, and responsible citizens. At the same time, it devalues traditional Chinese ideas of mutual help and empathy. The stigmatization of poor people served to limit the impact of counterarguments that require the government to look into the structural problem of the economic system (Hall et al., 1978). Fourth, the creation of moral panic places poor people under decentered surveillance, which is not exercised by the government. Instead, they are under the gaze by each member of society (more discussion in Section 4.6). It is not the enactment of law that regulates the individuals’ conducts, but the actual and symbolic guidelines that govern individuals at a distance.

At the same time, this paper indicates that the negotiation process of moral panic discourse was bound by the political environment, economic situations, and other prevalent ideologies and beliefs around the discourse of poverty. The moral panics regarding poor people originated in the concern of Hong Kong top officials who were worried about the economic downturn, which could have led to social
unrest. The discourse of poverty changed and entailed a hostile representation. Moral panic in Hong Kong is a government tactic. A group of political leaders, activists, and interest groups voice their concerns, and the media discourse on poverty and welfare policy are influenced by the public outcry over collusion between government and business. These political struggles should be examined in the complex context of socio-economic changes.

4.5 Roles of Media in Defining Poverty Discourse

The findings examine how journalism plays a role in defining poverty discourse and how it legitimizes its institutional authority as a vital platform to report and discuss poverty news. The audiences, social actors, and government officials are disciplined via realization, selection, and valuation. RQ3 is answered in the following paragraphs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Distribution of news reports by formats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ![Table 3](image)

1 Editorials are opinion pieces written by senior staff of publications.  
2 News commentary is an opinion piece written by people other than the staff of publications.

Source: 610 news items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Distribution of news reports by topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Table 4" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reports (% in total) | (45.2%) | (11.8%) | (7.9%) | (28.3%) | (6.7%)
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
3. Accidents include suicides, car accidents, and fires, etc.
4. Political stories include reports about housing policy, welfare policy, and public administration, etc.
5. Human interest stories include success stories about the poor and their miserable living conditions.
Source: 522 news items of news reports

Table 5. Distribution of political story by strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy or Comments</th>
<th>Surveys</th>
<th>Official Statistics</th>
<th>Demonstrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of news reports (% in total)</td>
<td>62 (41.9%)</td>
<td>25 (16.9%)</td>
<td>44 (29.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Source: 148 news items of political story

In this data set, charity narratives (45.2%), political stories (28.3%), and crime news (11.8%) are three most often covered topics, while policy or comments (41.9%), demonstrations (11.5%), and survey polls and official statistics (46.6%) are also frequently used strategies among political stories (Tables 5 and 6). As such, the reporters highlight some facts and ignore others via realization.

4.5.1 Disciplining Audience via Realization

Among three newspapers, two papers have established a charity beat (as part of news net [Tuchman, 1978]) to raise money for the poor regularly. Charity narratives present the miserable situation of the poor and replicate the self-reliance story. This narrative establishes newspapers as the rightful platform for fundraising and resources mobilization. For example, it makes a call for donation explicitly on
paper: “Grandma Hu (aged 87) lives alone and receives CSSA from government…her fridge and she does not have money to buy it. Please help her” (Apple Daily, August 27, 2008); or it states many people get help from newspaper funds:

Over two hundred families got this bag of food from our newspaper….Grandma Yan called the reporters saying that she wanted the bags of food to meet her ends. Yan was very grateful and happy when the reporter fulfilled her wishes.” (Apple Daily, September 19, 2005)

In this, the newspaper organizations built up their reputation as generous companies that always help the poor.

However, more than 99% of the poor people they covered in charity narratives were Chinese. They were elders, single mothers, children, or disabled or sick people. Charity narratives seldom describe the miserable situation of ethnic minorities (0.8%) and single fathers (0.4%). The fact that there is coverage makes certain realities more newsworthy and thus disciplines the audience to pay more attention to those groups and ignore others. Reporters change the audience’s perception via realization. The ideas of taking care of those who are old, female, or sick are consistent with Confucian thought. Benevolence, which is rooted in the philosophy of Confucianism, means to love others, especially elders, females, children, and the sick (Kao & Stuifbergen, 1999). However, the news coverage ignores the needs of ethnic
minities and single fathers.

Three newspapers all have established a beat of breaking news (as part of news net [Tuchman, 1978]) for showing dark side of human nature and negative content. It includes crimes and accident narratives (see Table 4). Past studies showed that bad news, including stories describing violence, conflicts, crime and tragedy, and so on, constitutes large part of news coverage (e.g., Carroll, 1989; Stempel, 1988). It inevitably results in overrepresentation of the poor as criminals and violent people. It may reinforce the stereotypes of minorities (Dixon & Linz, 2000). In this study, most of the crime news represents the poor as criminals, who are arrested for alleged sexual assault, violence, theft, and cheating. On an ontological level, realization raises awareness of an existence of poor people’s misbehaviors in the world, thereby affecting the legitimacy of poor people to get help. As Foucault (1977) argues, we identify criminals rather than judge the crimes. On the one hand, individuals inevitably fall into the circulation of ideas of “us” and “them” (Jewkes, 2009). The miserable situation is described as the result of the personal fault of poor people in crime news. They commit crimes and are regarded as bad people, especially those who are accused of social welfare fraud, which attracts wide media attention. On the other hand, transformation of the crime incident or negative content into news coverage might be regarded as a passive form of discipline. Poor people are
disciplined for behaving themselves since they may have a feeling of being constantly gazed and under surveillance, although they are not being observed, while individuals are being disciplined for monitoring the poor people.

4.5.2 Disciplining Social Actors and Government Officials via Realization

Political stories are the second most covered story of poverty. It includes welfare policy, demonstrations, as well as survey polls and statistical release (see Table 5). Reporters transform the information or events into news reporting. News media serves as a platform in discussing the issues or “factualizing” the events.

Although reporters seem to be taking a passive role in this legitimation process, this study showed that most of the policy release or comments come from governmental officials. This result is consistent with the past studies of source selection (Bennet, 1990). Government information is more likely to be used than other types of information. The connection between government officials and reporters makes the news a tool of authority (Schudson, 1989). Reporters have difficulty talking about an issue that no official sources are discussing, and they would be accused of being subjective and unprofessional (McChesney, 2003). It was government officials who set news agendas (Robinson, 1999), but government officials were disciplined to keep a good relationship with reporters and get their news covered more easily.

At the same time, government officials released official statistical reports to
support their policies and get more media attention. For example, “the Hong Kong Social Welfare Department made an announcement that the government offered $1 million to a food bank supporting those in need” (Oriental Daily News, July 24, 2008). The news coverage only has quotes from the head of the Social Welfare Department.

The study also showed that conducting surveys and using official statistics are the common ways for social actors want to get media attention (see Table 5).

On the other hand, those not in power found it difficult to raise an issue. News coverage reports on certain facts and events. If nothing happens, there is no news. The important issues like social inequality do not get media attention unless something happens (McChesney, 2003). Social activists are disciplined in conducting survey polls in order to fall through the cracks of news media. In this data set, 11% of news reports come from survey and statistical reports (see Table 5). For example, a survey poll indicated that almost 90% of elders complained that the welfare subsidies for elders are not enough to meet their basic needs (Oriental Daily News, March 6, 2006). Another example is the Housing Department releasing the statistical report of public housing abuse cases (Hong Kong Economic Times, February 12, 2007). The headline is “Owning 10 properties, worth 10 million. The rich illegally occupy public houses. The Housing Department takes back 500 houses. The abuse cases extend to new public estates.” The existence of fraud case disciplines the general public to scrutinize
their neighbors to avoid more fraud cases. The effect is similar to the influence of crime cases.

The above findings are consistent with the other scholars’ arguments that journalism values empirical observations (Zelizer, 1992), and quantification (Herbst, 1993). Social activists or NGOs conducted a survey to make their voice heard in media, while government officials released statistical reports to make the issues newsworthy.

Besides, reporters also value exciting or dramatic stories as well as human interest stories that can attract the audience’s attention (Ekstrom, 2000). In this data set, 2% of news describes demonstrations (see Table 5). Social activists engaged in demonstrations and petitions to catch media attention were also seen. As Gitlin (1980) argues, news always puts emphasis on the violence of demonstrations. However, most of the demonstrations in Hong Kong are very peaceful. Social activists thus dramatize the demonstrations. For example, they have demonstrations on Boxing Day and write down their requests on paper and then put them inside gift boxes (Oriental Daily News, December 27, 2006). Another example is using red oil paint to symbolize blood. The legislative councillors put red oil paint on their bodies to show their dissent over government policy (Apple Daily, December 27, 2006.). At the same time, the human interest stories describe extraordinary circumstances or spectacular views.
For example, the news describes people living in cubicle apartments or bed space apartments in extreme cases (e.g. Oriental Daily News, Dec, 15, 1999). Reporters as a result tend to neglect a bigger picture of poverty, the just focus on facts, official statement, and experts’ comments (McChesney, 2003).

**Table 6 Distribution of commentary writers by types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Citizens</th>
<th>Columnists(^7)</th>
<th>Legislative Councilors</th>
<th>Government Officials</th>
<th>Scholars &amp; Activists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of news reports (% in total)</td>
<td>4 (5.9%)</td>
<td>42 (61.7%)</td>
<td>14 (20.6%)</td>
<td>2 (2.9%)</td>
<td>6 (8.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^7\) Columnists includes famous writers, commentators, and celebrities.

Source: 68 news items of news commentary

Realization also determines the writers who are chosen to write in news commentaries (see Table 6). News organizations grant more credence to an individual coming from institutions and work closely and continuously with reporters (McChesney, 2003). In the data presented here, the writers are well-known in their areas of expertise, usually poverty issues. They are legislative councillors, scholars, government officials, and columnists. To make their voices heard in the media, the social actors either establish a reputation or are in a position of power (see Table 6).

**4.5.3 Disciplining audience via selection and valuation**

Knowledge is not neutral and objective itself, reporters struggle with government officials, social actors and audience to define the shared way of
understanding of the world via selection and valuation (Andrejevic, 2008). Although reporters value objective and balanced reports, they inevitably adopt this practice unevenly and prioritize certain information (Schedson, 2003). Through selection, reporters determined who would comment on particular issues and what information to be included. By highlighting certain information and ignoring others, reporters reclaim their position to illustrate the reality. Selection determines what is relevant for poverty issues.

In the data presented here, reporters work closely with government officials. Whenever the government releases a new policy, reporters cite government explanations in the report. The explanation usually echoes the self-reliant philosophy. For example, the reporter prioritizes the government officials’ statements: the charge of emergency services is to avoid the abuse of public medical services. The oppositional voices are put at the end of the news article (Apple Daily, November 6, 2002). The reporters also cite anonymous government sources that help to eliminate oppositional voices. The following news article is one of the examples. The government launched a new policy allowing adults immigrants from Mainland China to Hong Kong. This policy sparked controversy among Hong Kong citizens who were worried that the newcomers would overuse welfare benefits and compete with the local citizens for employment. The news coverage quotes the government source,
saying the government “will help adult immigrants to find a job and adapt to society. The government will provide related services, such as retraining services, job assistance services etc.” (Hong Kong Economic Times, January 15, 2011). The use of anonymous sources allows government officials to escape accountability and scrutiny (Kurtz, 2010).

In this data set, although the journalists quote other scholars or legislative councilors who hold opposing views to give a balanced view in the report, those opposing views rarely refuting the philosophy of neoliberalism. Rather, it focuses on the ways government spends money. For example, the councilors suggested a reduction in tax rates and asked for travel subsidies to encourage citizens to look for jobs in distant areas (Apple Daily, February 19, 2006). In another news article, the legislative councilors and social activists blamed the tight controls in government expenditure and suggested creating job opportunities for the lower classes (Oriental Daily News, January 3, 2011).

The findings also suggest reporters simply report official statements and experts’ comments. They never place the issues in a larger political ideology in news coverage. With little contextualization, reporters seems to be neutral and objective. By reporting statements and events, reporters save time and money. However, the audience focuses on facts, events, official statements, and experts’ comments. They
cannot gather a meaningful background for stories and make sense of them in a larger political ideology. They know how to criticize particular policies rather than a bigger ideological project of neoliberalism.

Through valuation, reporters transform the information into shared meaning of the world. There are two different ways of journalistic valuation found in this data set. First, reporters actively comment on the news in editorial page. In this data set, only 3% of news articles addressing poverty are editorials. It indicates that poverty is not a pertinent concern to address and discuss (Table 3). These articles blamed the government for ignoring social inequality and urged them to address this issue. Again, these articles argue that poor people want to be self-reliant, yet fail to do so. For example, “The children do not have the opportunity to study and will still live in poverty after they grow up” (Oriental Daily News, August 23, 2012).

Second, reporters color and value the perception of poverty views via their own descriptions. Two most obvious cases are charity stories and human interest stories. In the data shown here, reporters merely show the bright side of the poor in the charity narrative. The stories display good moral character and virtues of the poor. The poor are identified as responsible people who are eager to fulfill their roles as good fathers, mothers, sons, and so on. The stories also highlight their hardworking and self-reliant characters. They are victims of fate and are forced to be dependent on...
others. Reporters simplify their tragedies as results of accidents or bad health. Within the charity narrative, only those who are in bad health or have had bad luck deserve public help. These articles asked the audience to give generously to the deserved poor. Human interest stories replicate the philosophy of self-reliance by reiterating to the audience the values of hard work. The typical story describes an individual from a modest background who works hard and achieves successful academic results (Hong Kong Economic Times, June 30, 2007) or changes individual’s future (Apple Daily, November 6, 2011).

To summarize, journalists play a vital role in defining poverty knowledge via realization, selection, and valuation. First, they use their institutional power to determine the legitimate way to discuss poverty. Faced with journalism preference of scientism, rationality, and extraordinary stories, social actors and government officials use survey, official statistics, rational language and demonstrations to attract media attention. Second, journalists condition the audience to act as good citizens by repeating the self-reliance project. The individuals are either conditioned to behave themselves or to monitor the behavior of others in economic terms. As such, reporters offer a hand in defining good citizenship within Hong Kong society by privileging values of work capacity and participation in the job market.

4.6 Technology of Domination
4.6.1 Disciplinary gaze

Foucault (1979) used the term “disciplinary gaze” to explain a type of social control. Individuals have a feeling of being under constant observation, and they become their own observers. These techniques of normalization have replaced the repressive and physical violence of governing techniques. Power is diffused throughout our knowledge system and modern institutions. Individuals are deceived to believe our practices are essential for liberation (Holligan, 1999). Modern forms of governmentality influence our mind rather than our bodies directly. Experts are involved in creating and sharing the knowledge that facilitates the modern form of governance. For example, nurses, teachers, and social workers have developed knowledge to facilitate individuals to conform to normative conventions. The disciplinary gaze exists everywhere and governs our gestures, attitudes, and behaviors.

In this section, I argue in this section that the gaze organizes the encounters of poor people with “others”, providing some sense of guilt, shame, and structure to those experiences. The gaze is never pure and innocent. It is a learned ability (Urry & Larsen, 2011). It, like language, is culturally framed, and there are many different ways of gaze. It is not only conditioned by individual experiences and expectations, but also a matter of socio-cultural context (Berger, 1972; P. Turner, S. Turner &
Carroll, 2005). The poverty gazes are constructed based on class, gender, age, and ethnicity. This construction in any particular historical period is also related to the experience of non-poor people. The rise of social work and charity service was regarded as a benevolent solution to poverty. They constitute a halfway point between the government and families and strike a balance between public expectation and private behavior. The increase of charity services has a close relationship with the development of a welfare state (Biggs & Powell, 2001) and new forms of social regulation (Garland, 1985). The construction of poverty gaze is thus highly related to the experience of social workers and volunteers.

The poverty gaze is enabled by various technologies and media, such as photographs, media coverage, film, and digital images. Poverty is a contested term, which is tied to an individual’s imagination and government policies within particular socio-cultural context, although poverty is generally related to social and economic disadvantages. The meaning of this term is not embedded in society, but it is mediated by system of representation (Fairclough, 1992; Wenden, 2005). An individual is chosen to gaze upon because there is anticipation and imagination. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-charity practices, such as film, newspaper, magazines, TV, which reinforce the gaze (Bordo, 1993; Thompson & Hirchman, 1995; Urry & Larsen, 2011).
There are different ways of viewing poor people. This section discusses what produce a distinct poverty gaze, and power relations exist between gazers and gazees within charity service. The previous section illustrated the processes by which neoliberalism and other prevalent discourses at large establish standards of normal, acceptable behaviors and problematizes the traits that deviate from the norm (Joy and Venkatesh, 1994). The gaze is the major source of normalization. It normalizes the cultural values of who deserve help.

At the same time, exhibitionism allows the poor to reclaim their control over the information and manage their self-image (Baruh, 2009). Through webcams, social media and reality television, individuals actively engage in exhibitionism. It is a form of “empowerment” (Koskela, 2004, p.199). It allows gazers find a safe way to gaze (Dholakia & Zwick, 2001).

On the basis of observation and interviews in my field work, three types of gazes were identified as prominent in the gatherings among poor people. These three different types of gazes determine the normal, acceptable behavior and traits of those deserving help: they cannot meet their basic material needs, use resources well, and have good work attitudes. The following explains how the gaze develops and circulates.

The notion of the poverty gaze is not meant to account for why specific
individuals have empathy over others and are motivated to offer help. Instead, this section examines systematic nature of various gazes, which fosters the necessary outlook and normative behavior of the poor. The gazes are developed and constructed within social discourse and practices. The examination of gazes helps us to understand the physical and social relations between gazer and gazees organized by professionals and government policy dependent on various socio-cultural contexts.

4.6.1.1 Gaze upon material poverty.

Poverty gazes first involve the gazes of material poverty, particularly living environment. Hong Kong is well-known for its expensive housing. Poor people cannot afford to rent a decent apartment, unless they successfully apply for public rental housing. Before the day comes, they have no choice but to live in cage homes, cubicle apartment, subdivided flats, on the street, and so on. People are expected to live in extremely tiny places. The size of the house and the living conditions are the hot topic during home visits. Social workers and volunteers typically ask and estimate the price of the rent on their first home visit. Juan, a 55-year-old single female, said,

I have been looking for a new place for a very long time. I am lucky to find a home here. It costs HK $2,300 per month for a place with a single bed and a basic bedroom and kitchen. All of my roommates are girls. It is clean and neat,

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14 The median monthly household income in Hong Kong for 2013 was HK$ 22,400 (U.S. $ 2,872) (HKSAR, 2013).
although it is quite expensive…This small room does not have a window. An electronic exhaust fan is installed to ensure the room has adequate air ventilation.

There is always a trade-off. The subdivided flat of other respondents are bigger, and cheaper than Juan’s home, but the flats are usually old, shabby and broken, even have a water leak in the wall and ceiling. Mary, age 32, is also one of the examples. She is a single mom living with a 9 year-old son. Her home has a water leak in the ceiling, which has led to the growth of mold, fungi, and bacteria.

All subdivided flats I visited were located in old residential buildings with no lift and had dirty staircases, where housed brothels may be situated in a few floors. Although respondents paid unreasonably high rent for subdivided flats and suffered from poor building conditions, subdivided flats were still preferable to cage homes and street corners, which are notoriously smelly, dirty and lack privacy. In my study, only male respondents lived in the cage homes; this result is consistent with past studies (Society for Community Organization, 2008).

As Koskela (2000) argues, different forms of spatiality imply various social phenomena and social problems. The concept of space is crucial in explaining the gendered power relations, exercise of power and circulation of capital. Space is gendered. Gender can be seen as an important form of power and repression
associated with space (Massey, 1994). On the basis of my observation, far more men than women live in cage homes and on the street. Chan, who has started one of the NGO and worked there over 20 years, explains this phenomenon, saying that, “Cage homes are dirty and smelly. Most of the women can’t stand it.” At the simplest level, it may be true. However, it also involves a more complicated level of gender structure, that is, the existence of male violence influences the women’s perception of space. Mary told me that she always has arguments with John, her flat mate, but she is always in an inferior position because he is stronger than her. Apart from physical male violence, Massey (1994) argues that women are the objects of gaze in urban space. The visibility of women becomes one of the factors for women’s insecurity (Brown, 1998). Gazing involves power relations. Looking can be as powerful as physical violence and foster sexual harassment (MacCannell & MacCannell, 1993). Ting, who lives in a subdivided flat, told me that she needs her younger brother to accompany her after the late afternoon when she goes back home because she finds that it is not safe to walk up the staircase alone. The gaze of others makes her not feel very secure.

The iron sheet house is another choice for poor households. Wei Sheng, a single dad, is living in an iron sheet house with his daughter. The interior design of his house is quite new and fashionable, although the outlook is simple and crude. The
iron absorbs heat effectively and explains why the house has an extraordinarily high room temperature. Air conditioning is turned on almost all of the time because of the heat and poor air ventilation. His iron sheet house is situated in a very remote area. The long queues for public rental housing and extraordinary high rent in Hong Kong force poor households to squeeze themselves in such poor living environments. Respondents without public rental house indicated that their major expenses are rent. A social worker, Lam, told me their clients always make a joke, saying, “Getting public rental housing is better than winning the Mark Six Lottery.” The poor living environment is somehow like a “tourist” spot for new helpers to learn a lesson in Hong Kong poverty. When there is a new volunteer, social workers and experienced volunteers will first emphasize the extraordinarily bad living conditions of poor people. Chan said, “You can’t imagine how dreadful the living conditions are. You may read the news about cage homes, cubicle apartments, subdivided flats, and street-sleepers. It is not a myth. Let me show it to you.”

There is a close link between poverty gaze, media, and photography. The gaze is constructed discursively and materially through images and mass media. Photographs and videos are not innocent and objective. They are constructed within asymmetrical power relations. The representation of poverty is situated politically.

15 It is one of the biggest lotteries in Hong Kong. The winner may learn more than HK$10 million (US$1.28 million).
Social activists and charity organization deploy and construct photographs so as to invoke empathy and initiate actions (Tsoi, 2013). The extraordinarily cramped and squalid living conditions of poor people attract the attention of both local media (e.g., Ngo, 2014) and international media (e.g., Gayle, 2012). Photographs construct anticipation. Cherry, a helper, said, “I had seen the photographs of the living conditions, but still felt shocked when she witnessed the tiny squalid homes.” Digitization of photography not only makes memories last longer, but also disassociates the photographic memories from a fixed physical location to virtual reality via emails, blogs, and social networking sites. Digital images extend the poverty gaze in time and space. It becomes an element of multiple narratives to invoke empathy. As Chan stated, “Far more people come to help and donate after I post a picture of a cage home on my Facebook.” She chooses the places to visit because they are in some sense extraordinary and abnormal. The places are visually objectified via photographs and videos. These enable the gaze to be captured and distributed across time and space.

Besides the living environment, material goods, such as foods, clothes, and electronic appliances, are also gazed upon. They are supposed to spend money on necessities, rather than luxury goods and services. Otherwise, they may be portrayed as deviants, which might make them feel guilty or distressful:
I would have never tried a buffet before Mr. Wong (a volunteer) treated me to such a nice meal. The buffet was so expensive, and I would have rather saved the money for other necessities...The smartphone is not mine, it is my son’s; he has a new smartphone and passed the old one to me. I seldom spend money on gadgets. (Chang You, age 65)

Other responses include, “Yes, I rarely use air-conditioning but will turn on it when people come to visit me” (Victoria, age 35) and “My friend bought this seafood and red wine for me. I won’t buy it by myself” (Gao Shan, age 46).

The above messages reveal the operation of the disciplinary gaze. The combination of fear and shame facilitate self-discipline and control. The respondents are constantly worried about how others would see them. Buying luxury goods represent a loss of self-control and self-discipline that is potentially observable. They, therefore, explained how they obtained luxury goods, although nobody asked them.

The disciplinary gaze makes their private lives visible and constantly dictates and constrains their behaviors. It focuses on specific aspects of private life that do not conform to cultural standards. However, individuals have abilities to resist the objective gaze and negotiate the meaning of their actions with others. There are tensions between different gazes. Power is contested among different parties, and the subjectivities of individuals are the reflections of images that are embedded in social
relations of power:

I was very stressful because my husband treats me badly. He slept with other women in our rental estates. I am very upset and social workers suggest me to do massage every week. It costs $500 per hour each time. (Hui Fang, age 34)

The volunteers immediately asked Hui Fang to change her means for relaxation, saying that it costs too much and that she should save some money for her children. However, Hui Fang was not convinced and insisted that it is the best method to relax.

In this case, power is not monolithic but can be contested and negotiated among social workers, volunteers, and Hui Fang herself.

On the other hand, gaze also enables individuals to become an active subject in revealing their abnormal lives; they are liberated from shame and reveal the unequal power relations via transparency and visibility. Juan always welcomed others to visit her place and took photos. She said, “Look at this. My home is very small, but it costs me a lot of money; it is very expensive. It is unfair to us. It shows how serious the inequality is in Hong Kong.” Koskela (2004) suggests that individuals may choose to present their private lives publicly. This action can be considered as a form of exhibitionism. A look can be seen as a form of judgment (Burgin, 2000). In the Foucauldian sense, individuals internalize control. Shame keeps people obedient and self-disciplined because they are afraid that they are being seen as deviant and
unacceptable. However, exhibitionism can work as a form of empowerment and opens up new subjectivities (Featherstone & Burrows, 1995). Individuals deliberately make themselves seen via visits, photos, and videos, and their visibility becomes the tool for them to resist against the power structure or for their own means. Exhibitionism may even be used as a form of dishonesty. For example, Shan, who is a helper and undergraduate student, told me that she and her friends were cheated by an old man. They found an old man who was very sick during their first visit. They visited him frequently and bought him some food and basic necessities. Later, they found that the old man treated them badly when they did not bring him gifts and food. They checked with his neighbors and found that he was not as sick as he had claimed. He always sold off the food or sent it to others. It showed that gaze does not necessarily lead to submission, but can empower people to strategically use it for their own purposes.

4.6.1.2 Gaze upon use of resources

Gaze exists on the responsible use of resources. To prevent the misuse of resources, social workers and helpers always gaze upon whether the resources are put to good use. For example, Lam, a social worker, told me that when Han asked her for the same electronic appliance for a third time, she checked whether the appliance was broken before they offered help. Based on my observation, some elderly line up several times to get moon cakes and a box of rice, although all those in need of
assistance are told that they can only queue up one time. The social workers and helpers said they must monitor them and avoid it from happening. Thus, they have two roles, helper and investigator, which reveal the unequal power relationships between social workers and the poor, as well as the gazers and the gazees. The manner in which help is offered (particularly social workers) maintains a sense of authority over those who are getting help.

Some poor people internalize the normative standards, have a self-critical view over their own behaviors, and problematize any deviations from these ideals. It is a self-governing gaze, but it also has the potential to be a disciplinary gaze towards others. How poor people view other poor people is included and can be theorized as an intra-poverty gaze. The term is the re-articulation of Hollay, Green, and Hollay’s “intratourist gaze” (2011, p. 235). Intra-poverty gaze, like intratourist gaze, emphasises the way in which people see each other. The gaze constructs everyday knowledge and influences other poor people’s understanding about what is regarded as acceptable behavior of poor people. The self-reflexive poor people may monitor their behaviors in the light of the norms and discourse. Hence, poor people become both the objects and subjects of the gaze. As with many respondents, the way to use the resources served as the normalized standards of acceptable behaviors. Ye, a volunteer, said,
I felt ashamed when I saw their manners. This non-governmental organization offers a free buffet in a very upscale hotel for them each year. They had only about three hundred slots this year. It is a very valuable opportunity that should be cherished. Many people want to get this chance, but the number of seats is very limited. Not everyone got a chance to join this activity; however, some of them did not show up for the activities, and a few informed the social workers they could not come one day before the activities. It made the social workers very angry, and the social workers could find other people to fill their seats within such short notice. People wasted valuable resources because it is free of charge. It is unacceptable. They don’t treasure the opportunity.

The gaze ensures normalization and produces exclusion. Mei, aged 45, is one of the examples. She married a Hong Kong man and gave birth to his son. However, her husband died suddenly, and it is now difficult for her to successfully apply for a one-way permit. She stayed in Hong Kong with her son, but she cannot work or apply for welfare because she has not acquired Hong Kong permanent resident status yet. It makes their lives very difficult. The government’s support for her son is the only means to maintain their livelihood. To her, Hong Kong people are very nice, but she does not want to go out and have lunch with them. She said, “They treated me to a

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16 Mainland Chinese with family in Hong Kong can apply for one-way permit to permanently reside in Hong Kong (Chung & Zuo, January 13, 2015).
meal every time when I went out with them, which I thought was not very appropriate. I rather stay at home and no go out.” Mei is absolutely aware of how one look at her and her behaviors. She cannot conform to the normative standards and choose to keep herself out of the spotlight.

The images of the poor people are not only built on experience, but also by mass media. Poor people can also be influenced by mass media and have a negative perception on other poor people. Happy, age 52, is living in interim housing. She is a new Chinese immigrant, and her husband is from Hong Kong and works as a laborer. They sometimes get help from NGOs because they cannot make ends meet. However, she also despises the public welfare recipients. She said,

There are many people who just take the government benefits and apply for CSSA. They are lazy and are not willing to work…although I do not know anyone doing such things to a society, I believe it must be happening around us. The mass media always says so.

The mass media helps to reconstruct and reproduce the gaze of normative behavior of the poor. The above conversation also reflects that the gaze is not only about the ways the helpers, the social workers, and the volunteers view the poor, but also how the poor view, imagine, and construct one other. Happy is living in an interim housing project, which is temporary accommodation provided by the Housing
Department. The rental price is extremely low compared to the private housing market.

Although she is a new Chinese immigrant, she internalizes the normative standards of using public resources, disciplining herself and problematizing the deviant behaviors according to Hong Kong media standards. She told me it is better to be self-reliant and not depend on the government. To her, getting public housing from the government is not equal to depending on the government, but she despises the people who get welfare from the government. Consider the following reflection:

It is impossible to buy a flat in Hong Kong; it is too expensive. The government is inclined to the interests of the business sector. There is collusion between developers and the Hong Kong Government. It causes property hegemony…people have many children because they can get more public support from the government.

The norms and discourse developed in normal conversation and media construct the acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Both public housing and CSSA are government welfare; however, living in public housing is regarded as normative behavior of the poor, yet receiving CSSA is not. It is also consistent with the above findings that the welfare recipients are portrayed as folk devils, while the public housing occupants are never blamed in news articles.
A catalyst for differentiating behaviors between poor people, the intra-poverty gaze is particularly evident between people from different immigration eras and with different identities. For example, Ye came to Hong Kong 20 years ago. She imagined and perceived herself as different from others in her attitudes towards the host city. Those who came earlier are more empathetic with the host city.

When they have a buffet, they eat a lot of it. I heard one of the children say someone is too full and will vomit in the toilet. His parents should stop him from eating too much food…They not only ate all the remaining food, but also took many utensils from the hotel without asking the hosts. Shame on them! People were staring at us and looking at the way they behaved. It is not a proper manner…Those who have come to Hong Kong in these last few years are different from us. They don’t treasure the gift and resources… My son would not have behaved like that. He always let others take the food first and has a thankful heart. Other people showed appreciation to my son…I taught him how to behave and treat others; it is the responsibility of mothers.

The progress of problematization involves ethical and moral judgment. Ye, age 56, situates her behaviors and her son’s as more ethical and better than others. In this sense, the intrapoverty gaze helps to qualify the gazers’ behaviors as virtuous, in comparison to others, although they cannot be self-reliant and sometimes get material
help from others.

Ye commented in front of Yue Chang, age 36, a new immigrant, and her children when I had a home visit with Yue Chang and Ye. The conversation between poor people is not just important for them to socialize and help each other out, it also influences poor people’s behavior and constructs their knowledge about what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Therefore, the conversation and the gatherings are an effective experience but also an authoritative one. However, this moral judgment with regard to getting help is not always consistent. Ye’s son is good at drawing, but she did not have enough money to support her son to develop his interests. She asked help from others, and her son was satisfied with this arrangement at the beginning, but he changed his mind one year later.

My son has a talent in drawing, but I cannot afford to pay for the lessons. They are too expensive to me, so my story was published in the media. Many people reached out to me and told us they were willing to help out. One professional painting teacher offered to give my son lessons. At the beginning, all things went well, and my son learned a lot of skills from the lessons. One year later, he suddenly told me he didn’t want to go anymore because he didn’t want to continually get a free lesson, which was very expensive. I had no choice but to respect his decision.
Again, this story shows that the gaze is not necessarily an authoritative one; people may use the gaze as a tool for them to address the inequality and get a better livelihood. It can be considered as exhibitionism. The media plays a role and allows the situation exposed across time and space. On the other hand, the above conversation reveals that the ethical standards of behavior are changeable. Ye’s son does not want to continually get others’ help when he grows up. The acceptable behavior, which is acceptable in Ye’s son’s eyes, became unacceptable one year later. The standards vary according to time and space within different socio-cultural contexts.

The intrapoverty gaze is not just about the way one differentiates oneself from others on the basis of immigration duration within a monocultural population. They gaze upon people from other cultures. People seem to be very conscious of and constantly make a clear distinction between different cultures, particularly city and rural individuals, as well as Mainlanders and those from Hong Kong. Happy emphasizes that she is different from those who come from rural areas. She is educated and civilized. She can adapt to Hong Kong life easily because her home town is also a city.

Juan also raised the issue of discrimination without being asked:

I am in the same committee with Mainlanders. As a Hong Kong local, I never
discriminate against the Mainlanders. I fight for their rights and welfare benefits…but I don’t agree to let doubly non-permanent resident pregnant women from the Mainland give birth in Hong Kong, and I support the policy of a zero quota on them in hospitals. Otherwise, the children of Mainlanders will be eligible for all welfare benefits if they are born in Hong Kong. It will cause a big problem.

To Mainlanders, they are also conscious of the way other Hong Kong people gaze upon them. “My neighbors, as Hong Kong people, always keep their eyes on us. They discriminated against us and said something bad about us,” Happy said.

When I asked how she knew it, she told me they do not have any evidences, but have a feeling about it. As McLaren (2002) argues, one does not knows whether he/she is being gazed upon, but he/she behaves like it is. In the above two cases, gaze is ethnicized. The gaze reveals the power relations between Hong Kong people (gazers) and Mainlanders (gazes). Mainlander is the one who are or are aware of being watched by Hong Kong locals and tends to live up the expectation of Hong Kong locals.

4.6.1.3 Gaze upon working status and self-reliance project

As shown in Section 4.5, the media helps to construct a discourse that people have to be self-reliant and work hard to make their ends meet. Work status, therefore,
is an important element for gazers to gaze upon. Neoliberalism promotes a sense of self-governing and individualizes the risk management. It leads to a new form of prudentialism. The government controls the individuals at a distance without being responsible for them. Individuals are themselves responsible for social risks, such as illness, poverty, and unemployment. As a street cleaner, Xian Jie age 60, has to work for nine hours a day, six days a week. She does not have any entertainment and works all the time. She sometime works as part-time cleaner after work if she finds she is not tired. “I rarely watch TV or read newspapers, and my working life occupies all my life. My monthly salary is about $5000, I never thought of applying for CSSA. I don’t want such thing. It is not good.” She believes it is her who is responsible of her life, rather than the government, although she cannot earn much and is getting old.

Shan, age 50, said,

“Do you think it is not very good to choose job? I want to work for community service. I worked as a rehabilitator, I found the job very meaningful, but I have to resign and went back to my home village to visit my mom because she was very sick. I cannot find a similar job when I am back. I want to get a job which can help others.”

Shan has a critical view of her job status. She feels guilty because she believes that it is better to continue to work rather than pursue her dream job. She was worried
about the way I see her and made a confession to me.

The processes of normalization and problematization also influence the work preference of parents, although they have other caregiving responsibilities. A typical account of the preference to work is offered by Yan, a middle aged woman and new Chinese immigrant.

“I want to find a job and not rely on the government…I know that I have to take care of my children, but getting a job can earn a living for a family. My neighbors and friends can help me to take care of them.”

The decision to work or not is much harder for single parents, especially single fathers. “I am now planning to look for jobs, but I am still worried about my daughter because she is still young,” said Wei Sheng. He was a bus driver, but he quit the job one year after he got divorced from his wife. He found that the nanny was not doing her job well, and he would rather take care of his daughter by himself. His daughter is now about 13 years old. He is now receiving government assistance to support his family. The lack of a job and money makes him feel ashamed.

“I felt no face (shameful) when we talked about it. I had no job and could not afford to buy a uniform for my daughter’s extra-curricular activities…my daughter told me she does not care, but I know she wants to participate deep in her heart… I seldom see my friends, even my family members, since I quit my
Hong Kong is a modern society, which has long been influenced by a Chinese patriarchy (Chan et al., 2002). Women (especially middle-class) in Hong Kong take major responsibility for child care and housework, although they have full-time paid jobs, while men are expected to merely engage in full-time paid work (Lee, 2002). In this sense, Wei Sheng’s decision to quit his job and take up childcare responsibilities deviates from normative standards. It is, therefore, more difficult for him to accept his work status, compared to other single moms. He chooses to distance from his friends and family in order to escape the gaze from others. This kind of social isolation rarely happened to the female respondents.

Gui Cai, age 56, and Mr. Gu, age 62, are other two similar cases. Gui Cai was a cook, but he suffered from a stroke a few years ago and was forced to quit his job. Gui Cai told me he feels bad about himself because he cannot work again. He seldom contacts his friends and colleagues, similar to Wei Sheng. He said, “No money, no jobs, no friends.”

Mr. Gu has encountered a similar situation, he was a construction worker, and is now living in temporary homeless shelter. He said,

I could not get a full-time job when I grew older…My wife kept quarrelling with me because I had no money. I left home alone, and did not want to see
my wife again…I had no money and no regular job. I don’t see any point to meeting with my friends.

Work status seems to be more important to men than women, to younger ones than older ones. I have interviewed aged over-70 elderly males, and they seldom mentioned jobs. They all have been retired for more than five years. They get used to living off of their savings or depend on government subsidies. The gaze upon elders and older adults is different: the elders are supposed to be retired, while the older adults are expected to work. It is particularly difficult for the working class to adjust the retirement. They do not have savings to maintain their living standards when they retire. Most of them, therefore, prefer work to retirement, although they can receive government welfare in old age. Many old respondents told me that retirement is not their own choice. They were forced to quit their job because of poor health conditions.

For example, Hong, age 68, said,

I would rather be self-reliant if I still have the ability to work and my health condition is satisfactory. I worked as clerk when I was in Mainland China…I came to Hong Kong when I was middle aged and worked as a hostess in a Chinese restaurant. I had very long working hours every day. It was not an easy job, and it caused me back and leg pain. However, I continued to work for a few years until the day the doctor advised me to quit the job, and I had
difficulty walking…I am now relying on CSSA.

In this sense, the respondents problematize themselves if they do not have a job unless they have a very serious health problem. They continue to work in the same position, although they know that the heavy workload is hurting their health. The lack of a job is considered as a problematic situation that can be a target of justification. It makes people feel guilty and ashamed. Some even choose to hide themselves so as to escape the gaze of others. These respondents’ perceptions echo the above discourse analysis that work status is often considered as symbolizing one’s moral character and the ability. The new immigrants also know that work status reflects one’s level of work ethic through the socialization of other Hong Kong people. For example, Yan, age 40, is a new Chinese immigrant. She lived in a sub-divided flat and was sued by the fire department because her washing machine was blocking the escape route. She was scary and did not know what she should do. Lai, a volunteer who visited her regularly, helped her to draft a plea letter as follows:

Lord Chief justice, I have just come to Hong Kong on a single-way permit and don’t know much about Hong Kong…I have come to Hong Kong because I want to be self-reliant. I am now living in a subdivided flat of an old residential building. I have to take care of my son and daughter who are studying in high school and primary school, respectively. I have serious back
pain, but I insist on not applying for CSSA. I am now working in a Chinese restaurant, and my monthly salary is about $6000. My life is very difficult.

Yan has not been given any fines. In this case, self-reliance was interpreted as a moral merit. It reflects that a working mom is viewed as having a more desirable situation than relying on government welfare.

On the other hand, it is interesting to point out that the self-reliance project is not on an individual basis but is on family basis. In Hong Kong, just in like many Asian societies, family support is deemed as an essential and major source of care. The Hong Kong Government encourages family members to support the old people (Hong Kong SAR Government, 1994; Tung, 1997), while formal support from the government and charity organizations is very limited (Philips, 2000; Philips & Yeh, 1999). When elders apply for CSSA, their children have to make a declaration that they no longer financially support their parents (Li, 2013). The gazes of others makes the “abandoning” adults feel ashamed, and they are regarded as unacceptable in Chinese society, in which financial support is an important part of filial piety practices.

Consider the following reflections:

I want to apply for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and have asked my daughter to sign the declaration, but she refused to do it. She told me she can give me more money each month. However, it is still not enough. My life
is very difficult and cannot buy enough food to eat. I have talked to my
daughter several times; she insists that it is her responsibility to financially
support me. She is a filial daughter and treats me very well, but she has to
support her children and cannot give me much money. (Cai Jiao, age 78).

This passage reveals Cai Jiao’s daughter’s desire to be viewed as filial and that
she is afraid that she would be deemed selfish if she did not financially support her
parent. It is consistent with the past research. Cheung and Kwan (2009) stated that
children are supposed to provide financial support to older parents in Hong Kong. In
the spirit of traditional filial piety, Chinese culture is predisposed to believe that
money shows respect and piety to their parents and reflects one’s level of moral
standards.

The above descriptions show that the respondents are aware that they would be
gazed upon by others. The relations between gazers and gazees are organized by
many professionals, reporters, social workers, activists, volunteers, and poor people
themselves. In contemporary society, these discourses construct what you are
supposed to gaze upon when you are interacting with poor people. The media plays an
important role in reconstructing and circulating people’s imagination and anticipation.
The gazes serve as both empowering and controlling forces. The respondents’ actions
and responses are motivated by culturally sanctioned knowledge claims regarding
what the work ethic is and how one deserving public help would behave. The poor can be both objects and subjects of the gazes. They may help to construct and reinforce the normalization and problematization process. The analysis of gaze also illustrates that the gaze is gendered, ethnicized, and age-related. The social expectations vary depending on the gender, ethnicity, and age of gazees within particular socio-cultural contexts. As mentioned above, some gazes may serve other functions, including education and fundraising. The gazes can be educational if they are used to tell us the conditions of Hong Kong poverty. The gazes sometimes are reproduced to raise the seriousness of the problem.

As Foucault argues, power creates the knowledge that limits and defines the rules and norms embedded in society. It determines what is knowable and acceptable. Gaze, as a major form of social control, make individuals have a feeling of being constantly watched. A disciplinary power is operated via constant observation and threats. Individuals may become a disciplined subject via internalization of the gaze. At the same time, the poor may help to construct and reinforce the normalization and problematization process via the intra-poverty gaze.

4.6.2 Classification

Foucault (1977) argues that domination is operated through observation, threats, and punishment. Individuals become disciplined and obedient. In pre-modern
Europe, disciplinary power was executed via the use of fear generated by displays of barbarity and torture. This practice becomes less effective in exercising control when populations grow continuously. To Foucault, the power is exercised within a knowledge system and discourses in modern society. This part of analysis has contributed to the understandings of how the self-reliance project act as technology of domination that is embedded in a discursive web of normalizing practices. Juan is applying for CSSA. She is being classified as an able-bodied recipient who needs to regularly participate in community service. Poor people are subjected to the normalizing discourse of the ideal work attitudes. As mentioned above, they were continually defined as lazy and selfish if they deviated from the ideal norms and depended on government support. Volunteering work served as a means of domination and as conditioning practices. The Hong Kong Government governed the individuals by classifying them as able-bodied and forcing them to engage in community service.

4.7 Technology of Self

Through the use of a Foucauldian perspective, the following part illustrates how the following technologies can negotiate the meaning of the poverty self by the self’s own consciousness. The emergence of neoliberalism and disciplinary gaze may lead to different forms of resistance. The focus of other social responsibility and
social roles has allowed individuals with opportunity to construct and negotiate their own identities. Technologies of self fill out the meaning of the poverty narrative. Technologies of self can be identified in five domains: they are engaging in volunteer work, enrolling in retraining programs, fighting for social rights, fulfilling social roles, and modifying the appearance of identity via technology. RQ4 is answered.

4.7.1 Volunteering as Technology of Self

Volunteering can be utilized as a technology of the self that allows the respondents to practice certain freedoms within a limited context and also able to exercise power to manipulate others. Individuals are embedded in human relations that constitute themselves as subjects.

The volunteer work enables Juan to transform herself. She worked for an NGO as a volunteer to promote a retraining course. She told me,

I don’t dare to speak in public about the past. The social workers asked me to try. I am scared I’ll die when I make my first attempt, but I’ll get used to it and have a better performance after a few tries. Other helpers and social workers all said I do a good job. I made a breakthrough in my life via engaging in volunteer work.

Through self- improvement, individuals can construct their own identity and negotiate meanings of good citizens.
It is particularly important for elderly to use volunteer work as self-techniques and to create a new type of subjective experience in old age. Technology is a mechanism through which individuals negotiate their identities, transform and understand themselves. It is closely related to the increase of using leisure activity in the construction of new identity later in life (Lo, 2014). Almost all respondents over 60 have become volunteers in an NGO. As the respondents do not have much money to develop their leisure activities, volunteering is one of the ways to continually recreate self-identity. It echoes the social discourse that advocates increased participation in social activities, promotes wellbeing, and constructs a positive self (Chung & Park, 2008; Katz, 2000). Many of them have joined more than five different NGOs as members and participate in different activities and volunteer work. They told me they feel great that they can help others and contribute to the society. They will continue to participate in the activities if their health is satisfactory. They reconstruct the dominant discourses through the practices of self-development and constitution of ethical and responsible selves.

4.7.2 Education as Technology of Self

Education programs and training also served as technologies of self. Bao ling mentioned,

I joined the retraining program and learnt the skills to work as helpers in
hospital. The retraining program is good and equips me with the knowledge of patient care. It is good for me, although I am not sure whether I will be a helper in hospitals.

Joining the retraining and lifelong education program was a means for successful work path transformation that fits the dominant discourse, but Bao Ling would choose the specific program and the course based on her timetables and select a work identity after the training. This reveals that volunteer work and retraining programs are not a totally dominating power that controls poor people’s every action.

Mrs. Fong, age 60, enrolled a retraining course provided by the government to equip individuals to join the workforce again. It is related to the growth of lifelong education as a way to construct a new identity. Mrs. Fong learns to make desserts in the course. She, however, recognized that she is too old to start a new career. She said,

I enrolled in the course but did not plan to work again. I learn the skills so that I can do volunteer work and serve others desserts in the community center. The other elders feel so happy when they try my food. I am satisfied and glad to help others.

As stated above, neoliberalism as a form of governmentalities advocates self-responsibilities. Individuals are encouraged to join the workforce, rather than rely on government welfare. On the contrary, Mrs. Fong engages in the technologies of
self. She launches a process of subjectivation and derives her own subjectivity from power and knowledge, which involves critical self-awareness. She has not been normalized by power and has a relative freedom to interpret her own behaviors. She considers herself to be a responsible citizen and moral subject in her own style. Taking a retraining program and helping others without monetary rewards serve as ethncal self-care. She controls the use of power to leave others memories of a beautiful existence.

4.7.3 Fighting for Human Rights as Technology of Self

Some of the poor engage in conscious, active critique of the discursive constructions of neoliberalism propounded by the media. Mr. Zhou, 85, believes it is good to join the protest and ask for their rights.

We have a regular meeting organized by Society for Community Organization\(^\text{17}\). The host shared with us the current news and policy. We understand more about the society, although we may have a small talk at the back and do not focus all the time. I have also sometimes joined the protection to fight for our rights.

Juan mentioned that she loves to attend the meeting organized by the

\(^{17}\)\text{The Society for Community Organization is an organization that fights for human rights at the grassroots level, especially Mainland Chinese people, street-sleepers, and aged singletons, etc. Their information can be found on their website: }\text{http://www.soco.org.hk/project/project_main_e.htm}
Neighbourhood and Workers Services\textsuperscript{18}.

“The organization has opened my eyes and equipped me with knowledge about social affairs; for example, they have a seminar that reiterates the importance of universal suffrage and democracy. It transformed my life. I rarely paid attention to the news in the past, but now I have become more knowledgeable about social affairs and citizens’ right. I share my knowledge with my friends and relatives and even discuss social issues with new friends I meet on the Internet. It is a great experience. I was ignorant about social issues in the past, but I can now tell others the main points of different policies. I also joined the protests and helped the Mainlanders to fight for their rights.”

Through the social meetings and protections, Juan became reflective about her life and transmits herself. She is able to problematize the rationalities of neoliberalism that guide their behaviors and then works over in the ethical work and practice of freedom after the above problematization. As such, Juan engaged in active self-reflection to produce sites of contestation over the meanings and contours of discursive construction of responsible citizens (Markula & Pringle, 2006). After understanding the rules of play and the ethics of practice, she reduced the effects of domination over herself within the power relations.

\textsuperscript{18} The Neighbourhood and Workers Services (NWS) is a political group that supports democracy. It is regarded as the pan-democracy camp. It also provides services and education programs for grassroots and working class people (Neighbourhood and Workers Services, 2015).
4.7.4 Performing Social Roles as Technology of Self

Confucian values constitute a major part of traditional Chinese beliefs. They embrace the principal of respecting superiors and taking care of those who are inferior, especially family members (Hwang, 1999). Chinese people are expected to do their best to satisfy their family members. Filial piety is one of the core cultural values for Chinese people (Hwang, 1995). Consider the following reflection:

I have to take care of my mom. She is too old to stay in our home village alone.

I know that it will bring me a lot of trouble if she overstays in Hong Kong, but she hurt her legs when she planned to go back to the Mainland. I have no choice but ask her to stay. She is my mom, and I have to take care of her...We don’t have money to see doctors when she is sick, and she is not eligible for any welfare support, but at least I am here to take care of her. Chang You

Through taking care of her mom, Chang continually plays an active role in transforming and governing herself to attain a certain state of happiness and perfection. She knows absolutely well that letting her mom overstay in Hong Kong will bring her many troubles and violate the rationality of neoliberalism, but she redeems them through acknowledgement of perceived violations of the moral code she used to construct herself as an ethical, moral person via behaving in a caring manner towards others in the subjectivation process.
Taking care of other family members is also deemed as important part of fulfilling moral obligations. To Wei, she has to take care of her grandchildren and her relatives who are mentally disabled. She is busy all day because she has to do all the housework for her family and relatives.

“It is my responsibility to take care of my grandchildren, although they are very naughty. My relatives have very bad luck; she and her daughter both are mentally disabled. If I do not take care of them, they will be in a miserable situation.”

She transforms herself to attain a state of perfection and purity via helping her relatives and fulfilling her socially expected roles.
4.7.5 Modifying the Appearance of Identity as Technology of Self

As Morris (1998) argues, technology helps to realize the promise of ideal identity. There are a growing number of internet users using social media as a free-floating form of identity management (Jason & Biggs, 2004). In Turkle’s study (1996), homepages are examples for “multiple yet coherent” identities (p. 259). She demonstrated her commitments to the celebration of multiple and fragmented identities experimentation. Haraway (1998) suggested online identity is “split and contradictory” (p. 195), so that a person can engage in both rational discussion and fantastic imagination; this allows one to interrogate positioning and facilitate political coalitions. From a postmodern perspective, cyberspaces provide an opportunity for a person to present oneself without commitment to a master self that governs the body and escapes from the burden of coherent identities in the offline spaces. In other words, digital cyberspaces provide venues for people to realize their fragmented, fluid postmodern identities. Juan is one of the examples, she use Facebook to meet new friends around the world. She said, “I meet new friends on the Internet. One of my friends comes from Taiwan. He keeps in contact with me via Facebook. We talk about political news and human rights and found that we hold similar political views. I am happy that he appreciates what I have done for the poor.” Juan did not tell her friend that she receives welfare assistance; she modified her virtual identity on the Internet.
Social media can be constructed as a medium via which technologies of self may be exercised. Juan is empowered to set up her own communities with similar ethics as herself. She, therefore, is able to pursue her dreams with reference to her own moral standards and beliefs.

In each case, a technology of self is used to reshape the self in poverty life and to overcome the existing discourses on poverty. It is different from technologies of domination in which the possibilities of self-experience on the part of poor people are in and of themselves affected by the presence of social workers or helpers who have authority. The best example is illustrated in the poverty gaze, as above mentioned. Technologies of self provides spaces for self-regulation and better understanding of poverty. All these technologies have been used to illustrate the different ways in which the self has been changed by their self’s consciousness. The poor shape their lives by exercising their power to choose what activities they want to engage in and turn these technologies into ongoing identity work.
5. Discussion & Conclusion

This finding makes several contributions to our understanding of neoliberalism and constructed self. First, in arguing for an understanding of neoliberalism as a hegemonic ideology and as a form of governmentality, the researcher has sought to open a dialogue between scholars on both theoretical sides and find common ground between the epistemic and ontological understandings of these two approaches. This study sheds insight on how the Foucauldian approach might accommodate the Marxist approach, although not all of the tensions between poststructuralism and Marxian political economy have been addressed. This study follows Barnett’s line of thought and examines neoliberalism across time and space. In this case, the cultural ideology of poverty involves discourse of neoliberalism, of the Hong Kong success story, negative images of Mainlanders, and Chinese work ethic. This study contributes to earlier research by acknowledging the multiplicity, complexity, and contextual specificity of the concept of governmentality and the importance of place and time in conceptualizing the discourse of neoliberalism.

Specifically, it argues that the discourse around poverty and self-reliance in Hong Kong emerged out of complicated political struggles. The formation of the enterpreneurial man in poverty discourse is not ahistorical. The discourse of poverty is recognized as a mutable and inconsistent knowledge that circulates and functions in
variegated ways that involve social and spatial transformation. Cultural values, social practices, and temporal-spatial factors all play an important role in the formation of poverty and welfare discourses. Individuals are not only subjected to market and state, but also the rules and conventions in specific space-time contexts. This study indicates different ways that discourses of poverty intersect with neoliberal projects and other place-based discourses for producing the imagined responsible citizens’ lives, thereby providing a set of social regulation that operate at different scales and govern human subjects.

Second, it illustrates the relationship between neoliberalism, moral panics, and governmental strategies. The cultural ideology was shaped and influenced by mobilization of moral panics, which emerged in Hong Kong at a time in which the society faced shifts and transformation in its economic and political foundations. Moral panic in Hong Kong was a governmental technique. It involved the political aim of ideological transmission of a new neoliberal regime that treats individuals and society in terms of market metaphors. It marginalizes the poor and reproduces the class and racial divisions that justify the social exclusion of the poor. A new economic citizenship emerged, and the old form of social citizenship was replaced. The government attempted to design a new economic citizenship without considering individual differences and needs. The poor who refused to follow the new rationality
were stigmatized and criminalized. The definition of work is a contentious point in the struggle. Some political leaders, social workers, and activists have demanded to redefine their situation in terms of political rights and social justices. As such, there is a shift in the assumption regarding citizenships and the relationship between the individual and the government.

Third, past research examines media as a contested platform, in which the government officials, political leaders, and activists all attempt to make their voices heard (de Young 1998; McRobbie & Thornton 1995; Ungar 2001). This study, in contrast, considers how journalism asserts its authority and legitimacy in defining the poverty discourse. It examines the role of news media as an institutional authority in defining the poverty discourse. It reinforces the discourse of the self-reliance project and disciplines the poor in general for failing to live up to the standards of fiscally responsible, which requires them to be self-regulated and self-controlled. They have to act in a responsible way as determined by the workings of the labor market. As such, the audiences are disciplined to monitor themselves and others in terms of market rationalities. As part of this discipline, audiences are required to pay more attention to the needs of Chinese people and ignore the miserable situations of ethnic minorities. Journalism also determines the legitimate way to discuss poverty. It prefers scientism, rationality, and exoticism. Surveys, statistics, and extraordinary
events become the major tactics of social actors to attract media attention. Using Foucault’s conceptualization of knowledge and defining news media as disciplinary power paint a bigger picture of society, in which news media constructs its own authority. In doing so, news media continually reasserts its authority to define authentic political discourse and determine the legitimate ways of knowing via realization, selection, and valuation to maintain its institutional power. There is a long cultural history that allows reporters special status to disseminating information about public affairs. However, the findings suggest that journalism asserts the authority to define citizenship not only for the noble purpose of creating better informed citizens, but also to help preserve its position as a distributer of poverty knowledge.

Fourth, this article illustrates how the socialized self is constructed. Since the early 1990s, many scholars have started to engage in examining the media as an apparatus of technologies of domination and how media becomes the discourse of discipline (Cole, 1993; Duncan, 1994; Markula, 2003; Markula & Pringle, 2006). In 1980s, Foucault had developed the concept of self-techniques, governmentalities and agency; however, the above research is under-theorized (Thorpe, 2008; Vintges, 2012). Some scholars have critically stated that research puts too much focus on the “discourse of dominance”, which results in pessimistic views of agency and change (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 48). This study contributes to earlier research by
analyzing the techniques of domination as well as creative resistance, contradictions, and agency made by individuals.

The complex cultural ideology formulated via infusion of discourse of neoliberalism and other prevalent cultural discourses underlies people’s ideal working attitudes and moral practices, their satisfaction with their livelihoods, and activities that these self-perceptions motivate. Cultural ideology is manifested through mass media, advertising, social encounters, and so on. It has profound influences on the ways individuals interpret the symbolic meanings of the self and society. On the one hand, this article is influenced by the earlier work of Foucault in critical examination of the gaze of poverty. It illustrates how the poverty gaze influences individuals’ interpretation of the social world and their past experiences. On the other hand, this article has sought to complement such an approach through determining how subjectivity can be delineated as major ideas in understanding poverty. Through the use of Foucauldian concepts, five areas have been explored: the engagement of volunteer work and training programs, fighting for human rights, fulfilling social roles, and modifying the appearance of identity via social media. These five technologies are used to show the different ways in which the self has been changed by the self’s own consciousness.

This study has contributed to an understanding of later life and gender
difference by exploring the ways in which age, gender and gaze interact. Retirement has different meanings to older adults and elders. The older adults usually find it more difficult to accept the unemployment status compared to elderly. At the same, the social expectations on male and female are also different. Women are expected to fulfil their duty of mother and take care of their children, while men are expected to find a job and make a living for family.

Studying poverty discourse and the construction of self is a complex issue, and it should be noted that there are several limitations in this study. First, the promotion of the discourse of neoliberalism and the philosophy of self-reliant involves many different media, such as newspapers, magazines, films, and the Internet. Studying newspapers only reveals how poverty discourses are constructed in one particular media outlet. Future research should focus on how the government and social actors package the idea of the neoliberalism through different media outlets. It should also be noted that this study does not discuss the influences of the development of alternative media, particularly with the rapid increase of the number of media outlets and distribution channels. Audiences encounter multiple and contradictory discourses. It is certain that mass and alternative news media formats influence the negotiation of the knowledge system regarding the poor, and future research should focus on emerging news reporting formats, such as online blogging and reality TV shows. As
the discourse of neoliberalism is influential in the United States and many other European countries, the influence of neoliberalism may not be the same as in Hong Kong. Future research should comparatively study and examine the interpretation and influence of neoliberalism across cultures.

It should be noted that this paper has focus on sociable individuals who receive the assistance from non-government organization. It has not explored the reasons why some individuals do not seek help either from non-government organization and government in financial difficulties. Future research could explore the interpretation of responsible citizens’ lives of an individual who has not received assistance. Furthermore, this study only examines the views of poor people, and the participants were recruited through convenience sampling, and the results cannot be generalized to other social class. Future research could replicate the study by using random sampling and recruit people from different social class to enhance the generalizability of the study.

To conclude, this paper is the first study on the interplay between neo-liberal and place-based discourses in Chinese society. It also illustrates specific processes that shape the type of self-discipline that the poor desire to assert over their lives. The knowledge system of poverty brings about a specific ethic of self-discipline, which forces an individual to fulfill a moralistic obligation. It is a microcosmic yet
important study. It indicates that discourse of neoliberalism is a hegemonic force in Chinese society, but power is exercised over individuals not through coercion, but through a constitution of subjects who choose to change themselves to align with larger social values. This transformation is operated through specific normalization processes, such as the disciplinary gaze. It also acknowledges the potential for oppressed groups to create their own identity, regain their subjectivity, and struggle against domination.
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## 7. Appendix

### Table 7: Citation of newspaper articles

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<th>Newspaper (Year)</th>
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<td>綜援金非失業救濟金</td>
<td>November 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriental Daily News (2000)</td>
<td>脫貧要支援配套</td>
<td>August 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Economic Times (1999)</td>
<td>結構性問題 拖復甦後腿</td>
<td>July 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple Daily (1999)</td>
<td>生得早值得「慶幸」？</td>
<td>January 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Economic Times (1996)</td>
<td>新移民申請再培訓 資格應放寬</td>
<td>September 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hong Economic Times (1995)</td>
<td>港人內地子女九七勢掀偷渡潮</td>
<td>June 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Economic Times (2004)</td>
<td>6500 元養四口 難清貧拒綜援</td>
<td>June 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Economic Times (2000)</td>
<td>俞宗怡：須減慢福利開支增長</td>
<td>March 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apple Daily (1998)</td>
<td>社署向單親綜援開刀</td>
<td>August 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Economic Times (2003)</td>
<td>「隱形富豪」爭產案 輔孫先獲 100 萬</td>
<td>December 18</td>
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<td>Hong Kong Economic Times (2000)</td>
<td>March 4</td>
<td>明年逾二千億開支 增照顧老幼傷殘 中產付稅多福利少 料添怨憤</td>
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<td>Apple Daily (2002)</td>
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<td>October 15</td>
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<td>申請綜援個案激增 社署要求額外撥款</td>
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<td>Daily</td>
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<td>Kong Times</td>
<td>March 4</td>
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<td>繁華背後凝血淚 基層悲苦官逍遙</td>
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<td></td>
<td>最低最高收入戶相差 30 倍</td>
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<td>團體數基層勞工 10 大苦況康文署 40 員工聖誕前被解約</td>
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<td>求財應有道 商界莫積民怨</td>
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<td>10 蚊飯盒母子兩份捱</td>
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<td>黃金十年夢已醒 香港方向在何方</td>
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<td>200 婦遊行 紫頭巾反暴力</td>
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<td>獨居婦獲助購新雪櫃</td>
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<td>有賴讀者慷慨支持 食物福袋送贈弱勢家庭</td>
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<td>120 萬撥食物銀行應急</td>
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<td></td>
<td>88%長者怨綜援金少</td>
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<td>擁 10 物業值千萬 富戶霸公屋</td>
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<td>June 30</td>
<td>女生棄北大 留港伴雙親 新移民悲歌 暨重拾父母尊嚴</td>
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Table 8 Basic biographic information of the social service recipients

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Entry permit</th>
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<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>No of child</th>
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<td>HK Identity card holder</td>
<td>CSSA recipient</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Sex</td>
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19 Before getting a one-way permit, the mainland Chinese would come to Hong Kong to reunite with their family members with two-way permit, however, the validity of two-way permit usually lasts for three months, and they have to frequently travel across border to renew the permit (Chan, 2011).

20 It is a temporary permit and commonly known as going-out pass. It is granted on basis of human rights. The one who gets temporary permit are not allowed to work in Hong Kong or get any social service from the Hong Kong government (The Sun, 2012).

21 Mainland Chinese with family in Hong Kong can apply for one-way permit to permanently reside in Hong Kong (Chung & Zuo, January 13, 2015).
<table>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Identity Card Holder Status</th>
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<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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</table>

Note: All names are pseudonyms.
CURRICULUM VITAE

Academic qualifications of the thesis author, Ms. LO Wai Han:

- Received the degree of Bachelor of Social Science in Communication (Honours) from Hong Kong Baptist University, December, 2003.

- Received the degree of Mater of Philosophy in Communication from Hong Kong Baptist University, December, 2012

June 2015