University of Glasgow

Li, Yulong (2025) *Casino culture: the subjectivity of university students in Macau.* Ed.D thesis.

https://theses.gla.ac.uk/85284/

Casino Culture: The Subjectivity of University Students in Macau

Yulong Li

BA, MA

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Education (EdD)

School of Education

College of Social Sciences

University of Glasgow

June, 2025

Abstract

Following the transfer of Macau's sovereignty to China in 1999, an economic nationalism policy centred on casino capitalism was implemented to decolonise the populace of Macau. Casino capitalism introduced neoliberalism, infusing market values and a consumerist ethos into the local community and shaping the identities of its inhabitants, leading to a growing indifference towards education among the people of Macau. Recently, policymakers have committed to accelerating the industrialisation of local universities as part of the neoliberalisation of higher education. However, there is a lack of research exploring the subjectivity of Macau's students within neoliberalism. Most existing research on Macau's higher education has been conducted from the perspectives of teachers and researchers. To explore the subjectivity of Macau's university students through their own voices, I designed a post-structuralist case study focused on four students. To conceptualise and analyse the data, I used Foucault's care of the self, hermeneutics of the self, and technology of domination as theoretical lens matrices to interpret their subjectivity within neoliberalism. Since Macau is a Chinese territory steeped in Confucian culture, the present study also incorporated a theoretical lens based on secularised Confucianism.

The study found that university students from Macau appeared to have become subjects of neoliberalism. Rather than being subjects of casino capitalism, they were self-actualizing and responsive to performativity as homo economicus, assuming the role of lifelong learners. The students' peers, families, and other stakeholders in their lives acted as a discursive panopticon, urging and expecting their proactive dedication to constant self-improvement and confessions as lifelong learners. Foucauldian hermeneutics of the self played a more significant role in shaping their neoliberal subjectivity. The students demonstrated their intention to make themselves masters of their own lives by practising Foucauldian care of the self. However, their care of the self appeared to lose its radicalism in terms of students forging their own artefacts of aesthetics and unique subjectivity; rather, their care of the self behaviours were mostly employment-oriented. Care of the self, formerly an ancient spiritual exercise, has been reduced to modern-day life maintenance and has been institutionalised as neoliberalism. However, the study participants also

sometimes complained about their busy lives as homo economicus, expressing their longing to care for their souls and doubting the meaningfulness of self-maximisation. The participants demonstrated instability in their formation of subjectivities, which means that there exists a fluid and mutable relationship between care of the self and hermeneutics of the self.

Most of the students' behaviours and mentalities could also be explained as secularised Confucianism. This study innovates by showing that rather than merely responding to the performativity of the job market, students' dedication to further academic study and engagement in all types of competition and self-improvement activities have their historical roots in Confucianism. The compatibility of the two sets of theories in the present study epitomises how neoliberalism and the culture of traditional China have allied, cooperated, and overlapped in shaping Macau students into subjects of the market as well as Chinese authoritarian traditions.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

Pursuing an EdD at the University of Glasgow has been an extraordinary journey. From 2018 onwards, each semester presented unique and multifaceted challenges. These challenges stemmed from the rigorous difficulty of the EdD courses and dissertation, the intense work pressures of being a full-time university teacher, familial responsibilities, and personal issues. Throughout these seven years, my life involved several relocations, moving away from Hong Kong to settle in Macau and Zhuhai, and leaving Macau for Shenzhen. During this time, I bid farewell to many loved ones. These seven years felt as long as a lifetime, yet they greatly facilitated my personal growth, leading to a leap in my academic pursuits and thinking. To me, this is the real doctoral level education.

I am very appreciative of my two supervisors, Dr. Kevin Proudfoot and Dr. Fiona Patrick. They are the best supervisors. They are experts in Foucault studies and research methodology. Kevin and Fiona have devoted considerable attention to my research, consistently offering timely guidance and posing thought-provoking questions. Under their guidance, I have moved beyond the Eurocentric lens of Foucault, starting to critically assess theories, and I have even learned to incorporate a cross-cultural perspective into my research. Kevin and Fiona have also trained me in the systematic application of philosophical theories to the conceptualisation, methodology, and analysis of research. They prepared mock thesis defence for me, and Kevin gave me detailed suggestions in revising the thesis and drafting the response letter after the real defence.

Kevin and Fiona have been role models in my professional journey. They offered me substantial guidance and protection throughout my EdD study. During the pandemic-induced quarantine, amidst the overwhelming demands of my job that left me little time to work on my thesis, and when I was at risk of having my course discontinued, both mentors extended their unwavering support and profound understanding. Without their tolerance and assistance, I fear I would have abandoned my studies on numerous occasions. Being their student is an honor for me.

Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Yulong Li

Signature:

Tables

Orwell warns that we will be overcome by an externally imposed oppression. But in Huxley's vision, no Big Brother is required to deprive people of their autonomy, maturity and history. As he saw it, people will come to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think.

-- Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death

Contemporary labor society, as a society of achievement and business, fosters individuality. The late-modern animal laborans is equipped with an ego just short of bursting. And it is anything but passive.

-- Byung-Chul Han, The Burnout Society

1. Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Positioning of Macau in a Neoliberal Postcoloniality

This study examines Macau, a former Portuguese colony, now known as the 'Las Vegas of the East'. Following the transfer of sovereignty to China in 1999, an economic nationalism policy centred on casino capitalism was implemented to decolonise the local populace and disrupt the previous colonial narratives (Vong & Lo, 2023). Gambling was legalised in Macau in 1847, and an exclusive gambling licence was held by the Sociedade de Turismo e Diversoes de Macau (Macau Tourism and Entertainment Society) from 1962 (Sheng, 2016). However, upon regaining sovereignty, the Beijing central government proposed redistributing this once monopolised licence to a broader range of local and international casino companies (Shi & Liu, 2014), yielding significant transformations. On the positive side, competing casino theme parks emerged, each contributing to a new skyline, symbolising the modernisation and prosperity of Macau, a vision that had long been desired by locals during the colonial era (Shi & Liu, 2014). The casinos bolstered business, invigorated the tourism industry, and offered locals better employment opportunities and

wages, reinforcing Macau's status as one of the world's wealthiest regions (Sheng, 2016). The economic success of the city validated the newly established postcolonial governance from the perspectives of both the central government and the Macau SAR government (Lo, 2009).

However, this governance also created challenges. Casino capitalism introduced neoliberalism, infusing market values and consumerist ethos into the local community and shaping the identities of its inhabitants (Shi & Liu, 2014). Many high school graduates and teachers opted to work as croupiers, attracted by the allure of the casinos, abandoning their education or former careers respectively (Morrison, 2009; Yu, 2015). This shift led to a growing indifference towards education among the people of Macau (Lo, 2009; Yu, 2015), undermining the local student admission rate to higher education and depleting the local talent pool necessary for Macau's sustainable development (Lau & Yuen, 2014; Wu & Vong, 2017). However, in recent years, an increasing number of Macau policymakers and educators have acknowledged the risks of over-reliance on the gaming industry, and have committed to accelerating the industrialisation of local higher education (Li & Liu, 2022).

1.2 Meeting Macau and the Entrepreneurial Students

After completing my academic training in applied linguistics, I served as a lecturer at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. In 2019, I accepted a contract from a burgeoning metropolitan university in Macau, marking my first experience in this postcolonial region. During my four-year tenure, I observed that students devoted the majority of their time to activities such as training, exams, workshops, competitions, leadership roles in student societies, and internships or volunteering at prestigious companies. These activities, they explained in passing occasional conversations, were aimed at enhancing their resumes.

The primary concern expressed by students during class breaks was how to improve their GPA in my classes, whether I could assist them in achieving higher grades so that they could secure postgraduate positions at top-tier universities, and what advice I could offer regarding their university choices. While I understood their apprehensions about the future,

I was concerned that their pursuit of higher education had become overly pragmatic or utilitarian. They seemed to view education as a market transaction, with predetermined outcomes, rather than an opportunity for unexpected possibilities (Biesta, 2005). Their behaviour mirrored what Maiese (2022, p. 70) described as an entrepreneurial ethos among contemporary English students, characterised not only by high grades, but also by extensive extracurricular involvement, accumulation of certificates and diplomas, and engagement in 'productive' activities that enhance one's resume and self-sufficiency. This ethos is emblematic of neoliberalism (Maiese, 2022), which Foucault (1979a) characterised as individuals becoming their own entrepreneurs, producers, and sources of income.

In this context, I became increasingly aware of the neoliberal elements within the university and the city. The institution where I taught, a private university, operates on a corporate managerial system. In 2021, the university president announced a new mission: to serve the region and beyond, to cultivate talents alongside practical skills, to increase student enrolment, and to align the university's operations more closely with market values. Although the university did not openly acknowledge its neoliberal orientation, these objectives embody key features of neoliberalism (Allatt & Tett, 2019). This neoliberal transformation appears to be a response to the Macau Policy Address 2021, issued at the end of 2020, which called for growth in the higher education industry to offset the impact of the decline in the city's main industry—gambling—due to COVID-19 (Vong & Lo, 2023). As I witnessed this ambitious plan unfold, I found myself grappling with the question: what has become of our students in this neoliberal wave?

1.3 Deciding on the Theoretical Lenses

To answer the above query, I reviewed relevant literature online. I discovered that some local schoolteachers experienced stress when their schools transitioned to neoliberalism (e.g., Li & Liu, 2021), and many struggled to maintain their identities as conscientious and caring practitioners amidst neoliberal pressures (Huang, 2018; Huang & Vong, 2016, 2018). However, there was a noticeable lack of research exploring the subjectivity of Macau students within the framework of neoliberalism. The majority of the existing research on

Macau higher education had investigated the perspectives of teachers and researchers, and studies that sought students' views typically employed top-down survey methods (e.g., Morrison, 2009; Kaeding, 2010; Lai, et al., 2012; Yan, 2017; Resch, 2023; Xie, et al., 2023).

Consequently, I initiated this study to explore the subjectivity of Macau university students through their own voices (while acknowledging researcher reflexivity). I adopted a qualitative approach, interviewing several Macau students, and primarily used Foucault's theory as the theoretical lens through which to interpret their subjectivity within neoliberalism. I selected Foucault's theory of subjectivity because Foucault (2016) connected the study of human subjectivity with governance for social security (as I will elaborate upon in Chapter Two). This synergy between subjectivity and governance could provide insight into how casino-capitalist neoliberalism accomplishes its decolonisation task in Macau by reshaping the subjects of Macau people into economic entities. While recent studies, such as that by Vong and Lo (2023), have revealed how casino neoliberalism has served as Beijing's governance of Macau, these studies were largely policy discussions that offered insightful critiques at a macro level, with few delving into a micro analysis of how Macau students' subjectivity is shaped by neoliberalism.

Moreover, the theoretical lenses used by Wu and Vong (2017), Vong and Lo (2023), and Lo (2024) were all Foucauldian, which inspired my approach. However, although Macau is a Chinese territory steeped in Confucian culture, these studies appeared to lack reflexivity regarding the suitability of a French theory for examining a phenomenon in a Confucian context. Therefore, incorporating a theoretical lens from the Confucian perspective seemed to me to be a necessary counterpoint to the Foucauldian interpretation of Macau. Having decided on this direction, I embarked on a journey of reading to familiarise myself with Foucault's major ideas, enabling me to position the present research within a Foucauldian frame.

2. Chapter Two: Governance, Security, and Neoliberalism

2.1 Security and Governance

In order to conceptualize subjectivity in neoliberalism, using the context of measures utilized by the Macau government to maintain the newly returned territory's security, in this chapter, I initially present Foucault's three modes of security to foreground how neoliberalism as a biopolitical governmental technology uses people's subjectivity to rule. Subsequently, after navigating a Foucauldian explanation of subjectivity's evolution, the present study's core theoretical framework of subjectivity is justified (the technology of domination, hermeneutics of self, and care of the self). Then, through such a framework, the subjectivity of Macau students in the context of neoliberalism as governance for social security can be better analyzed and visualized.

Foucault is renowned for his extensive writings on power. However, his stated primary objective was not to explore the phenomena of power, but rather the subject (Foucault, 1983). Understanding power is undoubtedly a crucial step in comprehending Foucault's intellectual journey. The powers of sovereignty, discipline, and biopolitics emerged sequentially in Western history, each replacing or absorbing its predecessor (Foucault, 1990). Sovereign power refers to a monarch's authority to decree death through corporal punishment when threatened (Foucault, 1990). Such power relations were viewed by Foucault (1973a) as internal conflicts among people. Disciplinary power, which emerged after the 16th century, is characterised by the micro-management of individuals' bodies and minds within institutions such as prisons, factories, and schools, to prevent crime and deviance. This power replaced sovereign power and involved meticulous and continuous training imposed on subjects within enclosed environments, with the aim of making them obedient and useful (Foucault, 1978; Hoffman, 2011).

Disciplinary power later became part of the emerging power of biopolitics, which considers individuals' biological characteristics as part of population management with political objectives (Foucault, 1978b). Biopower flourished from the 18th century onwards,

driven by the growing influence of the state and the demands of burgeoning capitalism (Foucault, 1983a, 1990). The ideological stance of biopolitics views population growth as a prerequisite for state productivity and prosperity (Foucault, 1990, 1978b, 1978c). Modern nations pursuing biopower adopted the 'role of pastors' from traditional Christian churches, with Foucault (1983a, p. 214) likening this to a new or modern pastoral power that guarantees citizens' worldly salvation – i.e., their 'health, well-being, security, protection against accidents' – enabling them to live, and population to grow essentially. The number of agents and institutions involved in pastoral power multiplied due to population size; examples include the creation of schools and factories, with hospitals and families later assuming responsibility for maintaining individuals' lives (Foucault, 1983a). We now live in an era dominated by biopower.

Foucault (1983a) also highlighted that the essence of biopower is governance, which directs the potential behaviours of individuals or groups. The effects of governance can vary depending on the coordination between power relationships (the obligations imposed on individuals), communication relationships (one's response to others), and production relationships (one's relationship with things such as skills and techniques, or 'objective capacities') (Foucault, 1983a). Foucault (1983a, p. 219) describes governance as:

> Sometimes giving pre-eminence to power relationships and obedience (as those in disciplines of monastic or penitential type), sometimes to finalise activities (as in the disciplines of workshops or hospitals), sometimes to relationships of communication (as in the disciplines of apprenticeship), sometimes also to a saturation of the three types of relationship (as perhaps in military discipline, where a plethora of signs indicates, to the point of redundancy, tightly knit power relations calculated with care to produce a certain number of technical effects).

The impact of governance on neoliberalism, particularly casino-capitalist neoliberalism in postcolonial Macau, warrants further exploration. The subsequent text will begin by examining how different forms of power relate to security and justify how neoliberalism enhances societal security as a unique mode of coordinating

power-communication-production relationships. This theory could also be applied to understand the rationale behind imposing casino-capitalist neoliberalism on postcolonial Macau.

2.1.1 First mode of Security

Foucault (1978c) posited that from the Middle Ages to the 17th and 18th centuries, the primary concern of kings was security rather than governance in the contemporary sense. Unlike in modern times, where governments prioritise the safety of people, medieval kings emphasised territorial security. Foucault (1978c, p.64) stated, 'We could say that the traditional problem of sovereignty, and so of political power linked to the form of sovereignty, had in the past always been either that of conquering new territories or holding on to conquered territory'. To safeguard such security, a juridical mechanism was established, predicated on a binary division between legal codes that delineated permitted and prohibited behaviours (Foucault, 1978a). Foucault summarised the various forms of penalty employed to punish those who transgressed these legal codes: banishment, imposed compensation, bodily marking, imprisonment (Foucault, 1973a), and, notably, corporal punishment as a spectacle (Foucault, 1995).

In his 1972 lectures at the College of France, Foucault emphasised the importance of understanding punishment as a tool for analysing power dynamics. Specifically, he noted that penal tactics function as political actions aimed at conquering, confiscating, transforming, or engaging in other power-related struggles, exemplifying the nature of civil war (Foucault, 1973a; 1973b). It is crucial to remember that during medieval times, all power was vested in the king; thus, juridical systems and penalty tactics were implemented to protect his royal authority, assert territorial ownership, and deter potential challenges. Foucault (1995, p. 36) stated that, 'Before the justice of the sovereign, all voices must be silenced'. Consequently, all security technologies were designed solely to protect the king's sovereignty within his territory. Such a security mode is not how the Chinese central government expects to decolonise Macau because it may be criticised as autocratic.

2.1.2 Second Mode of Security

The disciplinary approach to security became prevalent after the 18th century (Foucault, 1978a). This approach transformed the punitive security measures employed by royal power, introducing crime prevention strategies such as inspection and supervision, along with penitentiary techniques like moralisation, correction, and mandatory work (Foucault, 1978a). The development of various fields of knowledge (e.g., psychology, criminology, medicine, sociology, and pedagogy) (Foucault, 1978a), coupled with the establishment of disciplinary institutions (e.g., police stations, schools, factories, and hospitals) (Foucault, 1973d), contributed to security through discourse. Specifically, the knowledge produced often legitimises the segregation and exclusion of certain individuals by labelling them as deviant or abnormal, making them subjects of disciplinary institutions and objects of power-knowledge (Foucault, 1973a). For instance, Foucault (1973c, pp. 156–7) cited an anonymous pamphlet from the 18th century that aimed to generate knowledge about farmers:

> The peasant is a vicious, crafty animal, a ferocious, half-civilised beast; he has no heart, probity, or honour; he would frequently let himself be carried away by ferocity if the other two estates did not swoop down on him pitilessly and prevent him from being able to carry out the crime he would like to commit.

Foucault (1973c, p. 159) further discussed the labelling of farmers' illegal activities, providing examples from letters penned by the provincial intendant in France in 1789:

> I could cite you several communities that the peasant has completely devastated and plundered; he attacks the bourgeois, craftsman, and noble indiscriminately. It is he who reigns and the bandits who direct and are at the head of the mob.

In the 19th century, workers were afforded similarly negative depictions in sociological literature. For example, Foucault (1973b, p. 187–8) referenced Grün's (1851) portrayal of workers in *De la Moralisation des Classes Laborieuses* [On the Moralisation of the

Working Classes]:

> 1. intemperance; 2. improvidence and early marriage...; 3. unruliness, anarchical passions, the refusal to submit to the laws, to settle; 4. lack of economy; 5. refusal to educate oneself, to improve one's labour-power; 6. lack of hygiene...; 7. bad use of leisure activity.

Consequently, both farmers and workers, as representatives of the labour class, were positioned as targets of discipline. This led Foucault (1973a) to observe that in the disciplinary mode of security, knowledge transcends its literal representation, merging into a dimension of power beyond the influence of the legal system. In disciplinary institutions, Foucault (1978d) described this mode as centripetal, with everything regulated in a closed and isolated space. Schools, factories, prisons, and military camps are all enclosed spaces in which individuals are integrated with fixed productive or pedagogic apparatus (Foucault, 1973d): workers with specific machines and students with designated classrooms. Individuals are confined within these spaces, constantly engaged in 'productive work, disciplinary activities, or leisure pursuits' (Foucault, 1973d, p. 210), thereby preventing behaviours that undermine security.

Moreover, Foucault (1978c; 1978d) emphasised that, within these confined spaces, intricate disciplinary-analytical grids were developed, categorising individuals as qualified or disqualified based on predefined codes of what is permitted and prohibited. Foucault (1995) provided examples of how the use of technologies such as timetables, hierarchies, Panopticon structures, repetitive exercises, judgements, and record books in enclosed spaces like schools render every action of the insiders observable, analysable, and correctable. Those deemed to be 'disqualified' risk exclusion or setbacks such as unemployment. To avoid such risks, insiders must constantly self-check to comply with regulations, transforming themselves into docile and efficient entities (Foucault, 1995).

While the effectiveness of these entities aids in preserving capitalist production, shaping these individuals into docile bodies is a strategy for maintaining security by ensuring their

readiness to obey instructions. However, Foucault (1973d) argued that the objective of disciplinary power in these institutions is not solely to produce docile-utility bodies but to shape society by instilling within insiders norms that they will later disseminate throughout society. The continuity and diffusion of disciplinary power in society ultimately sustains its security. As a tiny island economy (Sheng, 2016), Macau is not an industrial society; while the casino spirit is spread in the city, people seem to be concerned about how to develop economically with a great deal of flexibility rather than working in a confined place under surveillance. Even though some schools and companies could

use disciplinary techniques on their members, the second mode of security is not the central theme due to Macau's status as a casino city.

2.1.3 Third Mode of Security

The third type of security disposition emerged from the maturation of statistical technologies, the concept of probability, and a deeper comprehension of the population (Foucault, 1978a). The disciplining of individuals significantly contributed to the maturation of this knowledge, due to the generation of a large volume of written records of individuals (Foucault, 1990). Foucault (1978c) posited that during this stage, governors recognised population as the fundamental factor influencing all other social and economic issues. The population served as a source of ample manpower for agriculture and industry, while also ensuring intense domestic competition, lower wages, reduced prices, and increased export opportunities for the nation. However, through the process of disciplining the population, governors realised that a population is a natural phenomenon, not subject to alteration by a governor's subjective exercise or even by law (Foucault, 1978c, p. 71): 'If one says to a population 'do this', there is not only no guarantee that it will do it but also there is quite simply no guarantee that it can do it'. Instead, governors discovered that population depends on various natural variables such as climate, social and economic conditions, laws, and customs (Foucault, 1978c).

The 'naturalness' of the population is also evident in its capacity to guide people's desires, as desire is spontaneous, leading everyone to pursue their own interests (Foucault,1978c).

This unleashing of desire can generate collective interests beneficial to the entire population, to satisfy what the people want. As Foucault (1978c p. 72) stated, 'Every individual acts out of desire. One can do nothing against desire'. Thus, desire becomes another natural variable that governors can use to influence the population (Foucault, 1978c). If the population is encouraged to pursue their interests and wants, people may feel as though they are exercising their free will – while reality follows its own course – and they remain oblivious to what is being done to them by those in power (Foucault, 1978b). This outcome represents the art of governance, which Foucault (2016, p.114) revealed in his work to be, 'a technique which permits one to use the self of people, and the self-conduct of people, for the purpose of domination'. In this way and to this end, governance strategically utilises people's subjectivity or self to achieve the purpose of laissez-faire, leaving them no excuse to create disturbances and, thus, maintaining social security.

In general, compared to the process of subjects undergoing division and transformation into bodies of docility-utility under disciplinary power (Foucault, 1995), the mode of governance values the subject's naturalness, or laissez-faire. However, there is a shift in the ontology of subjects within governance, as they are now targeted as a 'complex of men and things' (Foucault, 1978b, p. 97). Specifically, it is men and their relationships with all possible variables of naturalness that are considered under the governance scheme:

> The things government must be concerned about... are men in their relationships, bonds, and complex involvements with things like wealth, resources, means of subsistence, and, of course, the territory with its borders, qualities, climate, dryness, fertility, and so on. 'Things' are men in their relationships with things like customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking. Finally, they are men in their relationships with things like accidents, misfortunes, famine, epidemics, and death. (Foucault, 1978b, p. 96)

These features of governance manifest themselves as a technology of biopower, incorporating the overall biological characteristics of human beings into political

mechanisms (Foucault, 1978a). Here in Macau, people's natural desire to prosper after the handover seemed to be being activated and used for governance by indulging themselves in economic activities (the details will be explained in section 2.2).

2.2 Neoliberalism and Governance

2.2.1 Neoliberalism and Critiques

Neoliberalism, a school of economic thought, emerged from classical liberalism and neoclassical economics. It was initially developed by the Mont Pelerin Society, whose members included key figures such as Milton Friedman, Karl Popper, and Friedrich von Hayek, in the 1940s (Harvey, 2005). The society posited that Western freedom was under threat from state power and that the preservation of a free, competitive market and respect for private property were essential for safeguarding this freedom (Harvey, 2005). However, neoliberalism did not gain significant attention until it was adopted as a national strategy in the UK and the US during the late 1970s and early 1980s, under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, respectively (Cahill & Konings, 2017). Their adoption of it was a response to the economic stagnation that had resulted from the post-war Keynesian policies implemented in many countries from the late 1960s. Under Keynesianism, as a recovery policy, the state assumes the role of a welfare state and take responsibility for full employment, economic growth, and the welfare of its citizens. Its proponents argued that state power should be freely deployed, either alongside, intervening in, or even substituting for market processes to achieve these ends (Harvey, 2005, p. 10). While this approach was effective in maintaining stability and reconstructing the economic losses incurred during WWII in the first two decades after the armistice, economic stagnation emerged from the late 1960s onwards (Harvey, 2005). As a counter strategy, neoliberalism focused on reducing the influence of the welfare state, accelerating the privatisation of state industries, and removing any obstacles that hindered market vitality (Harvey, 2005). Generally, neoliberalism encompasses the following characteristics:

[Neoliberalism] entails confronting trade union power, attacking all forms of social

solidarity that hindered competitive flexibility, dismantling or rolling back the commitments of the welfare state, the privatisation of public enterprises, reducing taxes, encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives, and creating a favourable business climate to induce a strong inflow of foreign investment. (Harvey, 2005, p. 23)

This approach successfully eliminated economic stagnation in countries including the UK, the US, Sweden, Chile, India, and China (Harvey, 2005). However, it also led to the decline of public industries and the expansion of corporate influence into sectors previously dedicated to public welfare, such as healthcare, housing, transportation, and education (Giroux, 2002). The accountability and auditing management systems used in corporations were also transferred to the running of the public sector (Giroux, 2002; Apple, 2006; Ball, 2016: Raaper, 2016).

The adoption of neoliberalism brought about a chain reaction affecting individuals in almost all industries. Taking higher education as an example, university teachers have experienced instability due to the erosion of collegiate unity and the prevalence of entrepreneurial spirit and self-heroism among teachers (Enslin & Hedge, 2019), a decrease in tenured positions (Giroux, 2002), an increasingly hierarchical administrative authority over teachers' power (Raaper, 2016; Seeber & Berg, 2016), and increased work stress (Li et al., 2021; Li & Liu, 2022). Similarly, student identities have begun to be reshaped as those of consumers (Doherty, 2017; Saunders & Kolek, 2017).

Critiques of neoliberalism have highlighted the negative phenomena it has caused. Authors such as Allais (2012) and Allatt and Tett (2019) have noted that human capital theory, which underpins neoliberalism, has been internalised into a discourse that prioritises skill, instrumentality, and market-driven value above all else. In the context of education, human capital theory suggests that an individual's income is determined by their level of education investment, as higher levels of education lead to increased productivity (Lauder, et al, 2006).

Human capital theory originated from Schultz (1962), who observed that Japan and West

Germany greatly benefited from education reforms and talent cultivation during their post-war recovery. Becker (2006) later noted that the US's economic downturn after the WWII was alleviated more by human capital than anything else and that a country's continuous investment in its citizens' education level will largely spur competitiveness in the global market (Reich, 2006). Consequently, countries and regions worldwide, including China (Li, et al., 2021), Japan (Takayama, 2008), Ireland (O'Brien, 2018; Henricsson, 2020), Macau (Huang & Vong, 2016; 2018), and even aboriginal regions in the Amazon (Peim, 2021), have implemented neoliberal education reforms aimed at creating human capital in order to increase their competitiveness as economies (Li& Liu, 2024). However, critics like Allatt and Tett (2019) argue that the prevalence of human capital has overshadowed education's other value in terms of emancipation and human flourishing. While such critiques are thought-provoking, they have not fully explored the forces that neoliberalism-human capital exert on the individual subject.

2.2.2 Human Capital and Homo Economicus

In his lecture on the *Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault (1979a) explored the essence of neoliberalism, focusing on human capital as a technology of governance of subject. He proposed that human capital theory redefines labour, distinguishing it from the classical economic view of labour as time spent in production, and from the Marxist definition of labour as a form of power. Foucault (1979a) posited that labour is an income return on workers' investment in themselves, their bodies, or skills that enable them to complete tasks and earn remuneration. He further argued that workers and their bodily skills are inseparable, as they make themselves a machine that constantly produces and earns a salary (Foucault, 1979a, p. 224):

> The worker's skill really is a machine, but a machine which cannot be separated from the worker himself... We should think of the skill that is united with the worker as, in a way, the side through which the worker is a machine, but a machine understood in the positive sense, since it is a machine that produces an earnings stream.

To ensure their 'body-machine' remains productive, workers must continually hone their skills so that they do not become obsolete (Foucault, 1979a). This depiction of humans as a combination of body-machine-ability-earnings uncovers the mechanism behind the constant need to invest in human capital. It suggests that one becomes an 'entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings' (Foucault, 1979a, p. 226). The prevalence of human capital has transformed homo sapiens into homo economicus, implying that most human actions revolve around an 'investment-costs-profit' calculation, akin to the calculations performed in companies (Foucault, 1979a, p. 242). For instance, when seeking a partner, individuals tend to prefer someone with a genetic advantage or greater social or economic capital, in order to produce offspring with superior human capital (Foucault, 1979a).

At the societal level, government actions are subject to strict economic scrutiny to ensure frugality and prevent the implementation of inconsistent, conflicting, and ineffective policies (Foucault, 1979b). Regarding national law-making, the complexity of laws is not necessarily important as long as 'punishment appeared as having to be calculated in terms of the injured party's interests, in terms of redress for damages' (Foucault, 1979c, p. 46). With the mindset of homo economicus, potential offenders who evaluate the cost of breaking the law as unaffordable might hesitate, thereby controlling the crime rate (Foucault, 1979c). Accordingly, societal security can be maintained. Shi and Liu (2014) exemplified the kind of homo economicus generated in casinos of Macau, but what kind of homo economicus is nurtured in Macau's university warrants attention.

2.2.3 Neoliberalism as Governance Technology

Neoliberalism, centred on human capital, can be viewed as a technology of governance. Foucault (1978b, p. 97) suggested that under governance, subjects are a 'complex of men and things', aligned with the concept of homo economicus as a complex of ability-machine-earnings. Given that governance utilises the desire and self (subjectivity) for its domination purposes (Foucault, 2016), the willingness of homo economicus to continuously enhance their skills and invest in human capital to generate an income stream

must be driven by desire; moreover, as homo economicus, individuals constantly evaluate the costs and benefits associated with any action. From the perspective of social governance, when subjects become homo economicus, their behaviours transform into economic behaviours, which are more predictable. This predictability makes individuals more susceptible to government control: 'Homo economicus is the interface of government and the individual' (Foucault, 1979b, pp. 252–3). Thus, neoliberalism could be seen as a synonym of governance, a method leading to social security: when people are fully immersed in economic life, disturbances to social security are somewhat reduced. This may shed light on why Beijing encourages the flourishing of casino-capitalist neoliberalism in Macau as a decolonisation strategy.

This discussion contributes to the ongoing debate regarding Foucault's stance on neoliberalism. Many of Foucault's comments in the *Birth of Biopolitics* lecture series seem to defend its legitimacy. For instance, he posits that neoliberalism is not merely a technique of governance but also a way of being and thinking (Foucault, 1979a). It is, therefore, unsurprising that scholars such as Dean and Zamora (2021) have expressed concerns about the ambiguity in Foucault's position on neoliberalism, fearing that he may have abandoned his critical stance. However, in the current study, this ambiguity is not problematic. As Calliat (2015) indicated in the title of his book 'Foucault Against Himself', it is clear that Foucault was continually engaged in the process of adjusting, updating, and correcting his thoughts, resulting in some of his ideas and arguments appearing contradictory. Furthermore, in his later years, Foucault advocated for an alternative social mode centred around the ethics of care of the self (Foucault, 1978b; Michman & Rosenberg, 2011), aiming to replace the existing mode of social governance, including neoliberalism. Thus, it can reasonably be concluded that Foucault was critical of neoliberalism as a governance technology.

3. Chapter Three: Foucauldian Theoretical Framework

3.1 What is Subjectivity?

Subjectivity is a central concept in Foucault's work. He emphasised that his research primarily focuses on the subject, rather than power (Foucault, 1983a). However, many Foucauldian studies (e.g., Ball & Olmedo, 2013) lack a clear definition of subjectivity, often using the term without explicit conceptualisation. This ambiguity can be attributed to Foucault himself, as he did not clearly define subjectivity, nor did he distinguish it from the definitions provided by philosophers such as Sartre or Heidegger, until his later lectures and seminars in North America. In his seminar on Truth and Subjectivity at Dartmouth University, Foucault (2016, p. 116) clarified the potential equivalence between the meaning of subjectivity and the term 'self' as it is commonly used in Anglophone contexts:

> As you know, we don't have the word 'self' in French, and unfortunately, because I think it's a good word. In French, we have two words – 'subject' and 'subjectivity' – and I don't know if you use subjectivity very often, I don't think so... The self would be the kind of relation that this human being as subject in a political relation has to himself. No? That you could call in French 'subjectivity', but that is not good, I think that 'self' is better.

In his second lecture at Victoria University, Toronto, Foucault (2021a, p. 18) discussed the concept of care of the self, equating subjectivity with the soul:

> What is this 'self' one has to take care of? What [does] this care consist in? ... The self which is in question does not, obviously, consist in the things which we can own, such as our possessions, our clothing, our tools; nor does it consist in our body, which is an occupation for the doctor or the teacher of gymnastics. We should occupy ourselves with that which is able to use our belongings, our tools, our body: that means our soul, in fact.

The soul could serve as an apt explanation for subjectivity, as in Ancient Greece it signified the indissoluble link between the subject and spirituality through self-technologies (Foucault, 1982a). However, the dual meaning of 'the soul' can obscure a clear

understanding of subjectivity. In his lecture at Victoria University, Foucault (2021a) offered another interpretation of subjectivity, defining it as the essence of ancient writing activity, through which individuals established relationships with themselves. According to McGushin (2011, p. 129), Foucault concluded that subjectivity is a relational concept concerning the self: 'subjectivity is the relationship of the self to itself'.

In this research, I adopt a comprehensive definition of subjectivity based on this relational perspective. This definition, cited by Revel (2002, p. 63) in the *Dictionary of Foucault* from Huisman (1984), posits that 'one experiences oneself in a game of truth where it relates to the self' (author's own translation via Google Translate).

3.2 Evolution of Care of the Self

In order to establish Foucauldian subjectivity, a theoretical framework containing specific components of technology of domination, the hermeneutics of the self, and care of the self (which will be explicated in later sections), here in 2.3.2 Foucauldian subjectivity's evolution or developmental stages are explained. The Hellenistic philosophies mentioned in section 2.3.2.1 are the ideal prototypes of subjectivity that Foucault drew from to conceptualise his care of the self.

3.2.1 Subjectivity in Ancient Greece: Beginning of Care of the Self

For his works on ethics, Foucault drew heavily from ancient philosophies of the Greco-Roman era, such as Stoicism and Epicureanism (Hadot, 2011a). The ancient philosophers advocated 'spiritual exercises' as a way of life; these exercises were aimed at persuading and transforming individuals, enabling them to transcend their biased selves to reach the elevated state of being with views from above (Hadot, 2011a). Practices of care of the self were a key symbol of that era, and Foucault believed that their significance was evident in the Delphic precept, where care of the self, the first half of the precept couplet, is the precondition for the latter half – know yourself. The latter part of the precept is subordinated to and a result of the former (Foucault, 2021a). Care of the self was one of

the 140 precepts inscribed near the Delphic temple by the Seven Sages (Thales of Miletus, Pittacus of Mytilene, Bias of Priene, Solon of Athens, Cleobulus, Myson of Chenae, and Chilon of Sparta), who sought to offer their wisdom to Apollo and inspire passersby at that time (Hadot, 2002).

Foucault (1982a) posited that care of the self prompted different schools, such as the Epicureans and Stoics, to introduce their own strategies and technologies to modify, purify, and transform people's existence in order to forge their gnomic selves as a lifestyle of philosophy (Foucault, 2016). He referred to this philosophical transformation as the generation of truth (Foucault, 2021a), although he did not specify the concrete meaning of such truth. Instead, Foucault emphasised that truth is formative, fluid, and personalised, making it unpredictable and dependent on one's directions of self-becoming (McGushin, 2011). This is a specifically Foucauldian adaptation of ancient philosophy, as his interpretation is unique. Hadot's (2002, 2011a) classical translation studies had demonstrated the 'objective reason' facet of care of the self in Hellenistic philosophy: the nurturing of universal perspective. Foucault's unique alignment of care of the self with the cultivation of personalised truth perhaps provided the basis for his later view on transgression through the establishment of aesthetics in life. In this study, in order to do justice to Foucault's utilisation of the spiritual exercise tradition in ancient philosophy and to justify the purpose of care of the self, I will interchangeably use the terms truth, gnomic truth, and spirituality to refer to the aim of a subject's self-transformation.

According to Foucault, subjectivity is defined as something relational to self, reflecting the fluid, formative, and unpredictable process of self-becoming (McGushin, 2011), during which the subject internalises philosophic maxims and constructs truth for themselves: 'in the truth and in access to the truth, there is something that fulfils the subject himself, which fulfils or transfigures his very being' (Foucault, 1982a, p. 16). Adhering to the tradition of ancient philosophy, subjectivity is spiritual (Foucault, 1982a), and the latter couplet of the Delphic precept ('know yourself') could only be a consequence of the self's transformation to spirituality; 'know yourself' could not overshadow the care of the self in ancient times.

As the spiritual subject's transformation and truth generation were, in ancient times, inseparable, one's exterior was the same as the interior, demonstrated in one's ethos, or all aspects of one's observable actions and attitudes:

> Ethos was the deportment and the way to behave. It was the subject's mode of being and a certain manner of acting visible to others. One's ethos was seen by his dress, by his bearing, by his gait, by the poise with which he reacts to events, etc. (Foucault, 1988c, p.6)

As embodiments of such an ethos, individuals are the exercisers of parrhesia, or fearless speech; they speak what they believe is the truth, regardless of the risk of upsetting a more powerful interlocutor (Foucault, 2001).

In summary, Ancient Greek philosophy did not differentiate epistemology from ethics, just like what is being said here: '[now] I can be immoral and know the truth… Before Descartes, one could not be impure, immoral, and know the truth' (Foucault 1997f, p.279). Subject in the general culture of the Greco-Roman period was 'spiritual corporality' (Vintges, 2011, p. 100), and subjectivity was spiritual (Foucault, 1982a).
Charles Taylor (2007) has a more vivid description of such spiritual corporality. He named subjectivity in ancient times 'the porous self', which means the subject was open and vulnerable to the influence of spiritual matters at the time.

3.2.2 Subjectivity in Christianity: The Birth of Hermeneutics of the Self

Section 3.2.2 foregrounds another key component of the theoretical framework of the present study, the hermeneutics of self. Subjectivity in Christianity appears similar to that in Hellenistic ancient philosophy, but there are slight differences. In the Christian era, subjectivity was established through self-conversion and labour for asceticism, seeming to be similar to the perception in ancient times (Han, 2006). However, a significant distinction exists between the respective ontologies of truth in the Hellenistic and Christian eras following Foucault's reason: truth, in the former, was infinite flourishing of

self-transformation in the subject, but truth was finite in Christianity, embodied in God's words. Thus, Han (2006, p.192) suggested: 'Although the source of the revelation changes (no longer the contemplation of the intelligible but the biblical 'text'), its operation remains the same (conversion and salvation)'. Consequently, in Christianity the subject could no longer generate truth through self-transformation activities. Instead, the subject could only familiarise themselves with and refer to God's words as a pre-defined truth, using this as a mirror through which to monitor their every thought and deed:

> The modality of truth-speaking changes fundamentally: It is no longer a matter of transforming oneself to become a subject capable of seeing and speaking a general truth, but of being able to 'speak the truth about oneself'. The subject is now constrained to 'objectify himself in a true discourse'. (Han, 2006, p. 193)

Christianity introduced the duty of truth, requiring every subject to know themselves and even expose their hidden secrets in front of the moral ruler, being God:

> Each person has the duty to know who he is, that is, to try to know what is happening inside him, to acknowledge faults, to recognise temptations, to locate desires, and everyone is obliged to disclose these things either to God or to others in the community and hence to bear public or private witness against oneself. (Foucault, 1988a, p. 40)

Foucault (2016) termed this duty of truth 'the hermeneutics of the self', which he saw to be primarily manifested in two subjectification activities: self-examination and confession. In the recent posthumous publication of his book *Confessions of the Flesh*, Foucault (2021b, p. 187) outlined Cassian's six stages of combat in safeguarding chastity, which rely heavily on the subject's continuous and meticulous self-examination:

> [M]an must do nothing less than remain, in relation to himself, in a state of perpetual vigilance concerning the slightest impulses that may be produced in his body or in his soul. On the alert night and day, the night for the day and the day by thinking of

the coming night.

Christian truth is crucial in self-examination, as subjects must constantly refer to God-truth to identify and distinguish their sins: 'Since the monk must continuously turn his thoughts toward God, he must scrutinise the actual course of this thought. This scrutiny thus has as its object the permanent discrimination between thoughts which lead toward God and those which don't' (Foucault, 1988a, p. 45). Notably, self-examination techniques also existed in Ancient Greece, particularly in the Stoic school. However, these were care of the self technologies, prompting the subject to reflect on their actions and apply philosophies in future actions to achieve a certain gnomic lifestyle (Foucault, 2016), without any focus on exposing the subject's secrets or sins.

Regarding confession, Foucault (1988a) defined it as the subject's transcription and verbalisation of all thoughts, followed by seeking advice from a master. The subject should 'tell all thoughts to our director, to be obedient to our master in all things, to engage in the permanent verbalisation of all our thoughts… Confession permits the master to know because of his greater experience and wisdom and therefore to give better advice' (Foucault, 1988a, p. 47). Thus, for Foucault, confession serves as a verbal form of self-examination and clarifies the relationship of subjectification between Christian subjects and their masters:

> The monk must have the permission of his director to do anything, even die. Everything he does without permission is stealing. There is not a single moment when the monk can be autonomous. Even when he becomes a director himself, he must retain the spirit of obedience. He must keep the spirit of obedience as a permanent sacrifice of the complete control of behaviour by the master. (Foucault, 1988a, p. 45)

Generally speaking, the hermeneutics of the self describes the Christian subject's initiative in transforming themselves by accepting the obedient relationship through ascetic labour like confession; meanwhile, the hermeneutics of the self leads to the subject's

self-abandonment, objectification, and, ultimately, discipline, irrespective of the subject's spiritual ascension as in ancient times.

Ancient Greeks, particularly the Epicurean school, also sought advice from mentors or friends as a form of care of the self. However, their motivation was to gain temporary protection and advice in order to overcome difficulties and 'so as one day to be able to behave autonomously and no longer have need of advice' (Foucault, 2016, p. 28). By contrast, the apprentice-master relationship in Christianity is not about care of the self but about self-sacrifice, involving permanent obedience to masters as representatives of biblical truth (Foucault, 1988a). Therefore, under the manipulation of such third-party Biblical truth, the subject objectified themselves - 'an indefinite objectification of oneself by oneself' (Foucault, 2021a, p. 189). As a result, the subject became separated from the truth nurtured within them, as was the case in Greco-Roman times; however, truth in Christianity departed from being an internalised transformative experience to an external third party, accelerating the universalisation of objective knowledge as the new truth in the post-Enlightenment epoch (Han, 2006).

3.2.3 Subjectivity's Secularisation since the 'Cartesian moment'

If Christianity is viewed as the beginning of the decline in care of the self, the spiritual exercise tradition of ancient philosophy, the Cartesian moment marks the extinction of spiritual exercise in philosophy, paving the way for the prevalence of the precept 'knowing yourself' (Foucault, 1982a). This shift was marked by two significant changes in subjectivity. First, the ontological construct of the subject changed. Descartes posited that the subject is self-evident (Foucault, 1982a); this suggests that the body and the soul are all about the 'you' of the here and now. Consequently, subjectivity takes on a fixed manner and is no longer fluid and formative; thus, individuals no longer need to transform their subjectivity to generate truth, as truth now lies in the beheld corpus.

Second, the emergence of the method of doubt in Cartesianism, which initiated a new tradition of inquiring objective truth (Blackburn, 2000), assisted a paradigmatic change in

subjectivity. Unlike in Ancient Greece, where truth was inseparable from the subject's self-transformation, Cartesianism tore truth entirely away from the subject's spirituality. According to Foucault (1982a, p.14), 'by putting the self-evidence of the subject's own existence at the very source of access to being, this knowledge of oneself made the "know yourself" into a fundamental means of access to truth'. Adopting a more fashionable interpretation, the subject can obtain truth through cognition when:

> [T]he philosopher (or the scientist, or simply someone who seeks the truth) can recognise the truth and have access to it himself and solely through his activity of knowing, without anything else being demanded of him and without him having to change or alter his being as subject. (Foucault, 1982a, p. 17)

In this context, truth is determined by whether a statement accurately reflects observed facts (Stone, 2011). Thus, to know the truth, 'we must have studied, have an education, and operate within a certain scientific consensus' (Foucault, 1982a, p.18).

Furthermore, ancient care of the self, once a means to truth, has since the Cartesian moment been relegated to a condition for the subject's existence (Foucault, 1982a). Care of the self technologies such as bodybuilding, meditation, and martial arts, once used to cultivate spirituality, are now used for health and beautification purposes (Stone, 2011). Stone (2011, p. 155) explains:

> In the United States, yoga is done mostly for aesthetic purposes or for medical benefit. The spiritual dimension of yoga is often internal to the practitioner: stress release and better breathing. Yoga is not the action done in order to truly gain truth about the world; it is a relaxing form of exercise. This is not to suggest that exercise cannot be a practice of the self aimed at truth, but most people exercise for the sake of health and beauty – usually the latter – not for the sake of truth and knowledge.

As Stone (2011) notes, both morally good and morally stained individuals can practise yoga attentively. Indeed, most modern practitioners are not aiming to purify themselves

with the ethos of ethics or spirituality through learning yoga or other self-technologies. Whereas, before the Cartesian moment, such purification of subject was inseparable from these kinds of self-technologies: '[b]efore Descartes, one could not be impure, immoral, and know the truth' (Stone, 2011, p.146). Thus, in the post-Cartesian era, the corporeal body has become an isolated fortress, with spirituality occurring outside of it. There no longer exists the spiritual corporality that Vintges (2011) described in ancient subjectivity. Moreover, the separation of spirituality from subjectivity also led to the division of epistemology and ethics. As Foucault (cited in Stone, 2011, p.146) lamented, 'the truth cannot save the subject'. Even if the subject acquires numerous skills and knowledge, their ethics do not necessarily improve simultaneously, and nor does their spirituality. Charles Taylor (2007) also has a name for such modern-day subjectivity, which he calls 'the buffered self' in contrast to the ancient subjectivity of 'the porous self'. This could explain why there exist many law-breakers with a good educational background, However, in Ancient Greece, a knowledgeable man was also an ethical subject whose ethos shone with a unity of parrhesia - they practised what they preached.

Despite these observations, it should not be inferred that there are no behaviours in the modern world that seek truth and knowledge through self-transformation, as in ancient times. Foucault (1982b) noted that behaviours such as joining a social class or party, pledging allegiance to a school or society, or dedicating oneself to specific training, all bear the hallmarks of self-transformation as the entry point to certain truth. However, these behaviours are typically explained in social terms, such as acculturation or assimilation. What Foucault overlooked is that there are still practitioners of faith in the modern world, like the ascetic monks by the Ganges river and the Tibetan pilgrims on the long kowtow to Lhasa; they live for spirituality and subjectify themselves in a manner reminiscent of ancient times.

3.3 Technologies that Act on Subjectivity

3.3.1 Technologies of Domination

3.3.1.1 Discipline: How Subject is made into Object

This section delineates the key disciplinary technologies, which will compose the theoretical framework of technologies of domination's deductive codes. Foucault (1988a) identified two technologies that influence subjectivity: the technology of domination, which could be more specifically termed the technology of disciplinary power, and the technology of self. Disciplinary power imposes meticulous and continuous training on individuals, fostering within them a complex of utility-docility (Hoffman, 2011). This process transforms the human body into an automaton or a machine controlled by power (Foucault, 1995). Thus, disciplinary power not only makes subjects submissive and productive but also encourages the automation and internalisation of power within subjects, which is a process of normalisation (Foucault, 1995).

Li (2022, p. 26) summarised the specific techniques of discipline mentioned by Foucault in *Discipline and Punishment* and the *Punitive Society* lectures as involving 'the control of time, space, and body, architectural and hierarchical observation, normalising judgement, and the field of documentation'. Li (2022) added that the creation of discourse, which generates social common sense while excluding the people projected as those 'deserving of being prosecuted', ensures these disciplinary techniques are not easily recognised by subjects. In this dissertation, I will focus on the three most commonly used disciplinary techniques of timetable (control of time), Panopticon (surveillance), and discourse.

Timetable. The control of time, often implemented through timetables or the division of daily tasks into discrete chunks, is a common feature in the management of school pupils, factory workers, and soldiers. An example of such a timetable can be found in Sum's (2010) fieldwork record of a primary school, which Li (2022, pp. 29–30) describes as follows:

> [T]he students have to wake up at 6am, with only ten minutes to clean up. At 6:10am, they must appear on the sport grounds to do morning exercises for 20 minutes, followed by 40 minutes of self-study. Then they have four periods of classes in the morning, and a guangbo ticao (collective body stretching dance) in between their second and third class. In the afternoon, they have three classes and

five minutes of ocular gymnastics (eye self-massaging). Each class is around 40 minutes long, and there is a ten-minute break between each two. Therefore, apart from breakfast, lunch, and dinner breaks, and a two-hour noon nap, the students' time is fully arranged, one short section after another, in either study or organised exercises until 8:20pm. By then, they should be ready to sleep. At 8:40pm, according to the timetable, all lights should be off.

Foucault argued that the purpose of such time control is to cultivate in pupils – who are future quasi-labourers in the workplace – a habitus of 'speed as virtue' (Foucault, 1995, p. 154). The time control of disciplinary power signifies monarchies' surrender to the reign of capitalist industrial production. To capitalists, the bodies and time of hired workers are assets of the factory. Workers who can participate in production in a timely, meticulous, and devoted manner increase the factory's manufacturing efficiency, while irregularities in production caused by workers' absent-mindedness, unpunctuality, over-rest, and laziness damage efficiency (Foucault, 1973f). To eliminate human characteristics such as 'pleasure, discontinuity, festivity, rest, need, moments, chance, violence, and so on' (Foucault, 1973h, p. 232) that disrupt production, capitalists strive to nurture workers' 'virtue of speed' and adaptability to synchronise with the factory schedule, even when they are still school pupils (Foucault, 1973g). The use of timetables is expected to keep subjects at school, the factory, or any other disciplinary power institution, engaged in study, production, disciplining activities, or restricted entertainment (Foucault, 1973g). Bowles and Gintis (1976) noted as early as the 1970s in the US the school system, including school time table, was to synchronise with the human resource demands of industrial production. Synchronising the school schedule with that of the factory is just one aspect of the educational system's corresponding function (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). There are many more habitus that are unconsciously normalised and internalised into students, which then spread to other areas after students graduate, enter workplaces, and start families:

> [T]o establish an internal norm, and therefore to give power a hold, and, on the other, to diffuse an external norm: it presents a fictive image of society the function of which is to give individuals both a certain conception of the society in which

they live and a certain model for their future behaviour [in the society in which they will live]. (Foucault, 1973g, p. 214)

The above process broadly illustrates the way in which Foucault (1973g, p. 214) believed power sequestration institutions 'fabricate the social'. In general, habits establish a social contract among people, in which norms and ethics become their default and 'automatic' commonalities. This is how subjectification occurs through the technology of disciplinary power.

Panopticon. The Panopticon, a term central to Foucault's lexicon, originally referred to a colosseum-shaped prison designed by Jeremy Bentham (Foucault, 1995). Over time, it has evolved into a metaphor and symbol. As a prison design, the Panopticon allows every prisoner, confined in individual cells along the interior wall, to be visible at all times to the guards stationed in the central tower. In Foucault's (1995) Panopticon, the guards remain unseen by the prisoners due to the use of Venetian blinds on the tower windows and segmented partitions that block incoming light. Consequently, the number of guards – be that many, one, or none – makes little difference to the prisoners, as they must always assume they are under observation (Foucault, 1995, p. 201). This results in fewer guards being able to supervise a large number of prisoners, as the prisoners themselves are compelled to constantly monitor their behaviour to avoid punishment. Thus, the subjects become self-disciplining:

> Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power... A real subjection born mechanically from a fictitious relation (Foucault, 1995, p. 201–2)

As its principles of constant surveillance have been adopted and disseminated across various social governance contexts, the Panopticon has become a metaphor for pervasive surveillance and observation. As Foucault (1995, p. 207) cautioned, the Panoptic schema was destined to permeate the social body, becoming a generalised function. Indeed, many subsequent architectural designs, such as school classrooms, have incorporated Panoptic

principles to render those within constantly observable. Foucault (1995, p. 172) lamented this development, noting that 'stone can make people docile and knowable'. Over the past three decades, CCTV cameras have assumed the role of the Panoptic tower in numerous locations (Li, 2022). Today, the Panopticon has transcended physical architecture and visual technology to influence discourse. Proudfoot (2021) provides an example, illustrating how neoliberal and accountability-focused educational policy in England has created a Panoptic surveillance effect on teachers rather than students, through accountability standards, expert inspections, performance-based interviews, and national data tracking systems. Proudfoot (2021) also explores theoretical extensions of the Panopticon, such as post-Panopticism and the 'searchlight', which represent shifts in the intention and strategy of disciplinary power. These contemporary adaptations of the Panopticon continue to target individuals' subjectivity, as they did in the past.

Discourse. Discourse, as defined by Mills (2003) and Buchanan (2018), is an ideological system underpinned by social, cultural, and historical factors that circulate, restrict, or forbid certain statements. It determines who has the authority to make such statements (Ball, 1990) and, crucially, what knowledge is represented (Hall, 1997). Mills (2003) exemplified the wider circulation of the Christian Bible in the Western religious atmosphere as a discourse system, due to the presence of numerous theology departments, churches, printing of biblical references, and Christian commentators as components and prerequisite of Christian discourse. In contrast, pagan classical texts had less influence in the Western world.

Discourse acts as a Kantian web of a priori knowledge or, simply speaking, an invisible epistemic filter, making it challenging for individuals to think, imagine, speak, sense, and behave beyond the discursive conventions they are immersed in (Mills, 2003). Foucault's (2003) *Birth of the Clinic* illustrates a shift in discourse from traditional to modern medicine. Modern medicine is founded on visual methods such as anatomy, experimentation, and radiology, while the theoretical foundations of traditional medicine were built on a pathological map, categorising illnesses and symptoms based on the collective consciousness of patients (Foucault, 2003). Consequently, people with similar

symptoms would receive different diagnoses and have different understandings of their illness in traditional and modern contexts. This exemplifies how discourse filters and restricts people's perceptions and actions. Laclau and Mouffe (1985, p. 108) provide an example of people's perceptions of earthquakes in different discursive fields:

> An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or expressions of 'the wrath of God' depends on the structuring of a discursive field.

McNamara (2019) recounts an experience of watching a World Cup football match between Australia and Croatia while travelling in Argentina. Despite not being a football fan, he was moved to tears by Australia's victory, a reaction stemming from his identification as Australian. This self-identification is reinforced by the everyday language he speaks and the narratives circulated about his national group, constituting a discourse of 'self' and 'other' (McNamara, 2019). Thus, discourse not only represents knowledge and reality but also unconsciously shapes an individual's identity (McNamara, 2019).

In addition, discourse extends the effect of the Panopticon by making subjects visible (McNamara, 2019). In most cases, people remain unaware of discursive conventions until someone breaks them or behaves differently from the rest; these 'different' individuals are then excluded from the discourse convention and so become visible, while those who conform to discursive rules remain invisible (Mills, 2003). In this way, discourse generates a process of excluding the abnormal from the normal (Foucault, 1981). Under the 'gaze' of the discursive Panopticon, people must self-monitor to conform to common conventions and become part of the invisibly normal majority. This is how disciplinary power operates at the ideological level.

3.3.1.2 Section Summary

Discourse, timetable, and Panopticon are merely three of the disciplinary approaches that

Foucault deconstructed. There are many other disciplinary technologies of power, presenting in various sequestration institutions, coming together to form a pervasive and capillary network of power (Foucault, 1995; 1973d). This network subjectifies and normalises the lives of all individuals (McGushin, 2011). Without reflection or the ability to make a difference, a person's daily life and even life path are predetermined, prepared, and shaped by disciplinary power. Foucault (1973d) illustrated how people's life paths are predefined in a manner similar to others through a prolonged disciplinary process across different power sequestration institutions, a concept that remains relevant today:

> So there is an awareness of the individual's constant framing, from birth to death, by these institutions... From the nineteenth century, on the other hand, individuals are tied, externally as it were, to and by apparatuses of which they are not a part. At birth they are placed in a crèche; in childhood they are sent to school; they go to the workshop; during their life they come under a charity office; they must deposit money in a savings bank; they end in a home. (p. 205)

At a micro daily level, disciplinary power shapes people's habits and mindsets through not only institutional structures but also omnipresent discourse:

> Life, as it turns out, has largely been laid out before me. I am daily encouraged and instructed, gently nudged, or firmly pushed in the proper direction... For example, I go to school and write down what my teachers say and study it. But what I learn is more than just the content of the lesson... Television and entertainment amuses me and gives me a chance to feel things, but it also trains me by forming my imagination, by helping me form concrete images of what I love and desire, what I hate, who I want to be and how I need to act... Marketing does the same things, just less effectively. (McGushin, 2011, p. 132)

However, disciplinary power is not solely about obedience; it can also render subjects more productive and effective (McGushin, 2011). Ultimately, discipline produces an objectified subject characterised by both docility and utility. Finally, Revel (2008) has

noted that there does not appear to be a comprehensive list of power technologies, as power continually invents new modes of subjectification.

3.3.2 Technologies of Self

3.3.2.1 Hermeneutics of the Self: How Subject Transforms himself into an Object

Section 2.3.2.2 explains the history of subjectivity in Christianity and the birth of hermeneutics of the self, and section 2.4.2.1 will clarify the meaning and contemporary manifestation of the hermeneutics of self as a part of the theoretical framework. In contrast to technologies of domination, Foucault (1988a) identified 'technologies of self' as another force that constructs subjectivity. He defined this as a means by which individuals, either independently or with the assistance of others, perform operations on their bodies, thoughts, conduct, and way of being in order to transform themselves towards a state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (Foucault, 1988a). While it is largely accurate to equate the technology of self with the ancient care of the self as a pathway to truth and spirituality, there is an exception. As previously discussed, the hermeneutics of the self, a later technology of self in Christianity, is defined as the process of 'deciphering a hidden reality under the apparent surface of representations' (Foucault, 2021b, p. 86). This encourages the subject to employ practices of self-examination and confession to uncover and renounce the 'Satan' within, as a means to approach the truth of God. This contrasts with the Ancient Greek practice of elevating subjectivity to formulate truth within oneself (Foucault, 2016).

The hermeneutics of the self leads to the subject's self-sacrifice and total submission to the god and its spokesperson, resulting in subjectification (Foucault, 1988a). This is why Foucault (2016) argued against the hermeneutics of the self. However, the hermeneutics of the self, as a technology of self or a discipline disguised as such, does not involve the subject being passively or unconsciously disciplined by power. Instead, it involves the subject proactively examining and renouncing themselves to align with external truth. Thus, the hermeneutics of the self represents the technology by which the subject objectifies

themselves. As previously discussed, governance techniques utilise people's subjectivity, self, and desire to maintain domination, rather than imposing direct arbitrariness like technologies of domination:

> Governing people, in the broad meaning of the word, is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself. (Foucault, 2016, p. 26)

On the contemporary governing function of the hermeneutics of the self, Foucault (2016, p. 107) noted:

> I have the feeling that there is a kind of appui réciproque, a mutual support: the way we are governed tries to justify itself by reference to the hermeneutics of the self, the human sciences, and so on, and these hermeneutics of the self are referred eventually to a good political functioning and institutions and so on.

Thus, the hermeneutics of the self is at the intersection of the subject's self-initiation and the concealed sense of subjectification and the power of sciences, the human knowledge.

3.3.2.2 The Contemporary Hermeneutics of the Self

Based on the above quotation from Foucault, the hermeneutics of the self is a governmental resource in contemporary times. Although it no longer emphasises self-renunciation (Foucault, 2016), it persists in the form of human sciences, enabling the subject to constitute themselves positively (Foucault, 1988a) as an object of knowledge (Foucault, 1989). Unlike the Christian subject, who confesses and becomes the object of biblical truth, the subject as an object of knowledge only became possible with the epistemic birth of the contemporary human being following Nietzsche's proclamation of the 'death of God' (Oksala, 2008, p. 31). As Foucault (1989, p. 375–6) noted:

The epistemological field traversed by the human sciences was not laid down in advance: no philosophy, no political or moral option, no empirical science of any kind, no observation of the human body, no analysis of sensation, imagination, or the passions, had ever encountered, in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, anything like man; for man did not exist.

That is, the concept of the human being only emerged after the human sciences – including philology, psychology, criminology, pedagogy, and political economics – began in the 19th century to view the human being as an object of investigation.

Knowledge/power. The human sciences do not evolve linearly; they emerge from the need to overcome challenges in social order (Foucault, 1989) or the demands of disciplinary power. For instance, psychology arose from the need to impose new norms on labourers in industrial society; similarly, sociology emerged due to the need to restore social equilibrium among different strata of French society (Foucault, 1989). Foucault (1973h) also illustrated that the knowledge of management, inquiry, and policing was invented alongside the birth of population administration and police apparatuses. He highlighted the role of the disciplinary technology of writing and documentation in the emergence of knowledge, as the hermeneutics of individuals in documents played a part in extracting knowledge from every single person. By accumulating individual writing records, such as the behaviours of factory apprentices (Foucault, 1973i) and the dossier and judicial record of a criminal (Foucault, 1973b), new fields of knowledge were created:

This institution thus opens up a whole field of possible knowledge. Now, it is in this same period that the hospital structure appears, which gives rise to the institutional space in which man as body will be known. Thus, the foundations both for what will become the anatomical-physiological science of man and for something like psychopathology, criminology, and sociology arise at the same time: what the hospital is for the body, the prison is for the soul. (Foucault, 1973b, p. 91)

This newly created knowledge then becomes a criterion through which to discipline

individuals. As Foucault (1973h, p. 227) stated, 'power extracts the knowledge it needs in order to be exercised and the form in which, on the basis of this knowledge, it distributes orders, prescriptions'. In this context, knowledge and power are inseparable concepts: knowledge is power. Knowledge grants its institutions and agents the authority of power. Thus, Foucault (1973h, p. 236) offered that:

> The clearest case is that of the physician who, from the nineteenth century, inasmuch as he is the master of the normal and the pathological, thereby exercises a certain power not just on his client, but on groups, on society. Similarly, the psychiatrist has a power institutionalised by the 1838 law which, by turning him into an expert who has to be consulted for any action of confinement, gives the [doctor-]psychiatrist and psychiatric knowledge a certain power.

Pursuing knowledge, therefore, offers individuals the capability to wield power, a benefit thoroughly analysed in Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital theory. Lin and Zhao (2023) named such a knowledge pursuer 'the knowing self', in contrast to the caring self that derives from the ethos of care of the self. From a Foucauldian perspective, the nature of power is an internal war-like relationship among humans, placing them in either prolonged or momentary confrontational relationships until some gain the upper hand (1973e). The advantaged party or group can then impose dominance over others (1973e).

As long as humans exist, power relationships will persist. The pursuit of knowledge as a means of seeking power will continue, contributing to the increasing academic study of disciplinary and professional identity (Hyland, 2009, 2012) and the further development of professionalism. The seekers of knowledge construct themselves into discursive authorities, while simultaneously becoming the object of knowledge/power. This process contributes to the study of human beings – the hermeneutics of ourselves – and, in turn, strengthens the discipline over human subjects.

Discipline through knowledge pursuit is also evident in Mourad's (2018) discovery of the prevalence of knowledge inquiry in higher education, which subsequently enhanced the

normalisation and pacification of the inquirers themselves to prevent them from becoming a threat to social security. As Mourad (2018, p. 338) explained:

> Inquirers are encouraged; in fact, it is increasingly demanded that they function as in effect, knowledge entrepreneurs, as human capital, as active economic subjects who compete, even when they collaborate, to obtain resources and produce knowledge outcomes... Higher education accommodates the intense hyperproduction of knowledge by expanding what counts for knowledge while constraining it to be about preexisting reality... Thereby, higher education helps to keep society secure from challenges to the social order by inquirers.

Modern confession. In the mid-century of Europe, Christian monks used confession as a form of self-renunciation and devotion to spiritual authorities. Fejes (2008a) noted that modern individuals confess not only to knowledge authorities such as psychotherapists, doctors, and counsellors, but also to employers, friends, families, and even to themselves. When we seek advice from our families and friends, we are confessing to them; when we consult professional counsellors for advice, we are confessing to them; when we write and submit our CVs to employers, we are confessing to them; even when we reflect on ourselves and create self-growth portfolios, we become our own confessors (Fejes, 2008a).

Regardless of whom we choose to confess to, the aim remains the same – to facilitate our lifelong learning (Fejes, 2008a) or self-actualisation (Worthman & Troiano, 2019). Fejes (2008a, p. 661) explained how, 'through the technology of confession, the adult is shaped and positioned as a learner whose learning is never finished'. Based on the thought of Fejes and Dahlstedt (2013), Worthman and Troiano (2019) suggested that the pursuit of self-actualisation helps individuals exclude so-called deviant subjectivities, leaving a learning-subject trained and regulated by education. They proposed that an individual determined to self-actualise is engaging in modern confession, leading to their objectification as a subject of power-knowledge and even disciplinary school power. However, Fejes (2008a) argued that modern subjects do not need to renounce themselves to confess. Instead, they confess because they are liberal, autonomous, and proactive in

pursuing knowledge to earn a living, and want to establish themselves as knowledge authorities.

While seeking advice from others, communicating with family and friends, and self-reflection may seem like Hellenistic spiritual techniques of care of the self, their modern adaptations are not used for self-conversion and gnomic truth (Foucault, 1988; 2016), but to equip individuals with sufficient knowledge for earning a living (Fejes, 2008a). This practical aim resonates with Foucault's (1982a) observation that the ancient skills of care of the self were reduced to conditions for sustaining existence due to the paradigm shift towards Cartesianism. Fejes (2008a) cautioned that modern confession is a subtle technology of governmentality, based on making the subject a self-autonomous and self-responsible lifelong learner. This echoes Foucault's concept of homo economicus, the constantly learning man-machine (Foucault, 1979a). Fejes (2008a, p. 660) further noted that in this discourse of lifelong learning, the subject is even responsible for 'the one who supports himself/herself in such an enterprise'. Thus, it is foreseeable that subjects will not only take each other's advice seriously but also support each other by acting as confessors, thereby becoming each other's governors.

3.3.3 Care of the Self: How one makes themselves a Subject of Truth

3.3.3.1 Importance of care of the self

In Ancient Greece, the exercise of care of the self held significance at the micro, meso, and macro levels for its citizens. At the micro level, care of the self necessitated a comprehensive conversion to self, focusing on one's body and soul, rather than on desires for external things like wealth and reputation (Foucault, 1988b). Foucault (1988b, p. 65) posited that once someone truly embraced this conversion, they would be free from the baggage of dependence, enslavement, disease, and misfortune. He poetically described this as follows: '[T]he [conversion to self] is also a path by which, escaping all the dependences and enslavements. One ultimately rejoins oneself, like a harbour sheltered from the tempests or a citadel protected by its ramparts'. Foucault also cited Seneca's *On*

the Shortness of Life, explaining the meaningfulness of conversion to self:

> This is the part of our time that is sacred and set apart, put beyond the reach of all human mishaps, and removed from the dominion of fortune, the part which is disquieted by no want, by no fear, by no attack of disease; this can neither be troubled nor snatched away – it is an everlasting and unanxious possession. (Foucault, 1988b, p. 66)

Conversion to self allows even painful experiences and past mistakes to become memorable reflections, which are no longer sources of torment (Foucault, 1988b). As a crucial technique of care of the self, memories can be harnessed to approach truth and foster courage for the future (Foucault, 2021a). In essence, through the practice of care of the self, an individual can internalise all the philosophical maxims of life, achieve harmony between body and soul, attain happiness, and become the subject of their own spirituality. Foucault (1988a, p. 18) describes this outcome as a transformation towards a 'state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality'.

The importance of care of the self at the meso and macro levels stems from the development of an ethos through the practice of care of the self. Foucault (2020) posited that the challenges of exercising care of the self lent a distinctive ethos to Ancient Greeks' behaviour, appearances, and even attire. Individuals embodying such an ethos are recognised and respected as exemplars of practising freedom (Foucault, 2020). This same ethos also underpins constructive interpersonal relationships, which are characterised by freedom rather than domination or abuse:

> [T]he risk of dominating others and exercising a tyrannical power over them arises precisely only when one has not taken care of the self and has become the slave of one's desires. But if you take proper care of yourself, that is, if you know ontologically what you are, if you know what you are capable of, if you know what it means for you to be a citizen of a city, to be the master of a household...if you know what things you should and should not fear, if you know what you can reasonably hope for and, on the

other hand, what things should not matter to you...if you know all this, you cannot

abuse your power over others. (Foucault, 2020, p. 288)

In essence, an individual with such an ethos is self-assured, aware of their obligations, and knows what to expect in every matter, all their endeavours, and every relationship they have with others. This represents the meso-level significance of care of the self, which underpins its macro-level importance. The below paragraph goes into more detail regarding the macro level.

3.3.3.2 Care of the Self as Foucault's Political Ideal and its Misunderstandings

Foucault (2020) argued that individuals possessing ethos hold ethical precedence, and thereby are entitled to govern their families and households. He suggested that a city state would function optimally when all its citizens strive for care of the self. This echoes Socrates' assertion that care of the self is the first step for a young person seeking to govern a city (Foucault, 1988b). In his 1978 seminar, Foucault (1978b, p. 94) stated, 'There is upward continuity in the sense that whoever wants to be able to govern the state must first know how to govern himself, and then, at another level, his family, his goods, his lands, after which he will succeed in governing the state'. This concept, termed by Foucault (1978b) the 'arts of government', forms the basis of his political philosophy centred on self-cultivation ethics (Michman & Rosenberg, 2011). It suggests a societal model akin to that of the 'philosopher king', replacing the deployed technologies of power or hermeneutics of the self in Western history. This new societal mode is perhaps the culmination of Foucault's critique of individual subjugation, aiming 'to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality, which has been imposed on us for several centuries' (Foucault, 1983a, p. 216). The vision is of a society transformed by the establishment of new subjectivity through universal care of the self.

In the past, this vision has been misunderstood. Scholars such as Li (2022) criticised Foucault's of care of the self as a mere placebo for power. However, Foucault's care of the self should be interpreted as the cornerstone of his political ambition and his solution to a

society steeped in power: 'A city in which everybody took proper care of himself would be a city that functioned well' (Foucault, 2020, p. 287). Contrary to the pessimism or nihilism once attributed to him, Foucault actively advocated for social reform by guiding his followers towards the utopia of 'care of the self' ethics. In his own words, he was engaged in 'hyper and pessimistic activism' (Foucault, 1983c, p. 232). Moreover, Foucault's endorsement of active societal participation through self-governance and care of the self indicates that he did not propose a binary opposition between individuals and society (Pan, 2021). Therefore, post-Foucauldian interpretations of care of the self as a form of resistance to power (e.g., Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Choi, 2017; Li, Feng & Liu, 2021) risk falling into dualistic thinking, particularly if the term 'resistance' is used to imply such a dichotomy.

3.3.3.3 Popular Technologies of Care of the Self

In the Greco-Roman epoch, there were six major schools of philosophy: Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, Cynicism, Epicureanism, and Scepticism. Each school had a unique approach to spiritual exercises, e.g., the Aristotelian contemplation of things, the Epicureans' training of desires, and the Stoics' exercises of dying (Hadot, 2011a). These can be considered their 'technologies'. Foucault identified and explained many of these; here, I will introduce three that are often mentioned in his works.

Contemplation. Contemplation, introspection, self-reflection, and self-examination are synonymous in the context of care of the self in Ancient Greek philosophy. Various Greek philosophers had distinct methods of contemplation, but all involved people adopting a focused attitude (Foucault, 1988b) to activate their memories, regulate their actions, incorporate new knowledge into their existing understanding, and transform their consciousness into a philosophical lifestyle (Foucault, 2016). For instance, the Pythagoreans advocated for contemplation in the morning and evening, while Stoic philosophers like Seneca suggested intermittent contemplation, especially before sleep and at career milestones (Foucault, 1988b). Reading philosophical works and maxims (Foucault, 1988b) and engaging in writing (Foucault, 2021a) were believed to enhance the

effects of contemplation.

Spiritual assistance. Care of the self is not merely a lifestyle or a set of practices; it also fosters reciprocal relationships (Foucault, 2021a). Providing spiritual assistance, or 'soul service' to one another when needed, as Foucault (1988b, p. 54) termed it, exemplifies such relationships. This practice involves talking and writing to friends, confidants, and mentors to gain their advice on how best to overcome life's difficulties; it also involves providing oral or written advice and offering assistance to others when they are in need (Foucault, 1988b; 2016). Foucault (2016) particularly stressed that the helping and being-helped relationship in this context is not something eternal or power-dependent but temporary, ceasing when the person's life returns to normal.

Critiquing. Critiquing, here means unlearning or eliminating negative influences, such as bad habits or incorrect opinions imposed by communities, parents, peers, and educators – through critique, one can achieve healing of body and soul (Foucault, 2021a). Foucault placed significant emphasis on critique in his works, evident in his cross-century dialogue with Kant (Foucault, 1984a; Li & Liu, 2024). Foucault (1983b, p. 31) equated critique with Kant's Enlightenment - to cease human tutelage, being the reliance on authorities for decision-making instead of one's own reasoning. Thus, the ability to critique symbolises maturity and provides a strategy to transgress discursive limits and challenge normalisation (Olssen, 2006).

3.3.3.4 Foucauldian Care of the Self's terminal State and Predicament

To contemporary society, Foucault's political philosophy, grounded in care of the self, is utopian and far-sighted. However, Foucault proposed a near-future goal for individuals practising care of the self to shape their subjectivity: to live life as an artefact (Foucault, 2020). In an interview, he explained:

> What strikes me is the fact that, in our society, art has become something related only to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something which is specialised

or done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life? (Foucault, 2020, p. 261)

One the one hand, this perspective reflects Foucault's reference to early Platonic views of bodybuilding aesthetics as a form of care of the self: 'the concern of oneself had as a model a kind of sculpture, the boy has…to sculpt himself as a piece of art'(2021, p. 53). On the other hand, pursuing the aesthetics of existence is equivalent to seeking a beautiful life, which requires individuals to live ethically as truth-speaking subjects (Danaher et al., 2000).

However, Foucault also noted that aesthetic artefacts are not merely products of the individual, but also products of society, as they benefit society, particularly those who appreciate them: 'art and judgements of taste aren't divorced from the wider community' (Danaher, et al, 2000, p. 161). As people's judgement and taste are intertwined with discourse and knowledge, artefacts are once again constrained by power. An example provided by Danaher et al. (2000) is Princess Diana, who crafted her self-image as an art of existence through her style and media presence, influencing British society while also being a product of fashion culture. This analysis reveals that the aesthetics of existence, despite the innovation of transgressing normalisation, succumb once again to the cunning design of governance. Thus, the aesthetics of existence serves as a mediating space between care of the self and power, rather than indicating an overhaul of power structure.

3.4 Foucauldian theories in higher education: a narrative literature review

Following my exploration of the general theoretical background, I reviewed published journal articles on the application of Foucauldian subjectivity theory in education. This was done to gain a systematic understanding of the educational research so far conducted using Foucauldian theories and to position my study accordingly. As this is a poststructural research, I chose not to rely on the numerical data derived from a systematic literature review. Instead, I conducted a narrative literature review, noting that publications utilising

and commenting on Foucault's theories have increased in the field of education since his death. To understand how Foucault's theories and methods have been applied in education over the past two decades, I adopted Ferrari's (2015) narrative review sequence: establishing literature search criteria; developing discussions and evaluations for each identified sub-section; and drawing a conclusion to form the research rationale.

To broaden the search pool, I used the general search function of the University of Glasgow (UofG) e-library and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen campus) e-library, rather than a specific database. The inclusion of the CUHK e-library aimed to capture potential publications from the Greater China area. I used keywords such as 'Foucault/Foucauldian', 'student subjectivity', 'governance', and 'university/higher/tertiary education' at both libraries. The inclusion criteria specified that selected papers should be journal articles written or at least abstracted in English, published between 2000 and 2023. The exclusion criteria stipulated that the publication should be in the field of education and follow a Foucauldian approach, thereby excluding papers dealing with other areas like computer games or literature and those not using Foucauldian perspectives. Book reviews and monographs were also excluded, as journal articles tend to represent the most current publications in a field at a particular time. By reviewing the trends of published journal papers, it was hoped that some mappings of Foucauldian educational research could be depicted. As a supplement to searching in the e-libraries, I also searched the keywords on the websites of some highly relevant journals, such as Critical Studies in Education, the British Journal of Sociology of Education, and Foucault Studies. Approximately 100 journal articles were included in the final selection, with most of the papers published after 2010, indicating a resurgence of Foucauldian work in education during this period.

Upon review, three major trends were identified, which give titles to the sub-sections in the chapter below: 1. Negotiating the affordance of Foucauldian theories; 2. Deconstruction of education; and, 3. Studies of subjectivity. It should be noted that the boundaries between these trends are not distinct and themes may overlap. Therefore, the categorisation of trends is tentative, fuzzy, and unavoidably biased, as is the case with any narrative review

(Ferrari, 2015). Consequently, a single paper may be mentioned many times in reference to different trends in this literature review.

3.4.1 Negotiating the Usefulness of Foucauldian Theories in Education

3.4.1.1 The Use of Theories From Foucault's Early Life

The studies under this subheading delve into Foucault's early thoughts that have inspired educational discourse. The concepts of knowledge-discourse and genealogy are among the most discussed aspects of Foucault's early work in education. In relation to knowledge-discourse in education, Mourad (2018) highlighted the normalising effect of knowledge and critiqued Maxwell's (2007; 2014) idealised assumption that academics should pursue knowledge to improve the living conditions of humanity. As a solution, Mourad (2018) advocated for interdisciplinary collaborations among scholars to disrupt the prevailing discourse of knowledge production.

Hsu (2021) critiqued the popular method in management education known as 'unlearning', which encourages students to continually acquire advanced knowledge and discard outdated information. Hsu (2021) warned that if students persistently unlearn, they risk failing to ever question the authority of knowledge and become 'knowing-selves'. Instead, Hsu (2021) suggested that educators evaluate the sources of knowledge.

In a study of Foucauldian genealogy, Johnston (2014) affirmed the theory's utility in interrogating practices perceived as authoritarian in medical education. Mabille (2019) posited that Foucault's archaeology of knowledge could assist South African higher education in recognising and resisting Western cultural influence, thereby establishing a new ethics of freedom based on local culture. Finally, Thompson (2007) suggested that students could develop a genealogy of selves through personal writing: by writing and depicting their beings, they might preserve the complexity of education.

3.4.1.2 Use of Theories from Foucault's Later Life

Research on Foucault's later theories, such as parrhesia, confession, hermeneutics of the self, critique, and care of the self, is more prevalent than that on his early work. Tamboukou (2012) highlighted the challenge for British academics to implement parrhesia, or fearless speech, in the neoliberal era. Fejes (2008a, 2008b) noted that modern forms of confession include consultation, counselling, reflective practice, and self-monitoring in resume writing. Stickney (2013) pointed out that the techniques of hermeneutics of the self underpin common educational practices, such as counselling and exam-taking, with the intention of making students into objects of knowledge and power.

Discussing critique, Li and Liu (2024) suggested that contemporary education and critical thinking training should incorporate the Foucauldian Enlightenment-critique, enabling students to resist imposed discourse and power. On care of the self, Drummond (2003) argued that the current knowledge economy, symbolising society's evolution from a manufacturing to a service industry, necessitates a greater emphasis on ethics and aesthetics education based on the ethos of care of the self. Rytzler (2019), however, expressed concern that current education focuses too much on nurturing students' attention, producing egoistic subjects. The proposed solution is to introduce the concept of care of the self as a foundation for students to learn to care for themselves and others, thereby redefining and utilising attention.

3.4.1.3 Learning from Foucault's Theories and Spirit

These studies tend to theorise Foucauldian theories that are often overlooked in education, and emphasise the importance of Foucault's theories for various fields in education. For example, Doherty (2007) discussed how education policy studies could benefit from the Foucauldian spirit, and Shenker (2008) suggested that educational counsellors incorporate Foucault's theories into their training. Thompson et al. (2013) recommended that school leaders in England read more Foucault in order to deconstruct or disrupt dominant discourses. Hodge et al. (2014) advocated for the inclusion of Foucault's theories in

medical education in response to calls for theoretical frameworks in the field. Bazzul and Carter (2017) observed a lack of philosophical and sociological theory in science education and recommended more readings of Foucault.

In addition to emphasising Foucault's theories, some research highlights the importance of learning from Foucault's personal spirit. Lopes (2014) and Brass (2014) reviewed Foucault's role as an activist in the May 1968 movement in France and as an activist intellectual, advising contemporary higher education and teacher education to draw inspiration from Foucault's activist spirit. Zembylas (2016) offered an innovative interpretation of Foucault's spirit, reading ideas about human rights from Foucault's works, despite Foucault rarely being considered a human rights education theorist.

3.4.1.4 Criticising and Modifying Foucauldian Thoughts on Education

Despite the numerous endorsements of Foucault on education, there are also critical voices. Sociologists such as Hannus and Simola (2010) found Foucault's theories inadequate for explaining sociocultural phenomena in schools, leading them to develop a model that combines the theories of Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. Olssen (2006) proposed a model that integrates Nussbaum's capabilities approach with Foucauldian critique to circumvent ontological criticisms that judged Foucauldian critique to be aimless. Woermann (2012), adopting a foundationalist perspective, critically evaluated Foucault's theories in educational research, acknowledging Foucault's contribution to illuminating previously neglected areas and phenomena but criticising Foucauldian critiques as lacking a solid basis in objective reality and a clear resistance aim.

In the context of medical education, Bleakley and Bligh (2009) identified limitations in Foucault's theories in terms of their ability to explain the complex development of medicine and the medical field, suggesting that Jean Baudrillard offers a more futuristic approach to addressing issues in this field. Prison education in the US is another area where Foucault's theory is judged to have limited applicability, not only because Foucault did not address prison education, but also because contemporary prison education

resembles external education, with teachers adopting a caring and compassionate approach (Flores, 2021). Philosophical studies, such as that by Wang (2011), have highlighted potential misuses of Foucauldian theories, such as framing Foucauldian resistance as a binary concept against domination in education.

3.4.2 Deconstruction of Education

3.4.2.1 Critical Educational Policy Analysis

Foucauldian theories have been widely employed as the source of method
or theoretic framework in critical policy analysis (CPA). CPA is used to deconstruct educational policies or policy influences often perceived as effective or normal. CPA, which originated in the 1980s, emerged as an antithesis to the traditional educational policy study that takes policies as given (O'Connor & Rudolph, 2023). CPA questions how a policy is negotiated and enacted (Li, 2021), what kind of influences it imposes on and co-generates with people as discursive will-to-truth and how to give the policy
a fresh insight (Hewitt, 2009), and how texts and the discourse of policy conceptualise
a particular issue as a concern and to what extent people can shape the policy discourse (O'Connor & Rudolph, 2023)

Over the years, CPA has evolved into four general approaches: interrogating the formation of local and global policies, diagnosing social problems that lead to policy origination, evaluating networks and mobilities in policymaking, and incorporating indigenous perspectives into policy discourse analysis (O'Connor & Rudolph, 2023). Out of the four CPA approaches, the first three absorb Foucauldian theories, particularly Foucault's discourse theory and power-inspired resistance theory (O'Connor & Rudolph, 2023). Following such Foucauldian tradition, Ball (2006) highlighted CPA's usefulness in rethinking education policy:

> [P]olicy discourses ... produce frameworks of sense and obviousness with which
> policy is thought, talked and written about. Policy texts are set within these

frameworks which constrain but never determine all the possibilities for action. (p.44)

Hewitt (2009) detailed why and how Foucauldian theories are significant in CPA. First, applying Foucauldian discourse enables CPA researchers to re-evaluate the policy of governments and governing bodies by not limiting themselves to these institutions' boundaries. Instead, Foucauldian discourse tells researchers to look at the interactions between policies and policy undertakers or actors, whose lived experience reflect the expectations and influences of the discourse as a part of policy (Hewitt, 2009). Second, Foucauldian discourse theory also increases the policy researchers' 'tentacles' to discover policy discourse's indispensable relationships with local traditions, social practices, media opinions, and people's propositions (Hewitt 2009) as a 'will-to-truth' (Foucault, 1981).

Thirdly, due to Foucauldian recognition of power as something that could be applied by anyone—see Foucault's metaphor of smashing a tape recorder as power-imposing in Bess (1988)—CPA researchers could perceive that it is not only the policymakers, the government, or other institutions that enact policy and have the power to govern individuals, but that every individual also has opportunities to respond to policies, like to co-operate, refuse, resist (Hewitt, 2009), or to manoeuvre policy content as a form of micro-resistance, using 'pockets of freedom' (Raaper, 2019). Finally, and most importantly, applying Foucauldian theory in CPA raises people's awareness of the power and nature of policymaking so that they can debunk it (Hewitt, 2009).

Returning to the four general approaches of CPA using Foucauldian inspirations in O'Connor and Rudolph (2023), among the studies found from the database, some have attempted to question the formation and content of higher education policies. Akdag and Swanson (2018) applied Foucauldian discourse analysis to the internationalisation policies of two universities, uncovering an uncritical discourse of marginalisation of international students. Mavelli (2014) critiqued the UK's widening participation policy in higher education, arguing that it does not reduce inequality but rather increases the neoliberal ethos and commodifies knowledge and education. Critical policy studies, such as those by

McGowan and Partridge (2014), have evaluated educational policies in university community education. In particular, they questioned the effectiveness of the Australian policy of *Student Engagement and Making Community Happen*, noting the emergence of diverse, lifestyle-driven communities formed by students rather than a homogeneous community with a normalising purpose. Spohrer and Bailey (2020) corroborated that *the Character and Resilience Manifesto* in England is another neoliberal attempt to promote employment skills and human capital in students to prepare them for the market.

Exemplifying the approach that diagnosed social problems caused by policies (O'Connor & Rudolph, 2023), Adriany and Tesar (2022) identified a discourse of stunting in Indonesian early childhood education and parenting, leading to state surveillance and the formation of docile children, parents, and teachers. Thorpe (2003) identified a crisis discourse in Australian physical education since the 1990s, and Schee (2009) found that US school health policies formulated a discourse of discipline on students' eating habits.

To further explain the CPA approach that evaluates networks and mobilities in policymaking, it concerns how a policy is developed and interacted with 'people, things, resources, conflicts, and stories connected to' it (O'Connor & Rudolph, 2023, p. 11). As examples, Li et al. (2021) analysed the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) policy in Shanghai, China, finding that the policy fosters a discourse that promotes human capital, a key feature of neoliberalism, but many teachers undertaking this policy resisted it. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme has been identified as a vehicle for training neoliberal subjects by internalising Australian students' desire to pursue success and avoid failure (Petersen & O'Flynn, 2007). Beyond studying policy actors' stories in policy implementation, studies like McCuaig et al. (2020) have explored how external educational providers impose pastoral power on school policy enactment.

3.4.2.2 Deconstructing Educational Practices and Materials

Foucauldian research has significantly influenced the deconstruction of educational practices. Various assessment apparatus, such as higher education quality-assurance

techniques like accreditation (Romanoski, 2022), South African engineering education accreditation (Mutereko, 2018), and the UK's national student survey (Thiel, 2019), have been analysed using Foucauldian methods. These studies found these apparatuses to be disciplinary and governing. Researchers have also applied Foucault's theories of discipline to deconstruct educational systems, pedagogies, and beliefs. For example, Li (2022) used disciplinary technologies as indicators to evaluate governance practices in traditional Chinese schools. The study confirmed the existence of these disciplinary technologies and that they hinder the holistic development of Chinese students. Similarly, Bowdridge and Blenkinsop (2011) identified components of outdoor education that discipline students. Henderson (2020) found that university writing practices also discipline students into becoming submissive and automatic knowledge-seekers. Llamas (2006) explored how students perceive the 'good student' construct and the way in which it is shaped by disciplinary technology.

Foucauldian discourse has also been used to analyse teaching materials. Li and Wu (2022) identified a division between locals and outsiders as a symbol of populist discourse in Hong Kong secondary school textbooks. Ideland and Malmberg (2015) found that sustainable development teaching materials for children, including textbooks and extracurricular reading and games, were imbued with pastoral power. These materials aimed to nurture 'eco-certified children' by encouraging self-sacrifice and confession of everyday habits related to sustainability. In recent years, the deconstruction of the subjectivity of educational stakeholders has become a more prominent topic. This is also the focus of the present study, which aims to explore the subjectivity of university students in Macau within the context of neoliberalism.

3.4.3 Studies of Subjectivity

In my review of databases and journals, I identified five types of Foucauldian subjectivity research. The first two types present a binary division: those who are subjectified by power, and those who are not. From the third type onwards, the studies tend to exhibit a more complex juxtaposition or integration of power and subjectivities.

The first type of research includes studies on how teachers are subjectified by various systems, such as the school clock-in system (Gilbert, 2021), the neoliberal national anti-bullying standard (Webb et al., 2023), and the academic performance evaluation system at certain universities (Morrissey, 2013). In the same category of study, students' subjectivity is shaped by factors like industry–school partnerships (Hay & Kapitzke, 2009), literacy practices representing rational, calculative, and disciplinary knowledge (Henderson, 2020), entrepreneurial education (Laalo & Heinonen, 2016), schools' political attitudes (Journell, 2011), a Sino-foreign university ethos (Han, 2023), and discrimination based on gender, skin colour, and ethnicity in transnational education (J.Li, 2022). These studies reveal the extent to which teachers and students are entangled in the powers of neoliberal governmentality. Even students with special needs are not exempt, as Whitburn (2017) observed a discourse of normalcy permeating their education, aiming to shape them into another labour market workforce.

The second type of Foucauldian subjectivity research focuses on Stephen Ball and colleagues' theorisation of care of the self as a Foucauldian resistance to power (e.g., Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Ball, 2016). This theorisation has been used as a template for subsequent studies on subjects' resistance (e.g., Nguyen, 2022; Raaper, 2016; Choi, 2017; Huang & Vong, 2018; Li et al., 2021). Ball and colleagues interpreted various everyday practices of their participant teachers as acts of resistance derived from Foucault's care of the self, such as refusal of and being uncooperative with external performance metrics, reinterpreting and unravelling rules and policies, acting irresponsibly instead of taking responsibility (Ball & Olmedo, 2013), directly attacking imposed teaching regulations by writing critical blog posts, and immediately confronting the judgement of external powers (Ball, 2016). However, this interpretation of Foucault's care of the self and Foucauldian resistance as direct confrontation or non-cooperation is misleading. As I mentioned in chapter two, Foucault was not anti-social or opposed to powers in a binary way. Any binary resistance is not post-modern but dualism-driven or (Neo-) Marxist-oriented (Hodgson & Standish, 2009). Wang (2011) highlighted a danger in Ball's interpretation of Foucauldian resistance, stating that such a dichotomy of liberation/entrapment misses the ironic point that Foucault

emphasises, and that this binary is exactly what Foucault intended to work against. Furthermore, Wang (2011) warned that studies adopting Ball and his colleagues' theorisation of Foucauldian care of the self or resistance may fall into the trap of using the theories in a confined way. For instance, specific behaviours of teachers are regarded as care of the self by Ball and Olmedo (2013); these are then used as prompts or codes for deductive analysis in studies such as those by Huang and Vong (2018) and Li et al (2021). Aside from Ball's binary approach to studying subjectivity, other studies borrow Foucault's thoughts and call for space for resisting subjectivity imposed by neoliberalism (Pudsey, 2016), English-only education (Bondy, 2016), and even history and tradition (Oyarzun, 2020).

The third category of studies adopts a more nuanced perspective, examining subjectivity by juxtaposing the co-existence of resistance and subjectification. For example, Raaper (2020) found that sabbatical officers at some university student unions diverged in their formation of subjectivity. Some maintained their passion for organising student demonstrations, while others were subjectified by neoliberal discourse, resorting only to lobbying politicians. Similarly, Li et al. (2021) found that English teachers in Shanghai universities were critiquing a new neoliberal language policy and developing their own teaching and pastoral care methods, regardless of policy instructions. However, some teachers were subjectified by the policy's discourse, believing in its superiority and progressiveness. Notably, Li et al.'s (2021) theorisation of subjectivity was based on the work of Ball and Olmedo (2013). In contrast, Drew (2020) theorised how classroom rules charted the subjectification of kindergarten pupils, identifying three types of subjects: the Apollonian 'good' (labelled as incapable but having potential), the Dionysian 'bad' (out of control, not constrained by rules), and the Athenian 'choice-making' student (turned into responsible pupils).

The fourth category of Foucauldian subjectivity research also demonstrated complex subjectivity. Instead of juxtaposing those subjectified and those not, studies in this category reported how subjects' care of the self as resistance became either more marginalised or endangered. For instance, Nguyen (2022) found that, despite academic mentors in Hanoi

universities implementing Foucauldian resistance, such as deconstructing governmental practices and devising their own ways of assisting students, they could not escape the discourse they inhabited. Their resistance led to uncertainty and risks, making them more vulnerable. Similarly, Huang and Vong (2018) found that visual arts teachers in Macau resisted the neoliberal changes at their schools, attempting to overturn the marginalisation of the visual arts course. However, their struggle led to a worse situation: re-marginalisation.

Raaper (2016) reported that UK university teachers expressed frustration and openly criticised the neoliberalism-oriented assessment reform as their form of Foucauldian resistance and parrhesia. However, their relative freedom in expressing their frustration in actuality diluted their motivation to instigate any revolution, inviting continuous subjectification. In another study, Raaper (2018) investigated graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) in UK universities, finding that they resisted and criticised the neoliberalised university. They shouldered much of the teaching and pastoral care workload for lecturers, soothing their conscience as a form of care of the self in their work. However, the limited role they could play in the neoliberal university in turn reinforced their fragility and helplessness.

Similar results of seeing subjects' freedom in regard to care of the self, coexisting with subjectification were also reported by Cannizzio (2015). Another study used Foucault's concept of heterotopias to examine how women's colleges, as educational heterotopias, empowered women to resist patriarchal domination. However, in these institutions women eventually ousted and replaced the original patriarchal power structure, becoming another power suffused with hierarchy, authority, and obedience (Tamboukou, 2004) .

The final kind of Foucauldian subjectivity research turned away from the theories of power subjugation and resistance. Instead, they explored how subjects actively embraced the power imposed on them and willingly opened themselves up to power's training, becoming homo economicus (Peterson & O'Flnn, 2007; Hay & Kapitzke, 2009; James, 2021; Gebreiter, 2020) and other forms of knowledge subjects (Peruzzo, 2022; Akerblom, 2020;

Mayes, 2020; Toledo et al., 2018; Llewellyn, 2016; Fejes, 2008a; Masschelein & Quaghebeur, 2005). However, these studies failed to incorporate the term "hermeneutics of the self" into their inquiries as a more precise Foucauldian expression of people's desired subjectivity being used for governance in neoliberalism.

In terms of subjects as homo economicus, Petersen and O'Flynn found that some contestants seeking to obtain the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme in Australia became highly conscious and desirous of success, avoiding failure in order 'to gaze upon themselves as malleable, flexible, always-improvable portfolios and learn to assess themselves as successful or failing accordingly' (2007, p. 209). Through a Foucauldian lens, Peterson and O'Flynn (2007) viewed the scheme as a neoliberal technology. Similarly, in Queensland, Australia, students were found to be more expressive and creative, but this result was derived from the partnership between industry and schools, leading to the creation of entrepreneurial subjects as a student-workforce (Hay & Kapitzke, 2009). James (2021) observed that students evolved into self-sustaining subjects, who specifically learned how to cope with risks in their study to qualify for ethical reviews at UK universities. After graduation, while job hunting for positions in the Big Four accountancy firms, UK university graduates were actively engaged in domination activities even before their trainee session, aiming to self-govern into the kind of professionals these companies were seeking to recruit (Gebreiter, 2020).

Regarding knowledge subjects, it has been found that mathematics education, particularly the method of learning by research (de Toledo e Toledo et al., 2018) and the progress of students' learning (Llewellyn, 2016), stimulated students' desires to continuously study and become 'techno-scientificised individuals' (de Toledo e Toledo et al., 2018), or at least to be labelled as a 'normal child' in mathematics education (Llewellyn, 2016). Furthermore, even students with intellectual disabilities are encouraged to constantly upskill themselves in knowledge or self-knowledge. In Sweden, a study found that disabled people were trained in 'how to promote health, especially with regard to physical activity and diet and related subjects such as strength training and daily exercise, food and nutrition, pedagogical leadership, group processes and inspiration methodologies', in order to

become desired subjects in society (Akerblom, 2020, p. 354). Similarly, in Italy, disabled people have been asked to explore themselves to raise awareness of their deficits. A study found that local policymakers believed that disabled people could better interact with others and fit into society if they had such an awareness and accepted their disabilities (Peruzzo, 2022). Peruzzo's (2022) study revealed how disabled people become subjects of self-knowledge through exploring and knowing themselves, but also found that while they are studying themselves, they inevitably become the objects of their self-knowledge. Mayes (2020) explored how subjects' proactive voice-making, as if it is parrhesia, with regard to school reform was, in return, used to know and govern the students, which eventually boosted the 'security' of school reforms by facilitating in-time interventions into students' behaviours.

Notably, the subjects in the aforementioned studies were actively enhancing their capabilities, knowledge, health, and other competencies, seemingly employing self-technologies to elevate their subjectivities. However, these proactive 'care of the self' behaviours were direct consequences of certain policies or incentives for reward and success. None of these studies theorised the subjects' proactive pursuit of subjectification through Foucault's hermeneutics of the self. It can be inferred from the findings of chapter two that the hermeneutics of the self, as a distinct form of care of the self leading to subjectification rather than spiritual truth, appears more appropriate for explaining the studies in this section. All the subjectivity studies under the five categories share a common feature: they treat each investigated subject's subjectivity as a fixed or bounded entity, as if a snapshot of a person's subjectivity in a study represents their spirit or soul throughout their entire life.

4. Chapter Four: Secularised Confucianism

4.1 Is Confucianism or secularised Confucianism a theoretical alternative?

If I bracket myself and the Macau students, who are all Chinese, away from the aforementioned Continental philosophy theories, and attempt to understand the students from a Confucian rationality of practice, results different from the Foucauldian interpretation may be generated. Indeed, there are a few studies that have used Confucian ideas to reinterpret Chinese teachers' subjectivities under neoliberalism, e.g., Zhao (2013) in the mainland of China; Huang and Vong (2016) in Macau; and Lin and Zhao (2023) in Hong Kong. Informative as these studies are, they all focused on teachers only and, more importantly, they problematised the neoliberal subjects nurtured in Chinese teachers via Confucian philosophy ethics.

To be specific, Lin and Zhao (2023) revealed how the Confucian family-child order supported teachers in Hong Kong in establishing an affectionate relationship with students against neoliberal governmentality; Zhao (2013) discussed how Mencius' concept of liangxin 良心 (conscience) redeemed Chinese teachers in countering accountability policies, in findings similar to those of Huang and Vong (2016) in Macau. Both liangxin and family-child order are Confucian ethics, which the aforementioned authors found to be a shield for teachers, enabling them to not apply neoliberal principles and views to their teaching or students. However, these particular examples of Confucian ethics are too idealised to be considered real principles that Chinese people use in daily life. Rather, the Chinese tend to use liangxin and other Confucian rituals to justify their behaviours or to condemn the wrongdoings of others, after the event. Studies using Chinese practical reasoning, particularly that which guides Chinese people's everyday practices, to

understand the behaviour and subjectivity of students with Chinese backgrounds are relatively lacking. The following sections will introduce the theories of living practical reasonings of Confucianism, which, in the present study, is termed secularised Confucianism.

4.2 Lianmian Culture

Lianmian is a common psychological phenomenon that can be perceived by Chinese people or those who have some experience of Chinese culture (Zhai, 2022). Many orientalists and Chinese philosophers argue that it is not the rituals of Confucianism but the logic of lianmian that implicitly informs Chinese people's daily behaviour (Zhai, 2022). For example, the orientalist Lin Yutang 林语堂 in *My Country and My People* (1935), one of the earliest monographs written by a Chinese person, identified '"face" as the most powerful of the three muses who ruled the Chinese people, and that the Chinese people lived for it' (cited by Zhai, 2022, p. 51). For a better understanding, lianmian should, in fact, be separated into lian 脸 and mian 面. Summarising Zhai (2022, p.55), 'lian' is a person's self-image or manner, including the culturally recognised ethos such as 'temperament, character, ability, knowledge, morality, demeanour, appearance, dress, (or) words'. Mian is a relational concept, concerning how others respect people with good manners and reward their decency by giving them resources or recognition of their 'identity, status, fame, position, power, money, sophistication, (or) networks'. (Zhai, 2022, p,55) Ideally, lian is the cause of mian, and they combine to produce a synergy that drives a Chinese person's success: 'if an individual obtains the resources of lian first, he will succeed in society and have the resources of mianzi (or mian); if he does not have the resources of lian, he will not get the resources of mianzi correspondingly' (Zhai, 2022, p.55). However, due to the two concepts' respective signifiers, Chinese people can sense a distinction between lian and mian, and many of them are reluctant to win the reward of mian through arduous self-image or lian-building. Instead, they prefer to work directly on mian (Zhai, 2022); in other words, by stressing mian, they seek recognition and resources directly from others, without first cultivating the necessary virtues and capabilities.

Revolving around lianmian, Zhai (2022) identified four kinds of people commonly seen in Chinese culture: junzi 君子 (gentleman), fangren 方人 (square or stubborn man), yuanren 圆人 (round or flexible man), and xiaoren 小人 (petty or small-minded man). People called junzi are those who have both lian in nature and mian as social recognition; junzi is the ideal type of person that Confucianism attempts to nurture, someone who is: 'sagely inside and kingly outside' (Zhai, 2022, p. 59). However, these people are rare, more often simply ideal figures (Zhai, 2022). In reality, many lian people with righteous manners or studious intellect are not respected by others (and not given the mian they deserve), because their righteousness or studiousness can be thought of as being too orthodox; thus, these people are analogised as being square rather than flexible (Zhai, 2022). Hence, they are looked down upon and called fangren, or 'square people'. In contrast, the more popular types of Chinese are 'round people', yuanren. A yuanren is someone with less inner virtue or lian but who devotes a lot of time and effort to building their reputation and connections, or mian.

Analysing the contemporary Chinese ironic literature *Fortress Besieged* by Qian Zhongshu 钱钟书, Zhai (2022) identified an extreme case of pursuing mian, with a Chinese 'scholar' faking university diplomas to obtain people's respect (a reward of mian). Women were willing to marry such a scholar because their higher education and overseas experience would bring honour to her and her family (another reward of mian). However, this case is a literary example; in real life, people expect yuanren to be people with the spirit of a 'thug' rather than being over-righteous: '[They] are just such thugs. They not only do not pay attention to moral cultivation or social norms, but also are smooth, skillful, good at steering the boat, plotting and politicking' (Zhai, 2022, p. 60). The final type of person, xiaoren or the 'no lianmian', in other words petty people, is beyond the discussion of the present study, because all the students have some cultural capital and are not without lian.

The lianmian phenomenon has its origin in Confucianism, which informs the family-centred structure of Chinese society. Presumably, Confucianism itself is not the creator of Chinese social structure but is rather a cultural messenger passing down the system through the generations (Zhai, 2022). Hence, with a legacy of thousands of years,

the family-centrality mindset continues to influence Chinese people. It is carved into their minds that the country is an extended family, and a citizens are relatives and members of that family. This is why Chinese people find it hard to stand against the country, because it is their family (Zhai, 2022). In a familial society such as this, everything one does should be in honour of one's parents, ancestors, or any other people or institutions one regards as family. Therefore, engaging in unfilial and immoral behaviours, being in poverty, performing poorly in academics, or having an 'indecent' career would, to varying extents, disgrace the family's honour (lian) and limit other people's respect for the family (mian), and vice versa. The behaviours beneficial for maintaining and enhancing both one own and other people's lianmian are those that are in accordance with 'li' 礼 (good ritual), another core tenet of Confucian philosophy (Zhai, 2022). The Confucian expectation of li behaviour is fulfilled by a junzi, whose inner self mirrors the external self, but nowadays li can be seen in how Chinese people operate the logic of lianmian. Hence, the lianmian phenomenon is a form of secularised Confucian rationality, and holds some power in explaining Chinese people's behaviours (Zhai, 2022).

4.3 Attitude Towards Learning in Confucian Culture

The attitude towards learning is a secularised aspect of Confucianism too. Zhuang and Kong (2023) argue that it is the less visible cognitive and academic Confucian philosophies, rather than the conspicuous code of the ancient times that influence contemporary Chinese students. The Confucian attitude towards learning is such a less visible philosophy, passing down through generations, which has been internalised by current students through the practice of lianmian. The goal of Confucian education, as Hwang (2015) outlines, is to become a junzi, uniting the intrinsic aim of self-perfection with the extrinsic goal of aiding others through the application of learned knowledge.

A junzi, being 'sagely inside and kingly outside' (Zhai, 2022, p. 59), naturally attracts social respect. In ancient China, an examination system was in place to nurture and select junzi for roles as shidafu 士大夫 (scholarly bureaucrats). This examination consisted of three levels: the xiucai 秀才 (successful at the county level), the juren 举人 (successful

at the provincial level), and the jinshi 进士 (successful at the national level) (Hwang, 2015). Success at any level could lead to officialdom or, at the very least, respect as a xiangshen 乡绅 (local gentleman) with 'land, property, money, status, [and] influence' (Hwang, 2015, p. 133). Success was an honour for the individual and their family, but also their ancestors. Thus, for the Chinese people of the past, diligent study was rewarded in social, economic, and symbolic terms:

> [E]xcellent academic achievement or attainment of a higher level of education not only serves as a tool to gain better jobs and higher income but, more importantly, represents a highly regarded social symbol and raises the self-confidence and self-esteem of a family or even the entire clan. (Hwang, 2015, p. 132)

Consequently, the Chinese developed a strong belief in the importance of education, encapsulated in the saying wanban jiexiapin, weiyou dushu gao 万般皆下品，唯有读书高 (all else pales in comparison to reading books). This historical legacy means that children's education remains a priority for Chinese families today. The old junzi selection system of xiucai-juren-jinshi persists in cultural memory, taking on new forms at the elementary, secondary, and university levels (Hwang, 2015), and in the bachelor-master-doctor sequence. In Confucian cultural contexts, academic performance determines a young person's standing.

The Confucian educational classic text *Daxue* 大学 (the Great Learning) defines learning as moral development rather than skill acquisition (Li, 2010). Thus, Confucian learning focuses on the cultivation of students' morality, dictating when and how to study. Neo-Confucian intellectual Zhu Xi 朱熹, of the Song Dynasty, emphasised the importance of early morning study for young people as a means of honing virtue. This led to the saying yitian zhiji zaiyu chen 一天之计在于晨 (the best time of a day is its morning) (Hwang, 2015).

Confucius advocated for the productive use of youth in study, being beneficial for young people's future, as reflected in his famous saying in *Lunyu* 论语 (Analects of Confucius):

'wushi youwu er zhiyu xue, sanshi erli, sishi er buhuo, wushi er zhitianming, liushi ershun, qishi er congxin suoyu, buyuju 吾十有五而志于学，三十而立，四十而不惑，五十而知天命，六十而耳顺，七十而从心所欲，不踰矩' (At fifteen, I applied myself to learning. At 30, I stood on my own two feet. At 40, I had no more doubts. At 50, I understood the will of heaven. At 60 my ear was attuned. At 70, I followed all my heart's desires without overstepping the line) (translated by Brown, 2021). Nevertheless, Confucian thought encourages lifelong learning, and Li (2010) emphasised that the teaching of ren 仁 (mercy) aims to cultivate virtue in students through a lifetime of study.

In terms of how to study, there are many modern-day interpretations of the Confucian ideal, but I will single out several principles of morality that are still prevalent and affect students in Chinese culture today. These principles are lizhi 立志 (commitment), zhuanxin 专心 (concentration), hengxin 恒心 (perseverance), and qianxu 谦虚 (modesty). Together, these are considered to be the living Confucian morality of learning. Lizhi, being more than just a career aspiration, requires emotional dedication and hard work towards a larger purpose (Li, 2010). Chinese students often learn about role models who are seen to have exemplified lizhi, such as Lu Xun (鲁迅), a critical and patriotic writer from the early 20th century. His commitment to wei zhonghua zhi jueqi er dushu 为中华之崛起而读书 (study for the rise of China) is frequently cited. Students lacking determination or broader aspirations are often criticised for having 'no zhiqi' 志气 (lack of commitment). Zhuanxin and hengxin represent attentiveness and perseverance in learning, respectively. According to Li (2010), zhuanxin requires full engagement in study, while hengxin implies enduring the rigours and duration of study without giving up.

Qianxu, or modesty, is highly valued in Confucianism. A junzi, or virtuous person, is not only intellectually capable but also considerate of others, which is the posture of modesty. Hwang (2015) defined the ideal student in Chinese culture as one embodying pinxue jianyou 品学兼优, or being a high achiever while modest towards others. Confucian classic texts offer some advice on modesty. For instance, in the *Analects of Confucius*, Confucius stated sanrenxing biyou woshi 三人行必有我师 (When walking with two others, I can always learn from them) (Waley, 1964, p. 127). The *Shangshu* 尚书 (Book of

Chow) suggests that pride leads to loss, while modesty brings benefit (Legge, 2013). This philosophy of modesty is a guiding principle for Chinese people, reminding them to remain humble and open to learning from others.

Regarding Confucian pedagogy, Wu (2016) summarised the idea of imitating exemplarity as one of the most important methods of study for Chinese people, alongside repetition (e.g., rote learning) and examination. Exemplarity can involve a person as a role model or a textual template (Wu, 2016). Chinese students are often encouraged to emulate the good deeds or spirits of larger-than-life heroes, high-achieving students, and respected teachers, which further symbolises the moral value of lizhi, having commitment. When preparing for exams, paragraphs in textbooks serve as exemplars for students to memorise and imitate (Wu, 2016). As such, imitating exemplarity is closely connected with the methods of repetition and examination. Exemplarity also has roots in Confucianism, because the aim of nurturing junzi as a virtuously honourable man is for others to emulate, so as to maintain harmonious social order (Wu, 2016). Thus, Confucian attitudes towards learning, passed down through stories, idioms, and gnomai, contribute to the behavioural motivations of Chinese people.

4.4 Post-Confucianism competitiveness

In recent years, the role of Confucian culture in economic growth has been reevaluated. In the past, Max Weber (1964) criticised Confucianism for hindering economic development and the emergence of capitalism in China. Yet the second half of the 20th century witnessed the economic acceleration of many societies with Confucian heritage, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. Since then, Confucianism has been identified as having some potential value in driving the economy, referred to as the post-Confucian hypothesis (Baumann et al., 2020). Confucian 'values such as future orientation, hard work, fervour for education, and frugality' (Viengkham et al., 2018, p. 338) have contributed to the rise of these Asian societies; however, their Confucian history is not the sole reason for this (Baumann et al., 2020). The values instilled in the people and institutions of these places represents a competitive worldview, making them believe that

'one is always capable of improving their situation if they are willing to put the effort in' (Baumann et al., 2020, p. 16). Therefore, even free from the influence of neoliberalism, Chinese people may be equipped with the mindset of competitiveness through constant self-improvement efforts. Reflecting on these cultural tokens, individuals within Chinese culture become subjects of Confucianism (Wang, 2016). Therefore, the extent to which the subjectivities of students in Macau are shaped by neoliberalism and/or secularised Confucianism warrants further exploration.

4.5 Confucian culture and students in higher education

The majority of studies researching Confucian culture and higher education published after 1990s were at the exploratory stage, as they were trying to use a dated Western-centric anthropological method to understand Confucian-heritage university students (e.g., Scollon, 1991; Maley, 1996; Salili, 1996; Gao, 1998; Liu & Littlewood, 1997; Jin & Cortazzi, 1998; Jin & Cortazzi, 2003; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Grimshaw, 2007; Watkins, 2009; Rao & Chan, 2009; Parris-Kidd & Barnett, 2011; Li & Cutting, 2011; Durkin, 2011).

However, O'Dwyer (2017) critiqued many typologies of the summarized learning styles of students from Confucian culture as being reductive and essentialist. I also believe that many of the following opinions over-simplify the characteristics of students of Confucian heritage: Confucian students do not like to answer questions in front of crowds due to the danger of losing face (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Liu & Littlewood, 1997); they prefer not to debate with peers to avoid embarrassment and contradictions (Durkin, 2011; Grimshaw, 2007); Chinese students favor a learning–listening approach compared with their UK counterparts (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998; Parris-Kidd & Bartnett, 2011); Chinese students strictly adhere to their teachers' and parents' instruction (Salili, 1996); Chinese students worship the authority of books and memorize their contents as a major learning method (Maley, 1996; Rao & Chan, 2009; Li & Cutting, 2011); Chinese students tend to prioritize learning for examination (Jin & Cortazzi, 2003; Gao, 1998); and Chinese students' sense of individualism is low compared with Western students (Scollon, 1991).

While navigating through all the above literature, a sentence from Maley (1996, p.104-105) particularly drew my attention, in which he seemed to extract how Chinese university students read English books. He said that the students were adopting a 'word by word, phrase by phrase approach, while noting points of vocabulary, syntax, style and content along the way'. I should point out that it is perhaps not wrong to summarize the characteristics of people from a certain culture; however, the above studies were too assertive and not negotiable, simplifying the possible individual, generational, and sociopolitical differences that underpin students of Confucian inheritance.

However, when entering into the era of online education, the over-simplification of Confucian-heritage learners is ongoing. Zhang (2013) discovered that students of a Confucian-heritage background adapt to online learning in a unique way, in that they like online engagement due to their culturally default reluctance to interact and speak in front of crowds; however, the online classroom causes isolation and increased anxiety due to their inability to communicate with Chinese-speaking peers to discuss coursework like in offline settings. More systematically, after a comparison with students from the US, Kang and Chang (2016, p.790) prescribed tailored online solutions for Confucian-heritage students, whom they described as those that see their instructor 'as the absolute authority or a "parent"', 'avoid conflict and uncertainty', prioritize the group's interests and needs, 'value well-structured and transparent learning environment', 'appreciate learning that is pre-sequenced by the teacher', and 'value detailed feedbacks, explicit grading criteria and specific reading materials'.

Worse, there are studies that treat Chinese students' cultural background as barriers and even problematic for their study in the US. For instance, M. Wang (2016, p.611) claimed the following:

> This study reveals the negative influence of Chinese cultural values on these students in American higher education ... which evidence Chinese students' dependence on their family, the Confucian middle way, the concept of 'mianzi' (lianmian) and

filial piety... By addressing these problems, American universities will be better

able to   accommodate the incoming multicultural students, the majority of whom are

Chinese, and bridge the gap that separates them from their American counterparts.

All the aforementioned studies seemed to use a colonial perspective, or at least a dualism perspective, distinguishing these students from those of the Anglo-Continental cultures, just like what Edward Said (1979) depicted in *Orientalism*, namely, how Western literature and texts distinguish and downplay Asian culture. Such dualism forsakes the complexity in any student's subjectivity, regardless of their birthplace, and the aforementioned studies seemed not sensitive enough in recognizing the homogeneity that neoliberalism brings to places across the globe. So, the limitations of the aforementioned studies warrant my research. Although I also attempt to interpret students from a Confucian background, I look at the students as not only subjects of Chinese culture but also as subjects of worldwide neoliberalism. More importantly, I regard each student participant as a unique being despite their commonalities. While in recent years, some studies have emerged (e.g., Gong & Dobinson, 2019; Zhuang & Kong, 2023) that have started to adopt a more complex perspective to rethink the interplay of social ideologies or value systems like socialism, patriotism, Confucianism, and neoliberalism on Chinese mainland students' subjectivity, as Zhuang and Kong (2023) have highlighted, such studies are still few in number, and there is still a considerable gap for future research. Therefore, my study is novel, as I analyze the effects of the interplay of neoliberalism and Confucianism on Macau students.

4.6 Research Rationale and Research Questions

Viewing humans as fixed, bounded, unchanging, and one-dimensional entities is an oversimplification, a fallacy induced by modernist thinking. In contrast, poststructural theorists such as Richard Rorty and Judith Butler view subjectivity as a formative process. Rorty (1999, p. 77) proposed that selfhood 'is in the process of making, and that any self is capable of including with itself a number of inconsistent selves, of unharmonised dispositions'. Echoing Rorty, Worthman and Troiano (2019) demonstrated how a student

intentionally concealed his other subjectivities to present himself as a dedicated student striving for self-actualisation as the single subjectivity left. Thus, subjectivity could be multifaceted. Butler (1990) made a similar argument about the formative nature of subjectivity: 'Post-structural theorising considers subjectivity to be an ongoing accomplishment… Who we are is never settled, but is continuously being formed and reformed, signified and re-signified… subjectivity… is a reiterative, citational practice' (cited in Peterson, 2014, p. 824). If this is so, Peterson (2014) posited that a new experience may extend, transform, amend, or even challenge one's original subject position, and new subjectivity brings a new narrative or vice versa.

In recounting the emphasis Ancient Greek philosophers placed on care of the self throughout a person's life, Foucault presented subjectivity as a process of becoming, or at least as a game of truth. Therefore, Foucauldian research on subjectivity should culminate in the portrayal of a formative, and perhaps complex, subjectivity in an individual's journey towards embodying a truth-infused spiritual corporality. As Hodgson and Standish (2009, p. 315) noted, 'Foucault's own view of his work [pointed] to resistance and subjectivation as an ongoing process, and ongoing struggle'. This leads me to consider poststructural individual agency as something that carries contradictions and tensions within itself (Cohen et al., 2011). For instance, a person might be subjectified in one aspect but not another, or they might have been subjectified in the past but later resist subjugation. A person who has been taken good care of himself might end up with being subjectified because of some possible distractions.

Returning to the aim of this dissertation, I plan to explore the subjectivity of Macau university students as a formative process. To achieve this, I will ask each case study participant about their past history and future plans. The aim of this approach is to reveal the fluidity and complexity of the participants' subjectivity formation from their narrated lived experiences, rather than merely seeking their opinions, as many previous Foucauldian subjectivity studies have done. I am inspired by Gajek's (2014) assertion that narrative is our only possible means to describe the time we have lived, and by Peterson's (2014) suggestion that having a new subjectivity may give rise to a new story.

It is worth noting that researchers may encounter pitfalls when claiming to use a poststructuralist framework in their research. One such pitfall is treating the framework as an orthodoxy of practice (Hodgson & Standish, 2009). In the present study, this risk is present, due to my use of Foucauldian concepts as the theoretical framework and prompts for data analysis. If I regard Foucault's concepts as the only means to explore the research participants' subjectivities without reflexivity, I may be inclined to accept Foucault's words as a universal truth, which is not poststructural. Therefore, while being reflexive of Foucauldian theories of subjectivity, I aim to test their explanatory power on Macau university students in a secularised Confucian context. I will also challenge the explanations provided by Foucauldian theories by comparing them with the interpretations of the data from a Confucian perspective. Integrating all these theoretical reflections and rationales, I propose the following research questions:

- To what extent does neoliberalism influence the subjectivity of Macau students in their university studies?
- How do Macau university students cultivate their own subjectivity?
- To what extent does secularised Confucianism influence Macau university students' subjectivity?

5. Chapter Five: Research Design

5.1 Paradigm: Poststructuralism

Defining poststructuralism, the paradigm of this study, is challenging due to the lack of a homogeneous definition (Marshall, 2004). As a movement in culture and philosophy, amplified by the French students' and workers' revolution in 1968 (Marshall, 2004), it is sometimes equated with deconstruction (Buchanan, 2018) and postmodernism (Crotty, 2010). However, some distinguish between the two, viewing postmodernism as cultural and poststructuralism as academic theory and methods (Crotty, 2010).

Poststructuralism, a loosely formulated school of thought, evolved through the contributions of three generations of scholars (Howarth, 2013). The first generation, including Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and Guattari, challenged structuralist assumptions and analysed societal modes like capitalism and state. The second generation bridged French philosophies with critical theories, extending their analysis to subjectivity and identity. The third generation focused on applying poststructuralist methodology and epistemology in social research (Howarth, 2013). The present study draws from all three generations, using Foucault's poststructuralist thought to theorise the postcolonial governance of Macau and adopting a qualitative methodology to study university students' neoliberal subjectivity.

Epistemologically, poststructuralism arose as a critique of structuralism, destabilising assumptions and structures that presuppose a humanistic, stable, and systematic nature of meaning, society, and human behaviour (Cohen et al., 2010; O'Keeffe & Skerritt, 2021). Thus, poststructuralism stands in opposition to positivism, objectivism, essentialism, and metaphysical ontology (Howarth, 2013). It utilises social studies to challenge the discrimination perpetuated by established language and discourse, and to destabilise the power and violence reinforced by rigid social structures and accepted truths (William, 2005). Furthermore, poststructuralism acknowledges individual agency, rejecting the notion of individuals as mere puppets of social structure (Cohen et al., 2010). It recognises

the complexity and fluidity of each individual, viewing them not as fixed entities, but as beings constantly constituted and reconstituted through the discursive practices they encounter in their daily lives (Davies, 2003, p. 11). However, poststructuralism's opposition to stability should not be misconstrued as a Marxist or neo-Marxist call for social justice (Hodgson & Standish, 2009). Rather, as William (2005, p. 4) puts it, 'poststructuralism is not against this and for that—once and for all'. In other words, poststructuralism advocates for deconstruction and awareness-raising in a philosophical sense, akin to a thought experiment.

To clarify my understanding of poststructuralism, I find it necessary to explain why I have chosen to abandon the popular theoretical framework that many studies (e.g., Ball & Olmedo, 2013) have claimed to be Foucauldian. These studies often resort to a modernist binary position of either subjugation or resistance in explaining subjectivity. In contrast, within a poststructuralist research paradigm, I view a person's subjectivity as complex, unpredictable, and fluid, rather than structured and fixed. Subjectivity is contextual, multifaceted, formative, and conflicted (Hodgson & Standish, 2009; Cohen et al., 2010; Peterson, 2014; Worthman & Troiano, 2019). From a methodological perspective, poststructuralist research seeks to expose alternative meanings, or even layers of meanings. This is fundamental to understanding the complexity and fluidity of subjectivity (Cohen et al., 2010). Poststructuralist research often incorporates multiple sources, employs various data collection methods, and adopts diverse analytical angles (see Mohammed et al., 2015; O'Keeffe & Skerritt, 2021). This approach avoids a writer-researcher dominated perception and narratives (Blumenreich, 2004; Choi, 2006; Cohen et al., 2010).

5.2 Methodology and Method

5.2.1 Instrumental Case Study

Case study research, an in-depth exploration of a bounded system's uniqueness and complexity, is traditionally viewed as a methodology (Stake, 2005). This perspective sees case study as an inclusive design that utilises multiple methods and sources to analyse and

theorise the system under study (Creswell, 2007). In contrast, Yin (2018) positions case study as a research method, arguing that it provides a logical framework for readers to explain, explore, or describe their organisations. However, Stake (2005, p. 444) criticises this view, arguing that Creswell (2007) and Yin (2018) overemphasise the methodological features of case study research, neglecting that the case itself should be the primary focus. According to Stake (2005), a case study is merely a choice to research a specific system or individual. While I concur with Stake that the case should be the focus of case study research, I maintain that it is a research methodology, as the depth of understanding of the case(s) is intrinsically linked to the sophistication of the research design.

Stake (1995, 2005) classifies case studies into three categories: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. An intrinsic case study arises when a researcher has an inherent interest in a unique and irreplaceable individual, event, or system (Stake, 1995, 2005). Conversely, in an instrumental case study, the researcher's focus is not on the case itself; instead, the case serves as a tool to understand and corroborate the causes of certain social events and behaviours (Stake, 1995, 2005). The collective case study includes more than one case, while the present research sees the institutional context that includes four participants a single case. Although the four research participants are unique, I do not have an intrinsic interest in them. My aim is to understand them as representatives of other students within the bounded system of the fieldwork institute. Therefore, the present work constitutes an instrumental case study.

Case study methodology aligns well with poststructuralism (Mohammed et al., 2015). This compatibility stems from the long-standing tradition of poststructuralists like Foucault using case studies to explore concepts like politics, knowledge, and power (Mohammed et al., 2015). Foucault referred to the cases he studied as sequestration institutes of power (Li, 2022). Another reason for this compatibility is that the case study methodology meets the requirements of poststructuralist research (Mohammed et al., 2015). Specifically, case study research seeks to investigate a bounded system, allowing for the study of discourse as a contextual outcome. Furthermore, as an umbrella term, case study research

encompasses the use of different methods for multiple data sources, facilitating the inclusion of perspectives from various stakeholders and disrupting overarching discourses generated from a single source (Mohammed et al., 2015). For instance, Mohammed et al.'s (2015) team used a poststructuralist case study to explore the discourse and subjectivities of cancer patients seeking life extension. They interviewed patients, family members, oncologists, palliative care physicians, nurses, and an unlicensed natural healer, revealing the existence of multiple discourses and their resultant subjectivities (Mohammed et al., 2015). This study informs my own approach, indicating that I should not rely solely on Foucault's perspective to understand students but should also incorporate student narratives.

I purposively invited potential student participants for interviews via email, drawing from my student mailing list in Macau. In my invitation, I clarified that the proposed study was part of my work with UofG and was unrelated to my teaching and assessment of them at the fieldwork university. I also offered potential participants an online meeting to discuss my research and address any queries they might have. I emphasised the voluntary nature of their participation, assuring them that they could agree to participate or withdraw at any point without affecting their ongoing or future assessment scores. Of the five contacted, four students agreed to participate (see Table 1).

Table 1. Participant descriptions

Name	Description	Affiliated programmes at MU at the time of interview	The participants' current status
Wilson	Son of a businessman, expected to inherit the family business; head of a student society; completed both his BA and MA at MU.	MA in Education	Currently enrolled in a PhD programme at MU
Stephan	Born into a Chinese military family; a vlogger with interests in language, philosophy, psychology, and classic	BA in English Studies	Suspended his studies to intern at an e-commerce company in a major Chinese city

	aesthetics; served as a student ambassador for the university.		
Morgan	Enjoys participating in competitions; head of a student society; multiple award winner; previously interned at a nationally renowned corporation.	BA in Tourism	Pursuing an MA in Business
Helen	Member of an animal protection society; former intern at a casino; dislikes her major in tourism and plans to switch fields for her master's degree to emulate her mother, a teacher.	BA in International Hospitality	Currently pursuing an MSc in Language and Education

Notably, I consider the four students who agreed to participate in the research as forming an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995, 2005) of the students I encountered at the fieldwork institute in Macau.

5.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Data was collected from the four student participants using semi-structured interviews. This method offers the researcher both consistency and flexibility: it allows for a sequence of prepared questions while also providing the opportunity for interviewees to further explain and clarify points raised (Newby, 2010). To ensure cohesion, all interview questions were designed around the students' past, present, and future participation in university activities. These questions were aligned with the theoretical framework of Foucault's technology of domination and self (see Appendix 1), and listed in an interview guide. Flexibility was maintained by asking participants to provide examples and allowing them to elaborate on their motivations, sentiments, and reflections on their university experience.

Before distributing the interview guide, I sought advice from my EdD supervisors on the prompts and wording of the interview questions to eliminate any leading questions or language ambiguity. The interview guide and informed consent forms were then sent to

potential participants via UofG emails. As mentioned, four out of the five students I contacted agreed to participate. In early 2023, when the interview invitations were sent, the Macau government had not yet announced the cessation of COVID-19 precautionary measures, so the interviews were held online via Microsoft Teams. The interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, the teaching language at the fieldwork university, and were recorded, with the students' consent, for later transcription and translation. Each interview began with a brief introduction to ensure participants were aware of the interview's purpose and that their anonymity and the confidentiality of the interview content would be protected. The interviews lasted from 30 to 50 minutes, and one student (Stephan) participated a follow-up interview, because he had approached me seeking advice on his decision to suspend his study.

5.3 Deductive Analysis

Deductive analysis, a theory-driven data analysis method, involves researchers generating theoretical propositions from literature and applying these propositions in data collection and analysis (Bonner et al., 2021; Pearse, 2019). Despite its relevance in case studies (Fisher & Ziviani, 2004; Yin, 2014), the independent use of deductive analysis is often overlooked in qualitative research compared to data-driven inductive analysis and hybrid approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Proudfoot, 2023; Pearse, 2019). Deductive analysis offers advantages such as building qualitative analysis on prior theoretical conjectures, providing a more systematic consideration of data and knowledge development (Bonner et al., 2021; Pearse, 2019), and testing of theories and conceptual models (Graneheim et al., 2017; Vargas-Bianchi, 2020). These advantages are particularly relevant to my research, which seeks to provide a more systematic theoretical framework for analysing data and to test the explanatory availability of the Foucauldian theory of subjectivity in the context of postcolonial Chinese society.

Pearse (2019) developed a step-by-step procedure for applying deductive analysis in qualitative research, given the lack of practical guidance. This procedure includes establishing a conceptual or theoretical framework, producing propositions from the

framework, developing a code book based on the propositions, using the propositions or codes to produce a matrix of interview questions, data collection, and then analysis of the data to produce themes. Following this procedure, I developed the following propositions after reviewing the literature:

- Proposition 1 - Discipline: This refers to an arbitrary domination technology that imposes meticulous and consecutive training to make subjects a complex of utility and docility.

- Proposition 2 - Hermeneutics of the Self: This involves the subject taking the initiative to self-examine and confess to themselves and others, in order to benchmark against and submit to objective knowledge-truth.

- Proposition 3 - Care of the Self: This is a self-technology that subjects use, or use with the help of others, to change their ways of existence so as to know and internalise gnomic truth, with the aim of living a philosophical and ethical life.

Based on these propositions from the theoretical framework, I generated a preliminary code book to code relevant interview transcripts – see Table 2 below.

Table 2. The preliminary code book based on Foucault's theory of the technologies of domination and self

	Proposition 1: Discipline	Proposition 2: Hermeneutics of the Self	Proposition 3: Care of the Self
Codes	Panopticon (D1)	To become a knowledge authority (H1)	Critique (to unlearn or to eliminate the bad influences) (C1)
	Timetable (D2)	To become an autonomous lifelong learner (H2)	Meditation (to retrospect and introspect) (C2)
	Discourse (the invisible epistemic filter predefining one's convention of doing things) (D3)	To self-actualise (H3)	Ethical relationship with others (C3)
		Confess to others (H4)	Pursuing aesthetics of life (C4)
		Self-Confession (H5)	Self-alleviation through askesis (exercise) (C5)
			Self-healing (C6)

Appendix 1 presents a matrix of interview questions informed by the propositions. When formulating these questions, I maintained an open attitude towards their alignment with the propositions, acknowledging that each student's experiences and thoughts on these subjects might differ. Following the conducting of the interviews and the coding of the transcripts, I discovered that not all preliminary codes effectively covered the content of the transcripts, for example, codes D1 and D2.

Ultimately, nine themes were formulated (see subtitles of chapter five). Deductive analysis may leave some data that do not fit with any established codes and propositions, which is considered a limitation of the method (Graneheim et al., 2017). However, I view these data as critical reflection points for evaluating the explanatory extent of Foucauldian theory in the context of Confucian society. For instance, it is important to understand why some interviewees were influenced by their family backgrounds; why some were motivated by experiences of shame, such as coming from a small town or having lower performance in middle schools; and the transformation between care of the self and hermeneutics of the self.

5.4 Reflexivity

Reflexivity, as defined by Walsh (2003), involves an author's turning back to themselves and their research subjects. This concept is not only emblematic of interpretivist research but also signifies the destabilisation of centralised knowledge, grand narratives, and authorial authority in poststructuralist studies (Mohammed et al., 2015). The author's own subjectivity, biases, positionality, and inherent knowledge permeate every aspect of qualitative research design and chosen writing style (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Furthermore, the author's embodied discourse, identity, and relationships with research participants influence the data produced (Alvesson, 2002; Choi, 2006). Therefore, reflexivity disclosure aids in revealing the author's subjectivity, epistemology, and influences, offering readers alternative narratives distinct from the author's own. Reflexivity thus enhances the rigour of poststructuralist studies (Mohammed et al., 2015). Choi (2006) and Mohammed et al. (2015) suggest presenting a fieldwork narrative prior to

data analysis, discussing shifts in positionality, preexisting knowledge, and power dynamics with research participants.

However, many reflexivity practices in social and educational research have pitfalls, described by Griffiths (1998) as being hypocritical and 'heroic'. Griffiths (1998) criticises researchers for making reflexivity a compulsory practice without effective reflection, deeming this hypocritical. Griffiths further critiques researchers for adopting a Western traditional autobiographical writing style when reflecting, transforming reflexivity into a narrative of self-justification. Both approaches may undermine the ethos of poststructuralist research. Some of my previous research has fallen into the trap of turning reflexivity into a narcissistic self-narrative (e.g., Li, 2020). Walsh (2003) proposes an integrated strategy for declaring reflexivity in research, encompassing personal, interpersonal, methodological, and contextual aspects. However, I find it challenging to compartmentalise an individual's holistic lived experience into these four structured categories.

Regarding lived experience, it is an everyday, unconscious state that individuals unknowingly carry into their daily lives. Van Manen (1990) uses the term 'pre-reflection' to denote such lived experience, which often remains unnoticed by individuals themselves. A researcher's presumptions, expectations, intuitions, embodiment, and the shared world of the researcher and research participants, are all influenced by pre-reflections (Walsh, 2003). To conduct valid reflexivity, authors should describe the experiences and assumptions influencing the research and proactively disclose their pre-reflections. Throughout the research, I adopt a first-person account using 'I' and 'me' to illustrate my experiences and the assumptions that led to conducting the study. For example, I provide my observations of Macau students as the rationale for conducting this study, and I also explain why I chose Foucauldian theories as my theoretical framework from the perspective of practitioner researcher.

5.5 Ethical issues

I obtained approval and permission from the gatekeepers at both the fieldwork university and the UofG. Under the guidance of my supervisory committee and the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, I prepared a set of pre-interview documents for my participants. These documents, which included a privacy notice, an informed consent sheet, a participant information sheet, and an interview guide, outlined the rationale and function of the research and data collection, the confidentiality and preservation duration of the data, and the voluntary and anonymous nature of participation.

At the time of my ethical review application, I was serving as a full-time assistant professor at the fieldwork university. My supervisory committee advised me to assure student participants that their academic performance would not be affected by their participation in the study. I sent all the documents to each participant individually via my UofG email. Once they had returned the signed documents, I commenced the interviews. At the beginning of each interview, I reiterated the research purpose, the participants' right to withdraw at any stage, the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality, and the specific circumstances under which confidentiality might not be guaranteed. These points were also stated in the informed consent sheets. The audio recordings, transcriptions, translations, and annotated and coded texts from the interviews have been encrypted and are currently stored on my PIN-protected personal computer. I have also uploaded them to the UofG One Drive. In accordance with the Data Protection Impact Assessment, I will retain the data for 10 years only. The data will not be shared with any other party for any reason beyond the writing and publication of the current project.

6. Chapter Six: Findings

In this chapter, I discuss the fluid, mutable, and interweaving relationships among the three seemingly separate propositions of care of the self, hermeneutics of the self, and discipline. In order to present the relationships of between these propositions, the writing style employed in this chapter seeks to present fluid transitions among the coded research participants' thoughts and behaviours, and their respective affiliated propositions. Thus, care of the self and hermeneutics of the self repeat across the different themes, as well as being discussed separately.

6.1 Proposition: Participants' care of the self

As defined in Chapter Two, 'care of the self' refers to the technology of self that subjects use, with the help of others, to change their means of existence and to internalise philosophical maxims, with the aim of living a philosophical and ethical life. Under the proposition of care of the self, I developed codes C1 to C6 (see Table 2 in Chapter Four), which, to different extents, cover the relevant data in the interview transcripts. Following the approach employed by Pearse (2019), the themes were generated by synthesising and analysing the coded content. Thus, this chapter presents five themes under propostion 'care of the self'. These not only demonstrate the spirit of the codes and the proposition of care of the self, but also showcase the connection of the participants' care of the self with another proposition, the hermeneutics of the self, which concerns the fact that the subject takes the initiative to self-examine themselves and to confess to themselves and others, in order to benchmark with and submit to knowledge. Subsections 6.1.1 to 6.1.5 explore the behaviours involved in the participants' care of the self and the connection with the participants' hermeneutics of the self.

6.1.1 Critiquing previous views regarding university

As an embodiment of care of the self, the student participants in this study developed a criticality of university, although what they were critical of differed. For instance, Stephan

criticised the utilitarian discourse popular among his peers at university, who attended university for reasons of future employment. He believed that such discourse was against his lifestyle, as he sought to explore the world, with enhanced future employment prospects merely an added bonus. He also believed that many students, including himself, participated eagerly in all types of competitions and that their self-esteem was linked to the achievements attained, however he criticised the fact that an individual's meaning of life can be dependent on external issues, rather than on aspects within themselves. He stated, 'competition is somewhat fun, however [life] should not revolve around them and keep one busy. As this type of busyness has no purpose, [people] do not know what they want, but find something to do'. He therefore believed that participating in competitions could be enjoyable, but was critical of the fact that a life which revolves around them evidences aimlessness and nihilism.

Meanwhile, Wilson critiqued the way in which he was influenced by the discourse concerning internships that was popular among his classmates. Specifically, when he began his master's degree at the fieldwork university, he found that his peers sought to excel in class and beyond, and many of them applied for internships. For fear of lagging behind class, Wilson interned as a receptionist at a STEM education centre in China, explaining, 'I did not believe that I should be left behind by others, at least not because of my own inertia'. However, during his internship, he formulated a critique of these trends, stating, 'I believe it was a completely wrong choice. As the internship consumed too much of my time, I did not have sufficient time to conduct academic research'. The criticality of Morgan's development differed, as he found that the sources of information he could obtain in Macau were more varied than those he was able to access on the Chinese mainland, and he therefore developed a critique of the knowledge authorities that many people opt to follow, which is typical of Chinese mainland people under the regime of the communist ruling party. As Morgan explained

> There is much information, whether it is good or bad...It makes me view things from a completely different perspective. Let me quote Yu Hua's words [a Chinese writer]: Yu Hua once said that no one trusted experts after the pandemic. Now, I am sceptical

about some things reported by the media in mainland China, particularly those from the communist party's political position. I believe the news from different political positions is not the same.

Furthermore, the students critiqued their previous lifestyle and found ways to correct the negative influences they perceived. For example, Wilson called his first year of life at university 'decadent', recalling that he spent much of his time eating, drinking, and having fun, instead of studying. He subsequently abandoned much of what he believed to be useless social interaction and instead devoted himself to student societies and competitions. It was perhaps the students' gradual maturation that caused their realisation of the problems of their previous attitude, and their decision to relinquish the company of certain individuals in order to avoid their negative influence and instead to address care of the self. As Foucault (2021a) explained

> [T]he culture of the self has not a pedagogical function but a critical function...The cultivation of the self should permit one not at all to get a formation but to get rid of all the bad formation he receives before, all the bad habits, all the false ions derived from the crowd, from the bad masters, but also from the relatives, from the entourage, from the [parents]. (p.52)

The participants' criticality of their previous lifestyle and worldview demonstrated their determination to break with their perceived 'bad' selves of the past, which can be seen as a care of the self action.

6.1.2 Meditating for a Life Worth Living

As another symbol of care of the self was the students' frequent reflection upon their past experiences and the development of their views concerning how to live their lives. For example, Morgan, who was eager to participate in all types of competitions, internal programmes, and entrepreneurial societies, admitted that he obtained a sense of achievement and confidence by exceeding his competitors in the events in which he

participated. However, at a certain point he had an epiphany that led to the realisation that he should live a more meditative life. As he explained, 'Now I feel that I continue to lack a spiritual pursuit'. When I asked him to explain what he meant by this, he said it was because he had come to spend less time reading, noting

> I can feel that my reading volume has decreased in the past two years, and the reading frequency has reduced. I used to read entire books, then I only read magazines, and finally I stopped reading magazines. Now, I only read some short-posted moments and share them on my mobile phone or read other people's blogs.

He worried that he would lose himself as a spiritual person, which he termed 'becoming sunk', if he traded reading for other activities. He described the pleasure he experienced when absorbed in reading books as 'incomparable'.

Stephan also reflected on his participation in competitions, although he did not regard them as a source of confidence and achievement, instead considering them to be a test of his abilities, noting that competing motivated him to perform better. He explained

> I view participation in these games as a test of my abilities. For example, my university studies have cultivated my speaking ability. I will apply what I have learned to the competition, and my performance will provide me [with] feedback. By comparing [myself] with other contestants, I can perform better.

Here, Stephan demonstrated a typical characteristic of neoliberal subjectivity, namely the productive will to perform better, work harder, and prove himself more worthy than others, as a result of performativity (Ball, 2016). However, as time passed, he reflected that to win, or to test his improvement in competitions, was no longer the purpose, rather it was to simply be present and embrace the experience. He observed

> I realised that university is a place for students to learn from losing face, and to win is not a must. Therefore, now, when I join any activity, I do my best, which benefits my spirit. It is important that when I do not intend to be so purposeful, my life, in return,

gives me something satisfying.

He also learned how to accept himself better and to lead a good life by replacing the endlessness and tedium of the journey of self-improvement with the mentality of having fun. He continued

> When I began to improve myself, I felt that the self had an end, a perfect end, and I wanted to realise the self at the end. Later, I was in the process of self-improvement and felt that there would always be a better self. Thus, if I blindly pursue a better self, I will have a difficult life, and there will be no meaning to such enjoyment. Therefore, I now realise that there is no end to life and there will not be a best self. However, if you have fun in it, make some friends, and have an enjoyable time, that is the best self.

This explanation demonstrates how meditation operated as a form of care of the self among some of the students, as they used it to reflect on what kind of life is good and worthwhile and what kind of relationship they wanted to establish with themselves and others, in contrast to a more neoliberal outlook of performativity. For other students, meditating on their past experiences enhanced their sense of self-improvement. For example, Helen came to disagree with her previous view regarding university attendance for job search purposes, reflecting that she should instead devote herself to many abilities, such as improving her professionalism, pursuing a PhD degree, obtaining a teaching qualification, having a part-time job, and completing internships, adding, 'As far as I am concerned, improving myself is the most important aspect'. She prioritised self-improvement and learning as the most important aspects of her personal growth, reflecting the fact that her subjectivity was focused on continuous learning, to the exclusion of other subjectivities. If seen from Fejes' (2008a) view, this prioritisation of learning symbolised her desire to become a lifelong learner, which was her concession to the demands of the job market. The duplicity and complexity of human subjectivity was observable in Morgan's perspective, since although he reflected that he should read more books instead of devoting all his time to competitions, he also expressed the need to examine and acknowledge his failures, noting, 'I would fall into deep self-blame. I would feel that my abilities are insufficient. If I had worked harder,

maybe the results would have been better'. Such thoughts appeared to be Morgan's self-confession about his past actions, which reflected the Foucauldian hermeneutics of the self practices mentioned earlier.

6.1.3 Relationships as Spiritual Assistance for the Students

According to the theoretical framework, spiritual assistance in the form of receiving advice or help from a wiser other is a practice of care of the self. In this context, the students interviewed demonstrated how they benefited from their relationships with others. For instance, Helen and Wilson both experienced loneliness and homesickness in their first year at university. Their classmates and roommates played a crucial role in helping them to overcome this, providing them a feeling of being at home. However, Wilson found that such friendships may not always benefit him and may even became toxic when they distract him from his schoolwork. He observed that he was disappointed about the time he wasted with his friends, so he discontinued those relationships and subsequently sought friends who were wiser and more experienced than him to facilitate his growth, explaining

> It will be useful for my growth. I have become their good friend. They were willing to share some of their life experiences, workplace experiences, and so on. For me, it is useful. Otherwise, eating, drinking, and having fun every day are of minimal help to me, and I prefer to be alone.

For Stephan meanwhile, friendship not only acted as a mental escape in his first year, but also existed for him as a sanctuary throughout his university life. As discussed in the previous section, at university he was most proud of the friendships he formed with others, who provided him with support and acceptance whenever necessary. As well as commenting on how his friendships brought him comfort, Stephan discovered that he learned from his romantic relationships to care for his relationship with himself as a precondition for a healthy and equal relationship with others, explaining

> Every transformation of myself began by establishing or ending a relationship...I have

improved myself by engaging in many different relationships; now, I probably maintain calmness. I am more enthusiastic. Nevertheless, I gradually realised that others would naturally approach me once they valued me. However, it would not be appropriate if I had the same enthusiasm for them. Therefore, I believe I should not be overly enthusiastic.

In order to clarify what he meant by this, Stephan quoted a poem: "When the wine meets a bosom friend, a thousand cups are little". Such relationships served as a lesson for Stephan to improve his relationship with himself and others, which can be considered his care of the self, because the relationships he experienced accelerated his spiritual growth. However, this care of the self was negative to a certain extent, because Stephan was reserved in establishing relationships.

Their relationships sometimes became a pressure for the interviewees, requiring them to examine themselves and confess to others frequently, using others as mirrors to expose their own failings, indicating that these others were baggage that one could not live without. The interviewees sometimes expressed their appreciation for their classmates or teachers, which appeared to be a form of benign relationship. However, they also often used others as vehicles of confession, as if others were the golden standard, and a failure to meet their standards was shameful. For example, in observing her friend Miss Yolanda's competence in interpersonal communication, Helen said

> This ability is also what I lack the most. She appears adept at dealing with people, including teachers, classmates, and leaders. It will also help me in my daily life in terms of improving interpersonal communication, if I could have her skills or characteristics.

This relationship with her classmates impacted Helen's hermeneutics of the self, because her friend became a mirror for her to develop self-confession. Such forms of confession demonstrate how the interviewees were subjugated by the performativity effect of neoliberalism (Ball, 2016) into becoming 'competitive economic actor(s)' (Naidoo &

Williams, 2015, p.213). Thus, while they compared themselves consistently with others to ensure their value (Ball, 2016), any failure or feeling of being diminished by others' qualities was seen as detrimental to, or even a punishment of their self-worth.

Competitive relationships even occurred between the students and their mentors. When commenting on her favourite teacher at university, Helen expressed an eagerness to become a teacher, in order to be a knowledge authority like him, noting, 'I appreciate him for his knowledge. I believe I must learn from him, therefore I must work hard to expand my knowledge. Moreover, I want to work harder; if I can be a teacher one day, I should try to be a teacher like him'. Similarly, Stephan mentioned that he regarded many of his teachers who came from a humble background as his models, or even as a goal for his future development, explaining

> I pay special attention to a type of teacher, those whose first degree was not particularly good…well, they have demonstrated what I want to replicate. I usually compare myself with them, and now I can see that these people are doing well, are in good condition, and have a good future

It is common for students to admire their teachers as role models, and it is also natural that students admire teachers as respectful others. However, the interviewees did not admire their teachers' morality or pedagogical craft. Instead, they were interested in the abilities or self-entrepreneurial experience of certain of their teachers' life history, which the interviewees felt was possible to replicate, and even transcend.

Similarly, when Stephan discussed his classmate Julia, he observed that characteristics that she possessed were among those he needed to improve himself

> She has a quality that I am lacking. I believe I am overly clever, which makes me opt to not do some things. Julia does not overthink before embarking on doing something. What Julia considers is not what she would achieve from doing it or if it is helpful. She says, 'I will just do it and try my best!'

Stephan called this quality 'wise simplicity', and used it to reflect himself and the qualities he believed he lacked, explaining, 'Such a type of simplicity is what I lack. I believe I will do what is suitable for me, and do it in a more efficient way'. Stephan resorted to self-examination and confession in a friendship, and also confessed that he critiqued his past utilitarian ethos, recognising that there was a more philosophical way of living that was a type of release-towards-things. He explained, 'Well, I know there is something in the world, despite there being no evident benefit, but one has to do [some things] because they are correct and they are obligations'. Thus, his relationship with Julia enabled Stephan to care for himself and to find a way to live more calmly. When considering Stephan's internal journey, I realised that a student's pursuit of care of the self is potentially not a linear or a smooth process. Some students may fall into self-confession and examination in some aspects of their lives, in a similar way to that Stephan experienced, however it is temporary state.

Meanwhile, Morgan developed a romantic relationship with Ruth. While he undeniably enjoyed this relationship, in contrast with the way in which Stephan learned lessons from romantic relationship, Morgan became Ruth's follower. He stated, "I did not devote much time to academics... Owing to Ruth, who likes competitions very much...She kept participating in the competitions. Hence, I have been participating in these competitions with her". In terms of his future plans, he also intended to follow Ruth's dream path:

> When considering studying abroad, my initial goal was to go to Malaysia. I had heard that one could buy a villa in Malaysia for only one million Chinese yuan, and then I wanted to live a leisurely life there. However, Ruth does not want to study in a developing country; she wants to study in the UK. Later, we decided to study in the UK for a master's degree.

In this relationship, Morgan cared more about Ruth, as he was always at her side, and was even willing to renounce his own pursuits, a form of behaviour that can be compared with the way in which a Christian monk discloses his secrets and reports every motive to his superiors for approval. In the theoretical framework, I introduced the way in which

Foucault (2021a) described a Christian monk's practice of confession to the Biblical God and his earthly representative, which engenders the confessor's self-renunciation. Similarly, Morgan was confessing to Ruth by constantly sacrificing his interests. Nevertheless, it transpired that this behaviour was productive as accompanying Ruth to so many activities promoted Morgan's self-actualisation and he developed confidence in competitions and furthered his education in the UK. Moreover, Morgan's relationship with Ruth constituted a type of spiritual assistance, as he benefited from the relationship by becoming more mature and confident. It may be that if Morgan's subjectivity was improved through his relationship, it is possible that some form of care for the self emerged from his hermeneutics of the self behaviours.

6.1.4 Being Beautiful Not Only for Oneself, but Also for Others

The pursuit of an aesthetic lifestyle is another form of Foucauldian care of the self. Stephan was the only student among the four interviewees to discuss the importance of self-beauty in pursuing an aesthetic life. This manifested in his daily appearance, behaviour, and bodybuilding. For example, he said

> I will pay great attention to dressing up to look presentable before I go to school. Going to school is a pleasant experience, hence I will be cautious in class, sit in the front row, and actively interact with teachers for learning [purposes].

Furthermore, he stated that his role as a student ambassador at many university ceremonies was part of his image, claiming

> It has something to do with my established image of self...Those activities I participated in were grand ceremonial and formal occasions. There are some people from very high social strata. For example, the university president, deputy to the People's Congress deputies in China, and celebrities, such as Yu Hua.

Stephan expressed his aesthetic wish to create the ideal person for himself, detailing

First, this person [Stephan] is not overly conceited. He is an image who is neither humble nor overbearing, but can deal with difficult problems in life. Moreover, he should be good-looking and be in good shape. I went through a series of explorations of my outfits and fitness and gradually let myself transition to a state where I believe I look pretty good.

The pursuit of personal beauty is arduous, and led Stephan to a life of aesthetics. However, surprisingly, for him this pursuit constituted no more than another form of confession to others, seeking their recognition and approval. As he explained

This society is a society that pursues beauty. However, this trend towards beauty is not visible on the surface. This does not mean that if one is good-looking, one will have privileges. This trend goes down to the lowest level of everyone, probably the lowest level of everyone's cognition. Being good-looking brings me much self-confidence. When I encounter my teachers and classmates, I feel perfect. Furthermore, when others look at me, they feel good, which is also an improvement in others' impression of me.

As a vlogger, Stephan always remembered to take a selfie when working at university ceremonies, which he posted on his social media. He noted, 'When I am performing those activities, I take photographs of myself. After the activities, I post them somewhere. To a certain extent, they meet the needs in my heart: see I am doing it!'. He admitted that he began life in an ordinary family in a small city in North China, and that he was ordinary and often went unnoticed by others throughout his middle school years. Therefore, at university he wanted a change, which was, in his words, 'to be at the centre of the world'. This was also important more widely as it prepared him for the performativity required by the job market. Furthermore, Stephan's pursuit of beauty symbolised his confession to himself: as discussed, every effort he made to enhance his aesthetic self after moving to Macau served to address the perceived ordinariness of his past. He reflected

I believe there are shackles in my character and self-image, and I want to break

through them. For example, in high school I was ordinary and no one paid attention to me. Then, I went to university, knowing that my academic performance was not outstanding, and nor was my appearance. At university, I was eager to change, however it took time, therefore I began by exercising to lose weight.

He was proud that the opportunity to work as a university ambassador was due to his effective overall self-image building, believing it was his performance in class that won his teacher's trust and led to her recommending him to the rector's office for the role. His image subsequently appeared to meet the standards set by the rector's office for an ambassador. Stephan's improved self-image also became a confession to others: the pursuit of aesthetics, as something beginning with the care of the self, contributed to his confession of hermeneutics of the self. More importantly, as part of the practice of performativity, Stephan's pursuit of aesthetics enabled him to succeed in bettering his peers and winning the role of student ambassador.

6.1.5 Changing Subjectivity Through Activity Participation

In his work, Foucault (1982a) emphasised the fact that in Ancient Greece the importance of the care of the self changed and improved the subjectivity of the exerciser to internalise and generate truth. He also stressed that in modern society, this ancient manner of changing subjectivity as the precondition of truth continues to exist in many social activities, such as participation in a party or an association, and in schools of thought (Foucault, 1982b). He also noted that people tend not to interpret the matter from an ancient perspective, so they do not see these behaviours related to someone's subjectivity change (Foucault, 1982b).

When Helen interned at one of the largest casinos in Macau, she worked with many middle-aged ex-croupiers who were reallocated to help in the kitchens or restaurants, because of the downturn in local tourism and in the gaming industry. By participating in this experience, she developed a more profound and embodied awareness of the regional employment situation than previously, which helped her to reflect on her future career path. This reflection also inspired her to self-examine her chances of employment in the

hospitality industry. She observed

> Before the pandemic, the idea of pursuing a master's degree was not firm. I found that
> the pandemic has hit the hotel industry severely. My major is in international tourism
> and hotel management. I contemplated [the fact that] I may not be able to find a job
> that I am satisfied with in this field.

As a result of this self-examination as a form of care of the self, she decided to become a
knowledge authority as a university-level English teacher. She also shared an experience of
her participation in a social research project that explored sex tourism in Bangkok, which
provided her with insights into this unique social phenomenon. However, she was later
consumed by the desire to be praised and recognised by others. She explained

> After presenting this topic to my classmates, the class found my research
> sensational. The teacher said that this was one of the most wonderful topics he had
> heard in recent years, because perhaps no other student had considered studying sex
> tourism.

The thrill at her reception by her teachers and peers represents Helen's confession to others.
Thus, the practice of care of the self did not prevent Helen from confessing her
hermeneutics of the self to others, nor did it prevent her determination to become a
knowledge authority, which constituted another symbol of hermeneutics of the self.

Helen's experience was only one of many cases among the interviewees of participation in
activities for the purpose of internalising truth: Stephan served as a student ambassador,
Morgan was involved in many competitions, and Wilson had an internship, all of which
can be considered journeys to care of the self, or at least as an elevated subjectivity. As
Morgan commented regarding his competition experience, 'I believe it is a process of
constantly breaking through myself'. However, the interviewees were also concerned with
others' recognition of their progress, which meant that their care of the self constituted
performativity and hermeneutics of the self. For example, Morgan demonstrated his

progress and superiority over the other contestants every time he won a competition, forefronting himself in response to competition from others as a form of neoliberal performativity. He said, 'Finally, I was able to stand on the same level as them. They may be better than me in other respects. However, this competition significantly enhanced my self-confidence'. The practice of comparing his achievement with that of others was also a form of confession, because for Morgan there needed be another present to demonstrate his experience and progress. In general, although all of the interviewees applied care of the self practices, they also appeared to employ hermeneutics of the self.

6.2 Proposition: The Participants' Hermeneutics of the Self

Another proposition of this study was the hermeneutics of the self. This implies that the subject takes the initiative to self-examine and confess to themselves and others, in order to benchmark with, and submit to, objective knowledge, which is the type of disembodied truth obtained only through the method of knowing and learning that prevailed after the Cartesian moment (Foucault, 1982). As stated in Chapter 5, five codes (H1–H5) were derived from this proposition for the purpose of this study. After coding and synthesising the relevant content in the interview transcripts, three themes were generated as subsections. Although Section 6.1 reported some of the participants' hermeneutics of the self behaviours, it primarily demonstrated the connections between the participants' care of the self and hermeneutics of the self. Section 6.2 focuses on the participants' hermeneutics of the self behaviours.

6.2.1 To Become an Autonomous Learner and Future Knowledge Authority

As summarised in Chapter Two modern hermeneutics of the self can take the form of a subject becoming a lifelong learner and a knowledge authority. Overall, the participants demonstrated that they were becoming self-adjusted lifelong learners, or symbols of confession (Fejes, 2008a), whose efforts concentrated on coping with the challenges of studying and the pressures of the future. Some of the participants' care for the self activities, when considered attempts at truth-oriented living (Section 5.1) were in fact

hermeneutics of the self, because of their attempts to continue learning to meet the requirements of work.

For instance, Helen wanted to study for a master's degree in education, then a doctorate, in order to become an English teacher, as knowledgeable as her teacher at university. As discussed previously, she developed these aspirations due to her meditation on, and response to, the tourism and hospitality industry during her internship at a casino. However, she also stated that acquiring a doctoral degree was essential, since "If I want to be a teacher in the university, I should acquire a PhD". Therefore, this constituted a passive motivation (external motivation) as it was a requirement of academia, thus Helen had to plan for it as a confession to the industry. Meanwhile, her participation in an internship at a casino could be considered care of the self (see Section 5.1.5).

Meanwhile, Morgan also planned to study for a master's degree, and then for a PhD, due to the economic downturn, explaining

> there is a voice in my heart and I want to try it [undertaking a PhD] ... The world's economic environment is negative. My current employment is also affected to a certain extent. Even if I return from studying abroad.

However, his pursuit of these qualifications, which would engender him becoming a knowledge authority, was a short-term solution to avoid the risks of the economic downturn, rather than being a proactive confession to industry requirements: "I believe this period will serve as a buffer. If I pursue my master's degree during the economic downturn, I will be able to avoid the downturn". Therefore, his main motivation to study was not a desire to become a knowledge authority, but a temporary adjustment to address the current wider situation.

Meanwhile, Wilson's aspirations to pursue a PhD were for different reasons. His family ran several kindergartens in South China, and his father was due to retire. Therefore, Wilson wished help the family business by obtaining a higher degree. He explained

It is similar to a stepping stone or threshold. If I talk to others as a master's degree holder, they will not take me seriously. However, if I receive a doctoral degree, not to mention the school I graduate from, I will at least be a PhD holder. I can talk to government officials, bosses, and business partners. My credibility will be better in their eyes.

Thus, his drive to become a knowledge authority was informed by Wilson's consideration of his family and his desire to establish valuable professional relationships. His care of the self also contributed to his decision to become a knowledge authority, as evidenced in Section 6.1.1, by his impulsive decision to intern at a training centre, rather than focusing on his academic career, because he believed the internship was obstructing his studies or his subjectivity as a knowledge authority.

6.2.2 Self-confession for Self-actualisation

As discussed in Chapter Two, a secularised confession takes the form of self-actualisation as a modern practice of hermeneutics of the self. As Worthman and Troiano (2019) noted, when practising self-actualisation, subjects should quit all other activities, and instead should focus on those permitted within education, in order to nurture only the subjectivity for learning. Morgan and Stephan exercised their will for self-actualisation by following different paths. For example, Morgan often used phrases, such as "proving himself", "sense of honour", and "breakthrough" when describing his journey of self-actualisation at university. As discussed previously, he participated in competitions and won many awards, which made him believe that he had proved himself

I wanted to prove myself, therefore I participated in the competitions...After several years of training at university, compared with students from universities of Project 985 and Project 211 [the top Chinese universities] who are already studying these subjects, I was no worse than them. (Morgan)

Furthermore, he believed that participating in competitions honoured his progress, as "the

meaning of the business competition to me is the recognition of my ability. I wanted to achieve a sense of honour in competing with others through business competitions". Self-proving and recognition are types of self-actualisation that indicate to the student that they are as good as their peers from renowned universities, satisfying their desire for performativity. When describing his determination to achieve the self-actualisation of discarding the influence of his dissatisfactory years at high school, Morgan explained

I want to see if I can break through my inner expectations. I believe my high school was not particularly good, because I am a sports student, and I always felt inferior to other students. I want to continue to disregard this idea in college.

Morgan's journey of self-actualisation can be considered his self-confession, namely his search for compensation for his previously unfulfilled dream of achieving excellence. However, his journey of self-actualisation was not always as smooth as expected, as he also faced failure; the related feelings of shame also contributed to his self-actualisation. As he noted

Sometimes, I feel a sense of shame. When this sense of shame drives me, it sometimes makes me compare myself with others. However, more often, I find that I progress continuously through this drive and process. Naturally, pain may also occur. Well, but more often, seeing the results of my success makes me want to be even better.

While being motivated to self-actualise, as discussed in Section 5.1.2, Morgan sometimes employed meditation as a technology of care of the self, mediating that his busy life meant that he had no time for reading. In contrast, Stephan was critical of participation in competitions as a way of meaning-making at university, and had his own approach to self-actualisation, which he described as "the centre of the world", by which he meant viewing the world by participating in meaningful social activities and knowing important people. When asked what he considered to be the meaning of being a university student ambassador, he explained, "By participating in these activities…they are something at the centre of the world". Additionally, as part of this role, Stephan met many government

officials and celebrities who visited the rector of his university, which also constituted an element of his self-actualisation to see the world. He explained, "they are all important people in my heart. Working at the rector's office brought me closer to them, making me the type of person I imagined myself to be". When he attended a neighbouring university to undertake an interpretation studies activity, he also viewed it as an opportunity to experience the wider world, as, "joining such an activity balanced the information difference between me and the world", meaning that he believed his experience was limited, and by participating in such activities he absorbed new information from others, which he called "the world". He explained his perception of what he called the "centre of the world" as follows: "I come from a small city. When I lived there, I was yearning to live in a large city; I was particularly yearning to be at the centre of the world". Stephan also revealed that he was to suspend his studies in Macau and intern at a budding internet company in Shanghai, China's largest and most prosperous city. This internship at a well-known company in Shanghai would increase his competitive edge, and the internship itself aligned with his desire to be at the 'centre of the world'.

It was noteworthy is that Stephan's approach to self-actualisation, namely to intern at a famous company, demonstrated his desire to strengthen his accountability as a response to the performativity of neoliberalism. Such a unification of a person's self-actualisation and neoliberalism justified my view expressed in Chapter Two that neoliberalism is a Foucauldian technology of governance that uses people's subjectivity, namely self-actualisation, as a modern confession that belongs to a technology of self that works on subjectivity, in order to dominate them. A characteristic that Stephan shared with Morgan was the fact that he perceived his time at high school to have been a negative experience of low esteem, therefore the pursuit of self-actualisation by both these individuals concerned healing their past; this healing in the context of Greco-Roman times was also a way in which one could take care of themselves. As Foucault (2021a) remarked, 'But above all I think that this cultivation of the self has a curative and therapeutic function. It is much nearer to the medical model than the pedagogical one' (p.53). Hence, as in the previous example, this practice of care of the self derived from the interviewees' practice

of hermeneutics of the self.

6.2.3 Endless Confession to others

Confession as another form of hermeneutics of the self in today's society that is present when an individual seeks advice from teachers, parents, and friends, in order to fulfil continuous or lifelong learning. It is also present when an individual aims to convey his best qualities, in order to demonstrate his experience to employers when seeking an opportunity to realise self-actualisation (Fejes, 2008a); even a person's reflective account of his practice performance at work can be considered a modern day confession to himself (Fejes, 2008b, 2011). Nevertheless, as Fejes (2008a, 2008b, 2011) indicated, confession nowadays tends not to enable a person to renounce himself, as in ancient times, but instead to forge a person into an autonomous learner and to benchmark against the expectations of another party. Confession to others and to the self is the technology of neoliberal governance (Fejes, 2008b). In the present study, all of the interviewees confessed to others, as discussed in Section 5.1, as a transformation of the participants' care of the self. These confessions are analysed formally as hermeneutics of the self in the current section. For example, Helen was determined to complete her PhD, because she had to confess to her future employers that she was qualified to be a university teacher; Stephan pursued an aesthetic lifestyle, and ultimately his enhanced appearance was his confession to his teachers and to his followers on social media, as it enhanced their appreciation of him. In addition, in a confession that sought to made him the kind of person his family members expected, Morgan participated in competitions for the pleasure of his girlfriend, who was an enthusiast of competitions, and to honour his parents who wanted to see him progress.

The example of Wilson, which was not covered in Section 5.1, serves to elaborate on my analysis of the ways in which the participants practiced hermeneutics of the self, and how it worked on subjectivity. In my conversation with Wilson, I was surprised by how his confessions to others affected his subjectivity. These confessions can be summarised as multiple forms of confession to family, the elite social class, policy, an academic field with more opportunities for publication, employers, and the job market. In terms of confession

to the family, Wilson wanted to pursue a PhD, however his motivation was to help his family business, because he believed that only achieving a doctorate would provide him with the credibility and authority to convince his parents that he could manage the family's kindergarten business. Wilson explained

> My family business needs a person with a higher degree or even more. My family business requires a manager with advanced academic qualifications or business qualifications. If it was the 1970s or the 1990s, a man with a bachelor's degree may have been able to manage. However, in today's society it is not easy to manage without a doctoral degree, because everyone holds academic qualifications.

In terms of his confession to the elite social class, Wilson explained that he must hold a doctorate as it will serve as capital for him to enter the elite social class. Without a doctorate, he believed he would not obtain the trust of elite friends required to join their circle. He continued

> With a master's degree when I talk to others, they will not care about me; however, if I receive a doctoral degree, not to mention school I graduate from, at least I will be a PhD. I can then talk to government representatives, bosses, and business partners. My credibility and reliability will be better. After acquiring a PhD, I can deal with people from different platforms…I want to climb up.

In terms of his confession regarding policy, Wilson explained that he would align himself with the kind of person who could be sponsored under local policies, and then take advantage of these policies in both Macau and the Chinese mainland by completing a PhD degree. He explained

> In terms of policy [in Macau], it will be more convenient and easier for students from Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. Hence, as there are preferential policies, why can I not try them? Well, I have adequate opportunities. Even pigs can fly when the wind is strong. I did not study well at first, however because of the policy, I will have the

opportunity. Now I have the opportunity to obtain a PhD. Hence, I want to try.

He wished to research education technology, a subject he had never studied, and explained that he had selected an area in which it would be easier for him to publish:

> The chief reason is because publishing papers in this field is easier. Our school does not have a graduation requirement requiring students to publish papers in top journals. However, other schools in mainland China have this requirement. My previous direction [the teaching profession] will not enable me to publish papers in top journals. However, as there are more journals in the field of education technology, I can publish in many of them.

This response might be considered Wilson's confession to an academic field in which there are opportunities for publication, because his research field did not emerge from his internal passion, rather he selected it according to the publishers' requirements. Therefore, the topic of his research was determined purely by what others believe to be popular, and by the quest to be recognised by publishers and hence to have the opportunity for publication. This is why Wilson confessed to the publishers.

Although Wilson intended to pursue a PhD in order to inherit his family's kindergarten business, he also cared about creating a desirable CV for future employment, and therefore accumulated accolades for his CV to ensure that it would be attractive to potential employers. He explained

> My goal is to add more awards and some of the abilities I have learned during the competitions to my resume. A resume is similar to a business card. However, I will only share my resume with certain groups of people, instead of with everyone. If I need to participate in activities, for example an interview, I will show them.

According to Fejes (2008a), creating a CV that meets employment standards is a confession to employers. Wilson had recently embarked on his PhD study, chose not to select a supervisor whose research focus was educational technology, instead choosing an

adjunct professor who held a position in the government. Regarding this choice, he commented that his family believed that by using this individual as a supervisor, he would be able to work as a civil servant after graduation. This therefore constituted a confession to the job market and employers.

6.3 Proposition: Discipline

As summarised in chapter two, discipline is an arbitrary domination technology that imposes meticulous and consecutive training to provide subjects with complex utility-docility. However, as Foucault (2016) argued, neoliberalism often employs individuals' self or subjectivity to dominate them, as is evident in the discussion in the previous sections, and the arbitrary and external force of discipline becomes relatively less used and latent. Among the types of discipline technologies that exist, I was only able to locate relevant interview data regarding the idea of discourse, which is believed to be socially, culturally, and historically underpinned by systems and rules for determining what knowledge is represented and who possesses the authority to speak about certain things (Ball, 1990; Mills, 2003; Buchanan, 2018).

6.3.1 Discursive Influence From Family and Peers

I observed in the interview data that discourse permeated the interviewees' lives and influenced their decisions at certain points. I identified two types of discourse: one that permeated the students' family culture, and the other that permeated the students' peers. These both exerted power on the students, and meant that they were perennially ready to confess to their peers and family, as discussed in the previous sections. In terms of the home culture discourse, Helen's original employment-oriented purpose for studying was the result of her family's discourse. She noted

> The purpose of going to college was that I expect to find a suitable job later... because I always heard adults saying that if one does not go to school or study well, one will probably have to do difficult physical and manual work. I believe that is not the type

of life I want to achieve.

Her decision to become a teacher was also inseparable from her immersed environment, as her mother was a university teacher. Similarly, Stephan's desire to reach 'the centre of the world', or to broaden his horizons, was also influenced by his family discourse. As he explained

> My father is a soldier. As a child, I visited many places with him, and observed the outside world through these journeys. He was a courageous and dedicated person. It could be because he was born in a smaller mountain village... He then went from the village to large cities to struggle to make a living. Therefore, I may also be influenced by the family environment to some extent, as I yearn for the outside world. With this idea in mind, when selecting a university I preferred to select one as far away from home as possible, as long as it was in a large city. Through this university, I was able to touch something more central and advanced in the world.

Although it is reasonable to regard Stephan's behaviour as a confession to his father's worldview, growing up in such a family in a small city may also create a desire to leave home and broaden one's horizons. As McNamara (2019) explained, discourse represents reality and unconsciously formulates the subject's identity. Therefore, family discourse played a role in lives of both Helen and Stephan.

Meanwhile, Wilson's choice to undertake an internship was an example of the influence of peer discourse. Although his family owned education institutions, hence it was not necessary for him to seek an internship during his summer break, Wilson accepted an internship because of pressure from his classmates, observing

> When pursuing my master's degree, I found that many excellent people had gathered together. Although they all said that they were under considerable pressure, as far as I observed, they worked hard, both inside and outside of class. I should not lag behind others, at least not because of my inertia; most of my classmates opted to do

internships during the summer vacation.

He therefore interned as a receptionist at an education centre, in order to follow the example of his peers. In his work, McNamara (2019) compared the function of discourse to an extension of the Panopticon; this was reflected in the way in which Wilson chose to intern, due to peer pressure and mutual monitoring. This mutual monitoring can also be explained from the perspective of individuals' confessions to each other (Fejes, 2008a). The discourse regarding the seeking of an internship continued for some time between Wilson and his classmates, leaving Wilson only limited time to consider whether he needed such experience once he embarked on it. Thus, discourse as a latent discipline technology programmed the subjects' behaviour and dictated their pursuit of activities for some time.

6.4 An alternative interpretation: secularised Confucianism

6.4.1 The interviewees' lianmian game

The use of lianmian to analyse the content of the four interviews enabled different answers to be obtained. The four students concerned had different pursuits as their subject of Confucianism. Stephan worked hard on his self-image building to achieve the appreciation of his social media followers, teachers, and even his university chancellor. By employing Zhai's (2022) categorisation of four kinds of Chinese people, Stephan wished to act like a junzi, cultivating his ethos and manner as his improved lian, thereby to win appreciation and trust from others was his mian. However, sometimes Stephan was too hasty in seeking more mian, which sacrificed his cultivation of lian at university, as could be inferred from his decision to cease his schooling in favour of a job in Shanghai as his assumed opportunity to see the wider world. His motivation for attending grand occasions in big cities, in order to broaden his horizons, aligned with his father's ideology; by doing so Stephan honoured his father, giving him sufficient lianmian as a practice of li of a filial son.

Similarly, Wilson's decision to pursue a doctorate was due to his motivation to gain lian, in

order to raise his social status, and so that individuals in government or industry would take him seriously and support him as his expected mian. However, his decision to pursue a doctorate was utilitarian, as he considered the mian he could obtain even before he was offered a PhD position. As he explained

> If I receive a doctoral degree, not to mention the school I graduate from, I would at least be a PhD holder. I can talk to government officials, bosses, and business partners. My credibility will be better in their eyes.

Thus, Wilson revealed the mentality of a yuanren, a round person, or an individual who is flexible in doing things. His decision to run for an internship also aligned with his lianmian, as his peers were also engaged in this activity and Wilson did not want others to look down upon him.

The logic of lianmian worked on Morgan too. His participation in competitions alongside many students across China won him and his parents sufficient lianmian, which might have remedied his low self-esteem, due to his experience at high school that disgraced his lianmian. His relationship with a girl in Macau, and his pursuit of a master's degree at a renowned institute in England can also be seen as his improved lianmian. The upkeep of this lianmian sometimes contradicted Morgan's wishes, as it restricted the time available to him to read and to study in Malaysia; this is reflected in a Chinese common saying: siyao mainzi huoshouzui 死要面子活受罪 'gentility without ability is worse than plain beggary' (translated via Google). This behaviour by Morgan can also be viewed as part of his yuanren mentality, namely being more concerned with mian than lian.

Of the four research participants, I found it most challenging to align the theory of lianmian with the analysis of Helen, perhaps because she was limited in what she revealed, or maybe because she was the kind of person who did not worry about the loss or gain of lianmian. While Chinese people are generally subjects of lianmian, secularised Confucianism, in Helen's case I sensed the limits of the explanation of lianmian. All theories have their limitations in their interpretations of things. Including lianmian in the

analysis fulfills the present study's post-structural reflexivity in avoiding using Foucault's theories as the only lens on students' subjectivity.

6.4.2 Testimonies of Confucian Attitudes of Learning and Competitiveness

The care of the self behaviours exhibited by some of the students can be attributed to Confucian attitudes towards learning and post-Confucian competitiveness. For instance, their expressed desire to learn from others can be understood through the lens of Chinese cultural values, such as modesty or qianxu, which emphasise the importance of humbleness in interpersonal communication (Hwang, 2015). Thus, during the interviews, the students demonstrated their virtuous commitment to displaying modesty. Concurrently, their commitment to learning from their teachers and more accomplished peers can also be seen as them imitating exemplars, which is another Confucian pedagogy (Wu, 2016).

Furthermore, there was a Confucian rationale behind the students' fervent pursuit of higher education. Education holds great esteem in Confucian culture, and those who display less commitment towards it may be criticised for lacking zhiqi, the commitment. According to Confucius, individuals should dedicate themselves to lifelong learning for self-improvement as junzi. In contemporary China, the value placed on attending university and pursuing advanced education remains high among most individuals, regardless of the economic benefits associated with obtaining a degree. Many interviewees expressed their aspirations to pursue doctoral degrees, which not only brings honor to them but also their families, because becoming a doctorate holder is akin to becoming honorable jinshi (those who passed the national level exam of official selection) as in ancient times. Just like Choi and Nieminen (2013, p.161) observed: 'successful entry to such a (prestigious) university is not only an important achievement for the future career of student, but also a victory for the family'. Consequently, for these students, seeking further education was natural.

The post-Confucian competitiveness was also evident among the interviewees. In their

work, Viengkham, et al. (2018) summarised the way in which competition is supported by Confucian values, such as future orientation, diligence in work, enthusiasm for education, and frugality. The concerns expressed by all of the interviewees regarding their future career as translators, teachers, or businesspersons were followed by their enthusiasm to pursue further study, and to participate in competitions or internships. Thus, they demonstrated a future-oriented mindset regarding their chances to be recruited by future employers. Additionally, students such as Wilson and Morgan were highly conscious of the presence of competitive peers and sought diligently to achieve their academic level by undertaking programmes, internships, and competitions. By engaging in benchmarking with their peers and exerting this diligent effort, the interviewees also developed a competitive edge, which Morgan perceived to be on par with graduates from prestigious universities. However, this sense of competition among the students may not align with certain market values of neoliberalism; rather, a sense of competition appears to be deeply ingrained historically within Chinese students who strive to earn lianmian for themselves and their family. In general terms, most of the behaviours and views exhibited by the interviewees could be attributed to Confucian cultural theories; thus, these students were not merely subjects influenced by neoliberalism, but also shaped by Confucian culture.

7. Chapter Seven: Discussion

7.1 To What Extent Does Neoliberalism Influence Students' Subjectivity In Studying At University?

7.1.1 The Neoliberalised Students

If seen from a Foucauldian perspective, all of the interviewees appeared to be neoliberal subjects to a significant extent. I shall justify my argument from the perspective of the interviewees' responses to performativity and their quest to become lifelong learners. All of the interviewees were to different extents made good use of all the activities and opportunities provided by their university and other institutions, in order that they would receive greater advantages than their peers and ensure that they stood out. This self-actualisation tendency of the students was in response to the call of performativity and neoliberalism (Ball, 2016). However, the findings of the present study seemed to disagree with the claims of researchers in Macau and beyond about students' transformation into customers, because of higher education's neoliberalisation (for example, Li & Liu, 2022; Saunders & Kolek, 2017). This was because none of the interviewees in the present study expressed an inclination to become customers, or expressed any customer mentality during the interviews, reflecting the findings of Tomlinson (2017). Instead, they positioned themselves as saleable commodities, in the sense of consumed, rather than consumer. It may be that the popularity of the myth of students becoming customers arose only from the concerns of educators and instructors about students' possible attitudinal change towards study (Macfarlane, 2020).

Not becoming a 'customer' does not mean the students interviewed were not subjects of neoliberalism. Instead, they showed a tendency to become lifelong learners, although this an often unnoticed symbol of being homo economicus in neoliberalism (Fejes, 2008a). The study by Worthman and Troiano (2019) found that the student who transforms themselves into an exemplary lifelong learner has a tendency for self-actualisation that excludes other subjectivities from them, leaving only a subjectivity dedicated to learning. Similarly,

almost all of the interviewees in the present study claimed a passion for learning and stated plans to continue the pursuit of degrees, instead of seeking immediate employment, which may symbolise their exclusion of all other possible subjectivities, leaving only that for lifelong learning. Becoming a lifelong learner satisfies the formulation of homo economicus, which as Foucault (1979a) said is a complex of man-machine-streams of earnings that rely on constant skill and knowledge upgrading for maintenance.

The students interviewed were also responsive to the performativity of the employment market. For instance, Wilson was concerned about how he could improve his CV and qualifications, in order to gain an advantage, while Stephan improved his appearance to increase his chances of securing future opportunities. In contrast, Helen decided not to enter the hospitality industry, due to its shrinking nature, instead choosing to undertake a master's in education because the teaching industry offered a more stable career path. The students therefore all seemed to interact with performativity, which was consistent with the claim of Vong and Lo (2023), namely that Macau University students are being forged into self-maximising units of neoliberal rationality.

Although Macau is famous for its casino capitalist neoliberalism (Shi & Liu, 2014), it seemed that the casino did not have an influence on the students' neoliberal subjectivity formation, as reported by earlier studies (for example, Morrison, 2009; Yu, 2015; Wu & Vong, 2017). The interviewees in present study either treated casinos as ordinary shopping centres, or developed certain criticisms of them. This may be because the present study was conducted at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted Macau's gaming industry negatively, and people's interest in casinos had dwindled, or it may be because previous studies such as those by Morrison (2009), Yu (2015), and Wu and Vong (2017) only collected data from statistics, instructors, and experts, failing to include students' voices. Hence, the reasons of Macau students for opting for work as croupiers over continuing with their education remained unheard. Generally speaking, the ways in which neoliberalism influenced the students in the present study to become lifelong learners and performativity-responsive subjects reflected those of neoliberal subjects elsewhere in the world (for example, Fejes, 2008a, 2008b, 2011; Ball, 2016; Worthman & Troiano, 2019;

Raaper & Burke, 2020). Thus, neoliberalism facilitates the MacDonaldization of higher education across societies (Holmes & Lindsay, 2018), flattening heterogeneity.

7.1.2 Decolonising Macau Neoliberally, Rather than Patriotically

It was not possible for me to find evidence in the interviews to support what Vong and Lo (2023) named 'post-neoliberal governmentality' in the way that Beijing governed Macau. According to Vong and Lo (2023), post-neoliberal governmentality is the integration of neoliberalism and authoritarianism, specifically Chinese nationalism, into the governance of Macau's higher education system, and society at large.This is so that what Han (2021) described as nationalist subjects who would obey the dictates of the sovereign in Chinese mainland universities are copied and nurtured in Macau. None of the interviewees in the present study mentioned patriotic emotions regarding China, demonstrated subjectivity of Chinese nationalism, or mentioned the presence of iron-handed disciplinary approaches at their university.

On the contrary, Morgan explained that he became critical of the propaganda of the Chinese government after studying in Macau, due to its position as a more liberal and international society. Although students like Wilson mentioned that he would take advantage of certain policies in China to receive funding, his purpose was financial, rather than political. I cannot deny the existence of the Chinese government's nationalist and political propaganda in Macau, because historically Macau's Chinese inhabitants connected frequently with their Chinese mainland counterparts. Nevertheless, based on my findings that the students became homo economicus, I tend to agree with Shi and Liu (2014) that the Chinese government adopts an economic approach to the decolonisation of Macau by introducing consumerism into the citizens' lives and making them the co-creators of the city's economic prosperity, and an experiment of casino-capitalist neoliberalism. Such logic fits with Foucault's conceptualisation of governance that is based on the use of the subject's self and desire, making them homo economicus, as the following quotations elucidate: 'Every individual acts out of desire. One can do nothing against desire' (Foucault, 1978c, p.72); 'Government is a technique which permits one to

use the self of people, and the self-conduct of people, for the purpose of domination' (Foucault, 2016, p.114); and 'Homo economicus is the interface of government and the individual' (Foucault, 1979b, p.252-3). By doing so, the inhabitants of Macau are driven by their economic desire to devote themselves to achieving a prosperous career in casinos (Lo, 2009), and latterly in higher education, as evidenced by the present study, without being aware that their behaviours are both visible and foreseeable by the government to which they are subjected. From the perspective of Foucault (1979c), when subjects' behaviours become economic, they are foreseeable and governable, and the social security of this newly decolonised city is sustained.

7.1.3 Pastoral Powers in the Governing of Neoliberal Subjects

As discussed earlier, modern nations have adopted the 'role of pastors' from traditional Christian churches, and Foucault (1983a) likened this to a new or modern pastoral power that guarantees citizens' worldly salvation, enabling them to live, rather than die. The number of agents and institutions of modern pastoral power has multiplied, due to population size; such pastoral power agents range from the micro, such as the family, to the macro, such as the school and hospital sponsored by government (Foucault, 1983a). This section describes how micro agents like family and peers play a part in formulating a discourse of government.

It is noteworthy that beyond the top-down governmental structure of economy and politics discussed in Sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2, a bottom-up discourse concerning students plays a role in disciplining them, subsequently propelling their neoliberal selves. This was evident in the case of Stephan, whose father hoped he would gain success in the context of big cities when he was younger. Growing up in such an environment, Stephan was surely influenced by his father's discourse, and incapable of thinking and acting independently; he grew up in a businessman's family, and his sole focus was to transform his degrees as cultural capital into economic capital, in order to inherit the family business. Both Stephan and Wilson were in discourse that ultimately dictated their mindset: 'Discourses are... about what can be said, and thought...discourses construct certain possibilities for thought'

(Ball, 1990, p.17). Sometimes, discourse operated in the form of the students' mutual competition and confession, which was manifested in the way Wilson had to study hard and engage in an internship due to peer pressure, as all his classmates were doing so. Therefore, discourse became an engine of mutual monitoring, which McNamara (2019) referred to as an extension of the Panopticon. It may be that the interviewees' parents and peers did not manipulate their thoughts and behaviour intentionally, rather the parents and peers per se may already have become subjects of marketisation. More importantly, this finding echoed Foucault's (1983a) concept that a wide range of individuals, including family members, are absorbed into the team of agents of new pastoral power, which is synonymous with the 'state as a modern matrix of individualisation' (p.215) in the time of biopolitics. Therefore, family and peers are already integral components of the state structure of governmentality.

7.1.4 Culture as Lived: Is Neoliberalism Ubiquitous?

One aspect of the present study's contribution to academia was the identification of an apparently blurred boundary between the power technology of neoliberalism and care of the self. I found that some of the interviewees' self-actualisation behaviour mutated to their intention to take care of themselves. For example, Morgan was remorseful that he spent so much time competing with others, impacting the time available to him to read literature. In Ancient Greece, reading, and particularly reading philosophy, was considered to be an exercise of care of the self, impacting an individual's soul (Foucault, 1988b). Interestingly, Morgan and Stephan felt that their self-maximisation activities in response to neoliberalism's performativity were a form of therapy that addressed the dissatisfactory nature of their high school career; their lives were subsequently changed and they became confident. Curative and therapeutic functions are the means by which care of the self improves individuals' subjectivities (Foucault, 2021a). Similarly, this study reflected what Apple (2012) termed 'culture as lived'. Although Apple (2012) spoke from a neo-Marxist position, his elucidation of 'culture as lived' is useful for explaining the phenomena of the students' production of care of the self in neoliberal discourse, as he argued, 'for if schools are wholly determined and can do no more than mirror economic relations outside of them,

then nothing can be done within the educational sphere' (p.63). Therefore, it is challenging for neoliberalism to subjugate every person all the time; hence, I can only say that students are generally transformed into neoliberal subjects, rather than in all circumstances. Such a result is akin to what Gong and Dobinson (2019) found from their case study of Chinese students' perception of China higher education's neoliberal turn: 'Neoliberal ideas do not seem to have pervaded every corner of Chinese society as overarching economic or cultural structures'. (p.339)

It is also possible that there was nothing spiritual in the students' care of the self. As Foucault (1982a) said, after the Cartesian moment the purpose of care of the self practices was downgraded from an behaviour of spirituality to merely concerns regarding conditions of existence. Morgan's remorse at the lack of time he had to read literature may have reflected a concern that it would discount his competitiveness in future, and the healing of their difficult past by Morgan and Stephan may be related to their concerns regarding their performance in both the past and the future. I am aware of the tentativeness of this proposal and the relativity of the conclusion drawn, however this study addressed only certain aspects of the participants' lives. As Marginson (2024) explained, 'student subjectification in higher education is not only incomplete but unstable' (p.757). While the interviewees' subjects will continue to evolve, even though I claim the interviewees become neoliberal subjects to a greater extent.

7.2 How do Macau University Students Self-Cultivate their Own Subjectivity?

7.2.1 Transition of Care of the Self into Hermeneutics of the Self

As demonstrated in Section 5.1, the students in this study seemed to have adopted various technologies of care of the self, such as critical reflection on their past behaviour and meditation on their life at university, benefiting from relationships and creating themselves as artefacts of aesthetics, as well as changing subjectivity through activity participation. To some extent, these technologies helped them to establish their subjectivities temporarily. The reason it was only temporary was because some transformations of the students' care

of the self behaviours identified were also observed to have mutated into hermeneutics of the self as technologies that strengthened their neoliberal subjectivities.

As a typical example of care of the self practice, by critiquing his previous playful lifestyle, Wilson distanced himself from his old friends to eliminate their negative influence. He subsequently pursued a higher degree, in response to the expectations of many parties, including his employer, potential future business partners, policy requirements, peer pressure, rules of academia, and even his family's business. He thus aligned himself fully to satisfy these expectations, evidencing his efforts in his resume, his experience, and his successful persona as perceived by others. By doing so, Wilson established a hermeneutics of himself that was perennially ready to be observed by others and to work as a confession (Fejes, 2008a). His alignment with the expectations of others was also his response to the performativity of neoliberalism, because his behaviour was either economic or self-maximising, and reflected the fact that the priorities of others, such as potential employers and peers, were his abilities and competitiveness; all of these languages belong to the discourse of neoliberalism (Allat & Tett, 2019). Thus, although his behaviour operated as a form of care of the self, Wilson did not build himself an independent soul, rather ultimately dedicated himself to self-nurturing into becoming a neoliberal subject.

Meanwhile, Stephan's determination to transform himself into an object of beauty reflected what Foucault (2020) defined as living one's life as an artefact: 'But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life?' (p.261). For Foucault, this is a destination of care of the self, because to live a beautiful life requires the subject to live ethically (Danaher et al., 2000). Indeed, Stephan did all he could to improve his manner, his physical appearance, and his attitude towards people and studying, which, if described in Ancient Greek terms, seemed the correct training to achieve virtue, namely doing virtuous things. As Kristjansson (2014) explained, the nurturing of an ethical person '[i]n order to take the step from habituated virtue to full virtue, we must learn to choose the right actions and emotions' (p.152). However, Stephan's improved appearance was his response to the taste of others, including his followers on social media, teachers, and others in society. He claimed that society prefers

and rewards those who look good, and he firmly believed that many of the opportunities given to him were due to the improvement in his appearance, from which I understood that Stephan's self-image improvement ultimately constituted an advertisement of himself, namely a hermeneutics of himself for others to reward. Hence, Stephan's care of the self activity became his confession to the taste of the market, which once again fell under the spell of neoliberal performativity. Nevertheless, an artefact, no matter how unique and groundbreaking, requires understanding from its appreciators (Danaher et al., 2000), and it is challenging to claim that the taste of general appreciators is separable from the influence of discourse, and inseparable from the dominant power-knowledge of society. Through seeking to take care of himself, the building of Stephan's subjectivity was therefore infiltrated by the external power of the market and sociocultural discourse.

Furthermore, all of the students mentioned the fact that they were nourished by their friendly or master-apprenticeship relationships with others, which should have been regarded as a practice of Foucauldian care of the self. However, as discussed in the findings, the students often ultimately compared themselves with others due to their nurtured subjectivity as competitive actors within neoliberalism (Naidoo & Williams, 2015). In this context, others seemed not as important as a benchmark for comparison in the students' hearts; what they are concerned with is self-centred accountability. In their work, Enslin and Hedge (2019) used the word 'narcissistic' to describe neoliberalised academicians, who share a similar obsession with self-centred competitiveness and accountability as the students in the present study. They explained

> The ethos of the market has required academics to adapt their behaviour to the self-centred competitiveness, driven by the 'insistent individualism' (Bennett 2008, p.142) of the academy that rewards displays of success in meeting targets and objectives. Narcissistic displays of excellence are required to account for oneself in acts of compulsory boastfulness.

Similarly, although interaction and communication with friends and wiser individuals exists, its care of the self nature is altered when the subject's ego dominates, becoming

extremely narcissistic. According to Han (2017), the erosion of others, combined with individuals' narcissification 'is occurring in all spheres of life; its corollary is the mounting narcissification of the Self' (p.1). He echoed Foucault in his use of homo economicus as an explanation, which in brief concerns the fact that in a neoliberal society, or what he called an achievement society, everyone becomes their own self-entrepreneur, whose production relies on the exploitation of themselves, rather than on the need to exploit others. Therefore, the self no longer requires others, except as a mirror to reflect the self's success: 'Finding success validates the One through the Other. Thereby, the Other is robbed of otherness and degrades into a mirror of the One—a mirror affirming the latter's image' (Han, 2017, p.3). This view helped to explicate the relationship of the students in the present study with others within neoliberalism, which eventually deteriorated through the narcissification of their subjectivity.

As discussed in Section 5.1.5, the students' involvement in all kinds of activities reflected the Foucauldian practice of care of the self, since one means of care of the self in Ancient Greece was to change and improve one's subjectivity through exercise, in order to internalise truth; Foucault (1982b) argued that in today's society, this ancient approach to changing subjectivity as the precondition to truth continues to exist in many social activities, such as attending a party or an association. Indeed, the students developed their criticality as a result of the activities they undertook, for example Helen's critique of the gaming industry, and also healed their emotional wounds, for instance Morgan gained confidence from his participation in competitions. These experiences also nurtured their respective neoliberal subjectivity. Her reflection on the gaming industry's downturn motivated Helen's determination to pursue a higher degree, in order to become a knowledge authority, which in a Foucauldian (1973h) sense is a process by which one makes oneself a subject of power-knowledge, rather than making a free subject of her own. This identity as a knowledge acquirer is also neoliberal in nature, because homo economicus survives by learning new knowledge. As Mourad (2018) explained, 'Inquirers are encouraged; in fact, it is increasingly demanded that they function as in effect, knowledge entrepreneurs, as human capital, as active economic subjects who compete'

(p.338). This applied to all the students interviewed who decided to pursue higher degrees. For Morgan, as discussed earlier, participation in competitions also honed his competitiveness as a response to neoliberal performativity.

It was apparent from the analysis of this study's findings that the care of the self technology transmitted from Greco-Roman times has lost its nourishing impact on its user's independent subjectivity. In the context of present study, all of the participants who applied care of the self technologies appeared to have mutated these for the purpose of their preparation for living amidst neoliberal competition. This echoed Foucault's (1982a) observation of the demise of care of the self, which now has no place in constructing subjectivity, but has remained a condition for the subject's existence since the time of Cartesianism. Although nowadays people continue to utilise some forms of care of the self activities, their purpose is no more than existence-related, rather than truth-seeking (Stone, 2011). The students in the present study sought to establish themselves as unique subjects, but were simultaneously influenced by neoliberalism. Hence, Foucauldian care of the self has been de-radicalised and institutionalised as a part of the market.

7.2.2 Subjects' Occasional Retreat from Neoliberalism

Interestingly, the influence of neoliberalism is not ubiquitous. As discussed in Section 5.2, Morgan spent his time participating in competitions to hone his competitive edge, but also reflected that he had not nourished his soul through reading for a long time, which seemed to represent a temporary retreat from his position as a neoliberal subject; moreover, Morgan's reflection was also performativity-orientated.

According to Foucault (1982a), after the Cartesian moment, truth-seeking became a cognitively knowing process that can be an endless journey that causes pain for the subject, but cannot bring change to the subject's being. However, in the context of the present study, students like Stephan and Helen found their lives, beliefs, and way of doing things were changed during their respective cognitive engagement with studying psychology and reading material concerning tourism in Thailand. It may therefore be the case that Foucault

114

was not always correct, since according to his hypothesis, the activity of cognitive knowing cannot work on one's subject (Foucault, 1982a); but philosophical schools such as the Epicurean place stress on the reading, writing, and remembering of philosophical texts (Sellars, 2020), which can be seen as cognitive knowing movements in the eyes of modern psychologists. The Epicurean approach to learning is not for the purpose of becoming knowledgeable, but to obtain peace in the soul (Sellars, 2020). The students' improvements in subjectivity, via studying, which is cognitive, may therefore be a rebuttal to Foucault's hypothesis, as these changes were not always for performativity purposes, rather from the students' standpoint they were sometimes for the purpose of a hobby or simply for fun, which may have lent them tranquillity of soul, in the same way as the Epicurean approach.

7.2.3 A 'Sixth Kind' of Foucauldian Subjectivity Research

Both the transition of the students' care of the self and their temporary retreat from being neoliberal subjects demonstrated instability in their subject formation, which once again justified Marginson's (2024) argument that 'student subjectification in higher education is not only incomplete but unstable' (p.757). This finding also appeared to acknowledge Foucault's (1994) later work, in which he said that 'subject and object 'form themselves in transforming each other', both in relation to each other and in function of each other' (p.634), thereby acknowledging the repetitive, zigzag, and fluid process of how one formulates subjectivity. This argument was supported by my earlier rationale in Chapter Three, where I problematised a range of previous studies that regarded subjectivity as a de facto fixed or bounded thing, and as though the snapshot of the subjectivity of a person in a study is holistic and permanent. Indeed, viewing the human subject as something fixed, bounded, and unchanged simplifies the complexity of subjectivity formation, but 'post-structural theorising considers subjectivity to be an ongoing accomplishment...Who we are is never settled, but is continuously being formed and reformed, signified and re-signified... subjectivity... is a reiterative, citational practice' (Butler, 1990, cited by Peterson, 2014, p 824).

Therefore, in addition to the five categories of Foucauldian subjectivity research outlined in Section 3.4.3, the first two categories of which delineate a binary distinction between those subjected to power and those not, while the third category reveals the coexistence of discipline and resistance within subjects, the fourth category elucidates the perils faced by care of the self practitioners, and finally, the fifth category explores subjects' initiative transformation into homo-economicus and knowledge subjects, the present study pioneered a sixth kind of Foucauldian subjectivity research that described the transition between care of the self and hermeneutics of the self as the instability and fluidity of the participants' subjectivity. Some differentiation between this and the aforementioned fourth category of Foucauldian subjectivity research requires clarification, since the latter concerns the way in which subjects' care of the self as resistance becomes either more marginalised or endangered, but it fails to demonstrate the fluidity and mutual transformation between care of the self and hermeneutics of the self. The sixth category proposed here echoes Foucault's (1971) remark concerning his changing self, with the typical post-structural ethos: 'Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same' (p.19).

7.3 To what extent does secularised Confucianism influence the Macau university students' subjectivity?

7.3.1 The Alliance between Neoliberalism and Confucianism

Generally speaking, both Foucauldian and secularised Confucianism theories can somewhat explain the subjectivities of the interviewees in the present study. The former, although from a continental philosophical position, can explain how the students were subjectified mainly as neoliberal subjects. In contrast, from a local standpoint, the latter represents the way in which secularised Confucianism subjectifies most students. The simultaneous use of multiple theories made this study more holistic in nature than others, echoing the claim of Levitan (2018) that it is necessary to avoid using a single theory to understanding empirical data regarding student voice, due to the limitations of a single theory to explain the findings completely. The use of multiple theories by the present study served to avoid the common tone employed within Western academia that links students'

subjectivity with neoliberal or economic discourse.

The concept of neoliberalism originated in the West, and the secularised Confucian culture of traditional China allied, cooperated, and overlapped with its subjugation effect on the Macau students' subjectivity. This result contradicted the findings of Oyarzún (2020) in rural Chile, where local students used their expected neoliberal subjectivity to combat the subjectivity formed by their ancestral culture by leaving their suburban home to live a city life, forsaking the traditional lives of their parents and grandparents. The allying of neoliberalism and secularised Confucianism in Macau reflected the observations concerning the vitality and pervasiveness of Confucianism in blending with other ideologies, such as Chinese Communism and Buddhism, in shaping the cultures of different places in East Asia: 'That is not to say that Confucianism competes or dominates other ideologies that flourishing within a society, but that given the syncretic characteristic of the region, operates alongside others to create unique blends of cultures' (Baumann et al., 2020, p.15). Moreover, the alliance between neoliberalism and secularised Confucianism in Macau may also be a deliberate result of the local post-colonial government, which is suspected to utilise an array of powers, from local and global, to enforce its governance (Liu, 2007, 2008). Such alliance is perhaps a unique feature of how Macau is governed; as for mainland China, it was found that except for the discourse of neoliberalism, the discourses of socialism (Gong & Dobinson, 2019), patriotism, and Confucianism (Zhuang & Kong, 2023) are all in effect.

In conclusion, rather than witnessing a declined Confucianism (e.g. Gong & Dobinson, 2019), the present study witnessed a cooperation of neoliberalism and secularised Confucianism in the participants' subjectivity. This finding echoed that of Zhuang and Kong (2023), who reported a similar interplay among neoliberalism, Confucianism, and Chinese patriotism in Chinese students. Therefore, the present study addressed the current gap in the literature explored by only a few previous studies regarding 'the collective effects and interplay of multiple value systems on university students' worldviews' (Zhuang & Kong, 2023, p.688). However, as discussed with relation to Vong and Lo (2023), the present study was undertaken in post-colonial Macau, demonstrating little

relevance of Chinese patriotism's influence on the students' subject formation. Furthermore, there seemed to be no evidence of what Saunders (2007) described as a superior-inferior relationship between neoliberalism and Confucianism in influencing the students. Unlike the Confucian subject, who is a counter effect of neoliberalism, as discussed by Huang and Vong (2016) and Lin and Zhao (2023), or the neoliberal subject, who is a counter effect of the indigenous tradition, as discussed by Oyarzún (2020), the impact of one system does not mitigate or counter the effect of another (Zhuang & Kong, 2023). Hence, the Macau students are under the cooperative subjectification of both discursive systems. If Shi and Liu (2014) and Vong and Lo (2023) are correct that the Beijing government uses neoliberalism as an economic tool to decolonise and govern the residents of Macau, the current study presented another perspective concerning how secularised Confucianism as a historical-sociocultural method is incorporated into post-colonial territories' neoliberal governmentality.

7.3.2 Foucault and Confucius: The Besieged Interiority and Subjects' Care of the Self and Self-Cultivation

According to Bonnett (2009), Foucault saw a person's subjectivity as being heavily and continuously constituted by external powers and discourse. Bonnett (2009) expressed concern that this interpretation excludes the interiority of self, but places others' power and discourse at the heart of one's self-hood. Previously, I would have disagreed with Bonnett (2009), because I know Foucault turned to the Greco-Roman care of the self as a self-conversion technology for nurturing one's spirituality, namely the interiority. However, the findings of present study changed my mind to a significant extent, as the participants' care of the self practices became their self-hermeneutic benchmark with the knowledge-other. This echoed Foucault's (1982a) belief that after the Cartesian moment, the aim of care of the self, in order to nurture spiritual subjectivity, became a practice of sustaining livelihood. In this context, care of the self lost ground in safeguarding one's interiority.

Similar to care of the self, Confucius also stressed self-cultivation or xiushen 修身, which

means one being equipped with Confucian virtue, including the morality and pedagogy of learning, to become a junzi (gentleman in the Confucian sense). However, Confucianism was spawned by Confucius to address the chaotic and war-torn Spring and Autumn periods of the Zhou Dynasty, and sought to end the chaos by restoring 'li', the ritual and propriety derived from the Zhou Dynasty (Baumann et al., 2020). Therefore, as Zhai (2022) explained, Confucius was not the creator, but the middle person who inherited and disseminated the rituals and virtues from the Zhou Dynasty. Nevertheless, the ritual and virtue of the Zhou Dynasty is the prototype of the Confucian Truth, which retained the patriarchal hierarchy within society (Wang, 2021), placing the Confucian self in the relational web of hierarchical intersubjectivity (Wu, 2016). Hence, self-cultivation in Confucianism is always achieved through adherence to predefined rituals, and the aim of self-cultivation is to become another role model of ritual (Wu, 2016). Thus, the role of ritual-other is placed at the centre of Confucian self-cultivation and subjectivity. Similarly, Wang (2021) believed that Confucianism causes an illiberal and authoritarian society that is not supportive of nurturing citizenship, because the Confucian requirement to follow established rituals is designed 'to emphasize obedience, obligation and hierarchy over individual freedom, rights and equality' (p.289). Again, the interiority of self-hood seems limited in the face of Confucian authoritarianism.

The subjectivity of the participants in the present research was besieged, despite their apparent adoption of the technologies of care of the self and self-cultivation. Their benchmarking with knowledge pursuit and ritual propriety prevented them from creating subjectivities of their own, threatening the space of interiority of subjectivity. However, the joint position of neoliberalism, representing the knowledge economy, and Confucianism, representing historical authority, rendered the research participants' objectification to both the market and to tradition. The subjectification of the students by these powers contributed to their homogeneity, since all four research participants' life choices were similar, namely to study and become professional. Clearly, such homogeneity is detrimental to society. In Biesta's (2016, p.7) words, it is a result of students' humanistic socialization (here it involves the influences from market and culture rationalities) and so

'foreclose[s] the possibility that the newborn child might be a new Ghandi, that the student in our classroom might be a new Mother Teresa, or that the newcomer might be a new Nelson Mandela' (p.7). In summary, it prevents the younger generation from establishing who they really are and from redefining what it means to be human beings (Biesta, 2016).

8. Chapter Eight: Conclusion

8.1. Synopsis of Major Findings

At first glance, university students from Macau appeared to have become subjects of neoliberalism. Rather than being subjects of casino capitalism who prefer luxury, they were self-actualizing and responsive to performativity as homo economicus, assuming the role of lifelong learners. There appeared to be no disciplinary enforcement; however, their peers, families, and other stakeholders in their lives formed a discursive panopticon, imposing an expectation of proactive dedication to continuous self-improvement and commitment to lifelong learning. Thus, Foucauldian hermeneutics of the self plays a more significant role than discipline in shaping neoliberal subjectivity. This study distinguishes itself from previous Foucauldian subjectivity studies, which typically employ binary concepts in their theoretical framework, such as using technology of domination (being disciplined) and technology of self (showing resistance) (e.g., Ball, 2016); to be more specific, by incorporating a third angle (Foucault's hermeneutics of the self as a domination technology in the disguise of technology of self), the present study interprets individuals' proactive intentions to become qualified knowing subjects as human capital in the knowledge economy. Thus, this study contributes a hermeneutics of the self as an amendment to the binary theoretical framework used by previous scholars, as a way to examine subjectivity in neoliberalism.

Furthermore, the students demonstrated their intention to attain mastery over their own lives by practising Foucauldian care of the self. However, their care of the self appeared less radical in terms of students forging their own artefacts of aesthetics and unique subjectivity; rather, their care of the self behaviours were mostly employment-oriented. Consequently, care of the self as an antique spiritual exercise has been reduced to modern-day life maintenance, institutionalised into neoliberalism. However, the participants also sometimes launched critiques of their busy lives as homo economicus, expressing a longing to care for their souls, questioning the meaningfulness of self-maximisation. Therefore, there is a culture as lived (Apple, 2012), or lacuna for

resistance in neoliberalism's totalisation, that encourages subjects to tend to their lives directly, rather than to the external pursuits demanded by the market. Considering this, the participants demonstrated an instability in terms of their formation of subjectivities, indicating that there exists a fluid and mutative relationship between their interiority and exteriority and between their care of the self and hermeneutics of the self.

The instability of the students' subjectivities, as found in the present study, may lead to a different interpretation of the neoliberal subject, as someone developing and changing, and whose exploration of being is complex, multifaceted, and open. Therefore, it appears too rushed and single-sided to call someone subjectified, resistant, or subjected-while-being-resistant, in any study that claims to be researching subjectivity. Admittedly, such complexities of subjectivity and common researcher's limitation in grasping the nature of an individual's interiority is consistent with the ethos of post-structuralism (Hodgson & Standish, 2009; Cohen et al., 2010; Peterson, 2014), which is the present study's underpinning paradigm.

Thus far, the study generally supports the explainability of continental Foucauldian theories in the Chinese context. However, in post-structural research, it is dangerous to follow one theory without applying criticality. Therefore, to decentralise Foucault's influence in the present study, the inclusion of secularised Confucianism provided an indigenous perspective to support our reading of the data. Most of the students' behaviours and mentalities, which might be caused by neoliberalism or technology of the self, could also be explained by secularised Confucianism, which offered an important contribution of this research.

This study innovates by showing that rather than merely responding to the performativity of the job market, students' dedication to further academic study, and engagement in all types of competition and self-improvement activities, followed the practical reasoning of acquiring a *lianmian* (face, the self-esteem in Chinese culture) through different methods. This phenomenon has its historical roots in *junzi* (Confucian gentleman), which is an aim of Confucian cultivation (Zhai, 2022). The students' expression of their preference for

having higher degrees could be attributed to the influence of Confucian learning culture, which highly values academic intelligence as a symbol of one's self-perfection and pursuit of recognition as a *junzi* (Hwang, 2015). This differs from the Foucauldian explanation, that the students were becoming lifelong learners subjectified by human knowledge. Furthermore, the students' determination to remedy their own shortcomings by learning from their peers and teachers could be considered as an indication of their modesty, a posture of adhering to the *li* (ritual) of Confucianism, which is regarded as good morality (Li, 2010). However, these behaviours were also considered confessions to others in the tradition of hermeneutics of the self. Moreover, students' strong sense of competitiveness could be identified a default characteristic of Confucianism (Baumann et al., 2020) rather than a phenomenon resulting from the injection of the market value of neoliberalism.

Nevertheless, this research further contributes by demonstrating how secularised Confucianism and Foucauldian lenses collaborate to provide a more holistic view of the participants' behaviours and motivation. Such collaboration could be considered as an innovative theoretical framework in student voice research, highlighting the necessity to avoid using a single theory when understanding empirical data pertaining to student voices owing to a single theory's limitations with regard to explanatory power (Levitan, 2018). Moreover, the compatibility of both sets of theories in the present study also epitomises how neoliberalism and the secularised Confucian culture of traditional China have allied, cooperated, and overlap when governing Macau students into subjects of the market and Chinese authoritarian traditions, which complements the future research direction that Zhuang and Kong (2023, p.688) have described as 'the collective effects and interplay of multiple value systems on university students' personal worldviews'. Although the four students cannot represent Macau's inhabitants, their formulated subjectivities provide a channel for readers so that they can come to understand how the Macau post-colonial government drew on people's subjectivities to maintain its social security, encouraging them to engage themselves in economic, academic, and traditionally conservative lifestyles. As discussed in the previous chapter, students' interiority was constrained, despite their practising Greco-Roman care of the self and self-cultivation in a Confucian sense. This may be explained by observing that external powers, like neoliberalism and traditional

Confucian culture, create homogeneity, which as Biesta (2005, 2016) warned, extinguishes the subject's transgression and social renewal.

8.2 Practical Recommendation Based on the Findings

8.2.1 Risk-Taking Teacher as Discourse Interrupter

Upon reading *Discipline and Punishment* (Foucault, 1995) and *The Order of Discourse* (Foucault, 1981), I found Foucault's view of school as a unit for propagating discourse and teachers as disciplinary agents, to be unconstructive in terms of the process of liberating students' autonomy. Foucault is partially right; the school system in the study context is discursive, as Macau, a sub-national education territory of the Chinese mainland (Lo, 2024), is already merged with the Chinese government's structuring of higher education to boost the nation-state's scientific development (Wen & Marginson, 2024). The school system, as an institution of discourse propagation (Foucault, 1981), legitimises certain voices while excluding others. It teaches and shapes a rational community (including teachers and students), which articulates the same legitimate voice (Biesta, 2016). Members of the rational community cannot contemplate or communicate beyond the confines of established discourse, whether through individual imagination or peer communication, as Biesta (2016, p.64) commented, 'When I speak with the voice of the rational community, it is not really me who is speaking'.

To disrupt discursive rational community and free students' interiority from homogeneity, I call for nurturing teachers who dare to interrupt the dominant discourse. Biesta (2016) described a pedagogy of interruption that encourages teachers to disturb the process of regular education, by leading students to take risks in exploring unfamiliar, challenging, controversial, and even disturbingly uncommon elements, to embark on inventing their own unique language and subjectivity relative to educational risks. Biesta (2016) justified this by urging us to recall how we respond to newborn babies and visitors seeking directions, both of whom are outsiders to our community. In response, we use language differently from how we use it in the community; such language is the language of responsibility, and it is the real language belongs to us (Biesta, 2016).

Generally speaking, Biesta's pedagogy of interruption is based on his critique of the Foucauldian ideal that technologies of self can establish one's own subject. Instead, he argues that 'the subject is not something that is issued from one's own initiative' but is only possible through encountering the other (Biesta, 2016, p.51). A risk-taking teacher can lead students to interrupt the discourse and provide an opportunity for students to encounter otherness.

8.2.2 Establishing Institutions Tolerating *Parrhesia*

The risk-taking teacher could be seen as someone who undertakes *parrhesia*, or fearless speech. Parrhesia is a philosophical exercise of Cynicism that interested Foucault (2001). Foucault believed to have fearless speech is a critique of discourse, because it allows a less powerful speaker, who is frank and sincere, to state what they believe to be true to a superior, and the possible irritation of the later could potentially position the former in a dangerous situation (Foucault, 2001). Due to the associated danger, the fearless speaking subject 'is the subject of the opinion to which he refers' (Foucault, 2001, p. 13), so his inside and outside are unified as a truth-pervaded subject, refraining from any subjugation of external powers on his own subjectivity: '[N]ot accepting as true what an authority tells you to be true, or at least it is not accepting it as true because an authority tells you that it is true. Rather, it is to accept it only if one thinks oneself that the reasons for accepting it are good' (Foucault, 1996, p. 385). The risk-taking teacher is such a person.

However, what is less known is that in ancient Greece, those with freedom to exercise *parrhesia* were either aristocrats or citizens of nation state, so for these individuals, speaking fearlessly is a right, and there seems to be a social agreement protecting them from reprisal (Allen, 2020). In contemporary society, *parrhesia* is not seen as a right as in ancient times, but to encourage such a tradition's revival at school not only requires the teacher's courage but also the school's tolerance to give the teacher the space and capacity to do so.

8.2.3 Nurturing Students Who Care about their Virtues

Student participants in the present study seemed to implement Foucauldian care of the self in their lives, but as the findings revealed, the students came to care more about their careers and fortune than truth. Previous chapters have explained the reasons for this, but perhaps there is also a misleading element in Foucault's notion of care of the self per se, making its exercisers overly concern about their own interests. Indeed, Hadot (2011a) claimed that Foucault had been over-indulgent in 'self' and the 'aesthetic of self' when interpreting the Greco-Roman philosophy tradition. Thus, Hadot (2011a) preferred to cite spiritual exercise instead of care of the self, considering the latter to some extent misleading: 'it seems difficult to accept that the philosophical practice of the Stoics and Platonists was nothing but a relationship to one's self, a culture of the self, or a pleasure taken in oneself.' (p.208).

Instead, Hadot emphasized that the Greco-Roman philosophy endeavours to cultivate people's universal perception of things, surpassing their egocentric selves to develop their superior selves: 'To forget one's personal interest is precisely to have concern for oneself, that is, in fact, to have concern for the superior self beyond all egoism' (Hadot, 2011b, p.109). Such universal perception requires considerable focus on virtue cultivation. For example, Aristotle was concerned about how to identify a mean between two vices (extremes) of doing things, and if rashness and cowardice are vices, to be brave sits as the mean as a virtue (Meyer, 2023); to be able to strike such a balance between vices across different scenarios requires the highest virtue, which is phronesis, and one can achieve phronesis only through deliberation and life experience (Eisner, 2002). In another example, Seneca encouraged the training of one's thinking through spiritual exercises like reflection, so that he can have clear perception of himself, not being easily carried away by his fear, worry, or others' opinions in interpersonal relationships, which is how one acquires the divine virtue of magnanimity and generosity within community (Kaster, 2023). Aristotle's and Seneca's exercises both transcended superficial pursuits of materialism. In order to reach the real spiritual purpose of care of the self, students should not be trapped in the semantic meaning of self, rather they should focus on the nurture of virtues.

8.3 Limitations and Future Research Direction

I had a smaller number of participants due to my case study approach, and thus, future studies with a larger participant cohort may yield different results. The diversity of participants was another issue. My previous job at an institute in Macau involved full-time students, and consequently the students who agreed to participate in the study were academically motivated; however, many part-time and mature students who left school when they were younger, may report different opinions and experiences. Students attending different universities in Macau may also have had other experiences. Diversification of recruitment in this context would require the involvement of research teams, particularly those proficient in Cantonese.

Furthermore, the study primarily uses Foucault's theory as its theoretical framework. However, his theory minimally addresses social class. In Macau, the disparity between the rich and poor is salient, causing many students to take up part-time jobs to contribute to their households (Morrison, 2009). Having jobs while studying at university provides an experience that differs from their peers whose parents can afford the fees for master's and doctoral degrees. To explore students' social class and experiences, prospective scholars should consider Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework. Likewise, scholars such as Lo (2024), Vong and Lo (2023), and Liu (2007, 2008) have mentioned the Chinese government's inclusion of Sinicisation and neo-colonialism in Macau's governance. While these perspectives were beyond the scope of the present study; future studies should include these perspectives within a broader analytical framework, as doing so may yield a more holistic view of Macau and its higher education.

Moreover, similar to Macau's reliance on the gaming industry, the Gulf States (i.e. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, and Kuwait) rely on oil. To eliminate the heavy reliance on oil, the Gulf States launched their revitalisation of education to train local high-skilled labourers (Baqadir, et al., 2011); this is similar to the manner in which the Macau government focused on higher education. However, despite decades of development in education, the Gulf States continue to rely on the oil industry

(Hvdit, 2013) because of a series of challenges in education policymaking (Muysken & Nour, 2006), whereas higher education has developed rapidly in Macau as a possible link for industrial diversification. Future researchers could benefit from conducting comparative research between the higher education stakeholders of Macau and the Gulf States.

Generally speaking, discovering a mutable relationship between care of the self and the hermeneutics of the self, the present study not only contributed to the diversity of Foucauldian subjectivity exploration, but also innovated the inclusion of Foucault's concept, hermeneutics of the self into educational research. By including the perspective of Confuc ianism into the matrix of data analysis, it was possible to balance the Foucauldian angle when interpreting behaviours of Chinese background students, which led to a post structural inquiry, not relying on the explainability of a single theory. Furthermore, the inclusion of a Confucian perspective effectively demonstrated the interplay between traditional Chinese culture and neoliberalism in the government as experienced by people in Macau.

8.4 Final Reflections on Foucauldian solution for education

8.4.1 Atomisation of self and care of the self's limitation

On reflection, with the Chinese students' interiority being besieged by neoliberalism and secular Confucianism, the extent to which Foucauldian care of the self alone could proffer a solution for interiority requires an afterword retrospection. My observation is that perhaps care of the self cannot be a solution because it is not distanced from their obsession with themselves, their ego, and adversity as an integral part of education.

Charles Taylor's (2007) description of the secularisation of human beings (from the spirit-influenced porous self to the self-sustained buffered self) in human history echoes with what Foucault (1982a) called the transition of the caring self in ancient times to the knowing self formulated after the Cartesian moment. The transitions revealed the change in how human beings regard truth-making. In Greco-Roman times, truth was both ethical

and epistemological; that is, a person cannot know truth unless they become a subject of morality through philosophical exercises as care for themself (Stone, 2011). This was the prototype of the caring self, whose truth lay within the being and as an art of his/her establishment (Foucault, 1982a; McGushin, 2011). However, Christianity changed truth from a subject's internal meaning-making to a third party – the Christian Bible – ensuring that believers mirror their exercises and mentality with God's words in the Bible (Foucault, 1988a; Han, 2006); that is, to know God is the only way to know truth. Hence, during this time, truth epistemologically was given more weight than as an ethic established through subject, though believing in Christianity included the ethical responsibilities of being pure, that is, approaching God and confessing one's faults:

> Each person has the duty to know who he is, that is, to try to know what is happening inside him, to acknowledge faults, to recognise temptations, to locate desires, and everyone is obliged to disclose these things. (Foucault, 1988a, p. 40).

> Since the monk must continuously turn his thoughts to ward God, he must scrutinise the actual course of this thought. (Foucault, 1988a, p. 45)

However, after the Cartesian moment, with the rise of human beings' reasoning against the religious hegemony in the Middle Ages, the recognition of scientific knowledge replaced God's words as the new truth external to any subject (Foucault, 1982a). To reach truth, one did not need to become ethical through philosophical exercise or be pure through confessing; instead, they needed to learn, to know knowledge (Foucault, 1982a), so that they could know the self in contrast to the ancient subjectivity of the caring self, so self in modern days is knowing-self. 'Before Descartes, one could not be impure, immoral, and know the truth' (Stone, 2011, p.146); however, in the post-Cartesian moment, truth became an epistemology, like Foucault said (1982a, p.18) 'we must have studied, have an education, and operate within a certain scientific consensus'.

Homo economicus, the jargon Foucault (1979a) coined, as the core of neoliberalism and the pursuit of Junzi in Confucianism, both strengthened subject as the knowing self. The former oriented human subjects to become a cyborg-like complex of man-factory-earning,

indicating that the skill and knowledge one masters lead to their chances as a corpus-enterprise to make a constant income (Foucault, 2016). Similarly, Confucianism highly regards academic study as the internal calibre for becoming an ideal type of man, rendering people automatically open to learn. Therefore, student subjects at the crossroads of neoliberalism and Confucianism, such as the Macau participants in the dissertation, eagerly engaged in and planned to study more to become degree holders or knowledge authorities, that is, the knowing self.

Nevertheless, in contemporary education, students' view of studies causes self-enclosedness and narrow-mindedness in chasing calculable outcomes and learning for exams (Steel, 2014). In the workplace, homo economicus gives no place to others, not even for an exploiting factory owner, because, in neoliberalism, the subject is a self-entrepreneur; he is his own boss who exploit himself and the manufacturing resource is what he has learnt as knowledge and skills (Han, 2017). To such a subject, irrespective of education or workplace, being trapped in narcissism is the finale, because the central pursuit is to be successful as an entrepreneur and others are only a benchmark (Han, 2017, p.3): 'the Other is robbed of otherness and degrades into a mirror of the One—a mirror affirming the latter's image. This logic of recognition ensnares the narcissistic achievement-subject more deeply in the ego'.

8.4.2 Care of the self as an incomplete Hellenistic philosophy

Foucault (1988b) thought, perhaps with the return of care of the self in social governance, a modern-day subject may avoid being subjugated by dominating powers; for example, the alliance of neoliberalism and Confucius culture. However, Foucault did not realise that his idea might recommend an artistic self with strong individuality and egoism too. Hadot (2011, p.207) criticised Foucault: 'It seems to me, however, that the description M. Foucault gives of what I had termed "spiritual exercises," and which he prefers to call "technologies of the self," is precisely focused far too much on the "self," or at least on a specific conception of the self'.

The prototype of Foucauldian care of the self comes from the 'spiritual exercise' that

Hadot used to summarise the six major Hellenistic schools' philosophical practices: Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Epicurean, Cynic, and Sceptic (Hadot, 2011). For example, the death exercise that Foucault (1982c) mentioned as a care of the self practice was borrowed from the Stoics, communicating with friends or wiser others as seeking spiritual assistance was enlightened from the Epicureans (Foucault, 1988b), and parrhesia or truth-speaking from the Cynics (Foucault, 2001). Though the spiritual exercise of the six schools may differ; however, they share the aim to give their philosophers a view from above and transcend biased ego (Hadot, 2011). It is the breaking of the boundary of individuality and approximation to the oneness (Hadot, 2011), which is Dionysian. Care of the self, the Foucauldian interpretation of the Hellenistic philosophy, overlooks the subject's intersubjective relationship with others or rejoining the totality of oneness; even friendship or communications with wiser others as a care of the self are for the subject to get through hardships, and such relationships are temporary and finishes as the adversity is overcomed (Foucault, 2016). In secular perspective, such relationship is so instrumental and self-oriented.

We should not forget that the care of the self's purpose is to forge the subject as an aesthetic artefact:

> What strikes me is the fact that, in our society, art has become something related only to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something which is specialised or done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life? (Foucault, 2020, p. 261)

Nevertheless, forging oneself into a piece of art is self-production, with the pitfall of being self-focused. Foucault tried to justify how care of the self is not being self-centred by saying that care of the self was the beginning of an upward mobility of a person who wanted to govern a city-state: 'There is upward continuity in the sense that whoever wants to be able to govern the state must first know how to govern himself, and then, at another level, his family, his goods, his lands, after which he will succeed in governing the state'

(Foucault, 1978b, p. 94). Being able to care for oneself, the person would know how not to abuse relationships with others, hence, he would be entitled to take care of the family and the community, and 'a city in which everybody took proper care of himself would be a city that functioned well' (Foucault, 2020, p. 287). Foucault's confidence in care of the self was due to his belief that there was a cultural or an overarching philosophical tendency in Greco-Roman times recognising care of the self, because it was written as a couplet with 'know yourself', carved in the Delphic temple (Foucault, 2021a). However, later, Hadot showed that care of the self was one of the 140 precepts inscribed near the Delphic temple by the Seven Sages (Thales of Miletus, Pittacus of Mytilene, Bias of Priene, Solon of Athens, Cleobulus, Myson of Chenae, and Chilon of Sparta), who sought to offer their wisdom to Apollo and inspire passersby at the time (Hadot, 2002). Hence, Foucault partially built care of the self on one maxim of a plethora of Hellenistic philosophies.

Although Foucault believed that care of the self as a technology of self could mediate the subjectification from social structure and ideology-imposed domination, to him, the former was a social governance replacing model (see Foucault, 1978b, 1988b), with little regard for the subject's pursuit of truth as 'God's limbs', a part of the oneness. This is worsened by how common readers understand Foucault's philosophical legacy of the afterlife. Without an in-depth reading of Foucault's description of care of the self or an extensive grasp of Hellenistic philosophies, readers may get distracted by the 'self' in the terminology to misunderstand that being self-centred or not concerned about things beyond themselves is what Foucault suggested. This should draw our attention, because grammar or language bewitches our cognition and discipline. As Wittgenstein pointed out:

> People are deeply embedded in philosophical, i.e., grammatical confusions. And to free them presupposes pulling them out of the immensely manifold connections they are caught up in. (1993, p.185)

> To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life. (1953, p.19)

Foucauldian care of the self, though, does not produce knowing subjects, yet puts subjects in the constant aesthetic process of self-perfection as self-production, expediting their continual individualisation.

References

Adriany, V., & Tesar, M. (2023). Unpacking the discourses of stunting in Indonesian early childhood education and parenting. *Children & Society, 37*(2), 311-325.

Allatt, G., & Tett, L. (2019). Adult literacy practitioners and employability skills: resisting neo-liberalism? *Journal of Education Policy, 34*(4), 577-594.

Allen, A. (2020). *Cynicism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Alvesson, M. (2002). Postmodernism and Social Research. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.

Åkerblom, E. (2020). The will to include–education for becoming a desirable citizen. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society, 28*(3), 351-366.

Apple, M.W. (2012). *Education and Power.* New York & London: Routledge.

Ball, S. (1990) *Politics and Policy Making in Education: explorations in polity sociology*. London: Routledge.

Ball, S. (2006). *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen Ball*. London: Routledge.

Ball, S. J. (2016). Subjectivity as a site of struggle: refusing neoliberalism?. B*ritish journal of sociology of education, 37*(8), 1129-1146.

Ball, S. J., & Olmedo, A. (2013). Care of the self, resistance and subjectivity under neoliberal governmentalities. *Critical Studies in Education, 54*(1), 85-96.

Baqadir, A., Patrick, F., & Burns, G. (2011). Addressing the skills gap in Saudi Arabia: does vocational education address the needs of private sector employers? *Journal of*

Vocational Education & Training, 63(4), 551-561.

Baumann, C., Winzar, H., & Viengkham, D. (2020). *Confucianism, discipline, and competitiveness.* New York: Routledge.

Bazzul, J., & Carter, L. (2017). (Re) considering Foucault for science education research: considerations of truth, power and governance. *Cultural Studies of Science Education, 12*, 435-452.

Bennett, J. B. (2008). A*cademic Life: Hospitality, Ethics and Spirituality.* Eugene, OR: Ankler Publishing.

Bess, M. (1988). Power, moral values and the intellectual: An interview with Michel Foucault. *History of the Present, 4*(1), 1-12.

Biesta, G. (2005). Against learning. Reclaiming a language for education in an age of learning. *Nordic Studies in Education, 25*(1), 54-66.

Biesta, G. J. (2016). *Beyond learning: Democratic education for a human future.* London: Routledge.

Blackburn, S. (2000). *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy.* Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Bleakley, A., & Bligh, J. (2009). Who can resist Foucault? *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy, 34*(4), 368-383.

Blumenreich, M. (2004). Avoiding the pitfalls of 'conventional'narrative research: Using poststructural theory to guide the creation of narratives of children with HIV. *Qualitative research, 4*(1), 77-90.

Bondy, J. M. (2016). Negotiating domination and resistance: English language learners and Foucault's care of the self in the context of English-only education. *Race Ethnicity*

and Education, 19(4), 763-783.

Bonner, C., Tuckerman, J., Kaufman, J., Costa, D., Durrheim, D. N., Trevena, L& Danchin, M. (2021). Comparing inductive and deductive analysis techniques to understand health service implementation problems: a case study of childhood vaccination barriers. *Implementation Science Communications, 2*, 1-9.

Bonnett, M. (2009). Education and selfhood: A phenomenological investigation. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 43*(3), 357-370.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In H. Lauder, P. Brown, J.-A. Dillabough, and A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Education, Globalization and Social Change*, (pp. 105–118). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bowdridge, M., & Blenkinsop, S. (2011). Michel Foucault goes outside: Discipline and control in the practice of outdoor education. *Journal of Experiential Education, 34*(2), 149-163.

Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling in capitalist America.* New York: Basic Books.

Brass, J. (2014). Activist teacher education, Foucault, and the case of two English teachers. *English Education, 46*(3), 216-246.

Buchanan, I. (2018). *A dictionary of critical theory.* Oxford University Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble. Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.

Cahill, D., & Konings, M. (2017). *Neoliberalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Caillat, F. (2015). *Foucault against himself.* arsenal pulp press.

Cannizzo, F. (2015). Academic subjectivities: Governmentality and self-development in higher education. *Foucault studies*, *20*, 199-217.

Choi, J. A. (2006). Doing poststructural ethnography in the life history of dropouts in South Korea: methodological ruminations on subjectivity, positionality and reflexivity. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 19*(4), 435-453.

Choi, T,-H. (2017). Hidden transcripts of teacher resistance: a case from South Korea. *Journal of Education Policy, 32*(4), 480-502.

Choi, S. H. J., & Nieminen, T. A. (2013). Factors influencing the higher education of international students from Confucian East Asia. *Higher Education Research & Development, 32*(2), 161-173.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). Research method in education. London: Routledge.

Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Crotty, M. (2010). *The Foundations of Social Research*. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Danaher, G., Schirato, T., & Webb, J. (2000). *Understanding Foucault.* St Leonards NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Davis, B. (2003). *Shards of Glass: Reading and Writing Beyond Gendered Identities.* New Jersey: Hampton Press.

de Toledo e Toledo, N., Knijnik, G., & Valero, P. (2018). Mathematics education in the

neoliberal and corporate curriculum: the case of Brazilian agricultural high schools. *Educational Studies in Mathematics, 99*, 73-87.

Dean, M., & Zamora, D. (2021). *The last man takes LSD: Foucault and the end of revolution*. London & New York: Verso Books.

Doherty, R. (2007). Chapter 13: Critically framing education policy: Foucault, discourse and governmentality. *Counterpoints, 292*, 193-204.

Drew, C. (2020). To follow a rule: The construction of student subjectivities on classroom rules charts. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 21*(1), 46-57.

Drummond, J. (2003). Care of the self in a knowledge economy: Higher education, vocation and the ethics of Michel Foucault. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 35*(1), 57-69.

Durkin, K. (2011). Adapting to Western Norms of Critical Argumentation and Debate. In L.X., Jin & M. Cortazzi, (Eds.), *Researching Chinese learners* (pp. 274-291). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Eisner, E. W. (2002). From episteme to phronesis to artistry in the study and improvement of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 18*(4), 375-385

Enslin, P., & Hedge, N. (2019). Academic friendship in dark times. *Ethics and Education, 14*(4), 383-398.

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International journal of qualitative methods, 5*(1), 80-92.

Ferrari, R. (2015). Writing narrative style literature reviews. *Medical writing, 24*(4), 230-235.

Fisher, I., & Ziviani, J. (2004). Explanatory case studies: Implications and applications for clinical research. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal, 51*(4), 185-191.

Flores, J. (2021). Fromm, Foucault, Garland, and prison education. *Curriculum Perspectives, 41*(2), 231-236.

Fejes, A. (2008a). To be one's own confessor: Educational guidance and governmentality. *British Journal of sociology of education, 29*(6), 653-664.

Fejes, A. (2008b). Governing nursing through reflection: a discourse analysis of reflective practices. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 64*(3), 243-250.

Fejes, A. (2011). Confession, in-service training and reflective practices. *British Educational Research Journal, 37*(5), 797-812.

Fejes, A., & Dahlstedt, M. (2013). *The confessing society: Foucault, confession and practices of lifelong learning.* London: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1971). *The Archeology of Knowledge & Discourse on Language.* New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (1973a). 3rd January 1973. In B.E. Harcourt (Ed.), *The Punitive Society Lectures at The Collège De France* 1972-1973 (pp.1-20). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1973b). 31st Jan 1973. In B.E. Harcourt (Ed.), *The Punitive Society Lectures at The Collège De France 1972-1973* (pp.82-98). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1973c). 10th January 1973. In B.E. Harcourt (Ed.), *The Punitive Society Lectures at The Collège De France 1972-1973* (pp.21-42). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1973d). 14th February 1973. In B.E. Harcourt (Ed.), *The Punitive Society Lectures at The Collège De France 1972-1973* (pp.122-138). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1973e). 28th February 1973. In B.E. Harcourt (Ed.), *The Punitive Society Lectures at The Collège De France 1972-1973* (pp.155-169). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1973f). 14th Mar 1973. In B.E. Harcourt (Ed.), The Punitive Society Lectures at The Collège De France 1972-1973 (pp.186-200). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1973g). 21st March 1973. In B.E. Harcourt (Ed.), *The Punitive Society Lectures at The Collège De France 1972-1973* (pp.139-154). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Foucault, M. (1973h). 28th March 1973. In B.E. Harcourt (Ed.), *The Punitive Society Lectures at The Collège De France 1972-1973* (pp.225-247). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1973i). 21st November 1973. In J. Lagrange (Ed.), *The Psychiatric Power. Lectures at The Collège De France 1973-1974* (pp.39-61). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1978a). 11th Jan 1978. In M. Senellart (Ed.), *Security, Territory, Population Lectures at The Collège De France 1977-1978* (pp.1-27). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1978b). 1st Feb 1978. In M. Senellart (Ed.), *Security, Territory, Population Lectures at The Collège De France 1977-1978* (pp.87-113). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1978c). 25th Jan 1978. In M. Senellart (Ed.), *Security, Territory, Population*

Lectures at The Collège De France 1977-1978 (pp.55-85). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1978d). 18th Jan 1978. In M. Senellart (Ed.), *Security, Territory, Population Lectures at The Collège De France 1977-1978* (pp.29-53). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1979a). 14th Mar 1979. In M. Senellart (Ed.), *The Birth of Biopolitics Lectures at The Collège De France 1978-1979* (pp.215-237). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1979b). 21st Mar 1979. In M. Senellart (Ed.), *The Birth of Biopolitics Lectures at The Collège De France 1978-1979* (pp.239-265). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1979c). 17th Jan 1979. In M. Senellart (Ed.), *The Birth of Biopolitics Lectures at The Collège De France 1978-1979* (pp.27-49). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1981). The Order of Discourse. In R. Young (Ed.). *Untying the text: a post-structuralist reader* (pp. 48-78). Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Foucault, M. (1982a). The first hour, 6th Jan 1982. In F. Gros (Ed.), The Hermeneutics of the Subject Lectures at The Collège De France 1981-1982 (pp.1-24). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1982b). The second hour, 6th Jan 1982. In F. Gros (Ed.), The *Hermeneutics of the Subject Lectures at The Collège De France 1981-1982* (pp.25-41). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1982c). The second hour, 24th Mar 1982. In F. Gros (Ed.), *The Hermeneutics of the Subject Lectures at The College De France 1981-1982* (pp.477-490). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1983a). The Subject and Power. In H. L. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.). *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (pp. 208-226). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, M. (1983b). 5th Jan 1983: Second Hour. In F. Gros (Ed.), *The Government of Self and Others Lectures at The Collège De France 1982-1983* (pp.25-40). Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1983c). On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress. In H. L. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.). *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (pp. 229-252). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, M. (1984a). What is Enlightenment? In P. Rabinow. (Ed.) *The Foucault Reader* (pp.32-50). New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (1988a). Technologies of the Self. In L.H. Martin, H. Gutman, & P.H. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the Self A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, (pp. 16-49). London: Tavistock Publications.

Foucault, M. (1988b). *The history of sexuality: The care of the self (Vol.3)*. New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (1988c). The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom. An Interview with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984, conducted by Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, Helmut Becker, & Alfredo Gomez-Müller. In J. Bernauer & D, Rasmussen [Eds], *The Final Foucault*, pp. 1 – 20. Boston: MIT,

Foucault, M. (1989). *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*. London & New York: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1990). *The history of sexuality: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Book.

Foucault, M. (1994). *Dits et écrits* [Said and Written], vol. IV. Paris: Gallimard.

Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Book.

Foucault, M. (1996). What is Critique? In J. Schmidt (Ed.). *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (pp.382-98). Berkley & Los Angeles, California: University of California Pres

Foucault, M. (2001). *Fearless Speech*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext (E).

Foucault, M. (2002). *The birth of the clinic*. London: Routledge.

Foucault, M (2016). *About the beginning of the hermeneutics of the self: lecturers at Dartmouth College, 1980*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, M. (2020). *Michel Foucault: Ethics Essential Works 1954-84.* London: Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. (2021a). *Speak Truth About Oneself: Lectures at Victoria University, Toronto, 1982*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, M. (2021b). *Confessions of the Flesh* (Vol. 4). New York: Pantheon.

Gajek, K. (2014). Auto/narrative as a means of structuring human experience. In M. Kafar & M. Modrzejewska-Swigulska (eds.),Autobiography-biography-narration research practice for biographical perspectives, (pp. 11–32). Krakow, Poland: Jagiellonian University Press.

Gao, L. (1998). Cultural context of school science teaching and learning in the People's Republic of China. *Science Education, 82*(1), 1-13.

Gebreiter, F. (2020). Making up ideal recruits: Graduate recruitment, professional socialization and subjectivity at Big Four accountancy firms. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal, 33*(1), 233-255.

Gilbert, C. (2021). Punching the clock: a Foucauldian analysis of teacher time clock use. *Critical Studies in Education, 62*(4), 439-454.

Giroux, H. A. (2002). Neoliberalism, Corporate Culture, and the Promise of Higher Education: The University as a Democratic Public Sphere. *Harvard Educational Review, 72*, 425-463.https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.72.4.0515nr62324n71p1

Gong, Q., & Dobinson, T. (2019). Breaking with old ideas: Chinese students' perceptions of China's 'neoliberal turn' in higher education. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education, 40*(3), 331-342.

Graneheim, U. H., Lindgren, B. M., & Lundman, B. (2017). Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper. *Nurse education today, 56*, 29-34.

Griffiths, M. (1998), Educational Research for Social Justice: Getting off the fence. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.

Grimshaw, T. (2007). Problematizing the construct of 'the Chinese learner': Insights fromethnographic research. *Educational Studies, 33*(3), 299-311.

Grun (1851). *De la moralisation des classes laborieuses*. France: Guillaumin.

Guion Akdağ, E., & Swanson, D. M. (2018). Ethics, power, internationalisation and the postcolonial: A Foucauldian discourse analysis of policy documents in two Scottish universities. *European Journal of Higher Education, 8*(1), 67-82.

Hadot, P. (2002). *What is ancient philosophy?* Cambridge, Massachusett: Harvard University Press.

Hadot, P. (2011a). *Philosophy as a Way of Life.* MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Hadot, P. (2011b). *The Present Alone Is Our Happiness.* California: Standford University Press.

Hall, S. (1997). The work of representation. In S. Hall (Ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (pp. 13–64). London: Sage.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1983). Ethnography: Principles in practice. Routledge.

Han, B. (2006). The analytic of finitude and the history of subjectivity. In G. Gutting (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (pp.176-209). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Han, B-C. (2015). *The Burnout Society.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Han, B. C. (2017). *The Agony of Eros.* Massachusetts: MIT Press

Han, X. (2023). Subjectivity as the site of struggle: students' perspectives toward sino-foreign cooperation universities in the era of discursive conflicts. *Higher Education, 85*(2), 399-413.

Hannus, S. & Simola, H. (2010). The effects of power mechanisms in education: Bringing Foucault and Bourdieu together. *Power and Education, 2*(1), 1-17.

Harvey, D. (2005). *Neoliberalism.* Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Hay, S.& Kapitzke, C. (2009). 'Smart state' for a knowledge economy: Reconstituting creativity through student subjectivity. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 30*(2), 151-164.

Henderson, J. (2020). Styling writing and being styled in university literacy practices. *Teaching in higher education, 25*(1), 1-17.

Hewitt, S. (2009). Discourse analysis and public policy research. *Centre for rural economy discussion paper series*, 24, 1-16. https://www.ncl.ac.uk/media/wwwnclacuk/centreforruraleconomy/files/discussion-paper-24.pdf

Hodges, B. D., Martimianakis, M. A., McNaughton, N., & Whitehead, C. (2014). Medical education meet Michel Foucault. *Medical education, 48*(6), 563-571.

Hodgson, N., & Standish, P. (2009). Uses and misuses of poststructuralism in educational research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 32*(3), 309-326.

Hoffman, M.(2011). Disciplinary Power. In D. Taylor (Ed.), *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts* (pp.27-39). Durham, England: Acumen.

Holmes, C., & Lindsay, D. (2018). Do you want fries with that?: The McDonaldization of university education—Some critical reflections on nursing higher education. *Sage Open, 8*(3), 2158244018787229.

Howarth, D.R. (2013). *Poststructuralism and After: Structure, Subjectivity and Power.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Hsu, S. W. (2021). Exploring an alternative: Foucault-Chokr's unlearning approach to management education. *The International Journal of Management Education, 19(*2), 1-12.

Huang, H. (2018). Foucault, Confucius and the in-service learning of experienced teachers in an era of managerialism. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 38*(1), 51-61.

Huang, H.,& Vong, S. K. (2018). Resistance, resilience and re-marginalization: a case study of a visual arts teacher in Macao. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 39*(7), 998-1011.

Huang, H. & Vong, S. K. (2016). The Confucian educational philosophy and experienced teachers' resistance: A narrative study in Macau. *Frontiers of Education in China, 11*(1), 1-22.

Huisman, D. (1984). *Dictionnaire des philosophes* [Dictionary of Philosophy]. Presses
Universitaires de France

Hvdit, M. (2013). *Economic diversification in GCC countries: Past record and future
trends*. LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/55252

Hwang, T. M. (2015). The studying and striving of secondary students. In S.Hsu & Y. -Y.
Wu (eds.), Education as cultivation in Chinese culture, (pp.127-148). Singapore:
Springer.

Hyland, K. (2009). *Academic Discourse: English in a Global Context.* London:
Continuum.

Hyland, K. (2012). *Disciplinary Identities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ideland, M., & Malmberg, C. (2015). Governing 'eco-certified children' through pastoral
power: critical perspectives on education for sustainable development.
Environmental Education Research, 21(2), 173-182.

James, F. (2022). 'Ethics review, neoliberal governmentality and the activation of moral
subjects.' *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 53*(5), 130-140.

Jin, L.X. & Cortazzi, M. (1998). The culture the learner brings: a bridge or a barrier? In M.
Byram, & M, Fleming (Eds). *Language learning in intercultural perspective:
approaches through drama and ethnography* (pp. 98-118).Cambridge: Cambridge
University.

Jin, L. X., & Cortazzi, M. (2003). English language teaching in China: A bridge to the
future. In W. K. Ho & R. Y. L. Wong (Eds.), *English Language Teaching in East
Asia Today: Changing policies and practices* (pp. 131-145). Singapore: Times
Academic Press.

Jin, L. X., & Cortazzi, M. (2006). Changing practices in Chinese cultures of learning.

Language, culture and curriculum, 19(1), 5-20.

Johnston, J. L. (2014). Resistance is not futile: Foucault and a brave new world of medical education research. *Med Educ, 48*(6), 554-5.

Journell, W. (2011). Teaching the 2008 Presidential Election at three demographically diverse schools: An exercise in neoliberal governmentality. *Educational Studies, 47*(2), 133-159.

Kaeding, M. P. (2010). The evolution of Macao's identity: Toward ethno-cultural and civic-based development. *The Journal of Comparative Asian Development, 9*(1), 133-168.

Kang, H., & Chang, B. (2016). Examining Culture's Impact on the Learning Behaviors of International Students from Confucius Culture Studying in Western Online Learning Context. *Journal of International Students, 6*(3), 779-797.

Kaster, R.A. (2023). *How to do the Right Thing: An Ancient Guide to Treating People Fairly*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Kristjánsson, K. (2014). Phronesis and moral education: Treading beyond the truisms. *Theory and Research in Education, 12*(2), 151-171.

Laalo, H.,& Heinonen, J. (2016). Governing the entrepreneurial mindset: Business students' constructions of entrepreneurial subjectivity. *European Educational Research Journal, 15*(6), 696-713.

Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London: Verso.

Lai, L. S., To, W. M., Lung, J. W., & Lai, T. M. (2012). The perceived value of higher education: The voice of Chinese students. *Higher Education, 63*(3), 271-287.

Lau, C. M. D., & Yuen, P. K. (2014). The globalisation of public higher education in Macau. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 23*(1), 117-124.

Legge. J. (2013). *Shangshu* [Book of Chow]. Liaoning: Liaoning People's Publishing House.

Levitan, J. (2018). The danger of a single theory: Understanding students' voices and social justice in the Peruvian Andes. *Teachers College Record, 120*(2), 1-36.

Li, J. (2010). Learning to Self-Perfect: Chinese Beliefs about Learning. In C.K.K. Chan & N. Rao (eds). *Revising The Chinese Learner: Changing Contexts, Changing Education*, (pp.35-69). Singapore: Springer.

Li, J. H. (2022). How am I supposed to feel? Female students' emotional reasoning about academic becoming in transnational higher education. *Gender and Education,34*(5), 561-576.

Li, X., & Cutting, J. (2011). Rote learning in Chinese culture: Reflecting active Confucian-based memory strategies. In L. X. Jin & M. Cortazzi (Eds.). *Researching Chinese learners: Skills, Perceptions and Intercultural Adaptations* (pp. 21-42). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Li, Y. (2020). *Educational change amongst English language college teachers in China: Transitioning from teaching for general to academic purposes*. Singapore: Springer Nature.

Li, Y. (2021). A Critical Policy Analysis of the Implementation of the Bi-Literacy and Trilingualism Language Policy in Hong Kong: From a Postcolonial Perspective. *SFU Educational Review, 14*(1), 33‑49.

Li, Y. (2022). Docile Bodies in Chinese Schools: What Defines a Future Postmodern Education? *Critical Education, 13*(2), 22–44.

Li, Y., & Liu, X. (2022). A Phenomenological Psychology Study of University Teachers' Lived Experience of Being Pedagogical in Neoliberalism. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 1-7.

Li, Y. & Liu, X (2024). Foucauldian critical thinking: An antithesis to technicizsation. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, online first*. Available online at: DOI: 10.1093/jopedu/qhae058

Li, Y., & Wu, Y. (2022). Why are the liberal studies textbooks that stigmatized China spread in Hong Kong? A textual analysis from Foucauldian order of discourse. *International Critical Thought, 12*(1), 116-132.

Li, Y., Feng, Y., & Liu, X. (2021). A study of Chinese university English teachers' subjectivity in a neoliberal EAP policy implementation: from a Foucauldian perspective. *Taboo,* 20, 55–74. Available online at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/taboo/vol20/iss3/4

Lin, M., & Zhao, W. (2023). Untangling the making and governing of Hong Kong teachers through neoliberal, Confucian, and affective technologies: with and beyond Foucault. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 51*(2), 147-161.

Liu, N. F., & Littlewood, W. (1997). Why do many students appear reluctant to participate in classroom learning discourse? *System, 25*(3), 371-384.

Liu, S. D. (2007). Macao's Neocolonialism: Reflections on the 2007 May Day Protest. *Reflexion, 7*, 55-84.

Liu, S. D. (2008). Casino Colony. *New Left Review, 50,* 109-124. https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii50/articles/shih-diing-liu-casino-colony.pdf

Llewellyn, A. (2016). Problematising the pursuit of progress in mathematics education. *Educational Studies in Mathematics, 92*(3), 299-314.

Llamas, J. M. C. (2006). Technologies of disciplinary power in action: The norm of the 'Good student'. *Higher Education, 52*, 665-686.

Lo, S. (2009). Casino capitalism and its legitimacy impact on the politico-administrative state in Macau. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs, 38*(1), 19-47.

Lo, W. Y. W. (2024). Towards governmentality with Chinese characteristics: higher education policy discourses in post-colonial Hong Kong and Macao. *Comparative Education*, 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2024.2335014

Lopes, A. (2014). The University as power or counter-power? May 1968 and the emergence of a new learning subject. *European journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, 5*(1), 31-49.

Macfarlane, B. (2020). Myths about students in higher education: Separating fact from folklore. *Oxford Review of Education, 46*(5), 534-548.

Maley, A. (1996). Xanadu -'A miracle of rare device': The teaching of English in China. In J. M.Valdes (Ed.), *Culture bound: Bridging the cultural gap in language teaching* (pp.77-78). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marginson, S. (2024). Student self-formation: An emerging paradigm in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education, 49*(4), 748-762.

Marshall, J.D. (2004). *Poststructuralism, Philosophy, Pedagogy.* Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Maiese, M. (2022). Neoliberalism and mental health education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 56*(1), 67-77.

Masschelein, J. & Quaghebeur, K. (2005). Participation for better or for worse?. *Journal of philosophy of education, 39*(1), 51-65.

Mavelli, L. (2014). Widening participation, the instrumentalization of knowledge and the reproduction of inequality. *Teaching in higher education, 19*(8), 860-869.

Mayes, E. (2020). Student voice in an age of 'security'?. *Critical Studies in Education, 61*(3), 380-397.

McCuaig, L., Woolcock, L., Stylianou, M., Ng, J. Y., & Ha, A. S. (2020). Prophets, pastors and profiteering: exploring external providers' enactment of pastoral power in school wellbeing programs. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education, 41*(2), 223-237.

McGowan, W. S., & Partridge, L. (2014). Student engagement and making community happen. *Educational philosophy and theory, 46*(3), 237-254.

McGushin, E. (2011). Foucault's theory and practice of subjectivity. In D.Taylor (Ed.), *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts* (pp.127-142). Durham, England: Acumen.

McNamara, T. (2019). *Language and subjectivity.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Meyer, S.S. (2023). *How to Flourish: An Ancient Guide to Living Well*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Mohammed, S., Peter, E., Gastaldo, D., & Howell, D. (2015). Discourse/Discours-Rethinking Case Study Methodology in Poststructural Research. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research Archive,47*(1), 97-114.

Morrison, K. (2009). Higher education students in part-time work in a Chinese city. *Evaluation & research in education, 22*(2-4), 121-144.

Morrissey, J. (2013). Governing the academic subject: Foucault, governmentality and the performing university. *Oxford Review of Education, 39*(6), 797-810.

Mourad, R. P. (2018). Social control and free inquiry: Consequences of Foucault for the pursuit of knowledge in higher education. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 66*(3), 321-340.

Milchman, A., & Rosenberg, A. (2011). Michel Foucault: an ethical politics of care of self and others. In C.H. Zuckert (ed.), *Political Philosophy in The Twentieth Century: Authors and Arguments*. New York: University of Cambridge.

Mills S. (2003). *Routledge Critical Thinkers: Michel Foucault*. London: Routledge.

Mutereko, S. (2018). Analysing the accreditation of engineering education in South Africa through Foucault's panopticon and governmentality lenses. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 43*(2), 235-247.

Muysken, J., & Nour, S. (2006). Deficiencies in education and poor prospects for economic growth in the Gulf countries: The case of the UAE. *The Journal of Development Studies, 42*(6), 957-980.

Naidoo, R., & Williams, J. (2015). The neoliberal regime in English higher education: Charters, consumers and the erosion of the public good. *Critical Studies in Education, 56*(2), 208-223.

Newby, P. (2010). *Research methods for education.* Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Nguyet Nguyen, M. (2022). Navigating academic mentorship as active, knowing, and moral subjects. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 30*(4), 434-453.

O'Connor, K. & Rudolph, S. (2023). *Critical policy analysis in education*. In Oxford Education Encyclopedia. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.1831

O'Dwyer, S. (2017). Deflating the 'Confucian Heritage Culture' thesis in intercultural and academic English education. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 30*(2), 198-211.

O'Keeffe, S., & Skerritt, C. (2021). Exploring teacher identity using poststructural tools. *International journal of research & method in education, 44*(2), 179-192.

Olssen, M. (2006). Foucault and the imperatives of education: Critique and self-creation in a non-foundational world. *Studies in philosophy and education*, 25, 245-271.

Osaka, J. (2008). How to Read Foucault. New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company.

Oyarzún, J. D. D. (2020). Uncertain futures in forgotten places: a study on education policies and students' subjectivities in rural contexts in Chile. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 50*(7), 1047-1063.

Pan, P. Q. (2021). yizhe xu [The translator's preface]. In P.Q., Pan (translated), ziwo tanbai: Fuke 1982 nian zai duolunduo daxue weiduoliya xueyuan de yanjiang [Speak Truth About Oneself: Lectures at Victoria University, Toronto, 1982], (pp.xi-xxvii). Wuhan, Hubei, China: Changjiang Wenyi Publishing House.

Parris-Kidd, H., & Barnett, J. (2011). Cultures of learning and student participation: Chinese learners in a multicultural English class in Australia. In L.X., Jin & M, Cortazzi. (Eds.), *Researching Chinese learners* (pp. 169-187). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Pearse, N. (2019). *An illustration of deductive analysis in qualitative research.* In 18th European conference on research methodology for business and management studies, 264-270. DOI: 10.34190/RM.19.006

Peim, N. (2021). The meaning of life: the ontological question concerning education through the lens of Catherine Malabou's contribution to thinking. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 53*(10), 1011-1023.

Peruzzo, F. (2022). The Model of Becoming Aware: Disabled subjectivities, policy enactment and new exclusions in higher education. *Journal of Education Policy, 37*(3), 482-504.

Petersen, E.B. (2014). Re-signifying subjectivity? A narrative exploration of 'non-traditional' doctoral students' lived experience of subject formation through two Australian cases. *Studies in Higher Education, 39*(5), 823-834.

Petersen, E. B., & O'Flynn, G. (2007). Neoliberal technologies of subject formation: a case study of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. *Critical Studies in Education, 48*(2), 197-211.

Postman, N. (2006). *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. New York: Penguin Books.

Proudfoot, K. (2021). Panopticism, teacher surveillance and the 'unseen'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 42*(5-6), 812-827.

Proudfoot, K. (2023). Inductive/deductive hybrid thematic analysis in mixed methods research. *Journal of mixed methods research, 17*(3), 308-326.

Pusey, A. (2016). Strike, occupy, transform! Students, subjectivity and struggle. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 26*(2), 214-232.

Raaper, R. (2016). Academic perceptions of higher education assessment processes in neoliberal academia. *Critical Studies in Education, 57*(2), 175-190.

Raaper, R. (2018). 'Peacekeepers' and 'machine factories': tracing Graduate Teaching Assistant subjectivity in a neoliberalised university. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 39*(4), 421-435.

Raaper, R. (2019). Assessment policy and "pockets of freedom" in a neoliberal university: A Foucauldian perspective. In C. Manathunga, D. Bottrell (eds.), *Resisting Neoliberalism in Higher Education Volume II: Prising Open the Cracks*, p.155-175. London: Palgrave Macmillan Cham

Raaper, R. (2020). Constructing political subjectivity: The perspectives of sabbatical officers from English students' unions. *Higher Education, 79*(1), 141-157.

Raaper, R., & Burke, C. (2020). Student politics: resistance, refusal and representation. *Social theory and the politics of higher education: critical perspectives on institutional research, 187*, 1-8.

Rao, N. & Chan, C. K. K. (2009). Moving Beyond Paradoxes: Understanding Chinese Learners and Their Teachers. In C.K.K. Chan & N. Rao (Eds.). *Revisiting The Chinese Learner Changing Contexts, Changing Education* (pp. 3-32). Hong Kong: Springer.

Resch, K. (2023). Student voice in higher education diversity policies: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Education, 8*, 1-12.

Revel, J. (2008). *Diccionario Foucault* [Foucault Dictionary]. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Vision.

Romanowski, M. H. (2022). Controlling higher education from a distance: using Foucault's governmentality to better understand accreditation. *Cogent Education, 9*(1), 1-12.

Rorty, R. (1999). *Philosophy and social hope.* New York, NY: Penguin.

Rytzler, J. (2019). Turning the gaze to the self and away from the self–Foucault and Weil on the matter of education as attention formation. *Ethics and education, 14*(3), 285-297.

Said, E. W. (1979). *Orientalism.* New York: Vintage.

Salili, F. (1996). Achievement Motivation: a cross-cultural comparison of British and Chinese students. *Educational Psychology, 16*(3), 271-279.

Saunders, D. (2007). The impact of neoliberalism on college students. *Journal of College and Character, 8*(5), 1-9.

Saunders, D., & Kolek, E. (2017). Neoliberal ideology and college students: Developing a customer orientation while in college. *Critical Education, 8*(8), 1-16.

Seeber, B. K., & Berg, M. (2016). *Slow Professor.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Sellars, J. (2019). *Lessons in Stoicism.* NY: Penguin Books.

Sellars, J. (2020). The Fourfold Remedy Epicurus and the Art of Happiness. NY: Penguin Books.

Sheng, L. (2016). The transformation of island city politics: The case of Macau. *Island Studies Journal, 11*(2), 521–536. https://doi.org/10.24043/isj.365

Shenker, S. S. (2008). Applying Foucault's "Archaeology" to the Education of School Counselors. *Educational Studies, 44*(1), 22-29.

Shi, W., & Liu, S. D. (2014). Living with casinos: the experience of young dealers in Macau. *Journal of Youth Studies, 17*(7), 930-947.

Spohrer, K., & Bailey, P. L. (2020). Character and resilience in English education policy: social mobility, self-governance and biopolitics. *Critical Studies in Education, 61*(5), 561-576.

Stake, R. (1995). *Case study research*. Thousand oaks, CA: SAGE.

Stake, R. (2005). Qualitative Case Studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of Qualitative research*, pp.443-466. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE.

Steel, S. (2014). On the need for Dionysian education in schools today. *Educational Theory, 64*(2), 123–141. https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12053

Stickney, J. (2013). A paradox of freedom in 'becoming oneself through learning':

Foucault's response to his educators. *Ethics and Education, 8*(2), 179-191.

Stone, B.E. (2011). Subjectivity and truth. In D. Taylor (Ed.), Michel Foucault Key

Concepts, (pp. 143-158). Durham, England: Acumen

Sum, C-Y. (2010) An exercise for the People's Republic: Order and discipline in the

morning ritual of a Chinese primary school. Boston University.

Taylor, C. (2007). *A secular age*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP.

Tamboukou, M. (2004). Educational heterotopias and the self. *Pedagogy, Culture and

Society, 12*(3), 399-414.

Tamboukou, M. (2012). Truth telling in Foucault and Arendt: parrhesia, the pariah and

academics in dark times. *Journal of Education Policy, 27*(6), 849-865.

Thiel, J. (2019). The UK National Student Survey: An amalgam of discipline and

neo‐liberal governmentality. *British Educational Research Journal, 45*(3),

538-553.

Thompson, C. (2010). Education and/or Displacement? A Pedagogical Inquiry into

Foucault's 'Limit‐Experience'. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 42*(3),

361-377.

Thomson, P., Hall, C., & Jones, K. (2013). Towards educational change leadership as a

discursive practice—or should all school leaders read Foucault? *International

Journal of Leadership in Education, 16*(2), 155-172.

Thorpe, S. (2003). Crisis discourse in physical education and the laugh of Michel Foucault.

Sport, Education and Society, 8(2), 131-151.

Tomlinson, M. (2017). Student perceptions of themselves as 'consumers' of higher

education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 38*(4), 450-467.

Vander Schee, C. (2009). Fruit, vegetables, fatness, and Foucault: Governing students and their families through school health policy. *Journal of Education Policy, 24*(5), 557-574.

Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy.* New York, NY: State University of New York Press.

Vargas-Bianchi, L. (2020). Qualitative theory testing by deductive design and pattern matching analysis. *SocArxiv* https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/w4gxe

Viengkham, D., Baumann, C. & Winzar, H. (2018). Confucianism: measurement and association with workforce performance. *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management, 25*(2), 337-374.

Vintges, K. (2011). Freedom and spirituality. In D. Taylor (Ed.), *Michel Foucault Key Concepts*, (pp. 99-110). Durham, England: Acumen.

Vong, S. K. & Lo, W.Y.W. (2023). On the (Re)move: Exploring Governmentality in Post-colonial Macao's Higher Education. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 44*(3), 389-406. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2023.2200076

Waley, A. (1964). *The Analects of Confucius*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

Walsh, R. (2003). The methods of reflexivity. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 31*(4), 51-66.

Wang, C-. L. (2011). Power/knowledge for educational theory: Stephen Ball and the reception of Foucault. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 45*(1), 141-156.

Wang, C. (2021). Confucianism and citizenship revisited. In Z.H. Guo (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Chinese Citizenship*, (pp. 287-300). London: Routledge.

Wang, C. (2016). chonghui daode zhuti: fuke yu rujia xiandai jiazhi [Back to Moral Subject: Foucault and the Modern Values of Confucianism]. *Tianfu New Idea, 3*, 58-63.

Wang, M. (2016). The Impact of Cultural Values on Chinese Students in American Higher Education:. *The Qualitative Report, 21*(4), 611-628. Retrieved from http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol21/iss4/1

Watkins, D. A. (2009) Motivation and Competition in Hong Kong Secondary Schools: The Students' Perspectives. In In C.K.K. Chan & N. Rao (Eds.). *Revisiting The Chinese Learner Changing Contexts, Changing Education* (pp. 71-88). Hong Kong: Springer.

Webb, A., Becerra, S., & Sepulveda, M. (2023). Becoming neoliberal policy subjects: Staff members' discursive practices about school climate in Chile. *Critical Studies in Education, 64*(3), 283-300.

Weber, M. (1964). *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism.* Toronto: The Macmillan Company.

Wen, W., & Marginson, S. (2024). Governance in Chinese universities. In K. Sahlin & U. Eriksson-Zetterquist (eds.), *University collegiality and the erosion of faculty authority*, (pp. 171-197). Leeds, England: Emerald Publishing Limited.

Whitburn, B. (2017). The subjectivities of 'included 'students with disabilities in schools. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education, 38*(4), 485-497.

Williams, J. (2005). *Understanding Poststructuralism*. Chesham, England: Acumen.

Wittgenstein, L. (1953) *Philosophical investigations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1993) *Philosophical occasions, 1912-1951*. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett   Publishing Company, Inc.

Woermann, M. (2012). Interpreting Foucault: an evaluation of a Foucauldian critique of education. *South African Journal of Education, 32*(1), 111-120.

Wu, J. (2016). Educational discipline, ritual governing, and Chinese exemplary society: Why China's curriculum reform remains a difficult task. *Policy Futures in Education, 14*(6), 721-740.

Wu, J., & Vong, S. K. (2017). Macau higher education expansion in flux: a critical spatial perspective. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 38*(6), 937-954.

Worthman, C., & Troiano, B. (2019). A good student subject: A Foucauldian discourse analysis of an adolescent writer negotiating subject positions. *Critical Studies in Education,60*(2), 263-280.

Xie, X., Liu, X., & McNay, I. (2023). One country with two systems: The characteristics and development of higher education in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macau Greater Bay Area. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 10(1), 1-11.

Yan, X. (2017). A study of Macao tertiary students' language attitudes after the handover. *Language Awareness, 26*(1), 25-40.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research: Design and methods* (Vol. 5). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE.

Yu, S. (2015) Becoming a teacher in a gambling city: a case study of two pre-service teachers' motivation for teaching in Macau. *Journal of Education for Teaching International research and pedagogy, 41*(4), 447-50.

Zembylas, M. (2016). Foucault and human rights: Seeking the renewal of human rights education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 50*(3), 384-397.

Zhai, X.W. (2022). *The Logic of Chinese Behaviors.* Singapore: Springer.

Zhang, Y. (2013). Power Distance in Online Learning: Experience of ChineseLearners in U.S. Higher Education. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 14*(4), 238‑254. https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v14i4.1557

Zhao, W. (2013). Reinstating bodily kneeling-bowing Rites (跪拜禮) sets education in pain and shame in modern China: Voluntary servitude as a new form of governing. *Revue Internationale de Sociologie de L'education, 31*(1), 65-80.

Zhuang, T., & Kong, X. (2023). Shaping personal worldviews when neo-liberalism meets Confucianism and patriotism: insights from Chinese postgraduate students. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 44*(4), 687-702.

Appendix 1: Interview questions matched against propositions

	Interview questions for the propositions	General experience	Proposition 1	Proposition 2	Proposition 3
1	How do would describe your daily life at the university?	√	√		
	What factors influence your daily behaviours in the university?		√	√	√
	What do they mean to you?		√	√	√
2	What activities did you participate in as a university student?	√			
	What are your reasons for participating in them?		√	√	√
	How would you describe the significance of doing these?		√	√	√
3	Can you share any stories or anecdotes that left lasting impressions on you from participating in these activities?	√			
	Why did they leave a lasting impression?		√	√	√
4	Are there any students/alumni/teachers you regard as role models?	√			
	Can you explain why?		√	√	√
5	What impact does studying at the university in Macao have on you?	√	√	√	√
6	How do you define your aims and goals at university?	√	√	√	√
	Why?		√	√	√
7	How would you evaluate your achievements at the university?	√	√	√	√
	Can you give any examples?	√			
8	How do you see yourselves in the future?		√	√	√
	What are your plans?		√	√	√
	What kind of person do you aspire to become through your university experience?		√	√	√
	How do you plan to achieve this?		√	√	√