Chapter 3
Theoretical Framework, Methodology and Methods

Abstract The theoretical framework drew upon existing broader frameworks and relevant literature to understand the extent of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong. Rumberger's (Dropping out: why students drop out of high school and what can be done about it. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2011) conceptual framework that unpacked the school dropout issue in the United States and Hunt's (Dropping out from school: A cross country review of literature. CREATE pathways to access research monograph, no. 16. University of Sussex, Brighton, 2008) similar work in developing countries were consulted. This study was qualitative in design, employing a case study method (Stake, Case studies. In: Denzin NK, Lincoln YS (eds), Handbook of qualitative research, 2nd edn. Sage, Thousand Oaks, pp. 435–454, 2000) falling within the post-positivist paradigm, following Lather's (Getting lost: feminist efforts towards a double(d) science. SUNY Press, Albany, 2007) frame of reference. Seeking to understand the realities of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people from multiple perspectives, 11 such young people were interviewed, as well as 20 stakeholders including principals, teachers, government officials and NGO professionals. Some young people were also observed. Two secondary and one primary school participated. Census statistics and school enrolment data were analysed, providing broader understandings of circumstances and issues for Hong Kong's 'out of school' ethnic minority young people. Data analysis steps identified units of analysis, coding data, sorting and checking codes, and creating an explanatory schema (Foss and Waters, Destination dissertation: a traveler's guide to a done dissertation. Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, Lanham, 2007). Coding was informed by all theoretical frameworks including critical race theory. Limitations including time constraints to conduct an ethnographic study and no case study participant from the Indian community were noted.

The previous chapter provided a review of literature on issues related to ethnic minority young people, both 'in school' and 'out of school'. This chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks on which the book draws to understand the 'out of school' phenomenon for ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong. It also provides a broad overview of the research methodology that underpins the study reported in this book and the methods used in researching the 'out of school' issue for ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong. Section 3.1 deals with theoretical frameworks and Sect. 3.2 describes methodology and methods.

3.1   Theoretical Framework

We draw on a number of theoretical frameworks as well as the literature across developed and developing contexts in relation to the questions that we seek to answer in this book. The structure of this section is:

Section 3.1.1 focuses on the complexities of the citizenship status of ethnic minorities and its implications for educational provision for these groups is explored through the discourse of ethnic vs civic citizenship within the nation-state (Bloemraad et al. 2008), and Bauböck's (2011) work on 'temporary migrants, partial citizenship and hyper-migration'.

Section 3.1.2 provides insights from Bekerman and Geisen's (2012) work on critical discourse in understanding culture to explain the educational experiences of minority and migrants as a complex learning process. In addition, the politics of education are explored through critical race theory and methodology by following López (2003) and Solórzano and Yosso (2002). We provide a detailed discussion on their (López 2003; Solórzano and Yosso 2002) work in Sect. 3.2.2 given its relevance to the research paradigm and methodology.

After locating ethnic minority educational issues within the previously referred broader theoretical frameworks Sect. 3.1.3 defines the 'out of school' construct for this book and provides a rationale for drawing on frameworks to study the construct. It discusses two frameworks 'Five Dimensions of Exclusion' from the education (UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2010) and CREATE's 'Seven Zones of Exclusion' (Lewin 2007), and subsequently a summarized and extension form of it, that looks at understanding the extent of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong.

Section 3.1.4 explores Rumberger's (2011) conceptual framework that unpacks the dropout issue in the context of the United States.

Section 3.1.5 highlights Hunt's (2008) work on school dropout in the context of developing countries.

3.1.1   Citizenship Discourse

Rumberger's (2011) work in the context of the United States identified 'immigration status' as a predictor of dropping out. Yet it said little about its relationship with citizenship and whether citizenship status itself has a bearing on dropping out. In the developing context, Hunt's work (2008), identified 'child migration' as a factor influencing dropping out, but it was limited to only in-country migration such as rural-urban. Issues of migration and citizenship are relevant to Hong Kong's ethnic minorities so that the relationship between citizenship status and school failure, an under researched area in the global literature, is important in the Hong Kong context. The next two sub-sections discuss two frameworks on which this book draws.

3.1.1.1 Citizenship and Immigration

Bloemraad et al. (2008) highlighted the challenges of citizenship and its different dimensions in conceptualizing changes within the nation state that is subject to increasing international migration. They drew on a comprehensive literature focusing on normative and empirical debates over citizenship in the context of the United States and Western European countries. The authors suggested that it is mainly globalization and therefore increasing international migration worldwide that challenges the traditional notion of citizenship as state-centered and state-controlled. Yet the state continues to hold substantive power that gives access to the citizenship status and its associated rights, participation and belonging, which has important consequences for immigrants' incorporation and equality.

The authors provided an important framework to conceptualize citizenship as 'ethnic citizenship' and 'civic citizenship' and their relationship with states' willingness to incorporate immigrants. They argued:

> Ethnic nationalism [citizenship] is associated with belonging to a nation rooted in descent, a view that usually excludes migrants, as in Germany (pre-2000). Civic nationalism [citizenship] ties belonging to rights and a universalist, voluntary political membership, and thus arguably offers immigrants a greater chance of inclusion, as in France……..Ethnic nationalism [citizenship] matches up with a *jus sanguinis* descent principle of citizenship and more difficult naturalization procedures. Well known countries in this category are Germany (pre-2000), Austria, Greece, and Switzerland. Civic understandings of nationhood coincide with greater access to formal membership for immigrants and their descendants through *jus soli* birthright citizenship and easier naturalization. Countries in this category include Australia, Canada, France, and the United States. (p. 158)

3.1.1.2 Temporary Migrants, Partial Citizenship and Hypermigration

Bauböck (2011) unpacked five different types of temporary migrants based on the degree of freedom of movement and the extent of the equality that migrants enjoy compared to citizens and permanent residents. They are 'irregular migrants', 'controlled admission with return conditionality', 'controlled admission with initial temporary status', 'controlled admission for permanent residence', and 'free admission for long term residence'.

Bauböck argued that all these temporary migrants are partial citizens who enjoy different degrees of freedom of movement with regard to right to enter or the right of stay and different degrees of social and political rights. They all have 'partial citizenship' status in relation to the three dimensions of citizenship. First, they are deprived of certain core rights of citizenship, second, they lack incentives and dispositions for civic participation and they are considered as partial insiders and partial outsiders. This is a dilemma and poses two challenges: whether these partial citizens should be granted equal citizenship and whether they can act as communities of regular citizens. Bauböck (2011, p. 665) argued:

> Temporary migration raises two different challenges. The first is whether territorial democracies can integrate temporary migrants as equal citizens; the second is whether transna-

tionally mobile societies can be organized democratically as communities of equal citizens…..on the one hand, liberals have good reasons to promote the expansion of categories of free-moving citizens as the most effective and normatively attractive response to the problem of partial citizenship for temporary migrants; yet, on the other hand, if free movement rights were actually used by too many, this might fatally undermine the sustainability of intergenerational and territorial democratic polities.

3.1.2   Migration, Minorities and Education: Understanding Culture

In addition to 'socio-economic' factors, Rumberger (2011) offers 'socio-cultural' factors, that is, cultural differences in values, attitudes and behaviors in explaining racial and ethnic differences in dropping out. Thus it is also important to look at broader cultural discourses in understanding the educational experiences of ethnic minorities. Bekerman and Geisen (2012) discussed the issues of critical cultural discourses and their potential challenges in different socio-political contexts for the development of education of minority and migrant groups. They started with the long standing debate over the relevance of culture and its influence on education of minority and migrant groups. On the one hand culture is crucial in understanding migration and minority issues while on the other hand any focus on culture is seen as a hindrance which leads to the processes of 'culturalization' and 'ethnization' that makes social inequalities invisible. Bekerman and Geisen (2012, p. 2), however, argued:

> New theoretical approaches in migration/minority theory have shown 'culture' to be a highly relevant factor. These approaches – 'transnationalism', 'transmigration' and 'transculturality' consider not only the relevance of but also the transcending and dissolving capacities of (national) cultures. Moreover, the centrality of culture has been underlined when considering the demands of marginalized minority members for 'recognition' and 'respect'. Both have been posited in social theory and practices as highly relevant concepts which in turn are in need of critical approaches. All in all, 'culture' has become a predominant factor for the explanation and understanding of social dilemmas and conflicts.

3.1.3   'Out of School' Construct

While the above two sections located the educational issues of ethnic minority within the broader theoretical frameworks related to migrants' or ethnic minorities' citizenship issue and accorded rights and its relevance to the cultural discourses, the following section discusses educational frameworks that locate 'out of school' issues in the contexts of educational access, participation and outcomes of schooling. The underpinnings of these frameworks are directly related to the theoretical issues discussed above as equal rights to educational access and participation and

equality in educational outcomes irrespective of ethnicity, immigration status etc. are very much part of human rights discourse. The equity oriented view of exclusion from education is the key feature of these frameworks that highlight issues related to educational rights and opportunities for ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong.

Conceptualizations of the 'out of school' issue largely stem from experiences in developing countries where the universalization of primary and secondary education remains a key policy objective. Therefore, in defining the 'out of school' construct for this book we have drawn on the frameworks such as 'Five Dimensions of Exclusion' and 'Seven Zones of Exclusion' used in the context of developing countries. Due to their equity oriented view of exclusion from education these two frameworks position themselves well to research ethnic minority young people's 'out of school' issues in Hong Kong. Subsequently, drawing on these, we provide an 'out of school' framework which is used in this book to understand the extent of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong.

3.1.3.1 Five Dimensions of Exclusion

UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2010, p. 3) identified 'Five Dimensions of Exclusion' as a framework for better understanding 'out of school' students. According to the framework:

- Dimension 1 considers children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary or primary school;
- Dimension 2 considers children of primary school age who are not in primary or secondary school;
- Dimension 3 considers children of lower-secondary school age who are not in primary or secondary school;
- Dimension 4 considers children who are in primary school but at risk of dropping out;
- Dimension 5 considers children who are in lower-secondary school but who are at risk of dropping out.

3.1.3.2 Seven Zones of Exclusion

A framework provided by the Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE), proposes 'Seven Zones of Exclusion' to understand 'out of school' children (Lewin 2007, p. 21–23).

- Zone 0 refers to the children who are out of pre-primary school;
- Zone 1 contains those children who are never enrolled in primary school;
- Zone 2 considers those primary children who dropped out at the early stage or before completing the cycle;

- Zone 3 includes those primary children who are in school but at risk of dropping out;
- Zone 4 includes those children who failed to transit to lower secondary school;
- Zone 5 considers those lower secondary children who dropped out before completing the cycle;
- Zone 6 contains lower secondary children who are in school but at risk of dropping out.

3.1.3.3 Adapted Extension of the Framework

It is now important to understand the construct 'out of school' especially as it applies in the context of a developed jurisdiction such as Hong Kong. The conceptual frameworks 'Five Dimensions of Exclusion' and 'Seven Zones of Exclusion' are useful for this purpose, as discussed in the previous two sub-sections. Together they can be summarized in three broad categories, firstly, the pre-primary, primary and lower secondary age-group children who have never been to any schools; secondly, the dropout students of primary and lower secondary level; and thirdly, the primary and lower secondary students who are in primary or lower secondary school but at risk of dropping out.

'Out of school' is not merely an educational access problem rather it can be conceptualized as educational participation and outcome issue too. It is not enough today simply to have students in schools – but there must be 'meaningful participation' (Lewin 2007) in a 'fair learning environment' which should ultimately result in 'equality in outcomes or achievement' (Opheim 2004). Universally, this understanding is central to 'educational rights', 'equitable opportunities' therein and 'social justice' as a whole. While rights to education can be realized through 'meaningful participation' (Lewin 2007), 'equitable opportunities' in education go beyond access and participation, and extend its horizon to outcomes (Opheim 2004). This focus on outcomes is now very important because irrespective of factors such as gender, ethnicity and class, the outcomes should be the same for everyone.

It appears that both frameworks 'Five Dimensions of Exclusion' and 'Seven Zones of Exclusion' consider 'out of school' construct for the students up to the end of lower secondary level. Perhaps their usage in the context of development might be one of the reasons. Yet dropout discourse in the context of the United States considers students until the achievement of a high school diploma (Rumberger 2011). While we see from the literature that there are two different upper limits we shall extend those limits to identify 'out of school' ethnic minority young people from pre-primary to post-secondary level of education in Hong Kong. In this book we shall use this summarized and extended adaptation as 'out of school' framework to investigate and better understand the extent of 'out of school' phenomenon for ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong.

3.1.4   School Failure in the Developed Context

Rumberger (2011, p. 155) in his comprehensive work identified the four dimensions of the dropout problem in the context of the United States. These are nature, consequences, causes and solutions of dropping out. He provided a very useful and necessary conceptual framework to understand the process of dropping out and the salient factors underlying the process. The framework assumes dropping out is an aspect of student performance in school and identifies two types of factors that influence the performance. While 'individual factors' are associated with students themselves, the 'institutional factors' focus on the contexts found in students' families, schools and communities.

Recognizing the fact from literature that it is difficult to establish causal connections, Rumberger (2011) refers to various factors as 'predictors' or 'influencers' of dropping out rather than 'causes'. A broad array of predictors contributes to the likelihood of dropping out. Individual factors constitute four domains – performance, behaviors, attitudes and background. Four aspects of educational performances such as 'failed courses', 'retentions', 'academic achievement', and 'student mobility' are the predictors of dropping out. There are five types of behaviors related factors such as 'engagement', 'course taking', 'deviance', 'peers', and 'employment' influence dropping out. Attitudes domain comprises psychological factors such as 'goals' and 'self-perceptions' that predict dropout. A number of background characteristics such as 'demographics (gender, immigration status)', 'health' are also linked to dropping out.

'Family structure', 'family resources' and 'family practices' are the three important aspects under the family contextual factor contribute to dropping out. The factors in school such as 'student composition', 'school structure', 'school resources' and 'school practices' exert powerful influences on dropping out. The characteristics of the community or neighborhood also predict dropping out.

Rumberger additionally offers conceptualizations of 'socio-economic' factors, that is differences in resources in the social contexts of family, school and community, and 'socio-cultural' factors, that is cultural differences in values, attitudes and behaviors in explaining racial and ethnic differences in dropping out.

3.1.5   School Failure in the Developing Context

While Rumberger's dropout work above focused only in the context of the United States it is also important to look at dropout work in the context of developing countries as issues such as being 'out of school' are actually much discussed in the developing context.

Hunt (2008) provided a comprehensive review of academic and development agencies' literature on dropping out especially in the development context with a focus on South Asia and Sub Saharan Africa. Yet the review included research from

places such as China and South American countries as well. The review identified a number of interrelated factors influencing dropout in relation to household, community and school.

There are four factors reported in the review under the household income and financial circumstances such as 'school fees and indirect costs of schooling', 'income shocks', 'child work' and 'migration' affect dropping out. Five factors under household contexts and motivations such as 'household contexts', 'bereavement and orphan hood', 'education of household members', 'household perceived benefits of schooling', and 'decision-making around dropping out' contribute to dropping out. Four health related factors such as 'health of children', 'health of relatives', 'pregnancy', and 'disability and special educational needs' have bearing on dropping out. There are five factors reported in the review under the social and political context such as 'gender', 'rural-urban locations', 'other socially disadvantaged groups' mainly ethnic, religious and ethno-linguistic groups, 'conflict, politically fragile and emergency situations' and 'age, marriage and notions of adulthood' affect dropping out.

Supply of schools has been identified as a factor influencing dropout. The other school factors identified such as 'schooling resources and facilities', 'teaching and learning', 'inclusions and exclusions in schooling practices and processes', 'school environment and safety issues', and 'quality, attainment and outcomes' are associated with dropping out.

Hunt's (2008, p. 53) review also identified four 'at risk' indicators. The four indicators are – students repeating grades, students with lower achievement, students at over-age enrolment and students remain regularly absent from the school or had temporary withdrawal previously.

With specific reference to the Chinese context, Carol (2012), in her PhD project examined dropout problems in rural China in terms of education quality inspired by a gap in the literature, which is, although there is a wide range of dropout literature worldwide, lacks empirically sound and theoretically motivated research to understand dropout issue from the education quality point of view. The research employed a critical ethnography that included four dropout cases. Each case comprised a common assumption associated with the cause of dropout or factor affecting school access. They are 'family poverty', 'illiterate parents', 'student attributes and their willingness to study', and 'the quality and distribution of school resources'. The study conducted interviews with 112 informants and observations which involved 3 months of fieldwork in Yunan and Guangdong provinces in China.

Carol (2012) provided a critical review of the theories used to conceptualize education quality and development drawing on the insights from the case studies. The insights also challenged the common assumptions made about dropout issues. The study also highlighted the attributes of the alienating nature of an educational system in an increasingly market oriented economy such as China's. The alienating school does not consider the students' individual interest, habit, socio-economic background, and aspiration while it is only concerned with the success or failure of the system or the effectiveness of a bureaucratic system. Therefore, the marginal-

ized students who have adjustment problems because of their socio-economic, cultural and geographical location are likely to be pushed out of school.

3.2   Methodology and Methods

This section addresses the research methodology and methods on which the book draws. There are nine sub-sections constitute this section. Section 3.2.1 outlines the research design according to the questions we seek to answer in this book. While Sect. 3.2.2 discusses the research paradigm, Sect. 3.2.3 details the research methods. Section 3.2.4 describes the participants who took part in the research and their selection process. The data collection and data analysis techniques are set out in Sects. 3.2.5 and 3.2.6 respectively. Section 3.2.7 describes the ethical issues. Sections 3.2.8 and 3.2.9 highlight the reflexivity and limitations respectively.

3.2.1   Design

This book sought to understand the contexts that both create and influence 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong. This focus on understanding led to the adoption of a qualitative research methodology as outlined by Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 3):

> …qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Therefore, the book employed a qualitative design consisting of case studies based on 15 in-depth interviews and 2 observations with 11 'out of school' ethnic minority young people as well as 22 in-depth interviews with 20 stakeholders such as principals, teachers, school social worker, ethnic minority education support programme staff in school, parents, ethnic minority community leaders, government officials, NGO professionals. At the same time, the book also drew on a range of primary and secondary data such as census statistics, educational statistics from national and international reports, school enrolment data and documents to provide as full a picture of the circumstances related to Hong Kong's 'out of school' ethnic minority young people. While document analysis mainly helped understand the extent of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong, the qualitative design explored the reasons behind this phenomenon and also sketched the life of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people. The qualitative design also contributed to the deeper understanding of the extent to which ethnic minority young people were 'out of school'. It is important to note that while document analysis sought to identify the extent to which there were 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong, it also provided a strong rationale for investigating and informed researching the reasons for being 'out of school', and their 'out of school'

life. Appropriate analytic techniques were used to make meaning from the data and attention was paid to ensure the data's reliability and validity. The details of the analytic techniques and the reliability and validity of data are discussed in the data analysis section. Conclusions for better understanding the conditions of ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong were drawn from these analyses and new theoretical insights about what creates 'out of school' phenomenon for the ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong have been highlighted. The book addressed three key questions as outlined below.

Question 1 What is the extent of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong?

This question was answered by analyzing available census and statistical reports from national and international sources to understand the extent of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong. In addition, field work was conducted in three schools in Hong Kong in order to collect school enrolment data and interview stakeholders in the school. This allowed for understanding the magnitude of the 'out of school' phenomenon specific to these schools. School enrolment data were analyzed to provide a clear picture of the extent of the 'out of school' phenomenon in the studied schools. It was also augmented by the interviews with various stakeholders including principals, teachers, school social worker, ethnic minority education support programme staff, and both dropout and at risk of dropping out students from the schools. We discuss the selection processes of schools and the characteristics of the studied schools in the research participants section.

Question 2 What are the reasons for ethnic minority young people being 'out of school'?

In addition to the literature review, in-depth interviews with all the stakeholders including young people of all 'out of school' categories such as never been to school, dropout and at risk of dropping out; teachers; principals; parents; Education Bureau official; Equal Opportunities Commission official; NGO professionals, ethnic minority community leaders; school social workers were carried out to answer this question. A total of 37 interviews was conducted in order to understand the reasons ethnic minority young people are 'out of school'. The in-depth interviews were unstructured in nature but there was an interview schedule as shown in Appendix 3.1. We discuss details on interviewees and their selection process in the research participants section.

Question 3 What is the life of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong?

The life of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people was explored through case studies in order to answer question number 3, and thus to portray their 'out of school' life. A total of 11 cases was developed with pre-primary, primary, lower-secondary, upper secondary and post-secondary age-group young people. These covered all types of 'out of school' young people such as those who have never been to school, those who have dropped out, or those considered to be at risk of dropping

Table 3.1 Research methods and participants (question wise)

Questions	Research methods	Participants
Q1: what is the extent of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong?	Census data, statistical document analysis; school enrolment data analysis	Two secondary and one primary schools for school enrolment data
Q1 Q2: what are the reasons for ethnic minority young people being 'out of school'? Q3: what is the life of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong?	In-depth interviews	Young people of all 'out of school' categories such as never been to school, dropout and at risk of dropping out; teachers; principals; parents; Education Bureau official; equal opportunities Commission official; NGO professionals, ethnic minority community leaders; school social workers
Q1, Q2 and Q3	Case study (based on in-depth interviews and limited observation)	Young people of all 'out of school' categories such as never been to school, dropout and at risk of dropping out

out. We discuss the participants and their selection process in the research participant section. In-depth interviews and limited observations were employed for case study in this research. Again, although the in-depth interview for each case study was unstructured in nature, please see Appendix 3.2 for the agenda of the case study schedule. In addition, the in-depth interviews with various stakeholders related to the education of ethnic minority students provided valuable insights about the 'out of school' life of ethnic minority young people.

Table 3.1 summarizes the research methods and participants according to the questions.

We first analyzed documents such as census data, educational statistics from national and international sources and school enrolment data from three studied schools to answer the Q1. The findings of the Q1 provided a strong rationale for investigating Q2 and Q3, and informed the identification of the methods for answering them. The methods adopted for answering Q2 and Q3 also offered good insights to the answer of Q1.

3.2.2   Paradigm

The research reported in this book falls within the post-positivist paradigm of research following Lather's (2007) frame of reference. The book's particular frame of reference is related to how reality is understood, the foundation of research data,

how knowledge is generated, the interests of the book, and the values of the researchers. These are all grounded in the post-positivist paradigm.

A post-positivist perspective assumes that there is a reality even though there may be multiple constructions of that reality from different perspectives. While the book seeks to understand the reality of the 'out of school' ethnic minority young people it does so from multiple perspectives. For example, we explored the perspectives of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people themselves as well as different stakeholders related to the education of ethnic minority young people such as principals, teachers, school social worker, etc. This helped generate knowledge from multiple perspectives, which was very important in order to understand the dynamics of the 'out of school' phenomenon. The inclusion of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people was particularly important in understanding their own views. This was significant in generating knowledge from the ethnic minority young people's perspective and also giving them a voice. This qualitative research intended to give voice to the people who have been historically silenced and marginalized (Brantlinger et al. 2005) such as ethnic minority people in Hong Kong. Also this qualitative inquiry under a post-positivist research paradigm aimed to improve the condition of marginalized (ethnic minority) people (in Hong Kong) by generating knowledge from their perspectives, thus empowering their voices and communicating their voices to others (Adair and Pastori 2011). We also adopted a number of frameworks that have been discussed previously. By employing case study based on in-depth interviews and limited observations, and other in-depth interviews, it is also informed by critical race theory and employs critical race methodology in its line of inquiry. The main reason for using critical race theory and methodology is itself grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of the oppressed race such as the ethnic minority people in Hong Kong.

Critical race theory originated from the critical legal studies during the Civil Rights Movement era in the USA (Taylor 2009). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) were the first proponents who introduced critical race theory in education. The underlying principles of critical race theory are that racism is a normal fact of the daily life and the supremacy of the privileged race (white in the USA) is so much embedded in the political, legal and educational structure that it is difficult to recognize (Delgado 1995 cited in Taylor 2009, p. 4). Bell's (1980 cited in Taylor 2009, p. 5) 'theory of interest convergence', that is, the interest of the oppressed race (black in the USA) is accommodated only when it converges with the interest of the privileged race (white in the USA). The main reasons for using critical race theory in education is grounded in its strength that critical race theory helps deepen understandings of the educational barriers for people of oppressed races and it can also explore ways to resist and overcome these barriers (Taylor 2009, p. 9).

Recognizing the fact that critical race theory originated in the legal arena and its important role in both legal and educational areas, López (2003) argued that it has yet to make significant contribution to other key areas such as educational administration, politics of education, policy studies and political science. He also commented that the presence and effects of racism remain largely absent from the discussions in these particular areas. Although literature suggests that racism in

Hong Kong is a common feature in the lives of South Asian ethnic minority people including in school (Ku et al. 2005, 2010), critical race theory has not been used as an analytical tool. By studying the 'out of school' issue of ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong through critical race theory in part we aim to bring to the forefront how the issue of racism interacts with the school failure on the part of Hong Kong's ethnic minority.

In accordance with critical race theory's line of argument, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) called for a new research methodology in education which they coined 'critical race methodology' that can be informed by critical race theory. They argued that the social scientists tell stories under the guise of 'objective' research, actually these stories uphold deficit and racialized notions about people of oppressed race, and there are also full of 'majoritarian storytellings'. This deficit-informed research silences and distorts the epistemologies of people of oppressed race. This is also evident in Hong Kong, when literature suggests that teachers hold views about ethnic minority students such as 'useless', 'misbehaving' and 'impolite' (Ku et al. 2005). Also researchers such as Gu and Patkin (2013, p. 139) in their study of South Asian ethnic minority students' heritage identity in Hong Kong tell a story such as ethnic minority students resisting the lower social status of their heritage languages and minority identity by maintaining their heritage languages. They also did this by promoting the dominant status of English and by devaluing the local Chinese language. The authors argued this limited ethnic minority students' linguistic choices and led to discrimination against other languages. Therefore, a critical race methodology can provide a tool to 'counter' deficit storytelling. The critical race methodology not only considers race and racism at the centre of a critical race analysis but also views them at their intersection with other forms of discrimination through gender, class, or sexual orientation. The strength of the methodology is itself grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of the oppressed race.

Although critical race theory and methodology originated in the multicultural context of the United States of America, it is important for this book to draw on it as a part of the framework and methodology in addition to others, which helped understand the phenomenon critically. And it is clear from the literature that the presence of racism was pervasive in all areas of life of ethnic minority population in Hong Kong such as employment (hiring, firing, and advancement), admission to facilities, purchasing of goods and services, access to government services, and acquiring a home (Ku et al. 2010). In addition, specific to the educational area, Ku and his colleagues (2005) conducted an earlier study with a view to understanding the educational problems that South Asian ethnic minority students were facing in Hong Kong schools. Employing a questionnaire survey with 200 students and in-depth interviews with 20 students, they found that ethnic minority students encountered racism in relation to the treatments they had received from the schools in Hong Kong. They also highlighted that a quarter of the ethnic minority students reported their teachers did not treat them equally, such as teachers gave more attention to the Chinese students than them, and teachers gave more severe punishment to them than the Chinese students. Therefore, a fixed agenda item of whether ethnic minority participants had 'any racial discrimination experience' or whether Chinese par-

ticipants were 'aware of any racial discrimination happened against ethnic minority young people' (see Appendixes 3.1 and 3.2) was discussed with every research participant reported in this book. Critical race theory also informed the selection of the participants and data coding and analysis. These are discussed in more detail later in the methods, participants and data analysis sections.

3.2.3   Methods

The qualitative research reported in this book employed the case study method (Stake 2000) based on 15 in-depth interviews and (2 observations) with 11 'out of school' ethnic minority young people. In addition, there were another 22 in-depth interviews carried out with 20 other stakeholders related to the education of ethnic minority young people. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the book began by drawing on the analysis of documents such as census, national and international educational statistical reports, school enrolment data etc.

The reason for choosing case study was to gain a better or more complex understanding about 'out of school' ethnic minority young people's life (Stake 1994, p. 237), and subsequently for theorizing about them (Stake 2000, p. 437). In describing the strength of even a single case study, Flyvbjerg (2006) emphasized the importance of context dependent knowledge in the social sciences and how case study method is crucial for constructing this type of knowledge. He argued that possessing deep context specific knowledge is the main requirement of being 'expert' in a certain discipline. All the in-depth interviews were unstructured in nature (Fontana and Frey 1994, p. 365). The in-depth interviews provided greater breadth to understand the phenomenon critically (Fontana and Frey 1994, p. 365). Critical race theory influenced the interviews that asked ethnic minority participants whether they have encountered racism in their lives in Hong Kong. Chinese participants were also asked whether they were aware of any racism happening against ethnic minority young people in different settings including school.

3.2.4   Participants

A total of 31 people including 'out of school' young people, principals, teachers, social workers, NGO professionals, government officials, ethnic minority community leaders, parents participated in the research. Three schools also took part in the research. Some of the above mentioned participants were from the three participating schools. All the participants were selected purposively as they were willing to be involved in the project. Selection was also informed by theoretical sampling, that is, sampling was guided by the 'theoretical sensitivity' which is necessary in qualitative work in general (Glaser 1978; Strauss and Corbin 1998). For example, the selection of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people for interview followed the

summarized and extended adaption of 'out of school' framework (please see Sect. 3.1.3.3 for details of this theoretical framework). In addition, all the participants also agreed to share freely (if) any racism they (ethnic minority participants) had encountered in Hong Kong or they (Chinese participants) were aware of. The accessibility to research participants was a major issue in the research reported in this book. We describe issues related to the accessibility in the reflexivity section. Table 3.2 shows the distribution of different categories of participants and schools in number.

While Table 3.2 shows the varieties of research participants, Table 3.3 includes more details about participants such as their category, whether they were from any of the studied schools, their pseudonyms, data collection strategies used, and the frequency of the interviews (and observation). The 'out of school' young people were categorized following the summarized and extended adaption of 'out of school' framework as discussed in the Sect. 3.1.3.3. The other participants were categorized according to their professional role in regard to the education of ethnic minority young people, or the family or community relationship with them.

3.2.4.1   Schools

Three schools participated in the research. Two of these were secondary schools and one was a primary school. One secondary and the primary school were so called 'designated' schools because they had been catering specifically for ethnic minority students. Designated schools cater for ethnic minority students by providing school based Chinese language support for non-Chinese speaking students. The other secondary school is not a designated school because it only admitted Chinese students until recently when it started accepting ethnic minority students. Table 3.4 outlines the general attributes of the three schools.

We approached almost 20 designated schools to take part in our research. Designated schools were targeted for the very obvious reason that they cater for most of the ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, many of these schools refused to accept our offer. The main reasons schools mentioned in favor of their refusal were either they were busy or they had already committed to some other research. Because of the schools' negative responses to being involved in the project we had to extend our offer to some non-designated school which traditionally catered for only Chinese students but had recently began accepting ethnic minority students as well. Finally, three schools positively responded to our invitation to participate in our study. Altogether 14 people from three schools including three principals, four teachers, one school social worker, one ethnic minority education support program staff, one dropout student and four at risk of dropping out students were interviewed. The selection of all interview participants in school was negotiated with the schools after we gained access. In addition, the enrolment data of the schools for ethnic minority students was explored in order to understand the magnitude of the 'out of school' phenomenon specific to the school.

Table 3.2 Number of participants

Schools	'Out of school' young people			Principals	Teachers and support staff	School social workers and NGO professionals	Government officials	Ethnic minority community leaders	Parents
	Never been to school	Dropout	At risk of dropping out						
3	1	6	4	3	6	3	2	3	3
	11								
	Total: 31								

Table 3.3 Details of participants and data collection techniques

Category	Participant (pseudonym)	Details	Ethnicity	Gender	Interview	Observation
Young child never been to school	Shormin Abbas	Never been to school	Bangladeshi	Female	1	
Young people dropped out of school	Maneesha Rai	Dropout	Nepali	Female	2	
	Aruna Thapa	Dropout	Nepali	Female	2	1
	Veem Pun	Dropout	Nepali	Male	2	1
	Tanvir Ahmed	Dropout	Bangladeshi	Male	1	
	Azad Rabbani	Dropout	Pakistani	Male	2	
School-based, pseudonym used for schools (English meaning of the name)						
Hei-mong School (hope school)	Mr. Tung Yuen	Principal	Chinese	Male	2	
	Ms. Wing Chow	Teacher (Chinese)	Chinese	Female	1	
	Mr. Matthew Chan	Teacher (science)	Chinese	Male	1	
Secondary non-designated school	Ms. Eva Kau	Ethnic minority education support program staff	Chinese	Female	1	
	Morshed Uddin	Dropout student	Pakistani	Male	1	
Mong-shuen School (dream school)	Ms. Susan Tang	Principal	Chinese	Female	1	
	Ms. Tami Hui	School social worker	Chinese	Female	1	
	Ms. Snow Ngai	Chinese teacher	Chinese	Female	1	
Primary designated school	Abdal Rashid	Student P6 (at risk of dropping out)	Pakistani	Male	1	
Woo-ping School (peace school)	Mr. Chris Leung	Principal	Chinese	Male	2	
	Nadia Bashir	Student S1 (at risk of dropping out)	Pakistani	Female	1	
	Sahid Afridi	Student S1 (at risk of dropping out)	Pakistani	Male	1	

(continued)

Table 3.3 (continued)

Category	Participant (pseudonym)	Details	Ethnicity	Gender	Interview	Observation
Secondary designated school	Mr. Tim Jordan	Liberal studies and geography teacher	Filipino	Male	1	
	Taufiq Iqbal	Student S3 (at risk of dropping out)	Pakistani	Male	1	
Ethnic minority community leaders	Mr. Sumit Baral	Community leader and ex school teacher	Nepali	Male	1	
	Mr. Tareque Rahman	Community leader	Bangladeshi	Male	1	
	Mr. Shahed Alam	Community leader and school teacher	Pakistani	Male	1	
Social workers and NGO professionals	Mr. Andy Xu	Social worker and Ex-NGO professional	Chinese	Male	1	
	Mr. Monu Pun	NGO professional	Indian	Male	1	
Government officials	Mr. Lee Cheng	EDB official	Chinese	Male	1	
	Mr. Albert Cheung	EOC official	Chinese	Male	1	
Other teachers	Martin Knowles	English teacher	British	Male	1	
Parents	Mr. Najrul Islam (Father of Tanvir Ahmed)	Father of an 'out of school' participant (dropout)	Bangladeshi	Male	1	
	Mr. Junaid Abbas (Father of Shormin Abbas)	Father of an 'out of school' participant (never been to school)	Bangladeshi	Male	1	
	Mrs. Parvin Abbas (Mother of Shormin Abbas)	Mother of an 'out of school' participant (never been to school)	Bangladeshi	Male	1	
Total					37	2

Table 3.4 Attributes of sample schools

Two designated schools and one non-designated school
One primary and one secondary school are designated, another secondary is not designated
All co-education schools
Ethnic composition is diverse with many south Asians
History of accepting ethnic minority students: one long, one medium and one recent
School location: two in Kowloon and one in New Territories
School band: 2 and 3

Table 3.5 Details of 'out of school' participants (gender, ethnicity, age-group and 'out of school' characteristics wise)

'Out of school' characteristics	Never been to school	At risk of dropping out		Dropout				Total
Age-group	Pre-primary	Primary	Lower secondary	Lower/upper/post-secondary				
Ethnicity	Bangladeshi	Pakistani	Pakistani	Nepalese	Pakistani	Bangladeshi		
Gender	F	M	F	M	F	M	M	M	
Number	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	
Total	1	4		6				11

3.2.4.2 'Out of school' Research Participants

A total of 11 'out of school' research participants were interviewed. Table 3.5 shows their details, including ethnicity, gender, age-group and 'out of school' categories. The participants were from a diverse South Asian background including Pakistani, Nepalese and Bangladeshi. Unfortunately, we were unable to find any Indian participant to interview.

Out of the 11 participants, 5 were negotiated through three participant schools. The remaining six were identified through a variety of networks. Different channels such as, the Hong Kong Nepalese Federation, the Bangladesh Association of Hong Kong, the *Ethnic Voice Weekly* (a weekly newspaper run by ethnic minority community in Hong Kong), and local NGOs working for the welfare of ethnic minority population in Hong Kong were used to identify participants. In selecting cases, 'opportunity to learn' was given the highest importance. This meant the participants to whom we gained access through different networks and those who also had shown their interest to participate in the research were selected. In addition, 'balance and variety' of cases was also considered important (Stake 2000, p. 447) when making these sampling decisions. Since the participants were diverse in terms of their experiences, age, language abilities, therefore, these were taken into account when considering interviews.

3.2.4.3   Other Participants

There were 11 other participants such as ethnic minority community leaders, government officials, NGO professionals, teachers from other schools, and parents participated in the study. Some of these participants were accessed through our networks within the ethnic minority community, while others were approached directly by us.

3.2.5   *Data Collection*

A total of 11 case studies mainly based on 15 in-depth interviews and 2 observations were carried out with 11 ethnic minority young people. Initially it was also planned to conduct observations with every participant, but due to their unwillingness only two observations with two participants were conducted in their workplaces. Participants were unwilling to participate because either their current employers would not have allowed us to observe them in their work-place or parents hesitated to allow us in the family. The main focus of both interviews and observations was to explore what their overall life looked like being 'out of school' young people. Both interviews and observations further sought to understand deeply what had made them 'out of school', what they had been doing since being 'out of school', and what were the family, social, economic and work context of their lives.

Additionally 22 other unstructured in-depth interviews were carried out with 20 different participants related to the education of ethnic minority to understand the issue of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people from a wider perspective. School enrolment data was also collected from three schools.

The interviews were conducted over an 8-month period, between October 2012 and May 2013. At least 5–7 days were spent in each school spread over the same period. Each interview with case study participants lasted for about 2 h and with other participants on average between an hour and 2 h. The family interview with a young girl and her parents lasted for 3 h. Each observation took on average an hour. The first author conducted all interviews and observations. The language of the interview was in English and is a second language for most of the participants and the first author. Some of the ethnic minority participants, however, opted to use their South Asian languages such as Urdu, Hindi and Bangla. Being a native Bangla speaker the first author is also conversant in Urdu and Hindi. The time and place of the interviews were negotiated and determined according to the participants' preferences.

Four of the 11 case study participants and 2 school principals were interviewed twice. The rest of the participants were interviewed once. In the case of two interviews, case study participants shared information about their background, family, previous life, school days in Hong Kong, and the issues they have faced in school and education in their first interview. The second interview focused more on things to be clarified, including more detailed information about pertinent areas previously

discussed and largely about their 'out of school' life in Hong Kong. The second interview with the two school principals was carried out mainly to have some clarification from the first interview, for more detailed information, and ultimately to enrich the interview.

In addition to the standard briefing about the research aims, interview protocols, participants' rights, and research ethics, some time was also taken at the beginning of each interview by sharing some personal background and motivation for conducting this research. A business card and identity card were shown to all participants as a strategy for gaining their trust. These two techniques helped to build rapport with the participants. All the interviews with participants focused on understanding their experiences, feelings and perceptions in a conversational manner giving them the lead by saying 'tell me something…' or asking questions like 'how was that…', 'what do you think…' and 'why do you think so…'. In addition, the role of ourselves as interviewer was not limited to only asking questions rather other actions such as saying 'hmm, mm', re-formulating questions, agreeing, remaining silent and assessing how these actions influenced what participants said (Silverman 2011, p. 204). With a view to capturing stories participants were encouraged to share freely their experiences of racism that they (ethnic minority participants) encountered or they (Chinese participants) were aware of. Drawing on critical race theory, it was important to find out about these stories in order to make some differences in the lives of ethnic minority young people as these stories need to be told to position ethnic minority young people not as problematic, but to offer different perspectives that would counter deficit story telling. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed except one because it was a second interview with a case study participant that was conducted over the phone. In addition to audio recording the interviews, extensive field notes were also taken. Some of the strategies presented by Lofland (1971, cited in Fontana and Frey 1994, p. 368) were used such as, 'taking notes promptly', 'writing everything down, no matter how unimportant it may seem', 'trying to be as inconspicuous as possible', and 'analyzing notes frequently'. Immediately after each interview, we took approximately 150 min to review the interview and would write a brief story about our discussion during the interview. These stories were based on the field notes and audio recordings. The story was validated against the written transcription of the audio file when it was available and notes, and before the second interview in case of two interviews. The story helped to identify areas that needed clarification and more detailed information in the second interview. This exercise also helped in preparing for the second interview. This process ultimately enriched the second interview, and provided opportunities to engage further with the participants. For example, in many cases during the second interview, participants seemed to be more spontaneous giving more information, even when questions were not asked as the answers came automatically from their longer and detailed responses. At times there appeared to be a shift in the power relationship between researcher and participant that resulted in participants taking charge by themselves to help the researcher understand their issues substantially. There were also instances where the second interview sparked a different kind of response from the first interview. In the case of two interviews, another story was

also written after the second interview and validated against transcription and notes. Overall, 37 interview stories and 2 observation stories were written totaling around 150 pages, each story having an average of about 2,000 words. The story writing technique helped to elicit information from the interviews. Two South Asian undergraduate students at the Hong Kong Institute of Education helped to transcribe the audio recordings. They also translated all of the conversations with some South Asian participants from South Asian languages to English.

Permission was sought to have contact again with the participants for any clarification after the interviews. In addition to new information, further explanations regarding some issues from the first interview were also sought from the two school principals and four case study participants during the second interview. In other cases, there was not much elucidation needed except some follow up was done through either e-mail or WhatsApp or phone. This was done in line with conducting ethical research by prioritizing participants' preferred way of further communication. Other ethical practices followed are discussed later in the research ethics section.

As mentioned earlier there were only two observations carried out with two 'out of school' ethnic minority participants in their workplaces. Each observation was conducted after completing two interviews with each respective participant. Two observations were held in November 2012 and February 2013 respectively over the period of an hour each. One observation took place in a private clinic and another in a club. During the observation, the focus was on what they were doing at work, how they were doing, and how they were dealing with their customers, bosses, and colleagues. Critical race theory influenced the observations since time was taken to have a close look whether participants were treated differently by either customers or their bosses and colleagues in the work. Later they were asked whether they had encountered any racism at work previously. It came as a surprise when the boss of a participant showed his anger towards one of the participants even in the researcher's presence.

Access for the purposes of observation was 'overt' (Silverman 2001) meaning that participants were well informed. During the observation participants were mainly followed. The researcher's role was both active and inactive, that is, when participants remained busy dealing with the customers or other people observations were made by standing or sitting away with a focus on how they were doing things. Some conversation took place at other times when participants were not attending any customer. Yet even at these times, observations continued while they did some other work and converse. Every attempt was made not to interrupt them too much in their busy working time.

Observations, in addition to in-depth interviews, had some advantages. First, observations of the work lives of 'out of school' ethnic minority participants helped understand them more deeply and differently. They were understood differently in the sense that by observing them in their original job settings their everyday experiences became obvious and exposed. Second, it provided an opportunity for generating data in multiple ways to make better sense of the other data which ultimately

strengthened the reliability of data. Finally, observations helped draw a full picture of these 'out of school' ethnic minority participants in Hong Kong.

3.2.6   Data Analysis

Question 1 What is the extent of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong?

Census statistics, other national and international educational statistics and enrolment data from three schools were analyzed to answer Q1. Descriptive statistics were used in this regard. A cohort study entailed the analysis of school enrolment data, therefore, an effort was also made to do a cohort study with the school enrolment data in order to identify dropout rate for any particular cohort of ethnic minority students in three schools. In addition, the interview data with the research participants was analyzed to enrich the answer of this question.

Question 2 What are the reasons for ethnic minority young people being 'out of school'?

Question 3 What is the life of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong?

All interviews collected qualitative data in order to answer Qs 2 and 3. Since the data was ultimately in the form of texts from in-depth interviews and field-notes, therefore, data was analyzed following one of the techniques that are used to analyze free-flowing text. 'Schema analysis', a method of analyzing large blocks of text as suggested by Ryan and Bernard (2000), was adopted in this regard. In order for doing this, text was first coded, as coding is the heart and soul of whole text analysis (Ryan and Bernard 2000, p. 780).

Data analysis was continuous and done simultaneously whilst collecting data in order to keep the study focused, shaped and modified as it advanced (Glesne and Peshkin 1992). Data analysis was mainly based on the written stories that were developed, drawing from field notes and the transcribed audio recordings. After the stories were validated against transcriptions and notes, they were read several times from beginning to end for coding, writing a list of ideas and finally to identify the themes. In this process several readings were also done again among transcriptions and field notes. Case study participants' narratives were used to portray a vivid picture of their previous school life and current 'out of school' life, and schema analysis of their accounts as well as the accounts of other participants were done to identify the themes that help explain the reasons for them being 'out of school'. Cross-case analysis was conducted to help contrast and compare cases. This was important for knowledge mobilization as Khan and VanWynsberghe (2008) asserted the value of cross-case analysis is that it accumulates case knowledge, compares and contrasts cases, and thus produces new knowledge.

Data analysis steps included identifying unit of analysis, coding data, sorting code, checking code, and creating an explanatory schema (Foss and Waters 2007). The units of analysis were 'what influenced ethnic minority young people for being 'out of school' and 'what their 'out of school' life looks like' that were mainly guided by the questions that we seek to answer in this book (p. 187). Coding was informed by all theoretical frameworks including critical race theory that we adopted for this book. For example, an excerpt related to a participant's failure in a school subject was coded as 'lower academic achievement'. This code was drawn from the literature on dropping out (Hunt 2008; Rumberger 2011), and an excerpt related to a participant's encounter of racial discrimination was coded as 'racism', which was drawn from critical race theory (Bell 1980; Delgado 1995; Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995; López 2003; Taylor 2009). The 'highlight' option of the Microsoft Word programme with different colors was used for coding purpose. After coding all data, they were checked and sorted thoroughly to identify the categories or themes. The explanatory schema was created by establishing the relationship among different coding categories. For example, in answering question 2 'what are the reasons for ethnic minority being 'out of school', an explanatory schema in part placed 'school factors associated with school failure' at a higher level category under which the lower level categories were 'inadequate schooling provisions for ethnic minority students', 'segregation effect in designated school', 'issues in teaching', 'school policy and practices', 'teachers' low expectation', 'stereotypes'. The relationship in this schema between higher and lower level categories is what Foss and Waters (2007, p. 201) call, the 'cause and effect'. This means school failure is the 'effect' of the different school factors identified at the lower level categories of the schema, or in other words, different school factors identified at the lower level categories of the schema are the 'cause' of the school failure. Finally, salient themes were created from the coding categories to answer the questions (Strauss and Corbin 1998) raised in this book. For example, in answering question 3 'What is the life of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong?', the salient themes were created – "out of school' life', 'job satisfaction' and 'future plan'.

We aimed to understand the extent of 'out of school' phenomenon for ethnic minority young people in Hong Kong, its reasons and to portray ethnic minority young people's 'out of school' life from the participants' perspective, using their own descriptions and explanations, and we sought to ensure the reliability and validity of the data and interpretations using a number of strategies suggested by Silverman (2001). During data collection, each in-depth interview with case study participants lasted for 2 h, and between an hour and 2 h with other participants. All face to face interview data were audio recorded, carefully transcribed, written stories were developed and validated against the transcriptions, and presented long excerpts in the findings chapter of the book. Data were collected from multiple sources which helped in generating knowledge from multiple perspectives and triangulating our findings. By triangulation is meant generating data in multiple ways to make better sense of the other data (Silverman 2001, p. 235). Two in-depth interviews were conducted with four case study participants and two school principals allowing a proper time gap between them which was utilized to write a story by

analyzing data from the first interview. This helped to make use of the second interview for clarification of some ideas and asking for more detailed information in areas felt necessary from the first interview which ultimately enriched the interview. Writing a story was particularly helpful in focusing the analysis centered on the data and comprehensive data treatment was ensured for analysis purpose. During data analysis, interpretations and conclusions were made through reading and analyzing stories, transcriptions and field notes seeking clarification and examples in support of them. Negative cases or data that contradicted interpretations and conclusions were also identified.

3.2.7 Ethics

This section discusses the practices followed to conduct the research reported in this book in an ethical manner. Since ethics and reflexivity are very much intertwined, some of the ethical practices are also presented in the reflexivity section. The ethical practice was started by making an application to the 'Human Research Ethics Committee' of the Hong Kong Institute of Education for ethical clearance. Accordingly prior approval was received from the committee before beginning field-work.

All participants were forwarded the briefing and consent documents beforehand. They were given detailed information about the nature of the research and their involvement written in English. Yet, they were briefed again and written consent was obtained before starting the interview. Verbal consent was sought before beginning of any conversation that seemed to be very personal and sensitive. This process of 'model or continuous informed consent' was followed throughout the interviews (Allmark et al. 2009; Sinding and Aronson 2003).

Due to the sensitivity of this research, especially issues related to school failure, it was necessary to keep research participants' data private and confidential by making data anonymous or using pseudonyms in public presentations. Participants' privacy and the confidentialities of their data were not threatened at any point of the research. Interviews were conducted in such a way as to avoid any conversation that might hurt participants mentally. Data collection involved interviewing one 5-years old girl. She was interviewed in the presence of her parents at her home on a weekend evening. Maximum care was taken so that she did not feel any stress. The transcriptions of interview data were provided to those participants who showed their interest during the interview so that they could verify them. The suggestions made on the provided transcriptions were incorporated in the revised version.

Having an ethnic origin the same as one of the ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong, the first author had the benefits of mastering two or three languages of the dominant ethnic minority groups. The challenges of being neutral during the interview and data interpretation and reporting process was well understood. Every effort was made not to influence any conversation or happening during the interview and the nature of the relationship with participants was as neutral as it could be. No

data was made available to anybody or any organization in order to protect 'out of school' ethnic minority young people who were under compulsory education age-group from any potential vulnerability that might arise in respect to the compulsory education law of Hong Kong.

3.2.8 Reflexivity

In qualitative inquiry the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, therefore, reflexivity is essential (Glesne 1999; Russell and Kelly 2002; Stake 1995). Russell and Kelly (2002 cited in Watt 2007) argued that through reflection researchers may become aware of what allows them to see, and what may hinder their seeing. This calls for a careful consideration of the phenomenon under study, and the ways our own values, assumptions and behavior might have impacted the study and the knowledge generated out of it. While in Chap. 1 (Sect. 1.3) we provided our background information that motivated us to step into this study, here we describe some of our reflections in relation to the methodological challenges that we encountered in conducting our research.

The dropout literature from other parts of the world shows the problems of accessibility in studying the dropout phenomenon (e.g. Hunt 2008; Rumberger 2011). Some of these include gaining access to dropout students, shortage of time for interviews due to their often very busy schedule in work, etc. Consistent with these findings, the accessibility to the research participants including schools was a major problem throughout the study. The field work was initially planned to last for 4–5 months, but due to the accessibility issue it extended up to 8 months. Although field work lasted for 8 months, some preparation work for accessing research participants and networking had started long before. In fact, initial networking with different ethnic minority community organizations such as Bangladesh Association of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Nepalese Federation, *Ethnic Voice Weekly* (a weekly newspaper run by ethnic minority community in Hong Kong) had already been completed before starting the data collection and some further relationship building activities were ongoing. First author intentionally started contributing voluntarily for the *Ethnic Voice Weekly* as a writer (e.g. Bhowmik 2012a, b) as well as providing editorial support as a way of better understanding the context. This strategic networking involvement actually helped in finishing field work despite major accessibility problems. There were many frustrating moments, however, when participants did not appear at all in the scheduled meeting without any notice. Long distances were often travelled for a meeting, time was spent waiting and the participants did not appear. Unfortunately, it happened several times with the same participants. In this context there was no alternative but to remain patient and continue communication in order to carry out our field work.

Being a Bangladeshi, the first author was hopeful that accessing the same ethnic origin students would have been much easier. This did not turn out to be true. Although one case study participant was known long before other research partici-

pants were identified for this study, access proved most difficult. Continuous calls were made to him but because of his extremely busy schedule for one of his new jobs at the airport it took more than 2 months to meet for the first interview after several previously fixed schedule postponements. Although the first author shared the same ethnic background with him and knew him personally yet when he was not able to make it, support had to be sought from one community leader to accelerate scheduling our interview time. Even with the intervention of that community leader the first scheduled interview actually ended up in postponement. Later again, with the help of that community leader, in one weekend a meeting was arranged at one of his friend's office. While every effort was made to reach him using all networks and access, there was the dilemma of whether it was right to do so. Nevertheless, when the interview eventually took place he expressed his gratitude for offering him the opportunity to be a research participant. Later his father was also interviewed.

It was a particular challenge to refrain when participants wanted some useful tips or information in relation to further education or education system in Hong Kong. For example, one dropout participant directly asked for help related to information about higher education. For the youngest participant, her parents asked for information about the education system and also information about NGOs that cater for ethnic minority children. These questions were followed up with as much information as could be accessed.

3.2.9   Limitations

There are certain limitations of the research reported in this book. Case study based on in-depth interviews was mainly employed to understand the life of 'out of school' ethnic minority young people. Other qualitative designs, such as ethnography, study a phenomena over an extended period of time, might have illuminated more on the issue under study. Due to the time constraint it was not possible to consider ethnography under the scope of this study.

Initially, both in-depth interviews and observations were planned with case study participants. But due to the disagreement on the participants' side the observation was conducted only with 2 participants out of 11. There was no case study participant included from the Indian community while they represent a big number within the South Asian ethnic minority community in Hong Kong. Existing networks and contacts certainly had limited access to them. Nevertheless, there is a common assumption within the South Asian community that Indians are better off than other South Asians in Hong Kong. The 2011 census data shows the median monthly incomes for the Indian population are among the highest of all South Asian ethnic minorities in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department 2012, p. 88).

We ourselves are outsider to the Hong Kong society but the first author has ethnic origin similar to one of the South Asian ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong. While being an outsider had certain limitations, especially not being able to speak the local language. The first author, however, did have the benefit of the mastering

two or three languages of the South Asian ethnic minority groups and this helped to provide in-depth access to research participants.

Although critical race theory partly informed the study reported in this book it is not the only theoretical perspective to do so. An exclusive emphasis on critical race theory might have resulted in a different study or at least different emphases. This remains a task for future research in the area.

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