VOICES FROM THE MARGINS:
TEENAGERS AT A SCHOOL INFORMED BY
THE ETHIC OF CARE

by

Anita M. Bates
B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1999

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

In the

Faculty of Education

© Anita M. Bates 2005

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Spring 2005

APPROVAL

NAME   Anita Bates

DEGREE   Master of Arts

TITLE   Voices from the Margins: Teenagers at a School Informed by the Ethic of Care

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Chair   Michele Schmidt

Wanda Cassidy, Assistant Professor
Senior Supervisor

Kelleen Toohey, Professor
Member

Dr. June Beynon, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, SFU
Examiner

Date   April 18, 2005

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENCE

Simon Fraser University

Ethics Approval

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics for the research described in this work, or has conducted the research as a member of a project or course approved by the Ethics Office.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed at the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for ethics approval and letter of approval is filed with the Office of Research Ethics. Inquiries may be directed to that Office.

Bennett Library
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, BC, Canada

Abstract

This thesis considers the school experiences of marginalized youth in two kinds of contexts. The first is that of "regular" public schools; the second is Blue Mountain Educational Centre, which places a high priority on facilitating positive staff-student relationships and flexibly responding to individual needs. The data, comprising open-ended interviews of students, teachers, and parents, was collected in a previous study. The current investigation employed critical research methodology and a theoretical lens formed by the ethic of care and critical sociological perspectives. Findings suggest that while the relatively uniform and impersonal practices in regular schools further disadvantaged already marginalized youth, more responsive and personal practices at Blue Mountain led to a variety of positive outcomes, including greater engagement with schooling, greater hope for the future, and positive relationships within and outside of school. This investigation suggests a number of implications for educational reform and further research.

Acknowledgements

There are a number of people whom I would like to thank for their help and support.

First, Dr. Wanda Cassidy was unstinting in her care, support, and generosity during all of the phases of this work. Her profound insights regarding the ethic of care were a major source of inspiration.

I would also like to thank Dr. Kelleen Toohey for her valuable insights and constructive criticism, which helped me to gain a richer and more holistic understanding of the education of marginalized youth. Thanks also to Dr. June Beynon for her contribution; her questions and comments were most helpful.

Others who provided help and inspiration along the way include Dr. Heesoon Bai, whose guidance at a critical juncture helped me to refocus my inquiry.

I would also like to express heartfelt thanks to Sarah Hickinbottom and Thomas Falkenberg. Our wide-ranging discussions over the past year and a half, fuelled by good food and wine, provided me with so many ideas, and made me feel part of a intellectual community, and certainly, a community of caring.

Finally, my sons, Michael, Andrew, and Mark Slater, have been an unending source of love and support, and helped me to understand the complexity and contradictions of contemporary adolescence. Thank you.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 —
Introduction

Background

The journey that this thesis represents began when the principal and a
teacher from a school called Blue Mountain Educational Centre[1] came to speak to
one of my graduate classes. They talked about the school and the students, and
the staff's commitment to care for kids who had been expelled from school, in
trouble with the law, and regarded as hopeless by themselves and others. Their
approach, they explained, was different from that of the schools which students
had previously attended and where they had been unsuccessful. At those
schools, they said, students had been regarded as trouble-makers because they
would not or could not adapt to the expectations of the school. At Blue
Mountain, in contrast, the staff worked to adapt the programs to the needs of
the students, with the aim of enabling every student to succeed. To accomplish
this, the staff focused, not on students' behaviour and how to modify it, or on
their past histories, but rather on treating each young person with the utmost
respect as a full and complex human being with unlimited potential, and on
building positive and caring relationships as a context for positive development.
The two presenters explained that Blue Mountain's students responded by

---

[1] For the purposes of this thesis, I have used the name "Blue Mountain Educational Centre" for
the school at the centre of this investigation. The students, parents and staff were also provided
with pseudonyms.

growing in many ways; for example, they began to trust others, become engaged in learning, gain confidence in themselves and their abilities, and gain hope for the future.

My initial impression, formed during the class presentation, that Blue Mountain was a place where students were respected and empowered, was strengthened by an experience that began several months later. I had the opportunity to participate as a research assistant in a study at Blue Mountain (Cassidy & Bates, 2005). The purpose of the study was to examine how students, parents and teachers perceived caring and how it is actualized at the school. The investigation used qualitative research methodology, and involved field study, interviews, document analysis, and a triangulation of data to determine findings related to the ethic of care. When I joined the project, the data collection phase was nearing completion. All that remained was to interview the parents and two members of the staff. My role was to set up and conduct those interviews using the prepared questionnaires. In the analysis phase, I participated more fully, and became familiar with all of the interview data and some of the other data which had been collected. In addition, I had several opportunities to visit the school, and have informal conversations with staff members.

My long-standing interest in understanding how some students are disadvantaged by their school experiences was revived and intensified. I had long believed that not all students are equally well served by their schools.

Looking back at my own school experiences, I can remember, from the age of about eight or nine, feeling uncomfortable when some students were treated in ways that appeared to disempower and humiliate them. One example of this centres on when, as students in the primary grades, we were required to read aloud: up and down the rows, each student in turn would read a passage. For those who were fluent readers, this presented no problem. For students whose reading was poor, however, and who stumbled awkwardly through their paragraphs prompted by interventions by the teacher, this practice must have been humiliating. I still remember the discomfort I felt on their behalf. A second example involves a boy who was my classmate when I was in Grade 5. Small for his age, and from "the wrong side of the tracks", this French Canadian boy in our predominantly Anglophone school was, I think, reasonably well-liked by his classmates, though often in trouble with teachers. It was common knowledge among his classmates that although this boy was considered to be a poor student, he had made a valiant effort to catch up sufficiently to be promoted to the next grade. I remember discussions about our hope that he would make it; most were confident his efforts would be recognized. When the last day of school arrived, however, his report card proclaimed that he had failed. I remember his public weeping and the shocked sadness I felt. In future years, he was at least a grade behind me in school, and I have no idea how he fared.

My own school experiences suggested that regular schools, that is public elementary and high schools, often poorly serve certain children and youth. A

substantial literature (e.g., Deschenes, Cuban & Tyack, 2001; Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001) suggests that educational attainment is unevenly distributed. A variety of individual and background characteristics including poverty, low socio-economic status, identification as having learning or behavioural challenges, and minority group membership are associated with lowered academic achievement and leaving school prior to high school graduation. Up to 30 percent of Canadian children and youth are considered to be "at-risk" of "failing to complete school and experiencing subsequent problems of integration into labour markets and adult life" (Evans, 1995, cited in Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001).

The number of those considered to be at risk has grown over recent decades (Deschenes, Cuban & Tyack, 2001; Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001). According to Cote and Allahar (1994, cited in Wotherspoon & Schissel), a combination of factors including high youth unemployment, a high rate of family breakdown, and increasing inequalities in the distribution of resources mean that all youth, to a certain extent, can be considered to be at risk. Wotherspoon and Schissel (2001), however, note that:

> The benefits and hazards of being young are not equally
> distributed. Poverty, social and economic marginalization, and other
> risk factors are most strongly experienced by people in selected
> groups, including Aboriginal youth, immigrants, and those living in
> inner cities and remote rural areas. Profound variations in
> circumstances also exist within these groups. (p. 326)

In this thesis, I most often use the term "marginalized". This term recognizes that youth affected by a variety of "risk" factors, for example, poverty, minority group membership, and negative labelling, may be placed on the margins by schools which are oriented toward the mainstream.

My experiences as a research assistant suggested that Blue Mountain enabled many marginalized students to be successful. The interviews from the initial investigation (Cassidy & Bates, 2005) provided a rich source of information concerning the perceptions of members of the Blue Mountain school community regarding two kinds of school contexts, and how they advantage (disadvantage) students. I was especially interested in the students' perceptions; it is relatively rare for student perspectives on different kinds of schooling to be brought forward in educational research (Cook-Sather, 2002; Corbett & Wilson, 1995).

Research Focus

The primary goal of my secondary analysis of the data was to examine the perceptions of students, parents, and teachers regarding how marginalized youth are disadvantaged at regular schools, and how they are advantaged at Blue Mountain. Moreover, I was interested in finding out whether there are certain principles or practices at Blue Mountain that can inform educational practices at regular schools so that marginalized youth can benefit.

Theoretical Perspectives

Blue Mountain places a high priority on caring for students who, staff believe, have not been adequately cared for in the past. The approach of the school is in accord with Noddings' (1992) description of a caring school. Noddings has argued that schools should be redesigned to facilitate the development of caring relationships. Noddings (1984, 1992, 2002) and Rauner (2000) view caring as a necessary context for positive development.

In this thesis, I used the ethic of care perspective as developed by early ethic of care theorists Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984, 1992, 2002) as a starting point. As I analyzed the data, however, I found themes which did not appear to be adequately explained in these conceptualizations of the ethic of care. These themes led me first to feminist reconceptualizations of the ethic of care, and then to a second theoretical lens, which I will argue is complementary to the ethic of care, that of critical sociological perspectives. While the ethic of care literature, as it is usually presented, is mainly concerned with immediate, face-to-face relationships, both later feminist versions of the ethic of care (to some extent) and critical sociological perspectives address wider social processes. Viewed from critical sociological perspectives (Fine, 1991; MacLeod, 1995; Wotherspoon, 1998; Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001), school experiences of marginalized youth must be understood in relation to societal patterns of inequality, which schools reflect and help to reproduce. Critical sociological perspectives challenge deficit models which attribute lack of school success to

individual and familial deficits of children and youth. I will argue that both the ethic of care ("early" and feminist versions) and critical sociological perspectives are crucial to understanding the different impacts on students of the two school contexts I consider, and the implications of these differences for the education of marginalized youth.

Synopsis of the Thesis Elements

In this chapter, I introduce the topic and the structure of the thesis, and discuss the origin of my interest in the topic and how I gained access to the interview data. I also introduce the two broad theoretical perspectives which I use to illuminate the data and its implications for educational practices as they relate to the education of marginalized youth.

In chapter 2, I explore the ethic of care: early versions which some feminist theorists criticized for being parochial and for failing to include a broad social analysis; as well as later feminist versions of the ethic of care which sought to redress these perceived flaws.

Chapter 3 explores critical sociological perspectives on schooling and how schools reflect and reinforce the social reproduction of inequality. I conclude this chapter by suggesting that critical sociological perspectives and the ethic of care are compatible and complementary. The two can combine in a way that allows for a more complete understanding of the education of marginalized youth, and suggests possible reforms.

In chapter 4, I present the research methods which were used, and describe the school.

In chapter 5, I present the findings. The themes found in the data are linked to the combined theoretical lens of the ethic of care and critical sociological perspectives.

In chapter 6, I discuss the findings and their implications for educational practices related to marginalized youth and for future research.

Chapter 2—
The Ethic of Care

This thesis centres around the experiences of a group of marginalized youth, who, while they did not thrive at regular schools, did so at a school informed by principles of the ethic of care. This chapter considers the origins and main precepts of the ethic of care, as well as its implications for the schooling of marginalized youth. The ethic of care is often contrasted with the ethic of justice, which is regarded as the dominant moral framework of liberal societies and as informing social institutions including schools (Gilligan, 1982; Clement, 1996). Although the primary focus of this chapter is the ethic of care, I also consider aspects of the ethic of justice and how it has informed the policies and practices of mainstream schools in ways that disadvantage many children and youth.

Early Care Theory

Carol Gilligan

Care theorist Grace Clement (1996) regards the work of Carol Gilligan as a turning point in the history of moral philosophy. Before Gilligan's work appeared, "moral philosophy was dominated by...the ethic of justice. That is, moral philosophy has tended to focus on general principles rather than attention to concrete detail, on the self as an independent individual rather than the self in

relation to others, and on varying commitments to equality rather than commitments to maintaining relationships" (p. 112).

Gilligan's (1982) book, *In a Different Voice*, challenged crucial aspects of psychologist and justice theorist Lawrence Kohlberg's stage theory of moral development. Beginning in the 1950s, Kohlberg (influenced by Piagetian stage theory and Kantian moral philosophy) conducted longitudinal research through which he sought to both develop categories of moral thought and measure moral development using those categories. Male participants were presented with hypothetical moral dilemmas (the most famous of which centres on Heinz, his dying wife, and a druggist who refuses to provide a life-saving drug at an affordable price) and their responses were analyzed to determine the structure of their moral reasoning. Kohlberg's findings led him to postulate the existence of three levels of moral development (each consisting of two stages): a preconventional level at which moral concerns are to avoid punishment and placate authority figures; a conventional level at which moral concerns are to be a responsible and good person, or to help to maintain and conform to societal expectations; and a postconventional level where moral concerns are with universal principles of justice focused on equal rights and respect for human dignity.

Gilligan (1982), who was Kohlberg's colleague at Harvard for several years, began to notice aspects of the moral approach of many subjects, particularly girls and women, which she believed were unrecognized (or labeled

as immature) by Kohlberg's analysis. Gilligan increasingly questioned some key areas of Kohlberg's project, including its assumptions (following Kantian ethics) that the goal of moral development is the formation of an autonomous moral agent, and that moral reasoning focused around justice concerns is necessarily more advanced than moral thinking focused on other concerns, such as care. She criticized the use of a male-only group of participants for Kohlberg's initial longitudinal research project, arguing that since the categories of moral thought applied in his subsequent work were developed using this group of participants, Kohlberg's work was "blind" to what might be distinctive characteristics in the moral reasoning of girls and women. Gilligan's own empirical studies, conducted after she left Kohlberg's research group, included both female and male participants. Like Kohlberg, she assessed participants' responses to hypothetical dilemmas, but also asked open-ended questions designed to elicit morally significant issues and dilemmas drawn from their own life experiences. Her findings led her to conclude that there was an important alternative to the justice ethic which had previously been overlooked or trivialized. Gilligan called the perspective that underlay this alternative mode of moral thinking the "ethic of care".

Gilligan (1982, 1987, 1995) posits that both the ethic of justice and the ethic of care are fundamental moral perspectives. She argues, however, that while the assumptions, methods and concerns of the ethic of justice have been developed and expressed as the dominant concern of moral philosophy for

centuries (for example, by Hobbes, Locke, and more recently Rawls), those of the ethic of care have been marginalized. The concerns of the ethic of care, she contends, have been regarded as a relatively unimportant aspect of the ethic of justice, or as useful for private and familial contexts, but inadequate or inappropriate for public contexts. Gilligan sought to develop the care perspective and bring it forward as a distinct and essential ethic.

Gilligan (1995) notes that "a shift in the focus of attention from concerns about justice to concerns about care changes the definition of what constitutes a moral problem, and leads the same situation to be seen in different ways" (p. 32). An example illustrates the differences Gilligan (1982) found in the moral reasoning of justice-oriented and care-oriented participants, as well as how the moral reasoning of the former but not the latter fit with Kohlberg's theory and analysis.

Two of Gilligan's 11 year old subjects, Amy and Jake, were presented with Kohlberg's dilemma of Heinz, his sick wife, and a druggist, which concludes with the question – should Heinz steal the drug (in order to save his wife's life)? The two children approach the problem very differently. Jake, who views the dilemma as " like a math problem with humans" (1982, p. 26), constructs the problem as one in which the right to life is pitted against the right to property, and judging that the right to life comes first, states unequivocally that Heinz should steal the drug. According to Kohlberg's scoring system, Jake is judged to be between stage three and four, and to demonstrate the beginnings of a principled

approach to moral reasoning. Amy's approach to the problem is different, and, Gilligan argues, falls through the cracks of Kohlberg's scoring system. Rather than abstracting principles such as the right to life or property from the situation, Amy considers its details and weighs the outcome to those involved of possible actions that might be taken. She rejects the framing of the problem as whether Heinz should steal the drug, and instead constructs the problem as one of how (rather than whether) the wife's need should be met. She argues that stealing the drug could lead to highly negative outcomes, pointing out that Heinz would not be there to care for his wife if he had to go to jail, and insists that if Heinz and the druggist "talked it out for long enough" (p. 29), they could come up with a better solution. Gilligan claims that according to Kohlberg's theory and scoring system, Amy's thinking is muddled and she cannot separate moral from nonmoral elements of the dilemma. Gilligan argues that the problem is not the moral maturity of the girl's response, but rather the inability of Kohlberg's theory and scoring system to recognize and evaluate care-oriented moral reasoning. Amy, constructing the dilemma as a failure of relationship and response, believes that the solution to the problem can only be found through communication and reconnection. Rather than asking whether Heinz should steal the drug, or *whether* to act to meet the wife's need, Amy's care-based approach solves the dilemma by reformulating it to ask *how* the wife's need can best be met.

The distinct approaches taken by Amy and Jake illustrate some of the key differences which Gilligan (1982) argues exist between the ethics of justice and

care. A justice-oriented reasoner, Jake has a vision of individual agents concerned with balancing rights and obligations using an abstract and dispassionate approach. Amy has a vision of persons embedded in close and essential relationships who consider how to meet the needs of others through dialogue and maintaining and repairing connection. Her approach exemplifies a developing ethic of care, which "leads her to see the actors in the dilemma arrayed not as opponents in a contest of rights, but as members of a network of relationships on whose continuation they all depend" (p. 30).

Gilligan posits that the ethic of care is a relational ethic which regards the self as socially constituted, and which recognizes both the primacy of relationships and our responsibilities to others. Moral action requires more than solitary reflection, but rather ongoing dialogue with, and deep attention to, others. While cognitive faculties are important, emotions play a key role in guiding moral thought and action. From this perspective, detachment, whether from self or others, is morally problematic, since it breeds moral blindness or indifference. Based on her empirical work, Gilligan associated the ethic of care primarily with women and girls, although she found that in maturity, both justice and care-oriented individuals often incorporated the insights and concerns of both ethics into their moral approaches.

Nel Noddings

In 1984, Noddings published *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Morality*, a phenonomenological examination of caring, which she regards as a way of being

in relation and a context for positive development. In this book, Noddings painstakingly examines what occurs in the consciousness of the two persons involved in a caring relationship: the persons providing and receiving care. Like Gilligan, Noddings views the ethic of care as primarily associated with girls and women, though particularly in her later writings (2002), she has acknowledged that males as well as females may have a moral approach based on the ethic of care.

According to Noddings (1984), the consciousness of the provider of care is occupied by two states. The first is engrossment: the caregiver is fully attentive to the other and apprehends "the other's reality" (p. 16). Second, the caregiver experiences motivational displacement, or a desire to do whatever is possible to advance the projects (broadly defined) of the other person. This dual state of engrossment and motivational displacement may be more or less enduring depending on the kind of relationship and the situation. Regardless of the length of time involved, however, while caring takes place, the one caring experiences "an open, non-selective receptivity to the one cared-for" (1992, p. 15).

Noddings (1984, 1992) also described the state of consciousness of the receiver of care in a caring relation. He or she is conscious of and receptive to care, and responds by growing or developing in some way. If the intended receiver of care does not consciously receive care or does not somehow respond, then care, as Noddings defines it, is incomplete, however well-intentioned the person who has tried to provide care may be. The final step in a complete caring

relationship, according to Noddings, is that the caregiver recognizes from the care receiver's response that the care has been received.

It should be noted that the above represents what Noddings (1984, 1992) perceives should ideally occur in caring relationships; she recognizes, however, that sometimes things do not work perfectly, and that there are often breakdowns in the caring process. An important means of preventing and repairing breakdowns is for those involved in caring relationships to engage in an open and ongoing dialogue.

Feminist Responses to Early Care Theory

Feminist theorists responded to the ethic of care as developed by early care theorists such as Gilligan and Noddings in complex and divergent ways. There was much in the ethic of care that was appealing and at the same time, cause for concern. Some of the elements of the ethic of care that were praised were its recognition of the importance of human relationships and the place of emotion in moral understanding, as well as its recognition of limitations in a moral orientation dominated by the ethic of justice (Baier, 1995; Held, 1995). Some feminist theorists (Clement, 1996; Tronto, 1993, 1995) however, dispute the view espoused by Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984) that the ethic of care is or should be a distinctively feminine ethic, and are critical of what they regard as the ethic of care's valourization of (especially female) subservience, minimal

attention to a broad social analysis, and lack of attention to care for distant others.

Virginia Held (1995) has pointed out some of the ways that the feminist approach to morality is compatible with the ethic of care. Some of the features she suggests the two frameworks have in common are their concern with relationships, emphasis on morality as a lived practice, concern with social conditions, and recognition of the crucial role of the emotions in enabling moral understanding. Moreover, each perspective is described as "a morality of contexts" (p. 161), which pays close attention to details of the lived reality of those involved in moral situations.

The ethic of care emphasizes the moral importance of recognizing our responsibility toward others, and recognizes that most relationships are between unequals (for example, parent and child, teacher and student, persons of unequal status). Some feminist writers (e.g. Baier, 1995) have praised these features of the ethic of care, and criticized the ethic of justice for its assumption that noninterference represents the extent of our unchosen obligations toward others. The ethic of care's recognition of responsibility is regarded as essential because a great deal more than non-interference is necessary so that, for example, children and other dependent persons will be cared for, and the earth's environment will be protected for the benefit of future generations. (Baier, 1995)

The central place provided in the ethic of care for communication and dialogue in moral decision-making was also welcomed as an improvement over

the ethic of justice's focus on a solitary moral agent judging correct action in

obedience to abstract principles. This area has been developed since Gilligan's

early work. For example, Walker (1995) has emphasized that the ethic of care

calls for not the "moral knowledge" (p. 143) of the justice approach, but rather

"moral understanding" (p. 143). The three elements of moral understanding,

according to Walker, are attention, contextual and narrative appreciation, and

communication. The first and second elements are interrelated, so that attention

to another involves an appreciation of her or his as specific "history, identity, and

affective-emotional constitution" (Benhabib, 1987, quoted in Walker, p. 142). Put

another way, the ethic of care with its focus on moral understanding highlights

the importance of attending to the narrative of another's life in order to

understand and be able to meet that person morally. Walker (1995) notes that,

> We don't and can't identify people's emotions, intentions and other
>
> mental states with momentary (and especially not momentary,
>
> inner, private) phenomena. Instead, we identify these features of
>
> people by attending to how their beliefs, feelings, modes of
>
> expression, circumstances and more, arranged in characteristic
>
> ways and often spread out in time, configure into a recognizable
>
> kind of story. (p. 142)

Despite their criticisms of some of its features, some feminist care

theorists (e.g. Baier, 1995; Clement, 1996; Jagger, 1995) have defended the

ethic of justice, and pointed to its importance as a means by which marginalized

groups, including women, have succeeded in bettering their social positions in society. These feminists have asserted that the justice perspective has an important place, but because justice concerns alone have dominated moral philosophy, it has become exaggerated and flawed. Baier (1995) writes,

> Those who have only recently won recognition of their equal rights,
> who have only recently seen the correction or partial correction of
> longstanding racist and sexist injustices to their race and sex, are
> among the philosophers now suggesting that justice is only one
> virtue among many, and one that may need the presence of others
> to deliver its own undenied value. (p. 47)

Some feminists (e.g. Clement, 1996) have also resisted the responses of some justice-oriented philosophers to Gilligan's development of the ethic of care, which included the suggestions that the ethic of care is appropriate only in private and personal contexts, that the ethic of care is subsumed within the ethic of justice, or that the two ethics are substantively the same but use different terminology. Such stances have been rejected as a "politics of dismissal" (Houston, 1988, quoted in Jagger, 1995, p. 186).

Criticisms of the Ethic of Care

Despite assertions by some feminist theorists (e.g. Held, 1995) that the ethic of care is compatible with a feminist moral outlook, this view is contested by others. The features of the ethic of care most often criticized by feminist writers are its perceived: tendency to essentialize women, valourization of

subservience, inattention to distant others, and lack of a broad social analysis (e.g. Jagger, 1995). Some feminist writers (Clement, 1996; Tronto, 1993, 1995) have revised the ethic of care in an effort to overcome these objections.

Early care theorists Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984) claim that women have a special link with caring, and seem to suggest that justice is a primarily masculine ethic while the ethic of care is distinctively feminine. Although Noddings (1984, 2002) acknowledges that men can be caring, the title of her (1984) book, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, suggests that she regards the ethic of care as primarily feminine. Similarly, Gilligan regards the ethic of care as primarily a moral perspective of women and girls. Along with other feminist theorists (e.g. Baier, 1995; Clement, 1996; Jagger, 1995), Tronto (1993) rejects the notion that morality is gendered. She criticizes Gilligan for stereotyping males and females, writing that:

> Gilligan's argument lends a quasi-scientific grounding for a view
>
> that men and women are essentially different. Even though
>
> essentialism has fallen on hard times in feminist theory circles in
>
> recent years, essentialism remains broadly popular. (p. 85)

Baier (1995) suggests that any special link women have with caring may be rooted in oppressive social conditions; the ethic of care can be viewed as suitable for those in subordinate positions, even attentiveness can be seen as originating in the need to attend closely to one's superior's moods. Baier (1995) expressed some feminist concerns:

Some find it retrograde to hail as a special sort of moral wisdom an

outlook that may be the product of the socially enforced restriction

of women to domestic roles (and the reservation of such roles for

them alone). For that might seem to play into the hands of those

who still favor such restriction. (p. 48)

A related concern is the high priority that the ethic of care places on

relationships along with its lack of a central place for autonomy (Gilligan, 1982;

Noddings, 1984). Feminist writers (e.g. Clement, 1996; Fisher & Tronto, 1990;

Tronto, 1993) criticize what they regard as the tendency of the ethic of care to

encourage women (historically the givers of care) to sacrifice themselves to

relationships even if the relationships are harmful to themselves or others.

The ethic of care as theorized by Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984) has

also been challenged on the grounds that while it advocates great concern for

those in close proximity, much less concern is shown for distant others (Tronto,

1995). According to Tronto, either the ethic of care can be extended to distant

others or it is not an adequate moral framework. "Caring seems to suffer a fatal

moral flaw if we allow it to be circumscribed by deciding that we shall only care

for those close to us. From this perspective, it is hard to see how caring can

remain moral" (p. 111).

Moreover, although some feminist writers (e.g. Walker, 1995) praised the

ethic of care for its attention to people's lived contexts and immediate needs,

concerns were raised about the ethic of care's perceived lack of a social analysis

that would address links between such contexts and broader societal structures and patterns. Jagger (1995) asserts that, to be morally acceptable to feminists, any ethic would, at a minimum, have to include a critique of social arrangements that subordinate women. She argues that the care approach fails to critique social structures that foster privilege for some while marginalizing others. Jagger writes, "From a feminist perspective, care's exclusive focus on particularity is sometimes a significant liability, since an important concern of feminist ethics must be the ways in which male-dominated social structures limit the life-chances of women" (p. 195). Jagger suggests that the ethic of care is good at encouraging acts of helping between individuals but not at "combating the conditions that underlie the problems they have" (p. 197).

Feminist Revisions to Care Theory

Rescuing Autonomy and Broadening The Ethic of Care

Some feminists (Clement, 1996; Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Tronto, 1993) have sought to develop versions of the ethic of care which would be morally acceptable generally and acceptable to feminists in particular. In *Care, Autonomy and Justice* (1996), Grace Clement has revised the ethic of care to meet feminist objections, in part by providing a central place for autonomy within the ethic of care. She has also offered some suggestions regarding the appropriate relationship between the ethic of care and the ethic of justice.

Gilligan (1982) regards autonomy as belonging within the sphere of the ethic of justice, and as antithetical to the relational ethic of care according to which the self is socially constituted. In contrast, Clement insists that an adequate ethic must support women's autonomy and self-determination. This belief reflects a concern that many women are involved in unhealthy, destructive relationships, and the recognition that an ethic that seems to suggest that such relationships should take precedence over women's well-being and safety is incompatible with feminism.

Clement (1996) has found a way to rescue autonomy and give it a central place in the relational ethic of care. She does this in two ways, first, by beginning with Gilligan's (1982) recognition that in maturity, those with a care orientation move away from an earlier tendency toward self-sacrifice, and realize that they are equal in importance to those with whom they are in relation. This allows caring individuals to make choices that respond to their own needs as well as to the needs of others. Clement takes this a step further, and asserts that a morally defensible ethic of care, one which refrains from valourizing subservience, holds that we ought to prioritize not just any relationships, but only those which are good, that is, healthy and not harmful to those involved. In this way, destructive relationships can ethically be avoided and do not take precedence over personal well-being. Clement writes:

Perhaps the fundamental priority of the ethic of care should be understood as a commitment to healthy caring relationships. One

of the criteria for healthy relationships is that they allow for the autonomy of their members.... Insofar as its priority is healthy relationships rather than relationships as such, the ethic of care allows for and promotes autonomy rather than undermining it. (p. 42)

Second, Clement (1996) has developed a version of autonomy which is in keeping with the relational ethic of care's view of a socially constituted self. She offers a conception of autonomy as partial, socially determined, and enabled though caring relations with others. No one, she argues, can be utterly autonomous, but people can possess autonomy to varying degrees. Clement regards autonomy as an important social value which should be fostered in individuals, in part to guard against various kinds of oppression.

Clement (1996) rejects Noddings'(1984) claim that autonomy is both impossible (because we are all interconnected) and unimportant (because by helping others, we help ourselves). Clement argues that this kind of thinking, common among early care theorists, exaggerates the extent to which the interests of self and other are harmonious and ignores possible conflicts of interest. Moreover, it runs the risk of disempowering both caregivers (often women and lower status individuals) and receivers of care. It is worth noting that while Noddings continues to reject an individualistic conception of autonomy, she agrees with Clement's view of autonomy as partial, and as developed and

supported by caring relationships (Noddings, personal communication at IERG conference, July 15, 2004).

Both Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984, 1992) focus primarily on care for others in close proximity rather than on care for distant others. This has garnered criticism from feminist writers who, while they accept some aspects of the ethic of care, criticize what they regarded as its parochialism (Jagger, 1995; Tronto, 1993, 1995). In Clement's (1996) reworking of the ethic of care, she gives care for distant others a central place, arguing that distant as well as proximate others are affected by and vulnerable to our actions, and as a result we have responsibilities to both groups.

The ethic of care has been criticized for its failure to engage in a broad social analysis, and for tending to engender band-aid solutions rather than solutions which address broad social factors linked to individual problems (Jagger, 1995; Tronto, 1993). Clement agrees with this view, and insists that to be morally defensible as an ethic which can guide moral action, the ethic of care must retain its focus on immediate contexts, but also look to wider social circumstances.

Clement regards care and justice as distinct ethics which are both necessary to adequately encounter any moral situation. Each ethic, according to Clement, has dangers and limitations, which may be prevented by incorporating the concerns and insights of the other. The dangers associated with the ethic of care are that it may degenerate into parochialism, so that care may be provided

for some while the needs of others are ignored, and that it may fail to engage in social analysis, focusing instead only on immediate contexts. These dangers can be avoided by incorporating justice concerns such as fairness.

Similarly, care concerns can improve and help to guard against the dangers and limitations of the ethic of justice (Clement 1996). For example, the incorporation of care concerns can help those using a justice approach to meet obligations in ways that do not cause harm and that recognize the importance of relationships. Moreover, "bringing the priorities of care to the public sphere leads us to favor an idea of justice based on positive rights rather than negative rights alone" (p. 81). Clement contends that the rights which all should have "are not rights to be left to starve unimpeded" (p. 81).

Although Clement (1996) regards the ethic of care and the ethic of justice as each contributing in ways that can help to redress the limitations of the other, she insists that the two ethics are distinct. She rejects the assertions of some justice ethicists that the ethic of care can be subsumed under an ethic of justice, or that it is equivalent to justice but with different terminology. Clement notes that in response to Gilligan's (1982) work, Kohlberg revised his earlier view that that there is nothing distinctive about the ethic of care. He continued to maintain however, that the ethic of care belongs solely in the personal realm of family and friends and is inappropriate in public contexts.

Clement (1996) and other feminist writers (e.g. Baier, 1995) reject the view that the ethic of justice provides guidance regarding what is required of

moral agents, that is, the moral minimum, or the "right," while the ethic of care points to what is supererogatory, that is, beyond the call of duty, or the "good." Baier argues that more than the moral minimum of noninterference is needed to, for example, raise children, educate the young, tend the sick, and protect the environment for future generations. Baier questions the fairness of social arrangements which require only noninterference from some people when care work clearly must be done by someone. The existence of many individuals in liberal societies who believe they have minimal obligations to others has negative social consequences, because they may become unfit "to be anything other than what its [liberal's] justifying theories suppose them to be, ones who have no interest in each others' interests" (p. 55).

Caring in Institutions and Societies

In their joint and individual work, Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher (Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Tronto, 1993, 1995) have also revised early care theory to make it more morally defensible and acceptable to feminists. Unlike Noddings (1984, 1992) and Gilligan (1982), who focused mainly on one to one caring relations and relations among those in close proximity, these authors have focused on caring in institutions and in societies. They posit that caring does not occur primarily in the context of one to one relationships, and moreover that women should not be viewed as the primary providers of care. They argue that views about caring have been influenced by socially constructed dichotomies between

the public domain of paid work (gendered as male) and the private domain of unpaid work (gendered as female). Tronto asserts that notions of who should care for whom are "rooted in (often questionable) social values, expectations and institutions" (Tronto, 1995, p. 111). Like other feminist writers (e.g. Baier, 1995; Clement, 1996), Fisher and Tronto (1990) want to see caring as a responsibility for everyone, not just some particularly caring individuals (whether male or female), and as a concept that extends its scope beyond the context of private lives to distant others.

According to Fisher & Tronto (1990), the care process has four elements: caring about, taking care of, caring for, and receiving care. Especially in institutionalized care, different parts of the process may be carried out by different people. For example, perhaps members of a school board pass a policy designed to assist students in some way, an instance of "caring about." A school principal, charged with "taking care of" the students in her school, works to implement the policy. Teachers, those directly "caring for" students, make a change in their daily practices. The students in the classrooms are those "receiving care." Fisher and Tronto point out that when those who make decisions regarding care are far away from those who are providing and receiving care, breakdowns in the caring process are common. To avoid breakdowns, they recommend close contact and dialogue among all of those involved in the caring process. Some of the problems that are common when close contact and dialogue are absent are: caregivers may not be able to provide

adequate care because of inadequate information or resources; the views of receivers of care may not be heard, and they may be harmed rather than helped; those who form policies may be out of touch with crucial information which could be provided by caregivers or receivers of care.

Schools and the Ethic of Care

Perhaps more than any other care theorist, Noddings (1984, 1992, 1995, 2002) has focused on the implications of the ethic of care for schooling. She believes that schools as they are currently organized fail to adequately facilitate the development of caring relationships, which she regards as crucial for the healthy development of children and youth.

Although Noddings (1984) sometimes seems to regard caring as a relationship between two individuals, and the paradigmatic caring relationship as that between mother and child, she asserts that the teacher-student relationship has a great potential for the provision of care. A teacher, as one-caring, can be, albeit briefly, engrossed in a student and experiences motivational displacement, that is, the desire to advance that student's well-being and projects (broadly defined) which are (to the student) of deep significance. Noddings (1984) asserts that to be caring, teachers do not have to establish long-lasting and time-consuming relationships with every student. Instead, teachers should be "totally and non-selectively present to the student – to each student.... The time interval may be brief but the encounter is total" (p. 180). In interactions with an entire

class, a caring teacher can model caring, engage the class in open dialogue about issues students regard as important, provide opportunities for students to practice care, and communicate to students that they are valued and accepted.

Noddings (1984, 1992) asserts that students and others who receive care recognize it as such and respond by means of some kind of positive development, which teachers then perceive, completing the relationship. Noddings' insistence that in order to be complete, caring must be recognized by receivers of care, who in turn somehow communicate this awareness to care providers, has garnered much criticism. For example, Tronto (1993) has rejected this view as unrealistic, arguing that in many instances of care - for example that provided to an unconscious person - the recipient does not perceptibly respond. Noddings (2002) has continued to argue, however, that it is important to pay attention to whether or not those putatively being cared for believe they are receiving care and whether they show evidence of receiving care through some kind of positive development. Moreover, when students claim that "no one cares," or when they fail to thrive, according to Noddings, teachers and others should pay attention, and examine the caring relationship for possible problems.

In today's schools, Noddings (1992, 2002) asserts that there are many barriers to the development of caring relationships, despite the desire of many educators to relate to students in caring ways. Factors such as classes which are too large, teachers who are under too much pressure or are forced to comply with directives to treat all students in the same way, and an undue focus on

narrow academic outcomes can negatively affect caring relationships and lead students to feel uncared for and alienated.

Noddings (1992) has argued that every aspect of schools should be re-examined through the lens of the ethic of care and that schools must move away from an "ideology of control" (p. xii). Noddings (1988) writes,

> If we were to explore seriously the ideas suggested by an ethic of
>
> caring for education, we might suggest changes in almost every
>
> aspect of schooling: the current hierarchical structure of
>
> management, the rigid mode of allocating time, the kinds of
>
> relationships encouraged, the size of schools and classes, the goals
>
> of instruction, modes of evaluation, patterns of interaction,
>
> selection of content. (p. 221)

Noddings (1995) believes that an undue focus on academic success is short-sighted and self-defeating. She argues academic goals are more likely to be achieved if children and youth believe that they are cared for and learn to care for others. Noddings insists that students "can accomplish wonderful things in an atmosphere of love and trust and that they will (if they are healthy) resist – sometimes to their own detriment – in environments of coercion" (p. 368).

Noddings has contributed to the discourse of the ethic of care for the past two decades. At a presentation to students and faculty at Simon Fraser University (July 14, 2004), Noddings reiterated her view that education should revolve around attention to the needs of individual children and youth, and a

concern for their well-being and happiness. She condemned the standards

movement as small-minded and mean-spirited, and as part of an influential

"culture of control" which engenders acts such as publishing the results of high

stakes tests, which compare child against child, school against school, and state

against state. The culture of control and the standards movement are turning

teachers into automatons, according to Noddings. She recalled her own days as

a biology teacher, when she was able to spend three wonderful years with the

same group of students, developing close ties, and continually adjusting her

teaching in response to her students' burgeoning interests. During many fruitful

afternoons, she held her classes outdoors in nature, enabling her students to

observe, record, and analyze, leading to new questions and interests. Noddings

wants teachers now to have the kind of freedom she enjoyed as a teacher, but

asserts that they have less freedom and are more subject to external controls.

Noddings' approach may be summed up as one that insists that children

and youth be regarded as complex human beings who deserve to be respected,

allowed to develop to their full potential, and heard. She warns that increasingly,

young people are treated as things to be measured and coerced.

Other care ethicists have also pointed out the implications of the ethic of

care for schooling. Clement (1996) regards the ethic of care as exemplified by a

school if it "is based on a social conception of the self, and prioritizes maintaining

relationships and meeting individual needs" (p. 90). In any social program, she

argues that it is crucial to pay attention to the quality of the relationship between

caregivers and care recipients. Clement rejects the argument that is sometimes made that if care is provided in the public domain, the family will be weakened, and "family values" will be undermined. She argues that the contrary is true, and that families are strengthened when support is provided because it can "lighten the burden on family caregivers" (1996, p. 101).

Diana Mendley Rauner's (2000) book *They Still Pick Me Up When I Fall* reviews the practices of several schools and programs in the United States which are based on the ethic of care. She regards the ethic of care as pointing to the need for society to assume responsibility for children and youth, and not to regard care as solely a family responsibility. She sees care as an interactive process of attentiveness, responsiveness, and competence.

Like Noddings (1984, 1992), Rauner (2000) regards caring relationships and practices as important in large part because they are the context in which positive development can occur. A program based on caring principles, is focused around goals "directed toward the kind of person one hopes a youth will become. It is, therefore, positively oriented, focused not on problems or deficits but on healthy development and functioning. It is also holistic, considering the entirety of a person rather than specific attributes or accomplishments" (p. 72). In addition to a context for healthy development, Rauner argues that caring can act as a buffer against the stresses which marginalized youth may face.

Because she views caring relationships as a context for positive development, and development as a complex, holistic process, Rauner (2000)

33

insists that success in care-based programs should be measured, not by examining particular outcomes related to students' growing abilities, but rather according to how successfully the programs have facilitated close connections between students and staff.

Justice and Care Approaches to the Schooling of Marginalized Youth

Care ethicists (Baier, 1995; Clement, 1996) argue that the ethic of justice is the dominant moral framework in liberal democracies, informing social institutions including schools and contributing to the disadvantage of marginalized youth. Some of the features which care ethicists regard as contributing to disadvantage are: its individualism, regarded as contributing to a tendency to "blame the victim"; its focus on equality of opportunity rather than on equality of outcomes; its concern to limit obligations to others; and its concern with what is "fair" rather than what may be needed. The ethic of justice's emphasis on neutrality is regarded as rendering it poorly equipped to respond adequately to individual and group differences. It is seen as leading to school practices which, while they purport to be neutral, reflect dominant cultural assumptions, ways of knowing, and values which may provide a good fit for mainstream children and youth, but not for marginalized young people. Thus, ironically, the ethic of justice may lead to outcomes which would be difficult to accept as "just", that is, a school system which systematically disfavours those who begin school with the greatest disadvantages (Baier, 1995).

The ethic of care literature provides many important insights relevant to the central concerns of this thesis regarding the education of marginalized youth. The relational ethic of care, with its recognition of the interconnectedness of human life, rejects the ethic of justice's individualism and posits a socially constituted self (Gilligan, 1982). While the ethic of justice regards differences in achievement as due to differences in individual effort and ability, a perspective informed by the ethic of care recognizes that individual achievement is, to a considerable degree, socially constituted, and rejects deficits explanations of educational failure.

Rejecting the justice-based notion that care is appropriate only in private contexts, such as within families, care ethicists believe schools should be places where caring relationships are fostered (Clement, 1996; Noddings, 1992; Raune, 2000). This is particularly important for the education of marginalized youth; as Rauner points out, caring relations at school may help to act as a buffer against stresses outside of school to which marginalized youth may be particularly vulnerable, such as poverty and discrimination.

Two areas of the ethic of care as it is developed by feminist care theorists are particularly important to the education of marginalized youth: autonomy and moral understanding. Clement (1996) suggests that caring relationships can foster autonomy, and moreover that autonomy should be encouraged. This is particularly important for marginalized youth, as they are more likely than others to face discrimination and oppression.

The second aspect of the ethic of care which is particularly relevant to the education of marginalized youth concerns moral understanding, as it is presented by Walker (1995). Building on Gilligan's recognition of the importance of dialogue within the ethic of care, Walker posits that moral understanding of others is possible only through processes of communication and deep attention not only to their present circumstances, but also to their interpretations of past experiences and perceptions of what their futures will be like. Thus the ethic of care encourages close and respectful attention to students' lived realities, including their race, ethnicity, language, family and social class, as well as their interpretations of their present, past and likely future circumstances.

Shortcomings of the Ethic of Care in Relation to Marginalized Youth

The ethic of care is a relational ethic which posits a socially constituted self. Its priorities are maintaining relationships and recognizing and meeting needs. Several feminist theorists (Baier, 1995; Clement, 1996; Jagger, 1995; Tronto, 1993, 1995) have suggested that there is a danger that the ethic of care's focus on relationships with proximate others and concern with concrete and immediate contexts may render it incapable of a broad social analysis. Such an analysis is needed to identify and guard against broad social patterns of disadvantage which lead to particular instances of unmet needs (Clement, 1996). In the case of marginalized youth, an approach informed by the ethic of care may focus on attending to and meeting the particular needs of students in the

classroom, but may not recognize and work to change circumstances in the community and society linked to the oppression of marginalized groups. Care theorist Grace Clement has argued that in order to be an adequate moral ethic to guide public policy, the ethic of care must be extended so that it includes a broad social analysis. Her suggestion for extending the ethic of care is to incorporate some of the concerns and priorities of the ethic of justice, such as equality and fairness. This means of extending the ethic of care, however, appears problematic. The two ethics are generally defined in opposition to each other; moreover, they have distinctly different conceptions of the self, concerns and priorities (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984).

An alternative means of redressing the tendency of the ethic of care to fail to recognize wider social processes which impact on local instances of need is to incorporate some of the insights of the second theoretical framework which informs this thesis: critical sociological perspectives.

The following chapter describes this perspective and concludes by pointing out ways that the ethic of care and critical sociological perspectives are compatible and can form a combined lens through which to examine the schooling of marginalized youth.

Chapter 3 —
Critical Sociological Perspectives
on the Schooling of Marginalized Youth

In Chapter 2, I focused on the origin, main proponents, and precepts of

the ethic of care. I concluded with the suggestion that some limitations in the

ethic of care may be overcome by incorporating the insights of a compatible and

complementary theoretical lens, critical sociological perspectives, which seek to

identify, understand, and change social processes associated with patterns of

inequality and oppression.

This chapter explores critical sociological perspectives on schooling,

emphasizing the link between schools and wider social contexts, the processes

through which disadvantage is conveyed, and how such processes can be

resisted. I conclude by suggesting that the ethic of care and critical sociological

perspectives might form a combined lens through which to consider the

education of marginalized youth.

Origin of Critical Sociological Perspectives

Scott Davies (1995) asserts that critical sociological perspectives arose in

response to older, more conventional approaches to sociology such as structural

functionalism. Structural functionalism, a dominant force within sociology from

the 1940s to the 1960s, was concerned with explaining how social institutions,

including schools, contribute to the smooth functioning and reproduction of society. Within this perspective, social inequality within advanced industrial societies is regarded as both natural and inevitable, schools are regarded as a key agency of social reproduction, and the role of sociology is to explain the functioning of social structures (Wotherspoon, 1998). Structural functionalists rely on "cultural deprivation theory" (Davies, 1995, p. 5) to explain unequal educational attainment among children and youth from different social classes. This theory posits that lower class youth fail to adopt middle class values needed in an industrial society, including individualism, competitiveness, and an achievement orientation (Banks, 1976, cited in Davies, 1995).

In the 1970s, there was "a general renunciation of structural functionalism" within sociology (Davies, 1995, p. 6) and many mainstream sociologists turned to a new explanatory model provided by the status attainment research pioneered by Blau and Duncan (1967, cited in Davies, 1995). Sociologists working within this still dominant research tradition document socioeconomic disparities in education and "assess schools' role in promoting meritocracy and social mobility" (Davies, p. 7).

A second group of sociologists (e.g. Bowles & Gintis, 1976 and Apple, 1979, cited in Davies, 1995), who likewise rejected structural functionalism and cultural deprivation theory, were dissatisfied with status attainment research, which they viewed as failing to challenge the status quo and ignoring evidence that schools hinder rather than help social mobility (Wotherspoon, 1998). These

theorists worked to develop critical sociological perspectives, which regard

schools as contributing to the reproduction of social inequality and preparing

working class students for subordinate adult roles. These reproduction theories

were later augmented by resistance theories developed by other critical theorists

including Henry Giroux (Davies, 1995), who examined and highlighted ways that

marginalized and oppressed individuals resist the labels and categories created

for them. Recently, critical sociological perspectives (e.g. Fine, 1991; MacLeod,

1995) have expanded from a near exclusive focus on social class to consider the

combined impact of social class, gender and race/ethnicity. Wotherspoon (1998)

asserts that critical sociology,

> engages in a critique of social structures and practices by probing
>
> beyond descriptions of the status quo. The social world, as opposed
>
> to something neutral or mutually beneficial to all its members, is
>
> characterized by fundamental structural inequalities constituted in
>
> part by oppression by dominant groups over subordinate social
>
> groups. (p. 11)

Critical Sociological Perspectives on the Education of Marginalized Youth

The Importance of Credentials

Wotherspoon (1998) argues that the growing importance of educational

credentials since World War II, while enabling some members of marginalized

groups to gain access to previously denied opportunities, has had the broader

effect of enabling some status groups to remain privileged while keeping others on the margins. He notes that "formal education came to be relied on more frequently as a screening mechanism for entry into jobs and other social venues...[leaving]...marginalized groups...even further behind" (p. 62). Wotherspoon posits that because schools are built on a competitive model, they currently (and unjustly) function to sort and grade individuals, and thus contribute to the reproduction of inequality. Students learn to view themselves as more or less worthy and more or less capable as a result of their school experiences, and to ultimately accept different levels of status and access to resources as adults. The belief, inculcated at school and throughout society, that success or failure depends on individual ability and effort, leads those who fail to blame themselves for their failure.

Contesting Deficit Theories

Citing recent reports by Canadian agencies, Wotherspoon and Schissel (2001) point out that more than 30 percent of Canadian youth are considered to be "at risk of not completing high school" (p. 324). The highest concentration of risk is "among visible minorities, the poor, residents of inner city and poorer rural regions, and individuals who are not fluent in the language employed at school" (p. 324). These authors, along with others who write from critical sociological perspectives (e.g. Fine, 1991; MacLeod, 1995) challenge deficit explanations of unequal educational attainment.

Deficit theories have been influential throughout the history of public schooling and have led to reform efforts including remediation, back to the basics and the standards movement, all of which, critics argue, are merely "more of the same" and unlikely to make a substantive difference (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001). Deficit approaches exaggerate the influence of individual, familial and cultural characteristics on school performance and underestimate the significance of group inequalities at the societal level and mismatches between the linguistic and cultural norms and values of schools and those of many students (Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001). Moreover, deficit approaches unjustly "blame the victim" (e.g. Deschenes, Cuban & Tyack, 2001; MacLeod, 1995; Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001).

These authors suggest that the fact that social and economic ills are commonly attributed to low school completion rates has led to a moral panic which demonizes already marginalized individuals. The belief that social and economic problems result from low school completion rates is based on faulty assumptions concerning, for example, the number of jobs that would be available if everyone were to graduate from high school (Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001).

Michelle Fine:
Good Intentions are not Enough

In her 1991 book *Framing Dropouts: Notes on the Politics of an Urban High School*, Michelle Fine has provided a powerful examination of the problem

of educational failure. Her analysis includes a focus on the broad social causes

and consequences of school dropout and an examination of processes and

policies at a New York City high school which contribute to the dropout problem

despite the apparently good intentions of many administrators and teachers.

Fine (1991) points out that in recent decades, problems of equal

opportunity related to access to education have been essentially resolved. Almost

everyone goes to school, at least initially. However, educational outcomes are far

from equal. Fine examined how, at a school which serves a racially and ethnically

diverse, low income population, a majority of students were assisted in subtle

and not so subtle ways to exit before graduation. At this school, Fine found that

the rate of student "discharge" was extremely high; only about a quarter of

those who entered grade nine eventually graduated. There were well-travelled

paths out the school door. Despite efforts on the part of some staff to retain

students, the dominant thrust in the school appeared to be to discharge students

who were regarded as troublemakers and those with poor attendance.

Fine posits that the underlying assumption of many members of the staff,

expressed directly by a few, was that because the students were working class

kids destined for the factories no matter what their educational attainment, there

was little point in efforts to keep them in school. Fine argues that this

assumption leads to a lack of commitment to keep marginalized students in

school, and a tendency to show them the door when a greater degree of staff

support might enable them to continue. She cites instances in which students (or

their relatives) tried to communicate their wishes to remain in school, but appear not to be heard, or understood, by staff members. Fine writes,

> In the 1990s, every child may enjoy access to a public school education. But in the 1990s, the *bodies* of some are exported out prior to graduation. These bodies are disproportionately bodies of color and of low-income students. These are the bodies that constitute the group euphemistically called "high school dropouts," as if they freely decided to go. (p. 25)

The perception that working class students are destined for the unemployment roles or low-paid employment is not without foundation. Fine (1991) cites statistical evidence that shows that the impact of high school graduation on levels of employment and income differs according to gender, race/ethnicity, and neighbourhood of residence. For example, the economic return associated with each year of education for African-Americans is approximately 63 percent of that of whites. Fine concludes that a high school diploma has "substantially different consequences by class, race/ethnicity and gender" (p. 23).

Fine (1991) argues that in an important sense, student dropout should not be considered voluntary. Fine says that exclusion takes many forms: for example, when parents are treated disrespectfully by the school; when students are retained in grade; when schools fail to be flexible in response to students' out-of-school responsibilities; when no one notices when students are absent;

when students feel confused in class, but are embarrassed to ask for help; and

when students realize that, for members of their families or communities, high

school graduation does not lead to reliable, well-paid employment.

Jay MacLeod: Lowered Aspirations and Inflexible School Practices

Jay MacLeod (1995) has written a compelling ethnographic account

focused on a group of marginalized, inner-city adolescent males. Drawing upon

the theories of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to help to explain the social

reproduction of inequality, MacLeod argues that the young people's awareness of

the success or failure of adult members of their communities has a strong and

lasting impact on their aspirations and commitment to schooling. MacLeod points

out that young people who grow up in relatively advantaged circumstances see a

direct correspondence between the school success and life success of members

of their communities. However, marginalized youth frequently see that, in their

communities, even those who are the most successful in school fail to reap

noticeable benefits. These different perceptions translate into different levels of

aspirations in differently situated groups of young people: high aspirations

among the middle and upper class mainstream, and low aspirations among

members of marginalized groups.

In the group of teenagers MacLeod (1995) investigated, lowered

aspirations translated into less interest in and commitment to school. These

problems were exacerbated by school policies and practices which discouraged

and failed to assist students, such as tracking, lack of accommodation for disrupted lives and responsibilities outside of school, as well as school norms, values, and linguistic practices which clashed with those of the students he studied.

MacLeod (1995) calls for efforts on the part of schools to acknowledge and respond to the cultures, linguistic practices and knowledge of marginalized students, as well as to the complex reality of students' lives. Like Fine (1991), MacLeod emphasizes, however, that if they are to be effective, school reforms must be accompanied by improved access to well-paid employment, and to opportunities for further education, for members of marginalized groups.

Wotherspoon and Schissel: Challenging Conceptions of Risk

Wotherspoon and Schissel (2001) contrast two approaches to the schooling of marginalized youth: a social control model and a social justice model. The former approach focuses on students' problems and deficiencies and often equates them with "stereotypical race, class, gender, or geographic categories" (p. 328). This approach de-emphasizes the impact of structural disadvantages and exaggerates the influences of culture, biological traits, and familial behaviour on school success or failure. The second orientation, which the authors endorse, is a social justice approach which does not regard phenonoma such as poverty "strictly in terms of risk status; rather, its concern is to locate and transform the sources of inequality" (p. 331). A key concern within this

orientation is sensitivity to how students may be harmed in school settings which are "built around expectations and practices dependent on specified conceptions of normality" (p. 332). An important goal is to create inclusive schools where every student is able to feel connected with the school's environment and culture (Dei, cited in Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001, p. 332).

Inclusive schools concerned with social justice build on the recognition that students possess or have the capacity to develop multiple competencies both in and outside of school. They incorporate social and cultural resources such as the accumulation of significant pools of informal learning...that are often ignored in schooling. (p. 332)

Wotherspoon and Schissel (2001) point out that positive steps have been taken in Saskatchewan toward creating schools where "the honour of being respected replaces the stigma of being diagnosed" (pp. 334-335). They note that a Saskatchewan provincial task force recommended policies aimed at creating integrated, community-based schools which would act as core agencies to provide a full range of social, health, recreation, culture, justice and other services to children and their families.

Wotherspoon and Schissel (2001) discuss schools they have researched which are guided by a social justice orientation. These schools are based on a philosophical approach that eschews blame and guilt, and focuses not on students' pasts and what they may have done wrong, but on their futures and

what they need to help them develop socially and academically. Moreover, while they work with the police and the courts, these schools insist that "social justice, personal development, and well-being are anathema to punishment. The philosophy is that a student can learn meaningful citizenship only in the context of a system that avoids punishment" (p. 334).

One such school which Wotherspoon and Schissel (2001) investigated, Won Ska Cultural School in Prince Albert, is an alternative school which serves marginalized children and youth, most of whom have been in trouble with the law. Wotherspoon and Schissel point to some of the practices at the school which they suggest are responsible for its students' success. The small class size enables teachers to act as mentors and develop relationships of trust with students who have had few opportunities for such relationships in the past, especially with adults in positions of authority. Most of the students are, initially, extremely distrustful of authority figures, especially the police, and have "an overwhelming lack of affinity with regular schools" (p. 333). Observing and interacting with teachers with whom they are comfortable gives students an opportunity to learn to trust those in authority.

The school is run democratically, giving students many opportunities for decision-making. Staff focus on helping students to identify and develop their strengths. The students are extremely positive about the school; many indicated that they would be there all the time if they could. If it were not for a school like Won Ska, many students believed they would be in jail.

Jim Cummins: How Disadvantage is Conferred and how to Disrupt It

Failure to thrive at school is particularly concentrated among certain groups, including racial and ethnic minorities. Jim Cummins (1986) reviewed international research data on the performance of minority students, and found that school success or failure was linked to the status of the minority group in relation to the dominant culture. This held even when groups were examined which had populations in different countries where they had different degrees of status. For example, Korean students tend to do more poorly in Japan (where they have relatively low status) than ethnic Japanese, whereas in the United States where they have high status in comparison with other minorities, Korean students tend to excel.

Disadvantage is conveyed to minority children before they start school, as well as during their experiences at school. Cummins (1986) explains that,

> The dominated status of a minority group exposes them to
> conditions that predispose children to school failure even before
> they come to school. These include limited parental access to
> economic and educational resources...[and]...ambivalence toward
> cultural transmission and primary language use in the home. (p.
> 22)

Within schools, interactions with educators further disadvantage marginalized children and youth. Cummins (1986) argues that:

Minority students are disabled or disempowered by schools in very

much the same way that their communities are disempowered by

interactions with societal institutions. Since equality of opportunity

is believed to be a given, it is assumed that individuals are

responsible for their own failure and are, therefore, made to feel

that they have failed because of their own inferiority, despite the

best efforts of dominant-group institutions and individuals to help

them. (p. 24)

Cummins (1986) argues that disadvantage is transmitted in classroom

relationships which marginalize and exclude minority students' cultural

knowledge, values and linguistic heritage; discourage parental involvement;

promote instructional dependence; and use assessment procedures which locate

the "problem" in the students.

Cummins (1986) contrasts two pedagogical orientations, which "differ in

the extent to which the teacher retains exclusive control over classroom

interaction as opposed to sharing some of this control with students" (p. 28).

The first, which he argues disables marginalized students, is a "transmission

model" (Barnes, 1976, cited in Cummins, 1986, p. 29). The other, which

empowers marginalized students, is a "reciprocal interaction model" (p. 29).

When instructional practices are influenced by the transmission model, the

teacher focuses on imparting skills and knowledge to the students, and "initiates

and controls the interaction, constantly orienting it toward the achievement of

instructional objectives" (p. 29). Cummins regards such practices as reinforcing the subordination of marginalized students by encouraging instructional dependence and "a kind of learned helplessness" (p. 28).

In contrast, teaching practices influenced by the reciprocal interaction model centre around the facilitation of a genuine dialogue between students and teachers. The teacher guides and facilitates rather than controls. The goal is to empower students, who are encouraged to help to shape their learning goals and become active partners in the generation of their own knowledge, leading to a greater sense of "efficacy and inner direction...[which]...is especially important for students from dominated groups whose experiences so often orient them in the other direction" (Cummins, 1986, p. 29).

Educators can empower marginalized students in other ways. Cummins (1986) urges educators to involve the parents of marginalized children and youth to become partners in their children's education. Cummins notes that parents from dominated groups are often held responsible for their children's low academic attainment, and are viewed as uninterested in their children's schooling. On the contrary, Cummins argues that "most parents of minority students have high aspirations for their children and want to be involved in their academic progress" (p. 27). Moreover, research suggests that involving minority parents in their children's education leads to improvements in academic performance (Tizard, Schofield, & Hewison, 1982, cited in Cummins, 1986).

More recently, Cummins (1997) has pointed out that minority students may be forced to reject their own identities in order to fit in and be regarded by others as successful learners. This occurs, Cummins argues, because many educators are influenced by "role definitions" (p. 34) which include negative expectations, assumptions and educational goals in relation to minority students. "These role definitions determine the way educators view pupils' possibilities and the messages they communicate to pupils with regard to the contributions they can make to their societies" (Cummins, 1997, Conclusion section, para. 8). According to Cummins, interactions with educators who exemplify such role definitions have a negative effect on students. Cummins argues that educators must gain an understanding of issues of power and identity in order to change their role definitions and transform interactions within classrooms so that they empower rather than disempower minority students. Cummins (1997) regards interactions and practices within classrooms as:

> never neutral...[they]...always either reinforce coercive relations of
> power or promote collaborative relations of power...in the latter
> case, the micro-interactions constitute a process of empowerment
> that enables educators, pupils and communities to challenge the
> operation of coercive power structures (para. 15)

Cummins (1986, 1997) points to the existence of potential barriers to reform efforts aimed at empowering marginalized students and their communities. Such efforts may meet with fierce resistance, because in a

competitive society, many benefit from unequal power relationships. The rhetoric of equal opportunity and the deep-seated belief that unequal attainment results from individual and familial deficits operate to uphold such relationships.

Critical Sociological Perspectives and The Ethic of Care

The critical sociological perspectives outlined in this chapter offer explanations of why marginalized students tend to be less successful at school than mainstream students which differ sharply from deficit-oriented explanations of unequal educational attainment (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001). Those who write from critical sociological perspectives refuse to view students or their families as deficient or pathological and recognize the impact on academic performance of social factors such as unequal social status and poverty (Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001; Cummins, 1997). Rather than stigmatizing and blaming victims of adverse circumstances, proponents of these perspectives seek to empower them and alleviate social ills (Wotherspoon, 1998). To be successful with marginalized children and youth, schools must find ways to disrupt relations of dominance and subordination by, for example, finding valued spaces within schools for diverse students' cultural and linguistic practices, and engaging in instructional practices that empower rather than disable minority and other marginalized students (Cummins, 1986, 1997).

Critical sociological perspectives, which focus mainly on the broad social contributors to disadvantage, complement the ethic of care with its primary focus

on close, proximal relationships and meeting the needs of individuals. Despite differences in focus, critical sociological perspectives and the ethic of care share several similarities. Both posit a socially constituted self and emphasize the importance of relationships. Both reject the liberal ethic of justice with its focus on competition and view of minimal obligations to others. Both reject deficit explanations of differences in educational attainment and instead suggest that ways must be sought to adapt schools to students rather than adapt students to schools. Some of the reforms that both approaches regard as necessary are: a greater degree of teacher autonomy; the inclusion of marginalized parents in their children's education; an approach to students as whole persons rather than as collections of abilities and deficits; and instructional methods which position students as active rather than passive participants. Both approaches eschew blame, coercion and punishment and posit that while students resist and fail to thrive in environments of coercion, they flourish in environments of caring and respect.

The ethic of care's focus on immediate contexts and the importance of close, nurturing and respectful relationships to healthy development complements critical sociological insights regarding the wider social contexts that affect local circumstances and create patterns of disadvantage. Together these approaches provide a more complete lens through which to interpret the school experiences of marginalized youth.

Some theorists within both traditions do emphasize the importance of both immediate and more distant relationships. For example, Cummins (1986), writing from critical sociological perspectives, posits that by engaging in respectful interactions at the classroom level and by including parents of marginalized students in their children's education, educators can disrupt broad societal patterns of dominance and subordination. Care ethicist Nel Noddings (2004, Presentation at Simon Fraser University) connects uniform and unresponsive classroom practices to a broader "culture of control." Moreover, Noddings insists that blaming social ills on high school dropouts is absurd (1995). However, while some theorists within both traditions already focus to a degree on both local and wider contexts, a difference in emphasis has led each tradition to somewhat different and complementary insights regarding the schooling of marginalized youth.

A perspective formed by bringing together the insights of the ethic of care and critical sociological perspectives is one which attends to the importance of local relationships as well as to the broad social contexts which influence their formation. In attempting to understand the school experiences of marginalized youth, a combined perspective is equally concerned with examining classroom interactions and whether they do or do not support healthy development, and with the links between classroom life and wider social realities. Such a perspective also recognizes that it is not accidental that marginalized students

are currently disadvantaged in regular schools, since in a competitive society, there are those who benefit from the disadvantage of others.

Using the combined lens of the ethic of care and critical sociological perspectives, I identified 4 primary themes which will shape my discussions in Chapters 5 and 6.

- Relationships which mirror/challenge societal relations of dominance and subordination;

- Relationships of caring which provide (or do not provide) a context for positive development and meeting individual needs;

- Instruction – responsive and individualized versus uniform;

- School environment – oriented toward inclusion or exclusion.

Chapter 4 —
Research Methods and Description of
Blue Mountain Educational Centre

The interview data I analyzed originated from an earlier study conducted at Blue Mountain which examined the perceptions of caring of members of the school's key stakeholder groups (Cassidy & Bates, 2005). The interview data contained many comments regarding participants' views of regular schools as well as of Blue Mountain, which is informed by the ethic of care. The data suggested that students fared very differently in these two kinds of educational settings. It appeared that further investigation of the data could help uncover what it was about these two kinds of contexts that led to such different outcomes and perceptions of schooling and suggest possible reforms.

This chapter briefly describes the study in which the interview data was collected as well as the methods used in this investigation. The chapter concludes with a description of Blue Mountain Educational Centre.

The Perceptions of Caring Study

This study (Cassidy & Bates, 2005) employed a qualitative case study approach, situated in the ethnographic tradition of educational inquiry and individual interview methodology. The purpose of this study was to explore, students', parents', and teachers' perceptions of caring and how caring is

actualized in Blue Mountain's policies and practices. Data was collected through field notes collected on site throughout the approximately two year duration of the study, and artifacts such as school documents and reports, external evaluation studies, curriculum resources, lesson plans, student files, and education plans for individual students were analyzed. Interviews were conducted with each teacher (5), a sample of parents (8), and a sample of students (14), as well as three former students.

Interview questions were prepared ahead of time and designed to be semi-structured and open-ended. There was a degree of overlap among the questions asked of different groups. Questions for all groups were designed to elicit participants' experiences, values and opinions, knowledge and feelings (Merriam, 1988, p. 78).

Students (Cassidy & Bates, 2005) were asked to describe the school, what they liked and disliked about it, how it compared to previous schools, how they would describe caring (and uncaring), whether they felt cared for (not cared for) at the school, who cared for them, how they would improve the school, whether the school had any impact on them, and other related questions.

Teachers (Cassidy & Bates, 2005) were asked about their background and why they came to the school, as well as questions about whether caring was central to the school and their work, how they would describe caring (and uncaring), the philosophy and working principles which guide them, some concrete examples of their work with youth, whether they would do anything

differently, the impact they believe they are having on the youth, and other related questions.

Parents (Cassidy & Bates, 2005) were asked whether they and their children liked the school and why, what they thought of the staff, whether the staff differed from staff at their children's previous schools, whether they thought the school was a caring place, whether they and their children felt cared for (uncared for) at the school, how they would describe a caring (uncaring) teacher, whether they believed the school had had an impact on their children and if so how, what they would change about the school, and other related questions.

The interviews with the staff and students were conducted in a private room within the school. Parents were interviewed in their homes. Care was taken during the interviews to create a relaxed atmosphere, and the interviewers were respectful and nonjudgmental. Each participant was asked to choose a pseudonym. Each interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Almost all participants responded enthusiastically and at length. The exceptions were two of the students, who participated willingly, but responded with abbreviated answers. Interviews were conducted responsively with follow up questions being asked when participants brought the conversation to areas not covered in the pre-established questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The number of interviews and their length resulted in a fair amount of data. Morse (1998) points out that the adequacy of data contributes to rigor.

"Adequacy is attained when sufficient data have been collected that saturation occurs and variation is both accounted for and understood" (p. 76).

Research Methods for this Thesis

This thesis uses qualitative research methods, informed by the assumptions and insights of the research tradition of critical theory. This perspective, rooted in Marxist and feminist philosophies, assumes that existing social "inequalities need to be changed and that the world would be a better place if we could change them" (Fiske, 1994, quoted in Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 619). This is in direct contrast to dominant perspectives which posit that research is a objective, neutral enterprise. Critical researchers regard the reasons for doing research as exposing the mechanisms of inequality, motivating people to change them, and revealing how change might be promoted (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). In this thesis, I start with the assumption that social inequalities exist and are reflected and reinforced by school practices, and further that these practices particularly disadvantage marginalized students. I further assume that these school practices are not inevitable or immutable, and that an important goal of educational research is to point the way to effective reform. Within critical research approaches, it is considered important to reveal one's standpoint from the beginning (Harding, 2004). Similarly, Janesick (1998) posits that "qualitative researchers accept the fact that research is ideologically driven. There is no value-free or bias-free design. The qualitative researcher early on

identifies his or her biases and articulates the ideology or conceptual frame for the study" (p. 41).

Authorizing Student Voices

Those working within the critical research paradigm endeavour to bring forward the voices of those who are oppressed and silenced (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). This investigation highlights the perspectives of parents of marginalized youth. These parents are rarely given voice in the literature (Fine, 1993). Student voices are given a central place in this investigation. Alison Cook-Sather (2002) argues that "it is time that we count students among those with the authority to participate both in the critique and the reform of education" (p. 3). She asserts that most educational research has failed to provide "legitimate and valued spaces within which students can speak" (p. 4). Cook-Sather points to positive outcomes of authorizing students' perspectives. Students who are seriously attended to feel empowered and are motivated to participate actively in their education. Moreover, "students have a unique perspective on what happens in school and classrooms and on the dynamics between their schools and their communities" (p. 3). In a similar vein, Corbett and Wilson (1995) argue that educational reforms should be undertaken only when students have been consulted directly "in settings where students can express their experiences freely, and without the constraints of an adult-imposed model of the most significant issues" (p. 16).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) point out the importance of choosing interviewees who are experienced and knowledgeable; students have experience and knowledge of schools which needs to be shared. As Cook-Sather (2002) and Corbett and Wilson (1995) contend, students should be considered experts on the ways that educational experiences affect them. Rubin and Rubin posit that "reality is complex...to accurately portray that complexity, you need to gather contradictory or overlapping perceptions and nuanced understandings that different individuals hold" (p. 67). Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (1998) argue that while data from any one source or group may useful in its own right, the perspectives of others provide "additional rigor, breadth, and depth" (p. 4). This investigation has sought the perspectives of differently positioned individuals, for example, students who have attended a wide variety of schools and have attended Blue Mountain for different lengths of time, former students, parents, teachers and (to a lesser degree) administrators.

Janesick (1998) points out that triangulation may be achieved in qualitative research in several ways. Three ways which apply to this research are: data triangulation (interviews of different groups at the school); theory triangulation (using more that one theory to interpret the same set of data); and interdisciplinary triangulation (using more than one discipline, in this case moral theory and sociology). The use of these and other kinds of triangulation "may broaden our understanding" (Janesick, 1998, p. 47). Moreover, within qualitative

inquiry "triangulation serves...to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen (Stake, 1998, p. 97).

Analysis

Because this was a secondary analysis, I was already well-acquainted with the interview data, which had been collected during the previous study (Cassidy & Bates, 2005). I was aware, however, of the need to examine the data with "new eyes." Because my research focus differed from that of the initial investigation, I was able to review and analyze the data in a different light. The primary goal of my secondary analysis of the data was to discover the perceptions of the various groups of participants regarding how marginalized youth were disadvantaged at regular schools, and how they were advantaged at Blue Mountain. In addition I wanted to consider the implications of these findings, interpreted through a combined lens of the ethic of care and critical sociological perspectives, for educational practices in relation to marginalized youth.

Over the approximately one and a half years that I have been involved in this work, the analysis has gone through overlapping phases, as I understand what the data demonstrated about the experiences of marginalized youth in two kinds of school settings. In the earliest phase, I reread the interviews carefully, looking for how the students and others talked about Blue Mountain and about regular schools.

The theoretical lens I brought to my readings was the ethic of care, especially as it is described and developed by Nel Noddings. I was careful to remain open to discovering categories and themes in the data which might not fit this lens and to avoid falling into the trap of "seeing" only what the theory indicated should be there (Janesick, 1998). As Morse (1998) points out, "theory is used to focus the inquiry" (p. 59) in qualitative research, but should not blind the researcher to themes which do not fit the theory. I found some themes which fit with the ethic of care perspective, and others which did not. These led me to further investigations of the literature, in particular, feminist care ethicists, as well as critical sociological perspectives. Thoughout the entire overlapping process of forming research questions, analysis, and writing, I have "stayed close to the data," allowing the voices of the interviewees to guide me, and being careful not to force the data into patterns suggested by the literature (Janesick, 1998).

The themes and categories which emerged suggested that both the ethic of care and critical sociological perspectives are useful in making sense of the data. The ethic of care literature was helpful in suggesting themes related to how students were empowered and enabled at Blue Mountain, but was less useful in explaining wider patterns of advantage and disadvantage. In particular, what I perceived was missing from the ethic of care literature was a means of explaining the problems of marginalized students at regular schools. Critical sociological perspectives provided the concepts needed to address this issues.

Theory and Data

The use of two theoretical lens, the ethic of care and critical sociological perspectives, allowed me to avoid the potential dangers of relying on a single perspective. Rubin and Rubin (2005) warn that reliance on a single theoretical lens during analysis requires care. "If you use an established theoretical lens as your sole source for coding categories, you might miss the original insights in your own data; you end up testing someone else's theory instead of building one of your own" (p. 209).

I avoided this potential pitfall by, first, using a combination of theoretical frameworks. Second, I used the theories as a rough guide, but allowed them to be tested and extended by what I found in the data. An example of how this worked is that while the theoretical frameworks were helpful in suggesting themes which might be found in the data, only close examination of the interviews, alone and in combination with others, showed how themes related to each other, and allowed a rich understanding of how participants viewed the two kinds of schooling and their impact on students.

Description of the School

Blue Mountain Educational Centre, housed in a modern and comfortable building located in a Greater Vancouver suburb, was founded ten years ago to provide a comprehensive educational approach for youth aged 12 to 19 who had failed to thrive at regular schools and had been involved in the criminal justice system. It is an independent school, funded through a combination of

government and private sources. The student population is small, averaging about 50.

The students initially come to the school as a result of court referrals. While there is no "typical" student, all of the students have a number of individual and background characteristics which place them at the extreme end of the "at-risk" (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001) or the "most vulnerable" (Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001) category. These include low socio-economic status, minority group membership, and identification as having learning or behavioural challenges. Many students come from single parent homes; some are in foster care or group homes. Some are estranged from their families. Most of the students have had school histories marred by multiple disciplinary encounters and exclusion from school. Most are approximately one grade level behind similarly aged peers.

There are two separate programs at the school. Upon entering the school, students attend Blue Mountain One, the initial program. This is funded as a short-term program for court-referred youth, who stay for between four to six months. Blue Mountain One has three interrelated components, academic, family, and community. In the academic component, teachers and students work together, either on a one to one basis or in small groups (the ratio is 1 to 8). Teachers individualize the curriculum according to each student's particular abilities, interests, and needs. Some students, for example, can't yet read, or have only been reading for a short time, requiring that the curriculum be

adapted. In the family component, family workers work with youth and their families in their homes, encouraging positive connections between home and school. There is also a community component staffed by youth workers. Each student is assigned a youth worker who strives to help him or her build positive connections in the community and learn certain skills. In addition, the youth workers provide a variety of recreational and educational activities for the youth. Despite the fact that there are separate parts of the program, staff from all three program areas work together and share information as a coordinated team.

Blue Mountain Two provides an opportunity for some students to continue their high school education at the school when they have completed the court-referred part of the program. Blue Mountain Two has no formal family and community components, and the teacher-student ratio is higher (approximately 1 to 12). As in the initial program, instruction is individualized and students work at their own pace. All of the students are together in one large classroom with two teachers, who encourage a high degree of student involvement in deciding on and planning activities, as well as participation in class discussions.

Regular Schools

The data provides insight regarding how a group of marginalized youth, as well as parents and Blue Mountain staff, perceive regular schools. Certain limitations should be noted. First, although the participants were asked some questions about their experiences at regular schools, the central focus of the interviews was their perceptions of Blue Mountain Educational Centre, so a

smaller proportion of the interview data concerns regular schools. Second, unlike the interview data concerning Blue Mountain, the data related to regular schools is not part of a wider set of data derived from on-site observation and document analysis. Nonetheless, I believe it is important and appropriate to include findings related to regular schools. First, there is a considerable degree of overlap among the students' comments regarding their various former schools, providing some grounds for generality of the findings. In addition, the insights of the parents and staff who were interviewed concerning regular schools share many similarities with students' views, offering a form of triangulation (Janesick, 1988). Moreover, as Cook-Sather (2002) argues, it is important to recognize that students are experts on their own educational experiences, and the interview data presents a rare opportunity to view the educational system through the eyes of students who have experienced failure at regular schools.

Chapter 5 —
Analysis

The primary goal of this investigation was to examine the perceptions of

the various groups of participants regarding how marginalized youth are

disadvantaged at regular schools, and how they are advantaged at Blue

Mountain Educational Centre. This chapter begins with a discussion of the

perceptions of teachers at Blue Mountain of the ways that they care for students.

I then discuss the findings in relation to the four themes which I identified.

Teachers Perceptions
of How They Care for Students

The school's five teachers had been there for between a few months and

several years. Most had taught in both the Blue Mountain One program and the

Blue Mountain Two program. The teachers have somewhat different but

overlapping approaches. Will regards himself as "kind of a cross between a

teacher and a counselor, a motivator, a mentor, a leader, all at the same time."

Paul views himself first and foremost as a teacher who focuses primarily on

academic goals, but is able to develop close relationships with his students

because of the small class size (eight students) and individualized instruction.

Paul stresses that although he has "developed some common strategies over the

years," he still individualizes the approach he takes with every student. He said,

"I try to be very respectful of the student's knowledge and interests and build on that as much as possible, and their experiences, and use those to facilitate their growth...in a natural way." Jenna sees herself as a facilitator who always lets youth "take the lead in their learning" and works to help them "discover their potential." Craig regards himself as:

> A listener and a caregiver, as opposed to the educator that is separated from the students' lives. You tend to take on more that approach as opposed to the educator that is separated from the students' lives, is just there to dictate what you're going to learn today. We take on more of a personal role than a lot of public schools will allow you to do.

> There are many common threads running though the teacher interviews."

Doug indicated that when he first started teaching in the Blue Mountain One program, he:

> felt frustrated sometimes because a lot of my students wouldn't finish the course. So if you're someone who thought that you have a student for four months and they should be able to complete the course and if they don't you consider it a failure – you're going to get frustrated.

Now, several months later, Doug feels good about his work, because:

> I learned that there were other successes. I saw my students transform. I saw them change and come out of their shell more. To

be able to form friendships with them, and to see them change was great.

All appear to share a deep respect for students and a belief in their potential. Jenna's comments reflect this general view. She sees the students as "survivors" for whom "anything is possible...I really believe that kids need to be accepted just the way they are at the moment...every youth has a strength."

Jenna views the school as "a place where [students] can regroup...where they can grow and develop and be happy...[and]...leave here feeling like they've been successful... and perhaps wanting to go on."

The teachers agree that the individualized instruction and small classes facilitate the development of caring relationships, which they regard as a priority, and as assisting students' learning. Craig said, "I'm really working with students on a one-to-one basis and I think that makes their learning experience a little more rich that way."

Teachers believe students take pride and ownership in their work. Will noted, "I encourage them to critique what I have set up for them, and if they have a question, I encourage them to ask me about that. And that really allows them to feel a sense of ownership on what they're doing at the school." Teachers also share a belief that a key way to help kids grow in positive ways is to help them "feel good about themselves on the deepest levels, all levels " (Doug). Teachers are also united in their view that the small class size and team approach are key factors which allow them to develop caring relationships with

their students, leading to positive growth. They regard regular schools, in contrast, as "education factories," which are "institutional" and "inflexible." Will's views are representative. He believes that Blue Mountain students have been unsuccessful at regular schools because:

> They don't fit into the typical mould, the public school system mould, and I think it's a shame because they could fit into the mould if the mould was flexible, but it's a rigid mould and it's been rigid for fifty or seventy-five years, and it's going to stay rigid as far as I can tell.

In contrast, Will regards Blue Mountain as "very flexible. It's progressive. It's been explained to me as an organic model where things can shift and change based on the [students'] needs."

Teachers believe that since coming to the school they have learned more ways to care for students, and indicate that they adapt their caring to the specific needs of students. All have their own ways of interacting with students. Paul said:

> You develop a relationship with the student, you get to know them, you talk about things, you "be." A lot of times in the classroom with students working, and I'm sitting there drawing a picture, and we're "being" together, we're not necessarily conversing on a verbal level, but as a result of that bond I care what happens to that student and how that student is going to grow and develop.

About 6 years ago, teachers and other staff developed the following vision statement as a guide to their practice:

We are a safe, respectful and nurturing community, sensitive to each person and his or her uniqueness. Within this community individuals have the opportunity to build their resources and develop new skills. These experiences encourage self-reflective behaviour and a strengthened relationship to family and the wider community. Living these principles inspires hope and promising futures.

There are commonalities as well as differences in teachers' interpretations of the vision statement. Jenna, who has been at the school for several years and helped to develop the vision statement, believes that it is crucial to keeping all of the members of the staff focused on the same goals, but that older and newer members of the staff sometimes interpret the vision statement in different ways. For example, she believes that sometimes newer staff members interpret "safety" in the vision statement narrowly, as meaning physical safety, whereas she regards it as including emotional safety and safety from negative labelling. Jenna said, "I think sometimes people take the word safety to mean safe as in the physical safety...and I think they forget there's safety in feeling like they're accepted and not made fun of...emotionally safe." Jenna added, "That's one of the things that needs to be renewed constantly is what does that [safety] mean." Moreover, Jenna believes that sometimes newer staff members interpret

"respect" in the vision statement as meaning students' respect for staff, whereas she regards the vision statement as being about staff's respect for students. Despite Jenna's concerns, none of the teachers' responses indicate they share the interpretations she is concerned about. All of the teachers interviewed appear to place a high priority on student safety in a broad sense, and on staff respect for students.

Paul believes that the vision statement is about providing a safe and nurturing environment in order to meet students' needs, and that caring is expressed in various ways by different members of the staff. Doug's comments suggest that, in his view, close adherence to a single vision may place limits on notions of how to care for students. He stated that in every organization "individuals change and evolve, becoming more self-knowledgeable – it's important not to be satisfied with "I am who I am and that's all that I am."

In general, the teachers believe that although there is an expectation that all staff will work to fulfill the vision of providing a safe, nurturing and respectful environment, they have a great deal of freedom to decide how to work together to achieve that goal. At weekly staff meetings, as well as on an ongoing basis, staff share information and plan how to respectfully meet students' needs. All five of the teachers indicated in their comments that the support they receive from other teachers and the rest of the staff is crucial in enabling them to successfully work with students. For example, Jenna said that, "It's a huge team effort for caring" and explained "it's sharing information, it's a huge part if it, it's

sharing ideas. I mean we have a lot of meetings here on Mondays where teachers play a role in sharing what's going on, it's such a collaborative, because it's such a holistic approach to their lives."

Themes of a Combined Ethic of Care and Critical Sociological Perspectives

In Chapter 3, I suggested that the ethic of care and critical sociological perspectives can be combined to provide a rich theoretical lens through which to examine and interpret the school experiences of marginalized youth. Following Cummins (1997), I argued that interactions at the classroom level are affected by and in turn can either reinforce or challenge social inequality at the societal level. The ethic of care literature (e.g. Noddings, 1984, 1992; Gilligan, 1982) is rich in insights regarding what Cummins (1997) terms "microinteractions", but is less so regarding "macrointeractions", or relations at the societal level. In contrast, critical sociological perspectives (Fine, 1991; MacLeod, 1995; Wotherspoon, 1998; Wotherspoon & Schissel 2001) are rich with insights concerning relations among groups but less so in terms of one to one relationships and classroom interactions. I have also argued that the two approaches are philosophically compatible. Both regard individuals as socially constituted, and relationships as an important means of conveying advantage or disadvantage. Both reject the individualistic ethic of justice with its emphasis on maximizing liberty and limiting responsibility to others to noninterference.

The themes I developed in the course of analyzing the data though the combined lens of the ethic of care and critical sociological perspectives are used to organize the findings related to students' and (and to a lesser degree, parents' and teachers') perceptions of two kinds of educational settings, regular schools and Blue Mountain Educational Centre. The four themes are:

- Relationships which mirror/challenge societal relations of dominance and subordination;

- Relationships of caring which provide (or do not provide) a context for positive development and engagement with schooling;

- Instruction – responsive and individualized versus uniform;

- School environment – oriented toward inclusion or exclusion.

**Relationships Which Mirror/Challenge Societal Relations
of Dominance and Subordination**

This theme encapsulates the ways in which relationships within schools either reflect and reinforce, or challenge, inequalities at the societal level. Within this broad theme I consider the different school contexts in terms of ways that students and their families perceive they support (or fail to support) student identity and whether they use methods of coercion. I also consider whether marginalized students and their families are treated in ways that respect differences or in ways that demonstrate racism, class prejudice, or the stigmatization of learning challenges or other differences.

Relationships of Caring which Provide (or do not Provide) a Context for Positive Development

This theme allows me to consider whether relationships in the two kinds of settings provide the caring relationships needed to promote positive development.

Instruction: Responsive and Individualized or Uniform

In this thematic category I consider aspects of instructional practices in the two settings, in terms of whether they are individualized or uniform, as well as the extent to which assistance is available.

Overall School Environment: Oriented Toward Inclusion or Exclusion.

This theme allows me consider the data in relation to how participants view the overall environment of the two school contexts with regard to the degree of responsiveness of school policies and practices to students' complex lives. I also looked at whether parents were informed and included as partners in their children's education and whether students felt a positive sense of connection to the school.

Relationships
which Mirror/Challenge Societal Relations
of Dominance and Subordination

Regular Schools

Blue Mountain students believed that they were regarded in a negative light and expected to fail at regular schools. As Greg expressed it, they were seen as "bad apples to throw out." Another student, Melissa, said that at regular schools she felt that was looked upon as a "little punk who didn't care" and that staff at regular schools "just judge me and my life."

Students indicated that staff at regular schools disapproved of they way they dressed and spoke. As a result, students felt discomfort and a lack of belonging. Eddie commented that at regular schools students like him have to constantly watch what they say and do and hope "that you're going to say the right thing or do the right thing." Although students regard themselves as unlike those at regular schools, whom they see as kids "from the white picket fence-type houses" (Theo), none of the students link these differences or the way they were treated at regular schools directly to racism or class prejudice. Some parents, however, do regard their children's experiences at regular schools as affected by such factors.

One of the parents, Tricia, described how, as a young single mother, she had felt that the school negatively judged her and her family. When her son Josh, at age 6, had severe difficulties adjusting to classroom expectations and became so depressed that he developed suicidal tendencies, the school provided

little help and instead labeled him as emotionally disturbed as well as learning disabled. Several years later, this parent, now a professional, believes she was treated differently by school staff as a result of her higher status. She had observed that staff treated parents and students differently according to such factors as parents' age, education, income level, and marital status. She noted that this was prejudice "as bad as racism." Tricia explained that,

> They (school staff) don't just look at the student, they look at the parent, they look at the family situation, and then they make their judgments, which is wrong. Because you can have parents that are complete screw-ups, and have an intelligent child, and if you focus on that child, and give him something to look forward to instead of stigmatizing him, and making him not want to go to school because he knows he's different...then I think that child would see school as a safe place to go, as a place where they feel valued, and where they can have a measure of success.

Tricia believes that by labeling Josh as different and by failing to respond to his learning challenges in a positive manner, regular schools contributed to his problems. "He was the one in the classroom that always got teased. He was the one who, you know, ended up having to become the bully, you know, or get into fights."

Another parent, Alam, who had emigrated from Africa with his family, and judging from the family's small apartment where the interview was conducted,

was of modest means, had a poignant story to tell. His son, Mari, had experienced numerous difficulties at a high school on Vancouver's West Side. Mari had been bullied and taunted by locally-born, white students, though he had made a few friends among other immigrant youth. Alam knew a little of the problems, and had counseled his son to ignore the taunts, and never to respond unless the bullying became physical. Alam received no indication from the school that any problems had been noted.

One day, Alam received a call from the school and was informed that his son had hit another student, and was being expelled, in keeping with the school's zero tolerance policy. Alam went to speak to the principal, and tried to communicate that his son had been victimized, and that he was the target of racism. The principal (ironically, a person of colour himself) calmly replied that there was no racism at the school. Alam said that when he heard those words he felt that there was nothing more that he could say or do to help his son, who had eventually reacted physically to the taunts and one incident of hitting. Because the principal was a person of colour, who nonetheless stated calmly what Alam knew to be false, he felt that further comments on his part were futile. Alam said that he "tried to explain, and he [the principal] says 'no, in this school, there is no racism, we know that.' I said, 'well, what can I say?' They don't even give us a chance to express ourself and to come to a mutual agreement." Mari was admitted to another school, where he was "placed on a program, anger management, and certain programs to help him, you know,

change". Mari's problems continued. Both Alam and Mari's mother felt frustrated, and often felt anger toward their son, who increasingly stayed away from both home and school, was sometimes brought home drunk by the police, and became involved in petty crime. According to Alam, the boys who had victimized his son were not disciplined, because they had not been caught contravening the school's zero tolerance policy concerning physical violence.

A third parent, Linda, believed that her son had been treated differently from other students and placed in a special education class primarily because the family was judged as "lower class type thing." During a conversation she and her son had with the school counselor, she reported that her son said,

"Okay, if I'm stupid then I'm not going to come to school," so he
never did go to, like he would leave every day to go to school, but
he never went to class. And I found out about it, let's see, that
happened in September, and I didn't find out about him not going
to school until the end of November. He'd already missed 3 months
worth of school before they notified me.

Several of the students had a lot to say about their experiences of coercion and disciplinary encounters at regular schools. Jack said teachers used their power "to send me to the office and stuff." He also explained that "at other (regular) schools you're forced to show respect to someone. I feel that you're forced to respect the teacher. If she's mean to you, you still have to respect her." Jack had resisted attempts at coercion. "At other schools I tend not to want

to listen to authority because it's the whole respect thing. Being forced to do something I don't want to do."

Much of Theo's past at school had consisted of disciplinary encounters. "I had a big file when I was going to regular schools, a really big file. Elementary school, they had the file at the bottom of the filing cabinet saved just for me." His memories of regular schools were mainly negative. One memory concerned his brother. "I remember this one principal in elementary school slammed my brother up against the door, grabbed him by the throat. My little brother was in Grade 2."

Disciplinary encounters often led to exclusion from school. Jeff said, "When I was in high school, like actual regular school, if we got in a scrap we got suspended for the school year or whatever, you know?" *The whole year?* "Well, like you know, the semester or whatever, right?" Jeff believes this was unfair, because it "it's different for every kid. Like I have a violent history right? I, if I fought in public school, you know, I was gone for that year, not even a second thinking about it."

Exclusion from school on a number of occasions may have contributed to James' decision to leave school. When asked if Blue Mountain differed from other high schools, James said, "I didn't go to any other (high) schools. I went to public (elementary) school and got kicked out a whole bunch of times before just finally dropping."

Blue Mountain

Students believe that their non-mainstream identities were accepted and respected by the staff at Blue Mountain, who understand "kids like us" and don't try to make them into carbon copies of other kids. This is important to these students, who stress the differences between themselves and kids from "regular" schools, whom they regard as "geeks...from the white picket type of houses." They see other students at Blue Mountain as "pretty cool people...[who] know what's up."

The teachers' relaxed acceptance of markers of student identity and youth culture, for example, students' dress and hair styles, as well as their calm response to informal language use (both slang and swearing), help students to feel accepted, confident and able to focus. Eddie said,

Sometimes you swear occasionally and don't think about it, and in a normal school the teachers are like, 'ah that's bad, that's bad, you've got to write lines' or whatever, but here it's just like 'hey, got to watch your tongue' kind of thing. It's not so strict about stuff like that. *And what result does that have?* I think it's better because...you can be more yourself.

Jack commented: "Here it's like you're at your friend's house...and it makes you feel more comfortable. You're not, nobody wants to change you or make you the way they are."

Parents regard their children as accepted and respected by Blue Mountain staff. While Tricia believes that her son Josh was regarded as deficient by prior schools, "at Blue Mountain, it's more, you know, they're allowed to keep their self-respect and their dignity, and learn at the same time, and there's not that kind of, you know, stereotyping or stigma that's attached with having a learning impediment." Tricia added that she was "thrilled" when Blue Mountain staff "looked at his transcript to see where he needed to most assistance, but that was it. After that, Josh was an individual, the file went away." Tricia believes that staff at Blue Mountain are "interested in Josh as a person" and that she and other parents are not negatively judged. "I'm treated the same way as any other mom is treated. They don't come here and, you know, scrutinize me. They're supportive, they're encouraging, they're forgiving," adding (laughing) that she doesn't have "school phobia anymore."

Teachers find ways to incorporate aspects of students' cultural backgrounds and interests into the curriculum. For example, Jenna described a former student who appeared uncomfortable about his First Nations' heritage, and who "made a very big deal about not wanting to be taught anything about native studies in social studies, hated, you know, was adamant that he didn't want to talk, made fun of his own race." The student refused to take part in a unit concerning Native Canadians "and we didn't push it on him. He wanted to switch to English, so we did switch him to English." Jenna explained that despite allowing him to switch, staff introduced books into the English unit that had

some native content, and that year, they planned a field trip to a sweat lodge in a small town near Vancouver. In addition, they encouraged other, non-native students to engage in work that had a native component; for example, one student did a large collage based on a native theme. "We did a few different things, you know, but we planned to try and work it in wherever we could without making it seem like it was directed at him." These efforts had the result that "he left feeling more comfortable about who he was culturally."

Students reported that they experienced ongoing conflicts with authority figures at regular schools, both teachers and principals. At Blue Mountain this changed. The restraint and the calm encouraging manner of the staff, even on occasions when they are faced with behaviour that might garner a strongly negative response at other schools, appeared to amaze the students, and contribute to the development of caring and trusting relationships between students and the staff. The students regard the staff as able to "turn big things into little things" and "smooth everything over quick." Issues of power are highly salient for some of the students, who spoke about the positive impact of not having to fight back and "prove" themselves at school.

Jack shared his insights about what is different at this school that can explain why he and others, who previously had many battles with school authorities, now have positive relations with all of the staff, including the principal. He explained that in the past he felt that he was forced to show respect, but that teachers and administrators showed by what they said and did

that they had no respect for him. "I had to give respect to the teacher even if she was mean to me." In contrast, "here you gain the respect of those people, and people here, they gain the respect of you. So it's a two way thing and not a one way." Once he felt respected, he no longer felt the need to prove himself or "act out." "Here if you act out you just make yourself look dumb."

While Jack recognizes that the teachers at this school are in positions of authority, he sees them as sharing power rather than using their power against students. Of his teacher, Paul, Jack commented that he "doesn't overpower and look at him, the teacher, as having the power. And some of the teachers at other schools do. They think they have the power to send me to the office and stuff. It's like Paul, he doesn't use his power."

Jack's sentiments about the absence of power struggles at Blue Mountain were echoed by Theo: "At regular schools I'd get the teachers pissed off so easily, but here the teachers don't get mad. They know how to control their anger." Asked what effect that has, Theo replied "It makes us a little bit more mellow, you know what I mean?" Much of Theo's past school life had centred around conflict, but things had changed: "I've never been in trouble here [in 1 1/2 years] so it's pretty good...here I don't even know if I have a file, except for my name and that's about it."

Scott talked about how being respected changed his attitude. "[I learned] a lot about respect. For a long time I haven't respected anyone and I haven't

received any respect back, but then I started being respected as soon as I got here, so I started respecting other people."

The teachers echo the students' emphasis on respect. Jenna's views are similar to those of the other teachers. She regards respect for students at the school as given unconditionally: not accorded in response to students' accomplishments, good behaviour or compliance but simply in response to "their individuality...they may be a drug addict and that doesn't mean they're less deserving of our respect." It's not necessary for "them to make changes based on what we thought was appropriate...in order to give them our respect." Jenna explained that staff strongly believe that if they treated students with respect from the first, "their respect for us would come later."

Relationships of Caring
which Provide (or do not Provide) a Context
for Positive Development and Meeting Individual Needs

Regular Schools

The students regard teachers at regular schools as impersonal and uncaring. When asked to describe what an uncaring teacher is like, several students referred to their former teachers at regular schools. Rick said that teachers at regular schools, "don't listen to you as much" and "most people hate their teachers."

Parents also regarded staff at regular schools as uncaring. One parent described an uncaring teacher as one who "really doesn't give two shoots, just

dumps everything on you, like the homework, and when you ask them questions, he'll just say, read your book." Parents attributed what they regarded as regular schools' failure to keep them informed about their children's progress or problems as evidence of the staff's lack of caring.

Blue Mountain

Parents regard the biggest difference between regular schools and Blue Mountain as being that at Blue Mountain "they actually care" (Alam).

The students look upon the teachers at Blue Mountain as more like friends than like teachers. Derrick's comments echoed many others: "Here they're more like a friend, not really a teacher." Jack also spoke of his teacher as "a friend. A teacher can care, and if a teacher's your friend, they care. If somebody actually worries." Rick described his teacher as "really cool. He takes us out when there's hot days. No other teacher I know would just take you out for coffee. So, it's more like a friend thing."

Greg said what he likes best about the school is that, "It's more personal, they care about my health, they care about my well-being, you know, they care about like how I'm doing and stuff like that.... That's what I like about it, they actually, they're in it for us." Students spoke of their teachers as people who listen and who go out of their way understand them. Of his teacher Will, Greg commented, "Like he wants to know about me. I can talk to him about anything and everything."

A word which appears again and again in the student interviews is "respect." Students are confident that the teachers and other staff respect them for who they were, and this appears to be what opens the door for relationships to be built.

In the context of trusting relationships, students regard teachers as "being there" for them, as wanting them to succeed, and as working hard on their behalf. One student explained that while teachers at other schools would explain something to him once and that would be it, his teachers at Blue Mountain don't give up until he understands.

Many of the students spoke of how the staff "are there for" them in the sense of being available to discuss problems in their personal lives. Staff help both students and their families in this way. One boy, Ali, explained that his Family Worker, Jake, often helps both him and his family by talking things over when conflicts occur at home. Jake sometimes meets Ali for coffee, or they go to a park to play a little basketball, allowing for informal chats in a relaxed setting.

Several of the students feel a special bond with Carl, Blue Mountain's principal, who maintains an open door policy. Sid, who has been at the school for two years, often comes to school early and Carl's office is his first stop. Having a chat with Carl helps Sid to cope with stress. Sid describes Carl as "the nicest guy, period, that I've ever met." Melissa also feels close to Carl and said that he is "just always there for me."

In addition, students spoke of the practical help which staff provide. One student described how his youth worker came and tapped on his window to awaken him for school when his alarm had failed to go off. Carl, the school's principal, often provides students with practical help as well, sometimes taking a student for a medical appointment or a haircut.

Both students and teachers indicated that they sometimes engage in activities together outside of the classroom, which appears to provide an extra dimension of caring to their relationships. One student commented that his teacher had taught him to play chess. "I never knew how to play before and he taught me." Another was taught to cook by his teacher (a former cook).

One of the parents, Farimah, attributes her son's renewed interest in school to the care and attention he received at school. "I think they give so much attention, they gave so much attention to the students, eh? And I think all the caring and the attention, it makes Ali interested in it so much too, like he showed his interest right back."

Farimah has seen her son become more communicative, more likely to complete tasks, and more caring toward family members. She described one occasion when she was lying down because she had a stomachache. Ali asked what was wrong and after learning that she was feeling unwell made her some tea and then "he was rubbing my back, eh, because I don't have a daughter, I only have two boys, right, Ali is the youngest one, right, so yeah, that felt really good, yeah." Farimah was clearly moved by Ali's caring response.

Farimah explained that in the past she worried about Ali a lot, but since he started at the school there have been many positive changes in his life. For example, now he works out, both at home or out with his friends and cousins, and he plays basketball. Farimah said she now feels "more content, more peaceful".

Alam believes that his son has matured as a result of his experiences as Blue Mountain. In the past, Mari would do "anything to get a friend." He would leave the house wearing a new shirt; "he comes back with a different shirt. He gives it to his friend, all that is no more. We observe that he has changed, you see.... After this program, you know, he changed, he kind of grew up." Now Mari talks to his family about what is going on in his life, helps out at home, and doesn't disappear for days, returning drunk with cuts and bruises. At the conclusion of the interview, Alam said "what I would like to add is why don't the authorities try and take the system of that school into every school...[and not]...wait until, you know, kids are down the drain?"

Parents also felt cared for by school staff. Brenda, whose daughter is a former student, said she felt cared for "because they kept in contact with me. Sandy [the Family Worker] was great. Like she called all the time to let me know, even if it was just something good...actually it was mostly good news, every time she called. You know, I used to fear getting a phone call from the [previous] school – every time, I knew it was bad. But not at this one; she called just if Carly had done something good that day.

Instruction:
Responsive and Individualized or Uniform

Regular Schools

Students found it difficult to sit and listen in a context where the teacher does most of the talking. Jack's comments are representative: "At a normal school you go and there's one person talking, like a lecture." Another student described his perceptions of how teachers act at regular schools:

> Come into the classroom, write your assignments on the board, tell you what days they are, explain them briefly, walk out of the classroom for an hour or so to go do photocopying. That's more like regular schools, where the teacher tells you to do your assignment and then they take off and sit in the lounge, and smoke cigarettes and drink coffee.

Students found that subject content was often unengaging. Referring to the novels assigned in his English class, Rick said that teachers would "throw a novel in front of you that they've read when they were young kids or whatever, you know - things change."

Rick also believes that teachers at his previous school failed to pay attention when students scored better than usual on tests or assignments. He perceives this as one way that teachers demonstrated a lack of caring.

> You know like if a kid you know, his average was like 50 or whatever, and then he scores an 83 and he's all happy, and the

teacher's like, "yeah, yeah, you know, get on your way kid," type of

deal, like that's not caring.

Students spoke of themselves as those "who didn't get it" and had

problems understanding the subject matter. When they tried to get help,

students said it was sparsely given and required a lot of waiting on their part.

Melissa spoke for many, "Like, I'll ask for help, they, sometimes they just totally

ignore you." When help did come, students indicated it wasn't enough: while

teachers would answer direct questions, they wouldn't ensure that the students

understood.

Regular schools, you have like 30 kids to one teacher, and it you're

one of the kids that doesn't really get it, you're guaranteed not to

get any of the teacher's time. You'll get 5 minutes and that's it.

(Eddie)

Students found little room for creativity. Even aspects of instruction

normally associated with self-expression were conducted in ways that did not

support creativity. Sid commented on the creative writing component of his

English class. "Well they called it creative writing but a lot of times the teachers

say, 'okay, it's creative writing time and here's your topic, write.' I don't think

that's really creative writing, that's writing about an idea that someone else gave

you."

Blue Mountain Educational Centre

Students spoke of now being excited about learning. Rick said his "reading had skyrocketed right off the roof" once his teacher "threw an interesting book in front of" him, one that was chosen in response to what his teacher knew were his interests. (The book's main character was a young man who was in and out of Canada's prisons.) Sid, talked about how a project his teacher assigned engaged his interest. He was asked to do a project in which he created his own "country," choosing its political system, religion, and so on. He was captivated by this, and appeared to enjoy it especially because it allowed him to feel a sense of creative ownership, as he said, "It was mine."

Several students spoke of their renewed sense of pride in their schoolwork. They enjoyed the individualized instruction, and now understand what is asked of them. All spoke of the help they receive from teachers, and the way teachers "didn't give up" until they understood. Some spoke with pride of receiving good marks for the first time in their lives.

Overall School Environment: Oriented Toward Inclusion or Exclusion

Regular Schools

In general, students' comments suggest that they felt a lack of affinity with regular schools, viewing them as "dull and boring" and as places where they felt unwelcome and out of place. Theo's comments are typical: "At a regular

school everybody just sits there at their desks, nobody moves. Everybody just sits there all day, and it's just boring."

Students regard regular schools as suiting some kids but not others. "A lot of people that you meet, I don't think can succeed in a normal school or do anything in a normal school." Another student said, "The regular school system, I don't know, is just not my thing" and that he "couldn't graduate in a normal school."

Students viewed schools as failing to recognize or be flexible in response to difficulties and events in their home lives. One student described how a friend of his, a new teenaged father, was suspended for missing school when his girlfriend gave birth.

Negative feelings about regular schools affected students' attendance. Several students commented that they would go to school only if they had nothing better to do, otherwise they would stay away. Greg stated that, "If I woke up in time for school and I was bored, then I'd go. If I had something to do then I wouldn't go to school." In order to dull his boredom at school, Greg would often "smoke a joint on the way to school."

Many of the students' comments suggest that not liking their teachers at regular schools was a problem which negatively affected their experiences at school. When Melissa was asked what she'd change about her previous schools, she said, "I'd change everything. The teachers especially. I can't work with teachers that I don't like."

Parents commented that regular schools failed to communicate with them, that they felt unconnected with what was happening at school, and if they were contacted, it was often too late for them to do anything to help their children. Alam pointed out that, "When he [Alam's son Mari] assaulted a student, and we were called to the school, they started bringing out so many accusations he did in the past, which we didn't know. The school was supposed to inform us. They didn't!"

Blue Mountain

Students perceive Blue Mountain as somewhere they are cared for, respected, and enabled to succeed, and where, if they make a mistake, staff are still caring and respectful. Theo noted that in the past, if he "messed up" he would be sent home: "Most other principals would go down to the office and say 'you did it, you're going home.' Carl would actually want an explanation, get both sides of the story." Both staff and students indicated that students are rarely sent home; more frequently all those involved in an altercation discuss what happened and how to avoid problems in the future. Parents are also involved: "If there's a problem, you know, I'm called, the other parent's called, and you know, they walk it though" (Tricia).

Teachers view the school as adapting to the realities of students' lives and not regarding difficult circumstances as barriers to success. Paul noted, "[A] good thing about this school is that it acknowledges the fact that you can have a student who's supporting a crack addicted mother and parenting siblings, and

that was the case with a former student." Paul explained that he set academic goals for the student to strive for "to create structure and balance in his life" but nonetheless was flexible in his expectations in response to the challenges the student faced.

Parents like the fact that Blue Mountain is small. "Everybody knows everybody else, and, you're working in that close proximity with kids that have had some troubles, you know, and you start to care about them" (Tricia). Parents appreciate being informed about their children's progress and consulted about what they regard as best for their children.

The help provided by the school to families extends beyond the school boundaries and timetable. Alam explained the difference Jake's (the Family Worker) help has made to the family dynamic by helping the whole family to understand the pressures and problems his son is coping with. Alam said that Jake,

> gives us tips, how to deal with him, you know, not strict all the
> way, you know, you have to calm down, and also we have to
> compliment him sometimes for, for going to school for the whole
> week, and oh, he's done his homework...we have to congratulate
> him, and that will encourage him more, you know. Yeah, so those
> kind of things actually helped, you know.

Concluding Remarks

I conclude with a few comments made by parents and students regarding changes they attribute to the practices used at Blue Mountain.

Parents

Mary commented that her son had learned, "that he's not stupid, that he's actually worthy...that he's not going to be an outcast type thing, you know."

Sarah, a parent of a former student, said that her son now has a more positive attitude toward the future, "because he's calmed down, he's able to get, find a focus in his life, what he wants to do, what he wants. And, because he's still practicing what he learned there, he's way further ahead that way."

Students

"I used to have no respect for anybody. If they didn't like what I was doing, basically screw them. Now I'm just, I'm easier to get along with."

"I feel more confident and respectful towards myself and others."

"I feel, when I meet somebody, that I, I don't just look at them and label them, I actually talk to them and you know, label them from the inside. You know, like everybody has a nice side."

"My attitude has changed. I've got more respect for myself and the staff because, just because I like the staff."

"I've always hoped for the best. I think going to this school has changed my perspective of what's the best and what I would want to do." *And what is that?* "Start a small business."

Chapter 6 —
Discussion of Findings

The primary goal of this investigation was to examine the perceptions of

students, parents, and teachers regarding how marginalized youth are

disadvantaged at regular schools, and how they are advantaged at Blue

Mountain. In addition I wanted to consider the implications of these findings,

interpreted through a combined lens of the ethic of care and critical sociological

perspectives, for educational practices in relation to marginalized youth.

How Marginalized Youth
are Disadvantaged at Regular Schools

"What goes wrong" within schools for minority, low income, and other

marginalized youth begins long before they enter kindergarten (Cummins, 1986;

Deschenes, Cuban & Tyack, 2001). The majority of schools are informed by the

liberal ethic of justice which views schools as places where all students should be

treated similarly, to give them an "equal opportunity" to compete for access to

social positions and resources (Clement, 1996). This approach ignores the reality

that because school practices reflect dominant norms, values, and linguistic

practices, non-mainstream and low income children and youth are at a

disadvantage from the start, and tend to fall farther and farther behind as they

go through school, often "voluntarily" leaving before completing high school

(Fine, 1991; MacLeod, 1995). Because the achievement ideology of liberal societies is internalized, marginalized youth join others in blaming themselves for their failure to succeed in school (Deschenes, Cuban & Tyack, 2001; MacLeod, 1995). Schools thus reflect and reinforce unequal relations among different status groups in society (Cummins, 1986, 1997; Wotherspoon, 1998).

Several enduring features of schools mitigate against the positive development of marginalized youth. These include: large class sizes; transmission-oriented instructional methods which place students in a passive role (Cummins, 1986; Noddings, 1992); impersonal and distant relationships (Noddings, 1984, 1992); and an atmosphere of coercion (Fine, 1991; Noddings, 1984, 1992). Schools also exacerbate disadvantage by negatively labeling many students as deficient, or what Wotherspoon and Schissel (2001) have referred to as pathologizing students, by ignoring or denigrating aspects of students' linguistic practices, cultural norms and ways of knowing (Cummins, 1986); and by failing to respond positively to the complexities and challenges in students' lives (MacLeod, 1995). Schools also contribute to disadvantage when they fail to acknowledge the reality that the economic and social value of education is not the same for everyone (Fine, 1991; MacLeod, 1995).

Blue Mountain students' perceptions of their experiences at regular schools support the view that schools are a source of disadvantage for marginalized youth. Students commented that they were negatively judged, did not understand and were not interested in subject content, received insufficient

help, had many negative disciplinary encounters, and were frequently excluded from school. They regarded their teachers as impersonal and uncaring, and felt little sense of connection with mainstream students. Students' negative experiences led them to believe that they did not belong in regular schools: some had dropped out, and most believed that without an alternative like Blue Mountain, they could not graduate.

The perceptions of parents corroborated students' views and added to the understanding provided by students' perceptions. While parents did not share the day-to-day experiences of students, and often felt that they were unconnected to and uniformed about their children's school experiences, they provided valuable insights. Parents regarded staff at regular schools as not caring about their children and as negatively judging both children and their families. Some parents linked their children's school experiences with factors such as unacknowledged racism, class prejudice, and negative attitudes toward learning challenges. They regarded these factors as influencing the way that school staff treated their children. Because these negative attitudes were unacknowledged and were in some cases denied by school staff, parents felt unable to contest them.

To sum up in relation to the four themes which were identified, the findings suggest that marginalized youth are disadvantaged at regular school in four main ways. First, relationships in regular schools reflect societal relations of dominance and subordination; for example, they inadequately provide valued

spaces for student identity, values and culture, and negatively label students. Moreover, by using coercion backed up by the threat of punishment or exclusion, schools reinforce societal relations of dominance and subordination. Second, regular schools fail to adequately facilitate the development of caring relationships necessary for positive development and for the identifying and meeting needs in respectful ways. Third, instruction at regular schools is fairly uniform and unresponsive, and insufficient help is provided to enable marginalized youth to succeed, due in part to factors such as large class sizes and multiple demands on teachers' time. Finally, the overall environment of regular schools is generally perceived as hostile and unwelcoming by marginalized youth and their families, and operates to exclude marginalized youth from school, even when many individual members of the staff may be well-meaning.

How Marginalized Youth
are Advantaged at Blue Mountain Educational Centre

The approach used at Blue Mountain exemplifies many of the reforms called for by proponents of both the ethic of care and critical sociological perspectives. Freed from the constraints of the regular school system, staff who embrace principles of caring work as a team to create an environment conducive to the development of close, trusting relationships based on a deep attention to, and respect for, students (Noddings, 1984, 1992; Rauner, 2000). In the context of such relationships, students needs are identified and met in a respectful

manner. Staff work closely with students' families, and assist students in the development of plans for the future.

The staff treat students as whole persons, and are concerned with all aspects of students lives (Fine, 1991; Rauner, 2000). The focus is on the future, rather than on past mistakes or on individual deficits (Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001). Instructional methods are in accord with the reciprocal interaction model, and position students as active generators of their own knowledge, empowering students rather than instilling instructional dependence (Cummins, 1986).

The staff's respect for students is manifested in their acceptance of the non-mainstream identities of many students, and the fact that they invite and encourage, but never coerce, students to engage in classroom activities. A high degree of staff autonomy within the school team means that staff can respond to students' needs flexibly and directly, without worrying about whether their actions are in compliance to rules imposed from above.

The findings indicate that students at Blue Mountain demonstrated many kinds of positive growth. Students reportedly began to trust their teachers and others, and to see themselves as successful learners and worthy people. There was evidence of students' renewed interest in learning, raised aspirations, and more positive relationships at home and at school. The data suggests that the school's approach helps students' families: parents reported feeling happier and calmer. They reported having better relationships with their children, whom they regard as more responsible and more hopeful about the future.

To summarize the findings in relation to the four identified themes. Blue Mountain facilitates the development of relationships which counter societal relations of dominance and subordination. For example, non-mainstream identities are accepted and respected, and there is no evidence of prejudice related to race, class, or ability. Coercion and punishment are eschewed, and replaced by encouragement and support. In these ways, unequal power relations at the societal level between dominant and subordinated groups are (to some degree) disrupted. Second, close nurturing relationships necessary for positive development are facilitated at the school and individual needs are identified and met in respectful ways. Third, instruction at the school is in accord with the "reciprocal interaction model" (Cummins, 1986). It is adapted to the needs, interests, and background knowledge of students, and sufficient help is provided so that every student can succeed. Finally, the school environment is regarded by students and their parents as welcoming and inclusive, engendering within the students a positive sense of connection to the school.

All three groups of participants indicated that attendance at Blue Mountain led to positive changes in students. Students reportedly revised their self-concepts and regarded themselves as more competent and able to learn that they had in the past. They indicated they became more respectful toward others, and felt more worthy of care than they had in the past. Students appeared to be more hopeful about the future. Several noted that they had, with the help of

school staff, formed and begun to work toward plans for further education and employment.

Implications
for Educational Practice

The four themes which I used to illuminate the data could be used as a lens to assess other school settings and stimulate educational reform. Moreover, these themes may be relevant for all students, not just for marginalized youth. Care ethicists (e.g. Noddings, 1984, 1992, 2002) do not suggest that the ethic of care should only inform education for marginalized populations. The ethic of care counters imbalances engendered by the ethic of justice, and is needed in public as well as private contexts (Clement, 1996). Even those who fare relatively well at school are not well-served by an impersonal approach which objectifies students and is unresponsive to individual differences. Caring relationships and flexible, responsive educational practices are good for all children and youth.

A second compelling reason why the ethic of care should inform the policies and practices of all schools has been pointed out by Grace Clement (1996). If only some students are identified as "needy" and requiring a special approach, they may be stigmatized and relationships between them and students not so identified may be damaged. Clement disputes the validity of categorizing people on the basis of a special need for care; we all have such needs, she argues, and the only difference lies in where and by whom needs are met.

Those who write from critical sociological perspectives also regard school reform as needed in all schools, and do not suggest that reform is needed only for those who are considered to be "at-risk" or marginalized. According to some calculations, most students can be considered to be at-risk at some point during their school lives (Cote & Allahar, 1994, cited in Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001), and while there may be good reasons for a separate school such as Blue Mountain (at least until needed reforms are implemented in regular schools) it seems likely that most marginalized students will remain in the regular school system.

The findings of this thesis suggest that certain kinds of school reforms would benefit marginalized (as well as mainstream) youth. These include reforms aimed at:

- Fostering relationships within schools and classrooms that acknowledge and respect but do not stigmatize difference;
- Fostering caring relationships within schools and classrooms that can facilitate healthy development and respectfully identifying and meeting needs;
- Creating instructional methods which are responsive and are aimed at individually defined success for every student;
- Creating an inclusive school environment with valued spaces for diverse students, their families and their communities;

- Rejecting the standards movement and its narrow focus on
  learning outcomes;

- Engaging students and their parents of all backgrounds in a
  meaningful and ongoing dialogue about their educational
  needs and goals.

Cummins (1986) predicts that there will be fierce resistance to any attempt to forge substantive changes aimed at empowering marginalized youth. Along with others who write from critical sociological perspectives (e.g. Wotherspoon, 1998), Cummins is deeply aware that in our society the disadvantages of some are inextricably linked to the advantages of others. Nonetheless, I believe that an effort should be made to work toward the reforms I have suggested. The alternative is an increasingly dehumanizing and divisive educational system.

Blue Mountain:
Future Challenges

It was not my intention to conduct an evaluation of Blue Mountain. Indeed, the starting point of this investigation was the recognition that Blue Mountain had been successful in reaching youth who had failed and been excluded elsewhere, and my interest was in investigating how this was accomplished. However, over the course of this investigation, I did note in the findings a few areas that, viewed from the combined lens of the ethic of care

and critical sociological perspectives, appear somewhat problematic and which staff may wish to consider in their ongoing efforts to empower students.

There were relatively few indications in the data that caring relations among students are facilitated or that students are consistently provided with opportunities to care for others. Certainly, there are factors which make it understandable that the primary focus of the school is on providing care to students as opposed to encouraging students to be carers; for example, most of the students are at the extreme end of the "high" need category when they arrive at the school, and many are there for only a short time. Nonetheless, particularly for those who are there for a longer time, it may be beneficial to provide more opportunities for them to take on a caring role.

Students could also be encouraged to participate with their fellow students and staff in critical and reflective dialogues aimed at raising their awareness of the connections between their individual circumstances and wider social processes. Both Noddings (1992, 2002) and Fine (1991) contend that educators and others should engage students in meaningful dialogues about the societies they live in. For marginalized students, greater awareness of the structural inequalities can help to prevent them from blaming themselves for difficulties they face, and may help to disrupt relations of inequality (Cummins, 1986).

A related area of concern centres around the way that Blue Mountain staff sometimes counter negative messages students have heard (either explicitly or

implicitly) in the past, for example, that they are stupid, or that they cannot be successful. Staff at Blue Mountain, in contrast, tell students that they can do or be anything, and that "anything is possible." Students' comments indicated that they revised their aspirations. One student said she intends to become a doctor or a social worker. While it is important and laudable to counter negative messages, and while raised aspirations may serve help students in their present and future efforts (MacLeod, 1995), it is also the case that many social and economic factors may mitigate for or against the attainment of individual goals. As Fine (1991) and MacLeod (1995) have pointed out, access to opportunities varies according to factors such as gender, race/ethnicity and area of residence. It is not clear from the data whether staff members accompany their encouragement with a frank acknowledgment of the many circumstances that can affect individual attainment. This is a complex issue; however, I concur with critical sociological perspectives which suggest that staff must find ways to genuinely and strongly encourage students while at the same time acknowledging the reality and complexity of factors which contribute to actual outcomes. Research with marginalized students by Conchas (2001) suggests that student aspirations can remain high in an atmosphere where school staff acknowledge social and economic constraints which affect attainment.

It is unfortunate that not all Blue Mountain students who wish to do so are able to remain at the school until they graduate. The initial program, with its family and community components, is funded as a short-term program for court-

referred youth. It works on a continuing intake basis, and youth stay for between four and six months. Of the students who complete the initial program, a minority move to the continuing program. There are insufficient spaces for all who wish to do so. Some parents of former students commented that that it was difficult for their children to return to a regular schools which lacked the care and support provided at Blue Mountain.

Staff at the school would like to enable every student who so wishes to be able to remain until graduation, but the number of spaces available is constrained by the level of government funding provided. Notably, staff have opened a second school modeled after Blue Mountain, so that more students are now able to benefit from the school's approach.

Concluding Remarks

In this thesis, I have highlighted the voices of marginalized students and their parents, as well as teachers, in an effort to gain insight into how marginalized youth are advantaged/disadvantaged in two kinds of school settings. The findings suggest that a school which exemplifies many of the combined insights of the proponents of the ethic of care and critical sociological perspectives was able to transform the educational experiences of a group of marginalized youth in positive ways.

This investigation highlights some of the ways that regular schools disadvantage marginalized youth, and the ways that they are advantaged at Blue Mountain Educational Centre, and suggests several areas for school reform. The

great divide between the two kinds of school settings suggests that a great deal of effort on the part of many individuals may be needed to accomplish significant reforms.

Those who wish to make a positive difference to the education of marginalized youth should heed the calls of those who argue that students must be brought forward as meaningful and honoured participants in educational research and reform efforts (e.g. Cook-Sather, 2002; Fine, 1991). As Cook Sather asserts, "It is time that we count students among those with the authority to participate both in the critique and the reform of education" (p. 3). Cautioning that students cannot be consulted "once and for all" (p. 12), Cook-Sather argues that the process of consulting students must be ongoing. "It is the collective student voice, constituted by the many situated, partial voices, that we are missing" (p. 12). Along with marginalized students, their parents are also a valuable source of insight regarding their children's education and the ways that students and their families can be supported.

The "journey" that this thesis represents is drawing to a close. I have endeavoured to listen carefully to voices seldom heard from in the literature and to interpret their views about the schooling of marginalized youth in a way that is true to their intentions. Their insight, wisdom, and honesty made this a moving and memorable experience.

References

Baier, A. (1995). The need for more than justice. In V. Held (Ed.), *Justice and care: Essential readings in feminist ethics* (pp. 47-60). Boulder: Westview Press.

Clement, G. (1996). *Care, autonomy, and justice.* Boulder: Westview Press.

Cassidy, W. & Bates, A. (2005). "Drop-outs" and "push-outs": Finding hope at a school that actualizes the ethic of care. *American Journal of Education, 112* , in press.

Conchas, G.Q. (2001). Structuring failure and success: Understanding the variability in Latino school engagement. *Harvard Educational Review, 71,* 475-503.

Cook-Sather, Alison. (2002). Authorizing students' perspectives: Toward trust, dialogue, and change in education. *Educational Researcher, 31,* 3-14.

Corbett, D., & Wilson, B. (1995). Make a difference with, not for, students: A plea to researchers and reformers. *Educational Researcher, 24,* 12-17.

Cummins, J. (1986). Empowering minority students: A framework for intervention. *Harvard Educational Review,* 56, 18-36.

Cummins, J. (1997). Cultural and linguistic diversity in education: a mainstream issue? *Educational Reviewer, 49,* 105-115. Retrieved March 15, 2005, from http:web24ep.net.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Deschenes, S., Cuban, L., & Tyack, D. (2001). Mismatch: Historical perspectives on schools and students who don't fit them. *Teachers College Record. 103,* 525-547.

Fine, M. (1991). *Framing Dropouts.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Fisher, B. & Tronto, J. (1990). Toward a feminist theory of caring. In E. K. Abel & M. K. Nelson (Eds.), *Circles of care: Work & identity in women's lives,* (pp. 35-62). Albany: SUNY Series on Women and Work, Albany State University of New York Press.

Gall, M. D., Borg, W. R., & Gall, J. P. (1996). *Educational research: An introduction.* White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers USA.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Gilligan, C. (1995). Moral orientation and moral development. In V. Held (Ed.), *Justice and care: Essential readings in feminist ethics,* (pp. 31-48). Boulder: Westview Press.

Held, V. (1995). Feminist moral inquiry and the feminist future. In V. Held (Ed.), *Justice and care: Essential readings in feminist ethics,* (pp. 153-178). Boulder: Westview Press..

Jagger, A. M. (1995). Caring as a feminist practice of moral reason. In V. Held (Ed.), *Justice and care: Essential readings in feminist ethics,* (pp. 179-202). Boulder: Westview Press.

Janesick, V. J. (1998). The dance of qualitative research design: Metaphor, methodolatry, and meaning. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 35-55).Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

MacLeod, J. (1995). *Ain't no makin' it: Aspirations and attainment in a low-income neighborhood.* Boulder: Westview Press.

Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Morse, J. M. (1998). Designing funded qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 56-85).Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Noddings, N. (1988) An ethic of caring and its implications for instructional arrangements. *American Journal of Education, 96,* 215-231.

Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Noddings, N. (1995). Teaching themes of care. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(9), pp. 675-79.

Noddings, N. (2002). *Educating moral people: A caring alternative to character education.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Rauner, D. M. (2000). *They still pick me up when I fall: The role of caring in youth development and community life.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Rubin, H. J. & Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data. 2nd edition.* London: Sage Publications.

Stake, R. E. (1998). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 86-109).Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Tronto, J. C. (1993). Moral boundaries: A political argument for an ethic of care. London: Routledge.

Tronto, J. C. (1995). Women and caring: What can feminists learn about morality from caring? In V. Held (Ed.), *Justice and care: Essential readings in feminist ethics,* (pp. 101-116). Boulder: Westview Press.

Walker, M. U. (1995). Moral understandings: Alternative "epistemology" for a feminist ethics. In V. Held (Ed.), *Justice and care: Essential readings in feminist ethics,* (pp. 139-153). Boulder: Westview Press.

Wotherspoon, T. (1998). *The sociology of education in Canada.* Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Wotherspoon, T. & Schissel, B. (2001). The business of putting Canadian children and youth "at risk." *Canadian Journal of Education. 26,* 321-339.