

DOCTORAL THESIS

Housing discourses of young people in Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a critical discourse study that explores the housing discourses of young people in Hong Kong which are premised on power relations throughout the process of discourse construction. Young people are increasingly being marginalised. Their housing plight given the housing situation and formation of housing discourses of young people in Hong Kong has yet to be explored. My original contribution to knowledge is the application of a critical discourse analysis to housing discourse studies on young people through the articulation of a number of discourses under structurally and agency-oriented theme.

This study adopts social constructionism as the theoretical and conceptual foundation for the conceptualisation and identification of housing discourses of young people. The research design is qualitative in nature, and the data analysis draws on theoretical perspectives from social constructionism, and housing and critical theories. Specifically, the dialectical-relational approach of Norman Fairclough on critical discourse analysis is applied. To examine the housing discourses of young people in Hong Kong, two types of discourses are examined. The first type is housing discourse about young people (i.e. ‘societal housing discourses’), which is based on examining three major housing policy documents (1987, 1998, and 2014) and 703 newspaper articles from 2005 to 2015. The second type is housing discourse by young people (i.e. ‘young people housing discourse’), which is based on 32 semi-structured interviews with young people between 18 and 34 years old. All data are coded and analysed by using MAXqda software, which is designed for qualitative data analysis.

A number of housing discourses that have been circulating in Hong Kong have been identified. The study shows that young people are in the same social context but subject to different inferences in discourse. The interviewed respondents attempt to recontextualise societal housing discourses, whereas the young people housing discourses are characterised by high interdiscursivity. However, a new genre, discourse and style may trigger social changes. Among the many discourses, the housing discourses of young people in Hong Kong can further divided into three categories, namely ‘overlapping discourse’, ‘unique societal housing discourse’ and ‘unique young people housing discourse’.

‘Overlapping discourse’ refers to discourses that can be found in both societal and young people housing discourse. The other two categories are discourses can be found in either societal or young people housing discourse. Such categorisation implies young people adopted different discursive strategies. It shows, on the one hand, young people draw directly from societal housing discourses. On the other hand, young people draw from societal housing discourses and produce a new discourse as a result.

Although difficult, it is still possible for young people to voice their needs under mainstream discourses. It is anticipated that this study will facilitate future research on critical discourse studies in housing and the examination of the order of discourses among the different groups of people in Asia where society is changing at a quick pace.

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