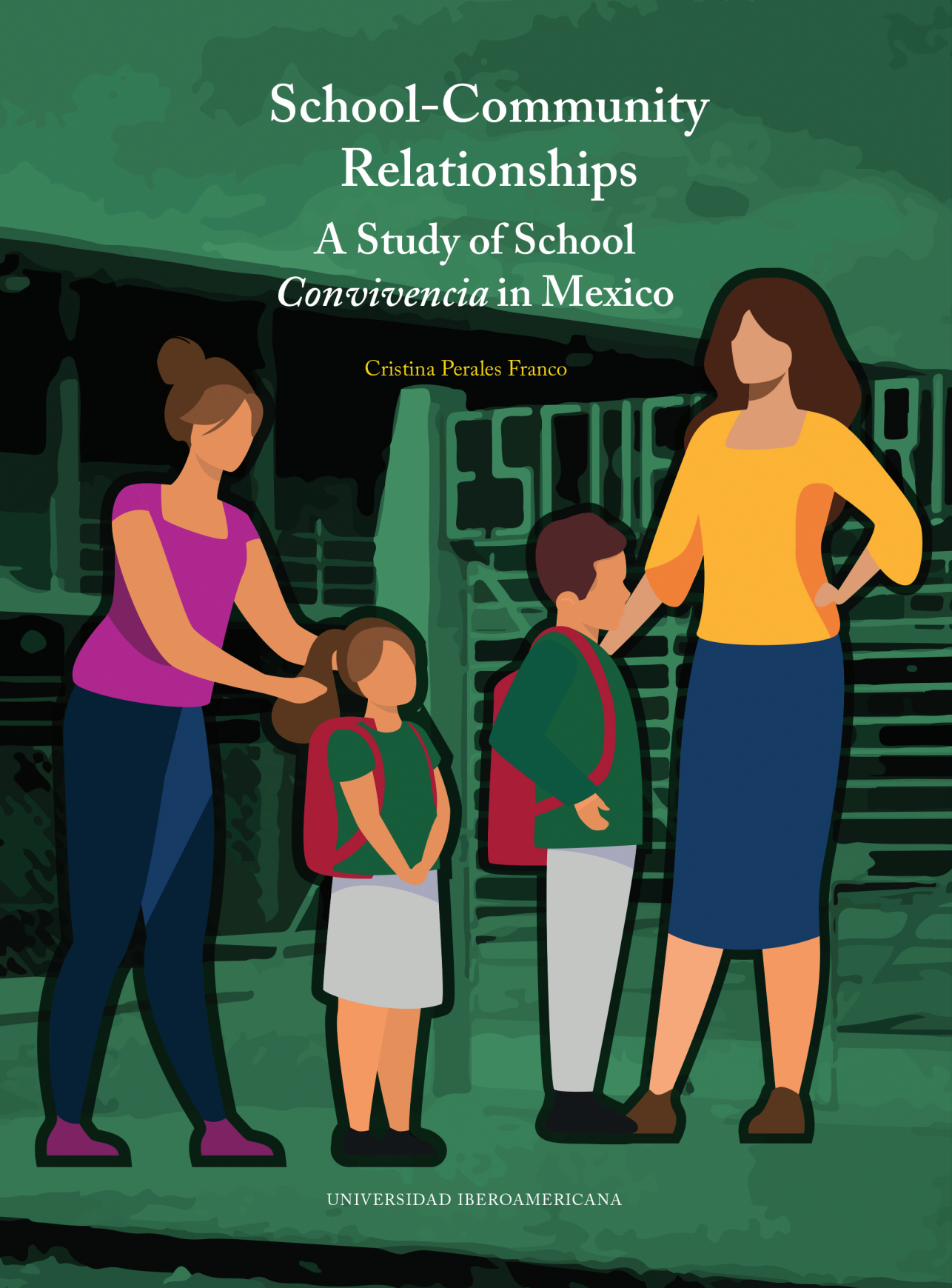
School-Community Relationships

A Study of School *Convivencia* in Mexico

Cristina Perales Franco



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Prol. Paseo de la Reforma 880
Col. Lomas de Santa Fe
Ciudad de México
01219
publica@ibero.mx

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To Christina Schondube and
Ángel Franco—*los abuelos*—who taught
me to love stories and respect the people behind them.

I. Introduction

The need for ensuring the right to education has been acknowledged throughout the world. This not only includes guaranteeing schooling coverage and reaching the expected academic outcomes, but also considering the schooling process as a whole. Such a process can be understood as shaped by the network of relationships among school actors that construct schools' everyday life. Quality in education includes, therefore, the relationships that exist in schools and the implications they can have for learning, for the people's well-being and for a social life in common. The experience of living together in schools that these relationships shape—and the learning processes they entail—is called school *convivencia* in Spanish. In different Latin American countries, such as Chile (MINEDUC, 2015), Peru (MINEDU, 2015), Colombia (MINEDUCACION, 2013) and Mexico (*Diario Oficial de la Federación* [DOF], 2015) work on school *convivencia* has become an explicit part of their educational policies.

Convivencia as an academic and practice field is still emergent, and the concept is present in areas such as school violence, peace, human rights, citizenship, inclusive, intercultural and moral education. Three important rationales are broadly used to justify the emphasis on *convivencia*. First, an improvement in *convivencia* is needed to counteract school violence, which is seen as a worrying issue that hinders quality in education and students' well-being (Ortega Ruiz, 2006; Smith, 2006). Although one cannot claim school violence is a new phenomenon, there is a growing recognition in both the academic literature and public perception of its prevalence in schools, the multiplicity and new forms it can take—being bullying the most acknowledged manifestation of school violence (Bickmore, 2011)—and the negative

consequence that violent acts can have in the students' lives (Abramovay, 2006). Secondly, an appropriate *convivencia* is necessary for the fulfilment of the right to education since a positive, safe and inclusive school experience is required to develop learning processes and to reach educational outcomes (Casassus, 2005; OECD, 2013; UNESCO, 2008). Thirdly, a social function of the school is to teach *convivencia* that ought to be democratic, inclusive and should promote a culture of peace—three aspects that are considered central in the notion of the right to education and educational quality (Fierro Evans, 2013; UNESCO, 2009). In this third rationale, learning to *convivir* in school and for the future is an educational goal in itself. The way these three rationales are connected and the weight given to each of them by the schools' actors, in the educational policy and in the school practices have important implications for the schooling experience.

In Mexico—where this book is situated—the construction and practices of school *convivencia* in policy and in schools have gone hand in hand with broader concerns about the need to increase citizen protection and national policies directed at combating crime, in particular organized and drug related crime. In that sense, the institutional approach to *convivencia* is more focused on protecting students and reducing school violence, which is seen mainly as a behavioural problem of the students that should be addressed through strict rules and sanctions (Zurita Rivera, 2012a). Under this construction students' behaviour is understood mostly as originated 'outside' the school, due to the characteristics of their local communities and their families (Valdés Cuervo et al., 2014a), a common narrative also found in studies from countries such as France (Debarbieux, 2003), Portugal (Sebastião et al., 2013) and Brazil (Abramovay, 2006). Mexican schools are hence positioned as 'victims' of an external context and teachers and parents often feel that there is little that can be done to foster improvement in both *convivencia* and learning achievements. Previous research in school violence (e.g. Benbenishty and Astor, 2005) peace processes (e.g. Bickmore, 2011) and *convivencia* (e.g. Foutoul Ollivier and Fierro Evans, 2011) show however that although there are important differences depending on the context of the students and the school community for school achievements and processes, schools are not passive receptors. In the same line Sebastião et al. (2013, p. 125)—analysing the school violence policy and implementation in Portugal state—that:

> Context counts, […] but we must look at its impact in both directions, the way it constraints schools activity (Malen and Knapp, 1997; Visser, 2006) and, simultaneously, how schools organize themselves to face those constraints, and in the end, end up contributing to the transformation of the context in which they operate.

This book presents the main findings of my PhD research carried out at the UCL Institute of Education.[1] It aimed to analyse *convivencia* in two Mexican primary schools, exploring—through an ethnographic study—the implications of the school-community relationship in the experiences of living together in school and in the characteristics and quality of the schooling process for students and their families, teachers and principals. The research was carried out from January 2014 to November 2017, with fieldwork of nine months during 2015. This study, differently from the majority of the research on *convivencia* done in Latin America, is situated in an analytical perspective that does not take as a starting point how school *convivencia* should be but how it is, which means analysing the characteristics and patterns of the relationships among school actors and the implications they have for the experience of living together in schools. It is based on the notion that models of *convivencia* are already present in schools and that there is a need to understand how the experience of living together is constructed and performed in the schools' everyday life, as well as the implications it has for developing peace, democracy and inclusion.

The study's specific aims were to:

- Identify and describe the key relationships between the schools and their local communities.
- Analyse the implications of these relationships for the school experience of the actors (i.e., the students, teachers, principals, parents and other family members).
- Examine the role of educational policy in these school-community relationships.
- Analyse how of the type(s) of *convivencia* link, shape and are shaped by processes of:

[1] The funding for this research was provided by the Mexican Council of Science and Technology (Conacyt) and the Public Education Secretariat (SEP, Beca Complemento).

- Participation
- Inclusion-exclusion
- Conflict management

An important consideration should be made from the start about the notion of community. The role of the community in relation to school has been considered on the one hand, in the context of decentralization policies that aim, among other things, to spread the burden of resources among different actors to foster government efficiency (Di Gropello, 1999; Shaeffer, 1994) and on the other, as part of democratization processes that foster more horizontal power relationships and social justice (Arnstein, 1969; Freire, 2002; Moll et al., 1992). An increase participation of community actors—parents, NGO's, entrepreneurs, etc.—in schools has usually been advocated and international research has been done in terms on the type and levels of participation, the characteristics of involvement of the different actors, the outcomes of the community-school engagement for schools and for communities, and on the complexities of fostering this involvement (e.g. Bray, 2001; Reimers, 1997). There also has been important critiques regarding the difficulty of defining what a community is (Bhattacharyya, 2004; Cohen, 1989; Hillery, 1955) and establishing the importance of avoiding a homogenous view of the community that does not recognize the internal differences and power configurations (Bray, 2003).

Understanding the breadth of the term and the diversity in approaches in its study, it is necessary to state that this study approached community only in terms of its implications for the *relationships in schools*. After an initial exploration of different school-community relationships, I chose to focus on how the community was understood to "come" into the school. For teachers, principals, students and family members the community experienced in school had two constitutive dimensions: firstly, the general socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the schools' immediate context and specially the risks associated with it, and secondly—and more important in the practices and narratives—the community characteristics that the students and the families embodied and "brought" into the schools. This narrowing of the notion of the community allowed me to explore with more detail how family-schools relationships were performed and how community risks were managed. A limitation of this study is however, that it was not able to fully incorporate other

actors and narratives that were also tangentially involved in *convivencia* relationships. The main research questions were as follows:

1. What forms of relationship exist between school actors, including parents and other family members in two primary schools in Mexico?
2. How do these relationships shape and how are they shaped by more general patterns of *convivencia* in the schools?
3. What are the implications of the relationships between schools and families for developing peaceful, inclusive and democratic school *convivencia*?

The study was derived from an initial idea that the way contextual characteristics are understood and managed in schools could have important implications for the possibilities of developing peaceful, inclusive and democratic *convivencia* and that should be explored. This assumption emerged from previous personal work on *convivencia* and school relationships (e.g. Perales Franco et al., 2014; Silas Casillas and Perales Franco, 2014) and other sources initially reviewed (e.g. Fierro Evans et al., 2010; Hirmas and Eroles, 2008; Jares, 2006). Other professional experiences as a secondary teacher and teacher trainer in Mexico also gave me a sense that there was a divide between teachers and families since there does not seem to be a clear view on what the latter's participation should be in schools—more involvement is demanded but teacher autonomy is defended, or schools advocate for collaboration, but teachers are positioned as having to "correct" how parents raise their children. I also perceived that there were difficulties for schools in vulnerable contexts for dealing with structural issues of poverty and social exclusion, which were closely linked to teachers' sense of lack of material, pedagogical and emotional resources. This study also considered as initial grounding points that first, although there might be particular problematic issues that "come" to school there can also be issues derived from or fostered by the schools' processes, practices and cultures. Second, that school violence could be understood more widely than students' behaviour, as a complex and multifactorial phenomena, where economic, social, cultural and political factors come together (Fierro Evans, 2013). These assumptions—framed as well by a personal political standing that expects education to be a mechanism of social justice and argues for a critical view of the inequalities fostered, produced or experienced in schools—worked as inquiry triggers that had to be acknowledged and critically reflected

on throughout the research since they constituted particular and non-neutral stances from where this research was constructed and is now presented.

Research in school *convivencia* in Latin America and Spain is relatively recent. In Mexico, the entrance of the concept *convivencia* in academic research can be traced back to a 2003 literature review by the COMIE—Mexican Educational Research Council—(Furlán, 2003). Although it did not include studies directly investigating *convivencia* in the revised period of 1992-2002, the concept was present as part of the proposed interventions to face school violence. The subsequent—and latest—review (Furlán and Spitzer, 2013) in contrast included over 60 specific studies on *convivencia* published between 2002 and 2012 (Fierro Evans et al., 2013a). Although school *convivencia* as an academic field has gained independence, there is still a connection—and tension—with related fields of school discipline and violence (Furlán and Spitzer, 2013, pp. 22-23 TFS). These three fields share in many cases areas of concern and concepts[2], but their developments show distinctive traits.

A balance of the reviewed literature from Mexico shows trends that are important to frame and justify the present research. There is evidence of a strong increase of the school violence production (Gómez Nashiky and Zurita Rivera, 2013) that partly responds to the need to explain, denounce and modify abuse that students suffer in schools, and partly to a general popularity of the topic in public opinion and the connection with the country's narratives of crime and insecurity. The field of school violence has also shifted from aiming to show the existence of the phenomenon in the country (e.g. Gómez Nashiki, 2005) to providing a wide description of the magnitude of the issues, with most of the studies focusing on physical violence and on *bullying* (Carrillo Navarro et al., 2013). From 2005 there has also been an emergence in research of school violence conducted directly by public institutions like the Public Education Secretariat of Mexico City or the INEE (National Institute for Educational Evaluation) (Aguilera et al., 2007; Muñoz Abundez, 2008). In this field, the engagement with *convivencia* is not systematic, only being used at times as a "solution" or as a background (Furlán and Spitzer, 2013).

The engagement with *convivencia* however is present in the literature on discipline. This area, which has been displaced by school violence literature,

[2] These three fields are also considered as part of one academic area of the COMIE—"*Convivencia*, Discipline and Violence in schools"—which further reflects their relation.

more recently has been presented in connection with the field of school *convivencia* (e.g. Ochoa Cervantes and Diez-Martínez, 2013; Ochoa Cervantes and Salinas de la Vega, 2016) and has gained some complexity addressing relationships between students and with teachers (Pereda Alfonso et al., 2013). Discipline research has qualitatively and quantitatively studied incivilities and indiscipline behaviours and the students' perceptions of them (Saucedo Ramos, 2004), as well as analysed the instruments to regulate discipline, such as rule codes (Landeros and Chávez, 2015).

In a relative tension with the field of school violence, school *convivencia* literature has also developed, particularly in the last five years. Fierro Evans et al. (2013a) explored the academic production on school *convivencia* from its emergence as a field in Mexico to 2012. They assert that that most of the research of *convivencia* is carried out through a normative-prescriptive approach. Especially prevalent was the research that focused on the relation between students' harassment (bullying and other types of maltreatment) and school climate.

For these authors, the overall literature reviewed presents three distinctive uses of *convivencia*. First, *convivencia* "emerged" as a conclusion from the analysis as key aspect to improve; second, it was presented in connection to other concepts—such as citizenship—; or third, it could be the main focus of the research, which was the least common use. Four examples of this last use are the ones from Foutoul and Fierro (2011), a good-practices based research in five countries: Mexico, Chile, Peru, Argentina and Guatemala; Chaparro *et al.* (2015), that constructed quantitative and qualitative instruments to assess *convivencia*; Nieto and Bickmore (2016), exploring young people's peace-building citizenship learning opportunities in Mexico, Canada and Bangladesh; and one where I participated (Perales Franco et al., 2014, 2013), which surveyed practices and attitudes linked to six socio-affective axis of school *convivencia* processes: respect, care, sense of belonging, trust, responsibility and communication. These projects have more broadly addressed issues related to democracy, inclusion and peace. The scarcity of investigations presenting *convivencia* as the object of study shows, for Fierro et al. a "lack of a well-established approach and a corpus of concepts and analytic categories that contribute to its comprehension" (Fierro Evans et al., 2013a, p. 112 TFS).

In a balance of the whole area of school *convivencia*, discipline and violence in Mexico, Furlán and Spitzer (2013) state that two large absences are a more detailed insight to the school cultures and a consideration of the adults in both

the school and the family realms, since only a few of the studies position parents or other family members as key participants (Gómez Nashiki, 2013; Perales Franco et al., 2014; Valdés Cuervo et al., 2012). Given this context, the research this book presents places *convivencia* at the centre of the research and establishes some links between the micro-context of the schools and the more general socio-economic and political elements of the communities and the Mexican context.

Here I consider not only the students' interactions, but the participation and relationships among the schools' adults (teachers, principals, students' parents and other family members), placing the relationships between schools and their local communities and their implications for school *convivencia* as the research object. Although there is a recognition in the academic field of *convivencia* of the importance of the community level (e.g. Fierro Evans, 2013; Gallardo Vázquez, 2009; Hirmas and Eroles, 2008; Onetto, 2004; UNESCO, 2009), there are hardly any studies of school *convivencia* that address these relationships specifically. The research connects as well to the literature regarding family participation in schools and shows the importance of, on the one hand, considering not only the parent in the school-home relationships, but of including diverse family types and the children's multiple carers. On the other, the study argues for the need to consider the quality of the relationships among the different actors as a central explanatory elements of family involvement in schools.

Three arguments are developed throughout the book. First, there is a restrictive understanding of school *convivencia* in both the educational policy and in what the school actors recognize as explicit work on *convivencia*. It is based on practices for preventing, detecting and modifying students' individual wrong behaviour. This understanding positions school *convivencia* instrumentally as something that needs to be improved to lower school violence and achieve a desired order. Such a construction has implications for how school violence is understood, the way explicitly recognized practices of school *convivencia* are carried out and the relationships that shape these practices. The second argument is that a wider more comprehensive approach is required to explain—and in some sense intervene in—school *convivencia*. If one considers *convivencia* as shaped by everyday relationships, other practices—such as responses to students' needs, or family participation in the schools—and other actors' participation in these practices need to be included. This research shows in this sense how the relational patterns matter for the way school practices are performed.

Finally, through this more complex view of *convivencia* the role of the students' families is analysed. Evidence is given on how constructions around the "appropriate" family and the "appropriate" involvement—in relation especially to the notion of "dysfunctional families" present in the settings—shape specific patterns of relationships that are related as well to how conflict management, responses to underachievement and participation in dealing with school's needs occur. Analysing *convivencia* in this way represents a path to investigate how processes of inclusion and exclusion, peace and violence take place through the everyday interactions. The evidence presented here shows the opportunities that actors have to develop positive ways of relating to each other in schools and the cultural, institutional and context elements that hinder them. The focus on *convivencia* is in this sense a way to explore how the right of education is put into practice.

Structure of the book

The book is organized in 10 chapters. After this introduction (chapter 1) the three first chapters provide details of the theoretical, contextual and methodological standing points. Chapter 2 addresses the concept of *school convivencia*. It provides first a general explanation of the meanings associated with the term and argues for keeping it in its original Spanish. I later move to explain how school *convivencia* was understood in this research and how it relates to fields of peace, inclusive, citizenship and human rights education. I then draw on Carbajal Padilla's (2013) categorization to distinguish two approaches to understanding and intervening in school *convivencia*: a restrictive approach—that mainly positions *convivencia* as an instrumental aspect to prevent, reduce or eliminate school violence—, and a comprehensive approach—that positions inclusive, democratic and peaceful *convivencia* as an educational goal in itself and as part of quality in education. I finally address how my personal analytical stance is constructed and include specifically some elements used to examine parental and family participation in school.

Chapter 3 introduces a description of the Mexican context and some of its most important social challenges. It highlights the social conflict that has occurred in the last decade which has seen an increase in armed and drug related violence, and in general perceptions and expressions of social violence. I then describe how Mexico's educational system—particular the primary level—is

organized and some of its main characteristics, including its most important educational reforms. Chapter 4 explains the methodological path carried out to construct the research. Although many books that present research findings omit the methodological process, given that *convivencia* is an emerging field that needs further theoretical constructions, I have decided to include a more detailed account of the ethnographic research developed. This chapter also includes the description of the two researched schools.

A deeper examination of the educational policy of school *convivencia* in Mexico is then presented in Chapter 5. It explores both federal and state policies first, and then other more practical guidelines for the schoolwork that include elements related to school *convivencia*. These documents make visible the importance that this area is given, but also the particular constructions they present. Although schools do not automatically implement their regulations, they represent important—and not always congruent—frameworks that shape schools' actors practices and understandings.

The next four chapters are the core of the book. They develop the analytic scheme used to explore, understand and provide an explanation of the multiple patterns of *convivencia* found in these schools. Each of them takes on particular sets of practices that include community-school relationships that shape school *convivencia*. The first two of them, chapters 6 and 7, address practices that are explicitly recognized by the school actors as work on *convivencia,* which are basically those that deal with what the actors consider *convivencia* conflicts. Although the practices in these two chapters are often performed together to prevent, stop and modify students' wrong behaviour, an analytic distinction was made to highlight their main aim in the school settings. Chapter 6 presents two sets of practices to *prevent convivencia* conflicts: setting and socializing of the rules and diagnosing aggressive and violent incidents. Chapter 7 explains the practices carried out to *manage* conflict. These are divided into two levels; the first one includes practices of reporting to the adults, intimidation and physical aggression, and the second one, practices of dialogue, separating conflicting parts and exclusion from school activities. This chapter also includes the reasons the school's actors associate with *convivencia* conflicts, in here narratives about families and context become important symbolic elements that give meaning and shape the managing of conflict practices.

Chapter 8 and 9 examine practices that are not recognized as work on *convivencia*, but are nevertheless crucial to understand the patterns that

school *convivencia* takes. They explore interactions where families are key participants and, as it will be argued, have strong ties with explicit *convivencia* practices. Chapter 8 presents an analysis of practices to respond to student needs, particularly students' underachievement. It explores the narratives associated with its causes and analyses from a *convivencia* perspective two set of institutional strategies: *a)* detection and reporting of underachieving students and *b)* setting up and development of institutional spaces of support. In Chapter 9 practices developed to respond to the schools' maintenance and improvement requirements are first presented. These are important because they are the ones where families are expected to take a leading role. Through the analysis of the different types of participations four *convivencia* modes between the families and the school are proposed: alliance, confrontation, detachment and collaboration. Interestingly, these modes do not only address participation in school's needs, but they also differentiate between the patterns of relationship in the practices of preventing and managing conflict and of responding to students' needs.

The book ends with chapter 10, where a conclusion is drawn that describes the main elements presented in this book and highlights the research's contribution in contextual, methodological and theoretical terms. In this conclusion, possible links between the findings of this study and other contexts are drawn, including how an approach of *convivencia* might relate to broader issues of school conflict, participation, diversity, inclusion, and human rights.

II. School *Convivencia*: Experiences of Living Together and Learning to Live Together in Schools

The following chapter presents the notion of school *convivencia* as a way to understand the living together and the learning to live together that take places in educational institutions. In the first section I will state first what it means in Spanish-speaking countries to refer to *convivencia*. A general notion of the concept will be briefly addressed also, as a frame for the development of school *convivencia* presented in the second section of the chapter. In the third section, I will explain the relation between this notion and the development of human rights, and the restrictive and comprehensive approaches to understand and intervene in it. These two approaches are the core of the theoretical orientations that run through this research. I will close the chapter by pointing out the analytical standpoints for the study and introducing some sociological understandings of family involvement in schools, elements which are proposed here as ways to enrich the analysis of the school relationships among all actors, particularly at the community level of school *convivencia*.

1. Notion of *convivencia*

Convivencia is a common and widely used term in Spanish-speaking countries, but the definition of its meaning is not a straightforward task. Given that I have opted to use *convivencia* in Spanish to allow for the diversity of meaning that it carries within in the context of this research, I will present in this section a brief attempt to clarify its sense as an introductory frame to the sections on school *convivencia*, the focus of this research. *Convivencia* refers to

the experience of living together in a group or a community. For the Real Academia de la Lengua Española it means "the act of *convivir,*" and *convivir* is "to live among other or others" (RAE 2014 Translated from Spanish).[1] Defined in this way, the term could be translated as cohabitation, or coexistence. In practice however, the meaning is slightly different because the term brings within, on the one hand, a sense that to *convivir* it is not enough to share the same space, but an engagement with each other is needed. The notion therefore focuses on the relationships that exists in those shared spaces and the meanings attributed to such relationships. On the other hand, *convivencia* has a pro-social connotation, since it addresses—explicitly or in the background—a desire for positive, respectful, peaceful and/or harmonious relationships that integrate people as a community. Three examples are perhaps useful here to highlight the diversity in its use and pro-social connotation. The first belongs to the field of history: here the term *convivencia* has been used worldwide since the 1900s by historians to refer a period in the Spanish "Golden Era" when Jews, Muslims and Christians established peaceful relations that allowed them to live together for the seven centuries Muslims ruled the south of Spain (Ray, 2005). The second addresses its uses in the political and legal field: in Mexico City, the legal figure 'society of *convivencia*' has been proposed to refer to "a voluntary society constituted exclusively by two people that can be of different or same sex. The object of this association is to establish "a common home, with a will of permanence and mutual help" (Adame Goddard, 2007). A third exemplifies a use in the everyday life: colloquially a '*convivencia*' can refer to a party, festival or gathering that promotes an amenable space to integrate people from the same or different groups.

The positive connotation of the term does not close the possibility of a critical analysis of the challenges of living together, especially as relationships of *convivencia* are socially positioned as more relevant when they are perceived as problematic. In a recent analysis comparing the concept of "conviviality" —which in the academic field loosely refers to 'the capacity to live together' particularly in culturally complex and mobile societies[2] —to *convivencia,* Wise

[1] The rest of the quotes that I have translated from Spanish will be marked TFS in the rest of the document; the notes translated from Portuguese will be marked as TFP.

[2] In Mexico, "conviviality" usually has a different meaning since it is used in relation Ivan Illich' construction, which is presented as a response to the industrial and ecological crisis. Conviviality means "autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment […]. I consider conviviality to be individual freedom realized in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value" (Illich, 1973, p. 11).

and Noble (2016) state that the latter as a term is particularly valuable to contributing to the former since it "includes an emphasis on practice, effort, negotiation and achievement" that allows one to step away from a "romanticized views of cultural harmony" (p. 425) that the concept of conviviality is usually related to, and for which it is often criticized[3]. *Convivencia* as a concept therefore adopts particular connotations depending on the context where it used. In the education field of Latin America and Spain, the term is also linked to the formation, improvement or strengthening of specific communities. It can also refer to formative contents, processes and goals associated with learning to live together. What it entails and how it has been understood will be further developed in the following sections.

What *convivencia* means, the boundaries of the term and the relation to other notions such as *coexistence* or *conviviality* is in no way a finished discussion. It is important to acknowledge that since *convivencia* addresses social relationships and it could be tightly connected to concepts such as socialization or social order, a link can be drawn to larger sociological debates that aim to answer, for example, what is a society or a community, or how social order is structured and maintained. The academic field of school *convivencia*, however, does not usually engage with such debates and it was not the aim of this project to bridge that gap, since I focused on the understanding and use of the notion in the educational field and take an empirical exploration of it in two particular school settings. Nevertheless, it is necessary to delineate some underpinning threads of a general conceptualization of *convivencia* that were used as pivotal points throughout the project.

Convivencia is understood here as the experience of living together that is produced, reproduced and transformed by the everyday relationships among people. The shaping of c*onvivencia* is a continuous process, based on transactions and negotiations of actions and meanings, which constructs particular patterns of living together. Such patterns contribute to form a "natural way" of doing things that moulds the different groups' identities. To live together means to interact in the framework of groups' identities, expressed in particular interactions, logics of action and installed meanings, values and

[3] Although it must be recognized that restricted views of *convivencia* as will be discussed later on this chapter, understand it more as a state of peaceful coexistence, in opposition to violence, than as a recognition of the relationships that form heterogeneous and diverse practices of living together (D'Aloisio, 2011).

beliefs (Hirmas and Eroles, 2008). *Convivencia* emerges from the "continuous use and practice of the cultural resources that are available to the people in a concrete society through their different membership groups" (Perales Franco et al., 2013, p. 107 TFS). A person will have resources from his or her family, school, ethnic group, work environment, neighbourhood, city, and so on, and these resources come into play to shape the type of relationships he or she engages with. The diversity in social and personal exchanges that shape *convivencia* allows us to think not of one single type of *convivencia* in the society and in its social institutions, but in in a "cluster of *convivencias*" (Fierro Evans et al., 2013b, p. 107 TFS). These *convivencias* can be hence understood as complex entities that are on the one hand dynamic, constantly being shaped and reshaped in the everyday interactions, and on the other, as social structures, fairly constant and organized by patterns of such interactions. The somewhat permanent aspect of *convivencia* makes it stable and shows the natural way of "how we live" and "how things are done"; the dynamic aspect brings the possibility of transformation. Both dimensions have been important in understanding school *convivencia* in this project since they address both the naturalized ways of living together and learning to live together in schools, and the processes of intervening in it to modify it.

The patterns of relationships that shape the living together can be explored as specific models of *convivencia* that link together elements such as values, types of knowledge, social organization patterns, linguistic forms, etc. Every person, especially in diverse and wide communities, moves through and interacts with different models depending on the social context she or he inhabits. However it is crucial to understand that the manner in which the different elements are interrelated and put into practice—and therefore the way that *convivencia* is shaped—allows for different possibilities of social organization and "brings different consequences for the quality of life of the people" (Jares, 2006, p. 11 TFS). The models of *convivencia* are configurations that join or separate people, delineating who belongs to "us" and who to "them," in a constant tension "between sameness and difference" (Jares, 2006, p. 31 TFS), and allow for ways in which differences are negotiated in situated practices (Wise and Noble, 2016). The distinctions of the multiple "others" and the ways of relating to each other are constructed through historically and culturally situated interactions shaped by elements of power, class, age, race, ethnicity and gender. How social groups define themselves and the practices they perform

is crucial to understand the particular *convivencias* of the different communities and its possibilities for relationships among the group members, but also with other groups. For example, in analysing the interactions of adolescents and adults in schools, Onetto (2004) explains that the latter understand young people—the "other"—as strangers, which brings a barrier in common meanings about what school and education is for. This is a way of configuring the relation between "teachers" and "students" that has consequences for how the interactions are organized, affecting the possibility of trust and disqualifying the adolescents' view of the world. Such configurations are also connected to wider narratives, in this case with particular anxieties about dangerous youth (Brown and Munn, 2008).

To sum up, *convivencia* is a rich term that addresses the experience of living together, the expectations of such shared lives, as well as their challenges. It is understood as a continuously constructing process based on the relationships that people carry out in their everyday life. The patterns within the models of *convivencia* might have different implications for the people involved in them, but also for the possibilities of developing peaceful, inclusive and democratic relationships, particularly in terms of school *convivencia* as will be discussed in the following sections.

2. *Convivencia* and schools

School *convivencia* is the experience of living together that takes place in schools. In formal education, all processes are mediated by interrelations between the different actors: students, teachers, parents, etc., which in turn adopt certain arrangements that present ways of being engaged with each other in schools. The types of *convivencia* the school has shape the schooling experience, understood here as "the way in which individual and collective actors combine the diverse action logics that structure the school world" (Dubet and Martuccelli, 1998, p. 79 TFS), since it provides the relational elements and boundaries where the school experience is constructed not just for the students, but also of the teachers, the parents and other actors involved. *Convivencia* is therefore formed by the multiplicity of social relationships that construct everyday life in these educational institutions (Bazdresch Parada, 2009). To consider *convivencia* in schools is to focus on the quality—in terms

of their characteristics and the value given to them—of the interpersonal relationships that are constructed in the institution (Ararteko, 2006) and the implications of such quality for other aspects like learning, moral development, conflict management and possibility of participation.

Convivencia is not only produced, but learned and taught through the school experience (Ianni, 2003). All educational processes imply the learning of specific models of *convivencia* (Jares, 2006), which present the usual and allowed ways of interacting, participating and relating to each other. In that sense, school *convivencia* has the particularity that is not only something that occurs in everyday life, but that particular ways of *convivir* are explicitly expected as part of everyday schooling and/or as its educational outcomes. Jares points out that to learn to live together, and the implied rules of it, is a historic function of education, and "therefore the models of *convivencia*, the strategies and even the responsible institution might change, but education, consciously or unconsciously, always carries within a certain meaning of *convivencia*" (2006, p. 11 TFS). One can consider explicit and intentional curricular strategies for engaging with each other, such as the school's rules of behaviour, peace and conflict management programmes or citizenship courses as part of the learning of *convivencia*. More broadly however, *convivencia* is constantly being shaped in general practices of interacting, dialoguing, participating, compromising, obeying, arguing, dissenting, agreeing, etc. that lead to accepted, naturalized, ways of living together (Bazdresch Parada, 2009). Intentional and unintentional processes conjugate and are put into action in the everyday life of the school through projects, activities and common multiple interactions.[4] In this book, I address these 'explicit' processes—i.e., what *is* recognized by the actors as work on *convivencia*—and 'tacit' processes i.e., what is *not* openly recognized but shapes the schools' *convivencia*—(see chapters 5-9), showing how the roles and forms of relationships of the participants shape school *convivencia*, which is therefore learned by the act of engaging in living together.

The social relationships that shape *convivencia* in schools are performed differently and carry within them different symbolic weights depending on their configurations and the social space they occupy. A common division to explore this diversity is the one reflected in the UNESCO indicator's matrix for

[4] Bickmore (2004) also uses a similar distinction of implicit and explicit to refer to the citizenship curriculum.

democratic *convivencia* and peace culture (Hirmas and Carranza, 2009) that separates in three levels of school convivencia:

- Classroom
- School at an institutional level and,
- School in relation to the community.

In these, *convivencia* has different actors, practices, narratives and implications that should be considered. Hirmas and Carranza (2009) acknowledge as well the educational system and national context at a macro level as interrelated with these three, but they do not directly integrate specific indicators for this level. They stress the importance of treating these levels of *convivencia* in a "fluid interexchange" (Hirmas and Carranza, 2009, p. 123 TFS). A complex perspective of the different layers and patterns of the practices of *convivencia* is needed to understand the model that is practiced in each school. Most of the studies carried out in Latin America and Spain focus first on the classroom and second on the teaching or leadership practices and roles (e.g. Ararteko, 2006; Foutoul Ollivier and Fierro Evans, 2011; Fundación SM, 2008; Hirmas and Eroles, 2008; ISEI-IVEI, 2004).

Ianni (2003) seems to justify this trend by establishing that *convivencia* is constructed in the classroom and that only by addressing what happens in there one can consider what occurs in the school. For him, the classroom is a privileged space regarding the students' experience of *convivencia* because it is the first arena of public life for children, adolescent and young people; it is the space to construct social relationships, and it is the place where the student learns social signs and rituals. I however consider that focusing in only on the classroom is not enough to understand the general patterns of *convivencia* in the dynamic way Hirmas and Carranza (2009) highlight, and therefore it is also necessary to address the relationships with all the school's actors and broader context, since they construct the everyday life in school as well. In this same line, Onetto argues for relinquishing the idea of the school as a "greenhouse," able to construct an internal climate separated from the "external social" world, establishing that it is not only impossible, but undesirable, since this strategy "has the effect of producing a void of meaning derived from the lack of the school's social insertions" (2004, p. 13 TFS).

In the research project presented in this book, *convivencia* focuses on the relational practices of the different actors that participate in the schools' everyday life by analysing the observable relationships that have implicit or explicit intention and meaning for living together and learning to live together in schools. These interactions construct models of *convivencia* and allow for a series of processes of approaching, getting to know and dealing with the other(s). Such actions shape in consequence, a specific school identity (Perales Franco et al., 2013). Understood in this way, the concept of school *convivencia* is tightly related to others that address the life in schools such as climate, ethos and culture. There is a constant overlapping between the terms, and an unfinished discussion in relation to the boundaries of each (Solvason, 2005). School ethos, used mostly in the English speaking community, can be understood as a broad spectrum term that refers to the general atmosphere of the school, but that several studies address as a key element in school effectiveness, value formation and school violence (e.g. Blaya and Debarbieux, 2011; Kutsyuruba et al., 2015). It may include the school forms of interaction, attitudes and expectations of teachers, the communication patterns, the ways students participate, disciplinary procedures, leadership styles, the school philosophy and orientation, etc. (Halstead and Taylor, 2000).

This term usually includes the idea of school 'climate', which is commonly used in Spain and Latin America, as it is in measurements of school violence. School climate usually refers to the "perception about the different aspects of the environment where the usual educational activities are developed" (Aron and Milicic, 1999, p. 25 in Valoras UC and Banz, 2008, p. 5 TFS) which can be understood as a part of the school ethos. Nevertheless there are authors like Onetto (2004), whose use of the term climate could be presented as a synonym of *convivencia*—in the way the latter is understood in this project—:

> We have called 'institutional climate' to this set of human relationships in the school. It is not separated of the actual interaction among people, but it does not equate simply to them. The institutional climate is more than the adding up of relationships. It has its own quality. It is a collective condition of the school. It can promote or hinder the achievement of institutional proposes. It is never neutral. It accumulates a history, but it might be suddenly changed. Although is tightly related to "social climate," it is not merely a reproduction of it (Onetto, 2004, p. 30 TFS).

According to Solvason (2005) school ethos is actually produced by school culture. She uses Prosser's (1999, p. 13) definition:

> School culture is an unseen, and unobservable force behind school activities, a unifying theme that provides meaning, direction, and mobilisation for school members. It has both concrete representation in the form of artefacts and behavioural norms, and sustained implicitly by jargon, metaphors and rites (in Solvason, 2005, p. 87).

I propose to understand *convivencia* as a transversal element of both ethos and culture. It refers to the quality of the interactions that shape the ethos (Fierro Evans, 2013) and construct the culture, and that at the same time are in turn influenced by them. One needs to address school culture and ethos to understand the common life in schools, but the focus of *convivencia* is on the relationships. The general perception of those relationships, vis-à-vis the social expectations of them, can be considered the climate. Other cultural aspects like school artefacts, rites and myths, can be related to *convivencia*, but they do not constitute school *convivencia* in themselves.

Central to the argument of this thesis is the idea that school is not the only social institution where its *convivencia* is shaped; it arises as well from other social areas that shape *convivencias* such as family, peer groups, religious institutions, mass communication media or the political and economic context (Jares, 2006; Onetto, 2004). The different models of *convivencia* that emerge from such spaces interact and have an impact on the school's relationships. For this reason it is necessary to locate the school *convivencia* inside wider historical, social and cultural processes, considering the context of the institution and the way that processes and resources are put into practice (Fierro Evans et al., 2013b).

As I have presented in the introduction, there are different rationales for focusing on school *convivencia*. Two should be highlighted here. The first one is that the characteristics of the social interactions that take place in schools have repercussion for the quality of the learning process and results, as different studies on academic outcomes have established (e.g. Casassus, 2005; OECD, 2013). For example, the Second Regional Comparative and Explicative Study done by UNESCO and LLECE in Latin-America and the Caribbean, postulates the importance of harmonious and positive human relationships inside the school since they found that positive school climate,

measured in terms of quality of interactions, is the most important variable to explain the students' performance in math, reading, and sciences (UNESCO, 2008). The second one is that the school has been socially positioned as the main institution responsible for shaping the citizens of the different countries, and therefore, to educate the students in the accepted ways of relating to each other, especially when other institutions, such as the family or religious institutions are perceived to be in constant change or to have lost their socializing 'power' (Subirats and Alegre, 2006). In this sense, considering *convivencia* in schools is relevant because schools can intentionally promote or transform a determinate model of *convivencia*. In this line Jares establishes that:

> Even if it is true that learning to convivir has a great deal of unintentional social osmosis, and therefore, hardly predictable borders, it is not less true that social circumstances planned in a set way—e.g. by promoting respectful, plural and democratic relationships—can facilitate, and in fact they do, processes and social relations in the mentioned direction (2006, p. 12 TFS)[5].

This second reason addresses the relevance given to the potential socializing and transforming power of the school. Different authors (e.g. Carbajal Padilla, 2013; Hirmas and Eroles, 2008), connect to this idea of an intentional model of *convivencia* to Dewey's reflection on how to instruct the young to "share a life in common" and what would be the best way to achieve this objective in a society. For Dewey, intentional institutions emerge to "train the young so he (sic) can become an adult member capable of participating in his community" (Dewey, 1917, p.18 in Hirmas and Eroles, 2008, p. 14 TFS). Hirmas and Eroles (2008) also point to Dewey's 1930s distinction between static and progressive societies. In the former it is enough to maintain the traditions, in the latter education is required to order the students' experiences so new and better habits are formed, and so a better adult's society is constructed. The best way to address this issue according to this perspective is to present an environment where children can experience such conducts and values in a meaningful way, which in turn would lead the children to give priority to certain options later on. This second reason can also be linked to notions of prefigurative forms of political organization that can be promoted in schools. Under this frame

[5] Jares continues this idea expressing the need that an education for *convivencia* and for democratic citizenship should be considered a matter of State, along with the rest of education.

schooling policies and actions can be expected to reflect and perform the qualities of the ideal society aimed for. For McCowan (2010), prefigurative forms focus on the intrinsic value of democracy, and have the possibility of *a)* instantiating the desired society, *b)* being a learning process in themselves and *c)* acting as examples of the "new" society. In this sense, carrying out intentional and transformative models of school *convivencia* has the possibility to reflect and perform the desired *convivencia* in the general society. This possibility of shaping the model of *convivencia* into what is considered a better one through specific actions in schools is a constant trait of the literature of this field, as will be presented in the following section.

3. Understanding and intervening in school *convivencia*

As Ianni (2003) clearly points out, *convivencia* in schools is not a new phenomenon or concept, educational institutions have always had social interactions that shape ways of living together, and strategies to manage them—e.g. in terms of discipline. What has changed is the understanding of the relationship between the institutional actors: adults and children are now considered subjects of rights (Furlán Malamud, 2012; Osler and Starkey, 2005). Hence, school *convivencia* must respect and promote such conventions, and relational practices should be analysed, understood and transformed so they ensure the fulfilment of human rights, especially the right to education of the students and their right to a life free of violence (Donoso, 2012; Smith, 2006). It is in this conception where elements like inclusion, democracy, peace, exclusion, violence, participation, etc. become intertwined with the importance of the models of *convivencia* in schools.

In this human rights frame, the field of school *convivencia* makes a contribution by focusing on the relationships among individuals or groups of people to approach the schooling experiences. These relationships can contribute to allow, hinder or block people's human rights (Abramovay, 2012), but they can as well be constitutive to the fulfilment and exercise of them. Although widely used as notion in the educational context in Latin America and Spain, *convivencia* as an academic and practice field is still emergent. The concept is transversally present in different studies and programmes in the areas of peace, human rights, citizenship, inclusive, intercultural and moral education, among

others. These multiple fields nourish, mould and characterize the understanding and scope of intervention of school *convivencia* and usually coincide in pointing out three main desirable traits: school *convivencia* should be democratic, inclusive and should promote a culture of peace (Fierro Evans, 2013; UNESCO, 2009).

Fierro *et al*. (2010) establish that the field of *convivencia* also shares with these other academic areas two main elements: first, it is situated in the schools' quotidian practices and recognizes the potential of the everyday life in schools to give form to the type(s) of *convivencia*; and second, a public perspective that stresses the importance of such constant interactions to shape actual and future performances in the social and citizen life. Several of these fields also establish the relevance of highlighting the interdependence among humans (e.g. Starkey, 2015) and the problematic nature of the role of schools in relation to social cohesion (e.g. Abramovay et al., 2012; Brown and Munn, 2008; Lianeri, 2013), elements that are also taken into consideration by the field of *convivencia*. Given the interconnectedness of the field two emphases must be made to delineate it. The first one is the focus on the relationships. The second one is to analyse such relationships in the frame of what is called in Spanish educational *gestión*[6] which considers the political-normative, administrative and pedagogical decisions and practices that intervene in shaping the relationships among the actors (Fierro Evans, 2013). According to Fierro Evans (2013), the field of *convivencia* usually addresses the school with an institutional focus. Looking at these practices one can attempt to understand "why, in each school—situated in a particular time and space—*convivencia* adopts identifying traits" (p. 3 TFS).

There are broadly two reasons why an appropriate *convivencia* relates to the human rights perspective. On the one hand, *convivencia* is important because of its impact on the schools' expected outcomes: an appropriate *convivencia* is required for the development of the learning process. This emphasis becomes particularly evident in the studies of school violence, which show how such phenomena can hinder students' learning, limiting therefore the right to education. In Brazil, for example, Abramovay (2005a) highlights as some of the most significant effects of school violences the low quality of teaching, general perception of a negative environment, the students' nervousness, lack of

[6] It is usually translated as school management, but it is perhaps more closely linked to institutional governance. *Gestión* integrates all the institutional processes that organize the school.

concentration and the tendency to skip class. Blaya and Debarbieux (2011) also present evidence on how a negative perception of school limits the development of feeling of belonging, which in turn affects the academic results and increases the risks of anti-social behaviour and delinquency. On the other hand, it is significant because the learning of certain types of *convivencia* is in itself a desirable outcome of the education process, as it is reflected for example in the Delors' report for UNESCO. In it "Learning to live together, learning to live with others" aims to fulfil a double mission: to teach "the diversity of the human race and an awareness of the similarities between, and interdependence of, all the humans" (Delors, 1996, p. 92). In this sense, to learn to *convivir* becomes a basic goal of education (Gallardo Vázquez, 2009) and acts as a guarantee to ensuring human rights at the school and at the social level.[7]

These two reasons provide orientations that shape different approaches on how to understand, manage and improve school *convivencia*, which in turn are reflected in the academic literature, in school policy and in the everyday practices in the schools. Carbajal Padilla (2013) proposes to understand these approaches under two broad categories: one restrictive and one wide or comprehensive. This distinction is also used later on by Fierro Evans et al. (2013a) and by Nieto and Bickmore (2016). In the following part, I will present a personal construction using Carbajal's distinction and key ideas as starting points.

3.1 Restrictive approach to school convivencia

This first approach joins together studies and interventions aimed basically at decreasing the level of school violence, "emphasising the control in the aggressive behaviour of the students" (Carbajal Padilla, 2013, p. 15 TFS), establishing a "causal relationship […] between 'behaviour correction' and 'educational achievement improvement'" (Sebastião et al., 2013, p. 112). It responds to a perceived need for more order and safety in the school by proposing to regulate the behaviour of the students (Furlan, 2003). This orientation is reflected, for example, in the fact that the most reported situation regarding issues of *convivencia*—both at a school system and research level—is pupil-on-pupil violence. Smith (2006, p. 15) states that this might reflect how

[7] Parallel links can be drawn to the discussion of status-based and instrumental approaches in the human rights within education analysis that McCowan (2012, 2013) presents.

the issue of school violence is understood and the possible resistance on the part of the school staff to open issues around other types of violence, but it also reflects a particular way of organizing the living together in schools.

This approach is especially associated with actions aimed at the development of individual behavioural changes and includes grouping together particular pupils in special classes or by specific activities, giving lessons on morality, and developing materials to raise awareness on bullying and harassment (Debarbieux and Blaya, 2013; Smith, 2006). Often it focuses on quick response mechanisms linked with "zero-tolerance" policies, which are based on maintaining a tough view on crime and violence that punishes even minor incidents to control and discourage further more severe actions. It is related to the establishment of strict codes of conduct—which are often constructed by educational authorities or legislators and not in schools—and specific activities to deter crime and violence, like searching the students' belongings. The increase in the physical protection of the schools is also part of this orientation, which might include the use of metal detectors at the entrance of the school, video surveillance and the establishment of well-guarded spaces (Debarbieux and Blaya, 2013; Furlán Malamud, 2012). The assumption underlining these actions is that individuals "will decrease their behaviour in response to the deterrent or punishing effects of sanctions and that creating safer schools by removing disruptive students will lead to a more supportive school climate that will, in turn, reduce individual aggression" (Astor et al., 2010, p. 73).

Carbajal (2013) connects this approach with the perspective on peacekeeping that Galtung (1976) proposes. Three types of conflict management processes are described in the peace and conflict literature: peacekeeping, peace-making and peacebuilding. As Bickmore (2004) identifies, these activities—applied first to international conflicts—are used in education to explain the way communities, groups and individual might deal with conflicts that emerge in social interaction. Peacekeeping is based on the "containment or security approaches," peacemaking includes "dispute resolution, negotiation and dialogue approaches" and peacebuilding emphasizes the need to "redress of underlying inequities and social conflicts to restore healthy relationships and/or prevent future escalation of conflicts" (Bickmore, 2004, p. 77). Schools' practices of peacekeeping rely on a narrow repertoire of actions to control the behaviour of the students with the aim of establishing security. It includes sanctioning violence, but it might also deal with behaviours related to drug

use, theft and non-compliant behaviour. Peacekeeping highlights the need for order in order to reach democracy and development in the societies, however, as Bickmore argues, in terms of citizenship, peacekeeping emphasizes "obedience and blaming/excluding those citizens who do not comply with authority" (2004, p. 77).

For Nieto and Bickmore (2016) the restrictive approach is associated with a view of societal *convivencia* based on the notion of citizen security, which frames the state as a protector and legitimizes its authority to ensure social cohesion. This notion "understands bad choices by 'bad' individuals (and groups) as sources of social conflict and violence, and emphasizes government surveillance and (overt and covert) force for peacekeeping control" (Nieto and Bickmore, 2016, p. 114). It stresses the need to protect the "deserving" citizens from the threats these people or groups present, attempting to make a clear distinction between victim and perpetrator. These authors use Young's argument to explain how, concurrently with neoliberal welfare reforms, a shift has been made towards an individual 'blame' model of responsibility in social policy, which in turn strengthens a restrictive view of *convivencia*. The model assumes that each individual or family has its own sphere of responsibility which they need internalize to take care of their own welfare. These discourses of personal responsibility:

> 1) blame one citizen in order to absolve others (and the collective, represented by government) for social problems; 2) invisibilize large-scale social structural and transnational processes in assessing people's responsibility for their circumstances; and 3) unfairly burden the poor as the 'irresponsible' whom the 'public' needs to worry about (Young, 2011 in Nieto and Bickmore, 2016, p. 114).

As I will explore in chapters 5-9 the notions of security, protection and especially of responsibility are crucial to understand how *convivencia* is constructed in the schools analysed in this project.

Several critiques have been made to actions connected with the restrictive approach. They come from perspectives of *convivencia* focused on the comprehensive approach that will be presented in the next section (e.g. Abramovay, 2012; Carbajal Padilla, 2013), but also from the literature on school violence which analyses the trends and implications of how this issue is conceptualized and intervened (e.g. Blaya and Debarbieux, 2011; Furlong and Morrison,

2000; Garner, 2014). Three particularly relevant critiques should be emphasised. The first is that in the restrictive *convivencia* approach students are considered the sole responsible actors of school violence, aggressive incidents and *convivencia* problems. There is a clear emphasis on students' interpersonal violence (Deuchar and Martin, 2015; Furlong and Morrison, 2000; Ribeiro da Silva and Gonçalves Assis, 2017) which is mostly considered to be visible and intentional. In this sense, it is a 'narrow' definition of violence (Brown and Munn, 2008), that does not include other types of violences, including the violence exercised by teachers towards pupils or the effects of structural violence (Furlán Malamud, 2012). The trend is evident especially in the multiplicity of studies and programmes regarding bullying, which have taken precedence over other views on school violence and *convivencia* in many countries, including Mexico (Carrillo Navarro et al., 2013; Debarbieux, 2003; Delprato et al., 2017; Olweus, 1994). Although the focus on bullying has generated a common awareness of the occurrence of violent practices in schools, the lack of a common definition of bullying used in practice (Abramovay, 2012; Benbenishty and Astor, 2005) and the predominance and exclusivity of the understanding has meant that educational systems "often allocate more resources to surveillance and control than to facilitation of healthy relationships or conflict/peace learning" (Bickmore, 2011, p. 648). Situating school violence only as a characteristic of students increases the risk of developing exclusionary practices and marginalization of particular young people—especially in terms of class, race, ethnicity and disability—(Bickmore, 2011, 2004) and in fact might "compound rather than address the problems of disaffected students" (Osler and Starkey, 2005, p. 196) since it only looks at the particular behaviour without addressing the factors that allow it.

A second critique is that restrictive strategies seem to foster punitive environments that can be counter-productive for the reduction in violence that they are trying to achieve (Smith, 2006). Focusing on the students' problematic behaviour often means that teachers spend "more time on discipline related matters and therefore pay significantly less attention to issues of school climate" which in turn develops a "reciprocal cycle […] in which schools with poorer climates and environment serve as contextual risk factors for developing antisocial and aggressive behaviours, while students exhibiting such behaviours shape even poorer school climates" (Jimerson and Hart, 2012, p. 10). This in turn can foster mistrust among students and staff and in fact makes

schools more dangerous (Benbenishty and Astor, 2005). From a public policy perspective López *et al.* (2013) explain that this type of approach creates punitive policy environments that do not favour processes of school improvement and therefore limit the possibility of improving the learning processes of the students. These strategies are therefore deemed inefficient in much of the literature on school violence (Blaya and Debarbieux, 2011; Furlong and Morrison, 2000; Osher et al., 2004; Skiba and Peterson, 1999).

A third critique shows how the "implementation of punishment-based strategies ("iron-fist," "crackdown," "zero tolerance," military models) tend to be the least effective and indeed are generally counterproductive" (Rodino, 2013, p. 65) but not only in terms of learning and violence reduction, but also in terms of guaranteeing the right to education and the respect of human rights in schools (Bickmore, 2004; Blaya and Debarbieux, 2011; Debarbieux, 2003; Furlán and Spitzer, 2013; Gladden, 2002; Rodino, 2013) since they "tend to condone or promote the human rights violation in the name of a certain 'order' unilaterally established by those who are the authority, leaving intact, at the same time, the profound causes that originate such phenomena"(Fierro Evans et al., 2013b, p. 104 TFS). Although human rights violations affect the whole community, it is particularly important for those students considered problematic, which also tend to be vulnerable in terms of class, race or gender (Bickmore, 2011; Osler and Starkey, 2005; Skiba et al., 2002).

As a way to overcome the critiques presented, especially to the first and second ones, some authors in the field of school violence have proposed different understandings of violence and of ways to tackle it. The first point made is to analyse not only the violent behaviour of the students, but to consider what is called the "school effect" (Blaya and Debarbieux, 2011; Furlong and Morrison, 2000) which can be understood as how policies, cultures and practices in the school have implications for school violence. Benbenishty and Astor (2005) also point out the importance of considering social influences in the school and the views of all school actors in issues of victimization. An ecological model is therefore proposed, particularly from the psychology field, as the best way to understand school violence (Osher et al., 2004). It includes focusing on the macro level of culture and society, the exo level of the community, the meso level of the family and the micro level of the school (Garner, 2014). In such understanding "no particular constellation of personal or environmental variables determines antisocial or aggressive behaviour among

youth; rather, children and context both influence each other, forming interactive feedback loops throughout time" (Sameroff, 2009 in Jimerson and Hart, 2012, p. 8). A second point refers to the interventions by proposing to deal not only with the disruptive or violent students, but to construct strategies at different levels in what is called the "whole school" (Astor et al., 2010; Shaughnessy, 2006) or the "whole policy" approach (Ortega Ruiz, 2006), which includes an understanding of violence as a social reality shared by the whole school community and highlight the need to involve all actors and to plan common strategies to improve school climate and not only inappropriate behaviour.

Sociological approaches also encourage more complex views of violence, understanding it as a social construction "widely dependent of moral codes, social representations of education, the state of the law and of the codes that crystalize it in always provisional constructions" (Furlan, 2003, p. 3 TFS). They critique "locating" the origin of the violence solely inside or outside the school (Charlot, 2006) and recognize the social tension that causes labelling something as violence in schools (Abramovay, 2005b). They also make useful distinctions on the plurality of violences that might exist in schools and point out the importance of their differentiations. Some authors (Abramovay, 2006; Charlot, 2006; Gómes, 2008 in IIDH, 2011) present an interesting classification between violences in school (violent acts that occur in the school context), violence of the school (symbolic[8] or institutional violence generated by the school itself) and violence towards schools (violent acts against the school such as thefts and vandalism) that opens the way of understanding the diverse issues. Charlot (2006) also reflects on the differences between the tension, the situation and the act of violence. Debarbieux (1998) Chesnais (1981) and Roché (2000) propose that not all acts that are subsumed under the umbrella of school violence are the same and present a distinction between indiscipline acts, incivilities or *microviolences* and criminal or hard violences (in Abramovay, 2005a).

Such proposals therefore aim for a wide understanding of school violence and are less focused on the punishment of particular students. They are still, however, located under the frame of the restrictive view of *convivencia*, since they subsume it to the need to reduce school violence and therefore

[8] Taken from Bourdieu's (2006) concept of symbolic violence.

convivencia is only seen as a remedial or preventing path (Fierro Evans et al., 2013a). Some of the works in this line, for example, define *convivencia* as "living together in harmony" and present it as the opposite of school violence (Smith, 2006, p. 5) and therefore, even when understanding the relation to human rights, peace and democracy, the actions planned deal with addressing school violence and are focused mainly on the relationship among students (see for example programme SAVE in Ortega Ruiz, 2006). For Carbajal (2013) this limits the possibility that the work on *convivencia* introduces and signifies a restrictive understanding of quality in education.

It is important to state, however, that the literature and intervention programmes with a "wide" understanding of violence (Brown and Munn, 2008) do give insights on the relationships that form school *convivencia* and contribute with pertinent elements to consider. This body of work highlights, first of all, the importance of safe environments as requisite for learning and the right to education (UNESCO 2009 in Garner, 2014). Secondly, they provide longitudinal studies that contribute to the identification of personal and contextual characteristics that link to probabilities of risk and problematic behaviour (Mertz, 2006 in Hirmas and Carranza, 2009). The ecological frame, multi-level approaches and nested studies explore as well the effects of different factors over an array of types of victimization allowing for some international comparison (Benbenishty and Astor, 2012; Osher et al., 2004). Finally, the complex understanding of school violence that some of the sociological literature proposes allows for not only identifying the violent behaviour, but emphasises the importance of recognizing and treating as different the plurality of violences that have different implications for schools' everyday life.

3.2 Comprehensive approach to school convivencia

Taking a different stance, the comprehensive approach establishes school *convivencia* not just a variable to be transformed to reduce violence and in turn improve learning outcomes, but as a way of educating and a goal of education in itself (Carbajal Padilla, 2013). It is positioned as an indispensable component of the quality of education, since it is a source of meaningful learning experiences for the different school actors. For Fierro (2010) the notion of quality in education must contain the perspective of the quality of the common life. For most of the authors that can be associated with this approach,

quality in education regarding *convivencia* is equivalent to the development of peaceful, democratic and inclusive relationships as needed components of the educational experience (Díaz-Aguado, 2002; Fierro Evans et al., 2013a; Hirmas and Eroles, 2008). It is explicitly framed by the perspective of human rights and even when in many contexts it is derived from a recognition of school violence and bullying, these issues are seen "as one of the many of the school *convivencia*" (Ortega Ruiz, 2006, p. 4 TFS):

> The theoretical-pedagogical construct needs to be reversed. The educational system should not take on the objective of "fighting violence" per se […], but instead should plan ways to create and sustain conditions that will guarantee safety and peaceful coexistence in school facilities and education communities, as these goals are clearly in the purview of educators. "Learning to live together" is, in fact, one of the great and undeniable purposes of education (Rodino, 2013, p. 63).

Differently from the restrictive approach as well, which focuses on individual behaviours, the comprehensive emphasizes the collective life in common. This approach is then located in the public sphere of education (Hirmas and Eroles, 2008; Kaplan, 2016) and states that the participation in the everyday life in schools is what shapes the educational community (Fierro Evans, 2011).

In terms of interventions to improve school *convivencia* the comprehensive approach can be associated with specific curricular and management interventions and some of the work focuses, on the one hand, on developing strategies in connection to the 'whole-school' approach proposed mainly in the school climate literature (e.g. Díaz-Aguado, 2002; Ortega Ruiz, 2006); or on the other, on conflict resolution and citizenship initiatives (Bickmore, 2011). Some of the most common strategies have been "promoting teamwork, recognizing students as young people and rights-holders, linking education to the world of work, citizenship training and conflict resolution, and presence in the school of other specialists to back up the teachers" (Rodino, 2013, p. 65). Other interventions have also proposed to give more attention to the everyday processes of school, including discipline management, decision making, types of pedagogies and conflict management processes, since most of the relevant learning opportunities are those that are "taught implicitly through regularized repetition and regulation" (Bickmore 2004 p. 92, also Abramovay, 2012; Ianni 2003). In this sense school *convivencia* "stops being a concept to learn

and then apply to become an experience of sociability" (Fierro Evans, 2008, p. 287 TFS). These perspectives aim to develop a continuous practice in the school community, reflecting on how the relationships are carried out and the type of convivencia they generate (e.g. Fierro Evans et al., 2013b; Hirmas and Eroles, 2008). The approach stresses the need for multifaceted and long term interventions aimed not only to change particular behaviours, but the whole school culture (Bickmore, 2011; Hirmas and Eroles, 2008).

The comprehensive approach is not a unified independent approach. It comes together from different perspectives (citizenship, peace, inclusion, moral development, etc.), each of them proposing particular paths or elements that relate or emphasizes some of the dimensions or elements of school *convivencia*. As an example, Carbajal Padilla proposes a view of democratic *convivencia*, which "integrates the democratic relationships (institutional, cultural and personal) as well as the participation structures as essential elements for peace construction and consolidation" (2013, p. 15 TFS). *Convivencia* is linked to democracy because it assumes the "construction of just and long-lasting interpersonal, institutional and cultural relationships that offer all students an equal access to an education with quality"(Carbajal Padilla, 2013, p. 17 TFS). Democratic *convivencia* articulates elements of power distribution, conflict resolution and inclusion as requirements for a democratic way of living together. It is important to acknowledge the particular proposals in the comprehensive approach relate not only to particular fields or theoretical orientations, but to the specific local, national or regional contexts they respond to. For example, in Spain issues of inclusion related to the multicultural challenge the country faces are given more weight than in Latin American countries, which are usually more concerned with participation spaces and social justice demands. The comprehensive approach is therefore wide and diffuse. In the rest of the section, I will only highlight some of the more important dimensions that relate to this approach not just in terms of the commonality found in the literature, but also in connection to the analysis that will be presented later on.

3.2.1 Democratic citizenship and participation

As I have stated, school *convivencia* is often presented as relevant in relation to citizenship and democracy since it deals with the life in common and proposes

particular understandings and improvements on what that life should be. Jerome (2014) proposes, in an analysis of the United Kingdom's (UK) policies, that citizenship discourses take three different orientations: *a)* the relationships between the individual and the state that are constructed in terms of rights and responsibilities, *b)* the relationships of groups of individuals and the state in terms of participation and active citizenship, and *c)* the relationships between citizens associated with the nature of community, social diversity and community cohesion. School *convivencia* relates to citizenship in connection with all of these discourses, by being based on human rights conventions that the State should guarantee, by promoting public spaces for group engagement in schools, but especially by articulating particular ways of constructing community and learning to live together in schools and in the society. School *convivencia* is therefore positioned as a contributor to the development citizenship in the school space through the enactment and learning of particular citizenship practices, of which and active and responsible participation and the democratic construction of rules to regulate the common life are probably the most important. The participation practice is based on the right for the school actors, particularly the students, to participate (Osler and Starkey, 2005) and it is considered a requisite for democracy (Fierro Evans, 2008; Jares, 2006). In terms of the norms, a perspective on democratic *convivencia* states the importance of commonly constructing agreements, highlighting the need for students to be co-responsible for constructing rules and the need for a just and well agreed rules' implementation in schools (Esperanza, 2001; Landeros and Chávez, 2015) to facilitate more horizontal distributions of power and the recognition of such conventions as valid. Implicit or explicit citizenship curricula shape in turn particular models of *convivencia* (Shaughnessy, 2006), and an exploration of them also gives insights into the type of *convivencia* the schools promote (Nieto and Bickmore, 2016).

3.2.2 Diversity and inclusion

School *convivencia* from a comprehensive approach is based on the notion of diversity as a valuable and normal part of life in common (Bazdresch Parada, 2008; Osler and Starkey, 2005), in that sense, inclusion is a "systematic response to diversity" (Lianeri, 2013, p. 44). The notion of inclusive *convivencia* draws on the developments and arguments of inclusive education which state

the right of all children to attend education and show the need for a change in school culture and organization to achieve this (Barton and Armstrong, 2007). This approach highlights that difficulties in learning and participation are not located solely in particular students, but often are the result of the social configurations of the schools and the society in general (Hirmas and Eroles, 2008; Liasidou, 2016). A comprehensive *convivencia* promotes inclusion by explicitly recognizing first the social and schooling inequalities and second by taking on relational configurations aimed at overcoming them, since "inclusive education is about the participation of all children and young people and the removal of all exclusionary practices" (Barton, 1998, p.85 Clough and Corbett, 2000, p. 7). It is especially from this dimension where critiques to the emphasis on the "safety" in schools emerge, since there is evidence on the unequal distribution of school violence (Debarbieux, 2003) and particular violence management strategies have been linked to and the way schools face social and cultural diversity in general (Sebastião et al., 2013). School *convivencia* from this perspective takes an explicit stance against exclusion and highlights the relevance of two fundamental processes "the experience of belonging and being part of the group, and the acknowledgment and recognition of one's own identity, which allows people to know themselves as equally valuable and distinct at the same time"(Fierro Evans, 2011, p. 11 TFS).

3.2.3 Peace and conflict resolution

The third dimension relates to the development of peaceful relationships in schools. A first distinction used, taken from the peace literature, is the one between conflict and violence in relation to peace. For Galtung (1996, 1976, 1969) and others (e.g. Cabezudo and Haavelsrud, 2007) the opposite of peace is not conflict, but violence, and therefore the construction of peace is dependant to first, a understanding of conflict as something inherent to diversity and participation (Jares, 2006; Nieto and Bickmore, 2016)—which implies a dynamic a positive possibility for social transformation and the construction of democratic relationships—and second, the need to deal with such conflict in non-violent ways (Monclús Estella, 2005). A second distinction used is the one between negative peace—the absence of violence—and positive peace—the presence of conditions for peace (Galtung, 1996). A comprehensive approach to *convivencia* takes on board the notion of positive peace linking

these conditions to the elements of democracy, participation, diversity and inclusion. In this line, Carbajal (2013) connects this approach to the perspective of peacebuilding, which includes as well processes of peacemaking. Peacemaking "attempts to facilitate conflict management and resolution through dialogue and problem-solving rather than blame or punishment" (Bickmore, 2004, p. 79), proposing that students themselves participate in conflict management process through peer support practices (Cowie, 2006; Ortega Ruiz, 2006, 1998) including mediation. Peacebuilding takes on peacemaking processes but it is oriented towards repairing relationships after incidents of violence (restoration) and building equitable and resilient relationships during the conflict cycle through addressing structural inequities by focusing on social justice, anti-discriminatory and non-violent practices (Bickmore, 2004; Nieto and Bickmore, 2016).

3.2.4 Socio-emotional and moral processes

The significant experiences of school *convivencia* include and need—transversally to the elements signalled in the previous dimensions—the development of values, socio-emotional skills and affective traits. They are relevant both to the well-being of the individuals and to the ethical character of the people's relationships. While the restrictive approach places more emphasis in the well-being of the individuals, the comprehensive perspectives deem the ethical character of the life in common as central (Hevia, 2009), and particular values, skills and traits are emphasized in order to achieve democratic, inclusive and peaceful *convivencia*. They are developed through participation with the others and in that sense, they are relationally (Kaplan, 2016) and contextually situated. Although there is no consensus on how this particular dimension of school *convivencia* should be understood or addressed—if programmes on socio-emotional and moral development should be carried out specifically or transversally to the curriculum, for example (e.g. Esperanza, 2001)—there is a commonality in emphasizing solidarity, which includes empathy and recognition (e.g. Fierro Evans et al., 2010; Gallardo Vázquez, 2009; Landeros and Chávez, 2015), and responsibility, which contains the care for one-self, others and the environment, as well of the possibility of responding to needs on those particular areas (Fierro Evans, 2008). The way different socio-emotional and ethical elements came into play in schools help shape the way of

being and of living together in *convivencia*, since provide concrete support for the maintenance of everyday life (Perales Franco et al., 2014).

These four dimensions are considered here the basis of the comprehensive approach. They join multiple perspectives that deal with the collective life that is and should be promoted in the school. It is important to state that the academic works that can be grouped in this approach do not seem to include an internal critique of the possible limitations or challenges it presents. This might be due to the fact that its development is fairly recent or that the main claims are presented as an alternative to the restrictive approach. Two possible constrains need to be addressed, however. The first one is that the comprehensive approach focus on the everyday processes of the school *and* on large societal narratives of democracy, inclusion and peace. Such characteristics make this a powerful perspective in terms of addressing extremely relevant areas of education and of giving ways to connecting the micro and macro social processes in school. However, it also makes it complex to achieve ways that can look at the specificity of the everyday interactions, without missing the comprehensive stand that it emphasizes. A second constraint relates to how this approach understands the peacekeeping processes. It highlights the risks of the arguments in favour of punitive peacekeeping mechanisms, especially in terms of the possible violation of human rights, and explicitly includes the importance of peacemaking and peacebuilding processes. However, there is still a gap on how more concretely to address the commonly perceived—like in the case of the two schools in this research—need to stop school violence and maintain order to ensure the possibility of education. In some violent incidents based in deep power imbalances (bullying or sexual harassment for example) there is still a demand to protect the "victim" in a firm and expedite way, and therefore a clearer stance on how to manage these situations from a comprehensive perspective should be further developed, an aspect which might help to bridge some of the tensions that will be explored later in the analysis.

4. An analytical comprehensive approach to school *convivencia*

The research here presented is oriented by the comprehensive approach, since school *convivencia* is understood as a complex relational phenomenon that shapes the educational processes and outcomes and develops meaningful so-

cial learnings. It involves processes of participation, inclusion-exclusion, conflict management and socio-emotional development, which make up the natural way of living together in the everyday school practices. The comprehensive approach to *convivencia*, through the four dimensions presented, also proposes that particular ways of living together and certain school practices should be adopted to promote peaceful, inclusive and democratic *convivencia*. For this research, however, I did not set as a starting point an ideal of how school *convivencia* should be, but adopted an analytical perspective that tried to explain first how particular types of *convivencia* are constructed and performed in the interactions of a specific context and secondly, with the comprehensive framework as an input, reflect on the implications of such a model for the school's everyday life.

I must nevertheless acknowledge that the concept of *convivencia* brings within an inherent tension between what can be described-analysed and the desirable-needed elements that the field, and myself as a researcher and educational practitioner, strive for and that are important reasons for the study. Fierro and Tapia (2012) explain that "to talk about school's *convivencia* in the everyday life inevitably embeds an aspirational component […] Referring to *convivencia* reflects a tension between what is and what we want it to be" (in Fierro Evans, 2013, p. 10 TFS). In my case, I take an ethical and political stance against segregation, inequity, exclusion and the violence that they represent and cause. I believe schools should and can be spaces for equity, inclusion and peace; and that a transformation of aims, practices and cultures is necessary to achieve this. As part of an ethnographic reflective stance, these elements needed to be acknowledged and considered throughout the research process.

Three key aspects frame the way I have approached researching *convivencia* from an analytical perspective. The first one is understanding schools as contested, non-neutral spaces where a multiplicity of interests, orientations, representations and contradictions are woven into the interrelations that shape *convivencia*. Such diversity cannot and should not be escaped when studying its everyday life. The second one is the need to adopt a complex, multi-dimensional view of school violence as a starting point. Although the comprehensive approach understands school violence as one of the many practices of school, because of the Mexican context, public policy and perceived needs in the research's schools, there is a need to give weight to this element in order to

unpick powerful narratives and performances that shape the everyday life. School violence is understood with Abramovay (2006, p. 53 TFP) as a "social construction that emerges from the array of relations and interactions between individuals" and as such "it must consider the different meanings attributed by the actors that are part of the schools' everyday." I adopt here a conception that integrates the plurality of forms of 'violences' (Charlot, 2006), but is more concerned with how they interrelate with the actors narratives and practices in the everyday life. In this conception not only the violent act matters, but their processes, constructions and transits between conflict and violence in the everyday.

In connection to this point it is important to note here than the concept of 'violence' as well as the concepts further used of 'conflict' and 'dialogue' present in chapters 6 and 7, follow the use the participants in both of the analysed schools made of them. For me, the term conflict, for example, represents an interaction between multiple actors that shows contrasting or opposing ideas and needs, and it is neither positive nor negative but can be managed to positively transform a particular situation. However, it is used by the school actors only in negative terms, practically as a synonym of "problem." This decision was taken to respect the ethnographic analytic approach chosen in this research, and therefore I use the terms of violence, conflict and dialogue in a way consistent with the actors' definitions.

The third framing aspect is considering *convivencia* as a product of the multiplicity of relationships of the school actors. This means on the one hand to give analytic primacy to the relationships and to the models of living together that they construct, and on the other to consider the participation of all the different people that interact in the school, since "the recognition of the complexity of the relationships allows one to map social processes and aids the understanding that the practices […] are present among all of the actors" (Abramovay, 2012, p. 16 TFP). This research in contrast aims to address the lack of specific *convivencia* research at the community level and the gap of understanding how wider community contexts and actors interact in the school and in that sense, it focuses particularly on interactions that include the schools' families. In regard to families, I will use work from the sociology of education field that addresses family participation in the next and final section of the chapter.

4.1 Family involvement and its relation to school convivencia

The family-school dynamic has been deemed one of the central elements related to school effectiveness and positive outcomes. It is positioned as relevant for students' achievement and for the schooling experience of the different actors (Bastiani, 1993; Munn, 1993; Schalla, 2015; Sheridan and Moorman Kim, 2016). Although relative consensus has been achieved on its importance, there is still debate on the appropriateness of the different configurations and on its implications for children, families, schools and the society in general (Abrams and Gibbs, 2002; Jeynes, 2003). Historically the relationship between families and schools has been modified tending towards an increased involvement on both parts: roughly, there was first a distinct separation, especially in rural and more traditional schooling, then a move towards economic and political support, with the development of mass education, and now the recognition of the implicated relationship in terms of academic development (Lareau, 1987). It has not been, however, a linear progression. The different orientations are still present in schooling systems and the way schools and families relate is often shaped by a combination them. In many cases, the—sometimes contradicting—implications of such orientations generate confusion or tension between families and teachers (Esquivel Alcocer, 1995) and play a role in the shaping of school *convivencia*, as will be explored in chapters 5-9. The majority of the literature studying this relationship has focused on the parental involvement in school looking at its importance in terms of better academic outcomes of the students (Epstein, 2010; Gordon and Louis, 2009; Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2003), an increase in attendance and lower drop-out rates (Gertler et al., 2012) and mental health and "social functioning" (El Nokali et al., 2010; Pomerantz et al., 2007). It also considers the parents involvement at home but it has been more challenging to research and measure (Schalla, 2015). For schools, parents' collaboration has been linked to benefits in terms of teachers' morale, family support and better school reputations within the community (Henderson and Mapp, 2002), and in connection to improvements in terms of school safety and security (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2008). Predictors and explanatory factors in terms of sociodemographic data, beliefs, attitudes, expectations, and family and school culture have been studied as well in an attempt to strengthen this relationship (Schalla, 2015).

Parental involvement has been analysed in the field of sociology of education given that processes of decentralization (Gunnarsson et al., 2009), marketization and accountability linked to neoliberalism have also reinforced the importance of the parent-school relationships in different educational systems, Mexico's included. These studies also show that parent-school relationships emerge as a result of the social process (Lareau, 1987) and are "strongly shaped by perceptions of parents' background and of the roles expected of them by school administrators, teachers and by the organizations […] that fund family literacy and parent involvement programmes" (Baquedano-López et al., 2013, p. 150). Family life, which used to be considered a topic of the private sphere, has now been increasingly discussed in the public domain (Vincent, 2000) through different discourses which contribute to shape the way of living together in schools. A generative path to analyse the relationship between schools and families is the exploration of the roles constructed regarding parents, which are understood by Vincent (2000, 1996) as 'subject positions' (Apple, 1996) opened to parents in the current education system. They are "ways in which understandings of 'appropriate' parental behaviour and relationships with other parents and teachers are reached, disseminated, accepted, challenged and/or subverted" (Vincent, 2000, p. 2). I will briefly present now four of such constructions: parents as problems, partners, consumers and citizens.

A. Parents as problems

Much of the work around parental involvement has proposed sets of narratives, norms, activities or interactions to foster the connection between home and school (e.g. Epstein, 2010; Epstein and Hollifield, 1996). Most of these initiatives are based on the assumptions that families' involvement in school is crucial, but that in many cases is insufficient or not appropriate, positioning it as a key reason for the lack of educational success (e.g. Coleman, 1991). In that sense, they focus on the deficit of parents to develop proper ways of interacting with the school or their children. Martiniello (2000), for example, stated that illiteracy and educational levels of parents are the greatest barriers to involvement in Latin American countries and that therefore programmes should include training for teachers and parents, and have the later involved as: caregivers, teachers, supporters at school, and agents for decision-making. These

types of understandings and interventions have a unidirectional quality—"parents are involved with the school, but not necessarily the school with parents" (Reese et al., 2012)—that can foster school-centric approaches that only relate to families as individual units, without including the possible relations among families. They also position the notion of parent involvement as a necessary condition of academic success, making it a "common sense" notion (Kainz and Aikens, 2007) which shifts the responsibility of school outcomes to families.

For Baquedano-López *et al* (2013), analysing the USA context, this perspective is especially problematic when schools are largely based on dominant values and expectations—white and middle-class—and therefore this normalized view of family "does not take into account the complexity of family arrangements and their economic organization" (p.150) which often negatively affects minority, working class and vulnerable families and hinders the possibility of involve marginalized populations meaningfully in schools (Crozier and Davies, 2007; also evidence in Schalla, 2015). This approach to understanding family-school relationships as deficient or inappropriate is particularly evident in relation to school violence. Several of the international studies referred to in the previous sections found that parents and families—especially the non-traditional, single, or "at risk"—are often blamed for the inadequate socialization of the students and positioned as responsible for the violent or aggressive behaviour of their children, through narratives or assumptions of parental styles regarding discipline, absenteeism from home and lack of support to the schools (e.g. Abramovay, 2012; Debarbieux and Blaya, 2013; Furlan, 2003).

B. Parents as partners

This approach also recognizes the centrality of the involvement of the parents in their children's education, but stresses the notion of collaboration and shared responsibility between parents and school staff. For Vincent (2000, p. 5) this approach "describes the intended or more often ideal relationship between parents and teacher," and it is positioned as a way of positively value the input parents provide to both the school as an institution and their particular children's education. Although "partnership" is used as a term related to notions of equality and more horizontal relationships between schools and fami-

lies, it still "constructs a lack of parent involvement as endemic and as something that schools must address to get parents on board with their agenda, particularly on reform efforts" (Baquedano-López et al., 2013, p. 154). In practice, the notion of partnership tends to position the parents more as "learners" or "supporters" (Lareau, 1987; Vincent, 2000, 1996), since schools view their appropriate involvement mostly in term of adhering to the school values and project, and aiding with its practices (Azaola, 2011; Lareau, 1987; Munn, 1993) especially in regards to monitoring the compliance of school related activities, such as homework or general behaviour (Baquedano-López et al., 2013). In return, schools are meant to offer guidance to families to help the students and increase their chances of educational success.

C. Parents as consumers

The role of parents as consumers of educational goods and services is closely related to the neoliberal trend stated above. It promotes the right of families to choose among a diversified market of schools which include options such as private, public, different locations, religious, secular, etc. The assumption is that choice promotes efficiency, quality and equality since all options are open and through choosing and especially exiting particular institutions, parents can shape the educational system to respond to their needs. It also demands that schools are more accountable for their own processes, promoting improvement through competition. The marketization of the schooling system in conjunction with this approach has been severely criticized in countries such as the UK, USA and Chile because it emphasizes private rights over collective welfare rights (Munn, 1993), promotes inequality (Baquedano-López et al., 2013) and diminishes agency and collective voice (Vincent, 2000). Parents as consumers is not a dominant role in the case of Mexico, because although privatization of education has grown in the last thirty years and there has been a significant development in the narrative of accountability, the discourse of choice is not present in this context, and the State is seen as the main actor in distributing resources (Malgouyres, 2014; Verger et al., 2017; Zurita Rivera, 2011).

D. Parents as citizens

This construction of parents' participation proposed by Vincent (2000) is particularly relevant to consider in connection with the comprehensive approach to *convivencia*. Vincent proposes this role regarding the participation of parents in Parent Centred Organizations in the UK, which she sees as an exemplar of relations between citizens and state institutions. She argues that traditional understandings of citizenship, both from a liberalist and a civic republicanist perspective,

> are exclusionary in practice, despite the rhetoric and signifiers of inclusion: terms and practices such as participation in the public sphere, "universal rights," "common good," and "consensus." This blanket signifying of inclusion ignores structural inequalities of power which act to marginalize particular individuals and groups (Vincent, 2000, p. 11).

Instead, she positions difference as a resource for democratic communication and the notion of *counterpublics*—although not necessarily democratic or egalitarian—as a way to reach the expansion of public discursive spaces. For her, education "would appear to be a highly appropriate field for the formation of 'subaltern counterpublics'" (Vincent, 2000, p. 19) and fostering parents' participation in this plural role could not only increase involvement, but also more horizontal forms of differentiation with the possibility of acting as a group. The notions of parents as citizens can also be connected with the roles of "monitor," "decision maker" and "advocate" explored by Abrams and Gibbs (2002) and with approaches aiming to empower and decolonialize parental involvement based on the recognition of multiple valid forms of family culture and knowledge and on the need to change economic, epistemic, psychological, and physical violent structures to promote inclusion of all families, particularly the ones belonging to minority or vulnerable populations (Baquedano-López et al., 2013).

Cutting transversally to the analysis of these models is the understanding that parental support is not homogenous. It is instead shaped through class, gender, race/ethnicity and other linked processes such as migration. Policies, social representations and practices relating parents and schools are generally based on normalized dominant views on families and therefore do not have the same orientations and implications for all. Teachers' deficit views on

parents' involvement frequently come from characteristics attributed to social background (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Vincent, 1996). Working class parents are often perceived as having less interest in their children's education, as lacking resources and in more need of support (Reay, 1998). For Lareau (1987), social class provides unequal capitals to comply with schools' expectations of appropriate participation. It also contributes to shape the roles of teachers and parents and the networks of the people involved in schooling (Ryan et al., 2010)

Analysis of parental participation regarding race shows that in many cases the "rules of the game" depend on race-specific interactions and that aspects such as trust vary depending on racialized experiences (Lareau and McNamara Horvat, 1999). These studies also show that race—or ethnicity and migration experience—might also be intertwined with it diverse configurations of families that are not contemplated by schools and that there are specific factors that limit the participation of parents that do not belong to the dominant cultures (Schalla, 2015), such as time flexibility, lack of financial resources and lack of awareness about the school system (Williams and Sánchez, 2011). In terms of gender, "parents" is the figure most used in policies, programmes, studies and narratives, in practice however, the responsibility lies unequally with the mothers who generally are expected to identify and meet potential needs of the students as well as to respond to school demands, "consequently mothers are judged upon their approach to and effectiveness at both mediation and regulation" (Vincent, 2000, p. 26). Gender, class, race and other structures mediate each other and construct particular and differentiated social configurations that need to be considered in terms of *convivencia*, because if the school's relations are approached "through homogeneous expectations […] it will be very hard to recognize and legitimize the experiences of our students that reflect such diversity" and they might be "translated into symbolic violence […] for grouping students and families approving some and disapproving others" (Onetto, 2005, p. 1127).

The focus on all school relationships fostered by a complex and comprehensive approach to *convivencia* demands, therefore, an exploration of the parent-school relationship which can be enriched through the perspectives presented above. To only consider the parents, however, is a limited view on how to understand the interactions and forms of *convivencia* between schools and families. In the Mexican context although policy and teachers percep-

tions are based as well on the parental role, there is a need to widen the analysis from parents to family in order to reflect the change and diversity of the students' homes (González, 2009; Piedra Guillén, 2016) and ways of relating to the school. The role of the extended families is especially necessary to understand the types of *convivencia* that exist in Mexico. An extended family is basically understood as a household made by one or two parents, their children and other relatives—mostly grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Although in Mexico the percentage of these types of families has been decreasing at a national level—moving from 20% in 2000 (Ariza and De Oliveira, 2007) to 9.6% to the population in 2015 (López Romo et al., 2016)—they are especially present in many of the most socially vulnerable communities. Ariza and De Oliveira (2008) discuss that the prevalence of this family structure might be the result of economic deprivation, families opting to live together to respond to economic and social necessities, which include caring responsibilities of children. Wider views of family participation are important as well to address other types of families—single-parent or reconstituted for example—but also other dynamics like the temporal or permanent migration of the students' parents and the instability of the families' configurations throughout the school years.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have developed the concept of school *convivencia* as a way to address the relationships and community configurations that take place in educational institutions. It presented first, a frame on the general notion of *convivencia* that explains the way models of living together are constructed in the everyday life and relate to people's cultural resources. It is necessary to consider *convivencia's* stable and dynamic characteristics that on the one hand shape a relatively permanent 'natural way' of doing things and living together and, on the other, open the possibility of transformation. The rest of the chapter has dealt with school *convivencia*, proposing to understand it as the tapestry of relationships among all school actors that shape the schools' everyday life and that provide the relational boundaries for the schooling experience. It included a discussion on the restrictive and comprehensive approaches to *convivencia* proposed by Carbajal Padilla (2013), discussing its implications and

connections to school violence, democratic citizenship, inclusion and peace. The final section positioned the research in an analytical approach suggesting the inclusion of proposals regarding parental and family involvement derived from the field of sociology of education. The different sections in this chapter frame the theoretical understanding that is put in dialogue with the methodological and empirical data that will be discussed in the following chapters. As a way to provide a discussed setting of the research, the next chapter addresses the Mexican context, in terms of its social, political and educational characteristics.

III. Mexico: Country Characteristics, Educational System and *Convivencia* Research

The "experiences of living together and learning to live together" that *convivencia* refers to are immersed in particular social, historical and political contexts. It is therefore required to understand school *convivencia* in Mexico as linked to its specific setting conditions, configurations and challenges. The following chapter aims to provide a first approach to the national, state and local settings of the schools analysed.[1] I will start by presenting a brief insight to the general context of Mexico, considering with more specificity some of the characteristics of the states of Jalisco and Sonora and of the municipalities of Zapopan and Cajeme, where the schools of Guadalajara and Ciudad Obregón are respectively located. It will highlight aspects that are significant in relation to the life of the families and local community of the schools. A second section will address the situation of social and organized crime related violence in Mexico, since it is directly connected to the policy of school *convivencia*. Finally, in the third section, I will introduce the configuration of the Mexican educational system in general and of the primary system in particular only as a frame for more detailed characteristics presented in the following chapters, emphasizing aspects that will be taken up in the discussions presented further on.

[1] In this sense, the data presented in this chapter account for the period in which the research was carried out 2014 to 2017.

1. A national glance

Mexico is a federal republic formed by 32 states. The two states where the research's schools are situated are Jalisco and Sonora, both located in the western part of the country (see map in figure 1). Each state is in turn divided by municipalities, the basic political and administrative unit in the Mexican Republic. Jalisco has 125 municipalities and Sonora 72. The city of Guadalajara in Jalisco, the second most largely populated city in the country, joins together four municipalities. The school of this research is located in one of them, Zapopan. The city of Ciudad Obregón, where the second school is located, is much smaller in size and it is in the municipality of Cajeme. The following chart shows the population number for each of these territories in 2015, except for Ciudad Obregón, which is for 2010.

Table 1. National, municipal and cities' population

Country	States		Municipalities		Cities	
Mexico	Jalisco	Sonora	Zapopan	Cajeme	Guadalajara	Ciudad Obregón
119,938, 473*	**7,350, 682 ***	**2,662, 480***	**1,332, 272****	**433,050 *****	**4,725,603****	**298, 625 ********

(Note. Adapted from H. Ayuntamiento de Cajeme 2015-2018, 2015***; Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía [INEGI], 2016a*, 2016b**, 2016c***)

Figure 1. Map of research settings

(Note. Created by the author)

Mexico is a country with stark socio-economic contrasts. It is part of the OECD—that groups together the so called economically developed nations of the world—and it is currently considered the second largest economy in Latin America after Brazil. The GPD per capita estimated in 2016 was of $ 18,579 USD which is the highest in the region—although considerably lower than the $ 42,098 USD average for OECD countries (OECD, 2017a). Mexico's export production has significantly grown, especially in the automotive and agricultural sectors—two sectors where several of the family members of this study were employed—and it is the main source of national income (Amador, 2015). This growth and other elements related to macro-economic stability are not however reflected on the well-being of most of the population, and other important situations reflect more the type of life experienced by the social actors in this study.

One of the most pressing issues in the country is inequality. Mexico is the most unequal country in the OECD—its GINI coefficient is 0.459, in comparison the UK is 0.360 (OECD, 2017b)—and it is estimated to be among the 25% of most unequal countries in the world (Esquivel Hernández, 2015). One percent of the richest Mexicans holds 21% of the country's income. Their fortunes have also increased through time and the amount of Mexican millionaires is estimated to grow by 57% by 2019 (Research Institute, 2014). In contrast, poverty rates have not decreased in relation to the economic growth since 1990 (Esquivel Hernández, 2015), and the current number of people living in poverty has in fact increased, going from 44% of the population in 2008—48.8 million people—to 46.2% in 2014, equivalent to 55.3 million people. From the people living in poverty, it is estimated that 9.5%—11.4 million people—lived in extreme poverty in 2015 (INEGI 2016a), which means the full use of their incomes for food, would not give them enough to obtain the minimum of needed nutrients for a healthy life. Although in the particular states of Sonora and Jalisco poverty levels have not increased at the same level as they have in the rest of the country, there still were over 800,000 people in Sonora and over 2.7 million people in Jalisco living in poverty in 2014 (Coneval, 2017).

Some of the most vulnerable people live in rural environments and are part of the indigenous population of Mexico; in 2014, over 70% of indigenous households lived in poverty and 22% more were considered in a vulnerable position due to social deprivation (Coneval, 2014 in UNICEF/INEE, 2016, p. 9). Indigenous people represent an important part of the Mexican population, 10% live in a household where at least one person speaks an indigenous language (indigenous household) and 22% self-identifies as part of an indigenous community (CDI, 2016). There are 68 linguistic groups and 364 language variations (INALI, 2008) spread across the territory. In the case of Jalisco, 11% of the population is considered indigenous (INEGI, 2016d) and in Sonora, the percentage rises to 17% (INEGI, 2016e). Although the two researched schools did not have a large population of indigenous groups, there were a few indigenous families who were some of the most vulnerable ones. The students from these families were often absent and lagging behind the rest of their peers, two common issues for the indigenous populations, as it will be presented in section three of this chapter.

Poverty in Mexico is also associated with the prevalence of workers' low wages. Daily minimum wage in 2015 was of 68 Mexican pesos—less than 3 British Pounds—which, as Esquivel Hernández states, puts the worker below the poverty line: "if a Mexican earns this amount and maintains him/herself and a dependant, both of them can be considered as extremely poor" (2015, p. 8 TFS). In addition, wealth is only marginally redistributed across the different social classes through formal mechanisms of the country's fiscal policy taxes. Not surprisingly, there is a high prevalence of informal economic activities. Just as an example, for the first trimester of 2015, 58% of the working population in Mexico were involved in some kind of informal employment, including economic activities situated at the people's home, unprotected agricultural work and remunerated domestic work (INEGI, 2015). The participation in informal economic activities is an important characteristic of the schools and local communities analysed in this research; around a third of the family members involved in this study worked in the informal sector—especially the women—and goods were often sold and bought in school's premises and nearby areas by the same school actors and other external people.

The informal characteristic of the economic sector is also reflected in the type of medical provision people have. Mexico has a public system that historically has provided services for formally employed families. There are two main health systems, one for workers of private enterprises (IMSS)—which in 2015 cared for 47% of the population—and one for State workers (ISSSTE) that provided services for 10% of the population (Presidencia de la República, 2016). In 2001, the *Seguro Popular* (Popular Health System) was created to attend the population not formally employed, where households make subsidized contributions to a public fund—based on their ability to pay—in order to cover catastrophic spending on health care (Frenk et al., 2003). In 2015 the national percentage of people ensured by the *Seguro Popular* was of 43% (Presidencia de la República, 2016). In the case of Jalisco, the people ensured this way is estimated to be 41% whereas in Sonora it is a little less than 30%. Not all the Mexican population is covered by a medical health service, and in these two states there is still 19% and 17% respectively, of people that are not covered (INEGI, 2016b, 2016c).

Finally, it is relevant to mention that economic migration is also an important characteristic and a common experience for many of the Mexican

families, including the families in this research. In 2015 there were almost 12 million Mexicans living outside the country; 97.8% out of them living in the United States. Jalisco is usually considered the fourth Mexican state where most international migrants are from and 8.1% of its households receive foreign remittances. In contrast, in Sonora only 3.3% are in this situation, although there has been an increase from the year 2000 onwards (Consejo Nacional de Población [CONAPO], 2014). Foreign remittances represent a significant source of income for the families and the country—two percent of the GPD—(Cervantes González, 2016). Internal economic migration is also a common experience for many families, particularly in the case of temporary agricultural workers that move from the south of the country to northern states. Jalisco and Sonora are also hosts of internal migration (Gordillo and Plassot, 2017) and both of the researched schools' communities were initially populated by migrant agricultural workers. In the last decade other internal population movement have also increased, mainly due to situations of insecurity and violence in the country. The next section will address this concerning aspect of the Mexican context.

2. Social and crime-related violence in Mexico, Jalisco and Sonora

The situations of inequality and poverty are closely related and contribute to crucial issue in the Mexican context over the last decade: an escalation of the violent incidents in the country, particularly the ones related to organized and drug related crime, and the Mexican State's fight against it. At the end of 2006, the recently elected president Felipe Calderón Hinojosa started what was called "a frontal fight against organized crime," which involved an armed persecution of drug cartels across several areas of the Mexican territory. Such a strategy was supported by the United States government as part of their own "war against drugs" (Rosen and Zepeda Martínez, 2015). The 2012-2018 president, Enrique Peña Nieto, continued this fight, albeit with less intensity than the previous government. Since then, the country has experienced not only a direct armed confrontation between the State armed forces and the drug cartels, but a reconfiguration of organized crime itself with negative consequences for the population. Fragmented cartels are engaged in armed fights among

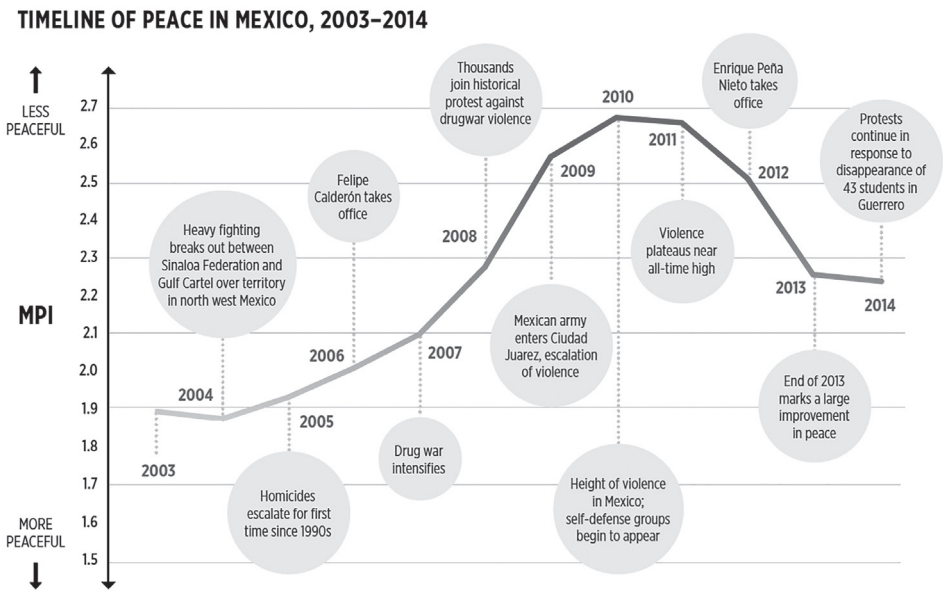
each other for the control of the market and the territory (Rosen and Zepeda Martínez, 2015). They have also diversified their activities to include among others extortion, abduction, human trafficking and oil pipelines' "milking" (Robles et al., 2013).

The outcomes of the last decade have been dire. The number of homicides have increased: in 2005 the official account was of 9,926 people killed whereas in 2011 the number almost threefold to 27,213 (INEGI, 2016a). The range of estimations of people killed in direct relation to the combat against drugs go from 50,000 to 120,000 during the six years that Calderón was in power, and in 2016, Amnesty International [AI] (2017) reported a number of 36,056 homicides. There has also been an important rise of detained people (INEGI, 2016a) and an increase in reports of extrajudicial executions, torture, enforced disappearances, and violence against journalists and human rights defenders (AI 2017; Merino et al., 2015 in Estévez López, 2015). Such situations have had as consequence the internal movement of families and even whole communities, and the number of displaced people due to violence is estimated to be 481, 400 (Estévez López, 2015). Another consequence is the economic cost of the violence, which in the last three years has been assessed to amount to between 17-18% of the Mexican GDP, around three billion pesos each year (Institute for Economics and Peace [IEP], 2016, 2015). Moreover, there have been links found between an increase in violence and a decrease in productivity and economic activity (Robles et al., 2013).

The Global Peace Index has mapped the peace situation in Mexico since 2007 (e.g. IEP, 2017, 2015, 2013). The Index is formed by 23 indicators. Figure 2 on the next page presents the development of peace throughout this time[2] according to this index and includes some of the most relevant national situations in relation to violence.

[2] In 2016 (not included in the figure) the index worsened in 4.6% in comparison with the previous year. It has been the first downturn since 2011. In this year, the homicide rate and use and access to fire arms increased. In 2017 the index worsened even more, deteriorating by 10.7%; there were here were over 29,000 murder in the country (IEP, 2018).

Figure 2. Timeline of peace in Mexico



(Note. Reprinted from IEP, 2015, p. 5)

It is important to understand the violence in Mexico not only in terms of its escalation, but also in the relationship with societal and State configurations that contribute, allow and are in turn, influenced by these violent situations. These conform a general condition of social vulnerability where material supports (e.g. wage labour, welfare state) and symbolic supports (identification with community, social recognition) are also eroded. Just as an example, the latest data from the World Values Survey (wave 6) estimated that only 12% of Mexicans agreed on the statement "generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted" (OECD, 2017b). According to Vite Pérez (2014) drug related crime, local agreements between those groups and local authorities, as well as the federal strategy of war against drugs in Mexico can be understood through the figure of the "state of exception." It refers to a process "where exception becomes a rule, when the individuals are stripped from their rights and freedoms, and even their identity, to be defined as enemies" (Vite Pérez, 2014, p. 247 TFS). This figure helps to explain the government's histo-

ric authoritarian manner of ruling the country[3], and it is reflected in the lack of institutionalization and legality of governmental actions at federal, state and municipal levels[4]. The "state of exception" affects all Mexicans, but mainly it impacts those who are socially marginalized and are in many cases constructed as the "enemy," the "criminals," the "dangerous" and are put in opposition with the State —and a privileged sector of the society— that attempt to ensure order and social cohesion through control mechanisms. In chapter 5 I present how some of these mechanisms are constructed through the educational policies of *convivencia*.

The focus on violence has involved an emphasis as well on mapping the risk factors relating to delinquency and crime of young people. A good example of this is the ECOPRED—the Social Cohesion Survey for the Prevention of Violence and Delinquency—(INEGI, 2016f), a 2015 study involving 97,754 households in 47 cities. It surveyed the household's head and young people in the 12 and 29 age range. The results showed that 71% of young people reported having a friend involved with what the research calls *risks factors*, which include absences of parental figures, alcohol and substance abuse and participation in gangs. Some important results are the following:

[3] The PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) maintained a hegemonic power in Mexico from 1929 to 1989 when it lost a first state election. In 2000 it lost the federal election to the PAN (National Action Party) which was in power for two mandates. The election of the president Enrique Peña Nieto in 2012 brought back the PRI to the federal government and there are still four states (Estado de Mexico, Colima, Hidalgo, Coahuila) where the PRI has never lost power at the state level.

[4] Corruption is perceived as high in the country. According to Transparency International (2017) Mexico is the most corrupt OECD country. Of 176 countries, it occupied in 2016 the 123rd place with the same corruption score as countries such as Honduras, Laos, Moldova, Paraguay y Sierra Leone, 30, Chile in contrast has a score of 66 and the average for the OECD is 69, where 0 is the highest level of corruption perception and 100 is the lowest.

Table 2. Results from ECOPRED 2015

Indicator- % of young people that stated:	% National level	% in Guadalajara	% in Ciudad Obregón
A. Having friends involved with illegal drugs (they have offered, sold or consumed drugs)	22.2	27.6	26.1
B. Having friends involved in delinquency activities	30.6	32.3	32.6
C. Being involved themselves in delinquency activities	12	15.2	13
D. Having consumed illegal drugs	9.7	13.7	9.4
E. Feeling their city is insecure	47	44	56

(Note. Adapted from INEGI, 2016f)

This study also estimated that in 2014 there were 19.8 million crimes associated with 4.5 million victims aged between 12 and 29 years old. Roughly 46% of young people were victims during that year and there were on average 4.4 crimes for each victim. This study shows the high perception of insecurity and the contact with crime related activities by almost half of the youth population. It also gives a glimpse of the construction of young people either as criminals or in need of protection that has been prevalent in the country in the last decade—a division also present in the policy of *convivencia*.

In the last 10 years there has been as well an increase in the generation of evidence around other types of social violence, such as the violence against women and the violence against children and adolescents. As will also be presented in chapter 5, the importance of protecting women and children and ensuring their human rights is one of the elements involved in the configuration of the school *convivencia* policy. Perhaps the most important study regarding violence against women is the ENDIREH—Home Relationships Dynamic National Survey— (INEGI, 2016f). The results of 2016 showed that 66.1% of Mexican women report having at least one emotional, physical, sexual or discriminatory violent incident across their life. Such percentages have been maintained since 2011 when the study started. Jalisco and Sonora

are two of the states with the highest percentages of violence against women, 74% in the case of Jalisco and 61% in the case of Sonora.

The evidence of violence against children and adolescents at a national and state levels is scarcer. The National Public Health Institute and UNICEF Mexico published in 2016 the first national wide survey on the situation of boys, girls and women (Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública and UNICEF, 2016) based on the international MICS survey carried out by UNICEF (2017). The results regarding violence or maltreatment against children indicate that only 30% of the households stated the implementation of nonviolent discipline measures. In contrast, physical punishment was carried out in 44% of the households (severe physical punishment was reported in 6% of the cases). The results also showed that 10.4% of children between 5 and 14 years old worked and 4% of the households indicated a marriage or civil union before the age of 15.

The elements presented in these two sections represent some of the key challenges Mexico as a society has. They also can be considered symbolic devices where the public opinion and analysis of *convivencia* is derived from both at a social level, in terms of social cohesion for example, and in the schools. The high perception of crime and insecurity and the need to protect women and children are powerful narratives that shape the policy that is enacted and negotiated in schools, they are also intertwined with the practices that this research analyses. Before moving to these aspects, in the following section I will present a brief characterization of the Mexican Educational System, giving emphasis to the primary level where the research presented in this book is situated.

3. Mexican Educational System and Educational Indicators

The Mexican Educational System was established in 1921 and it is regulated by the Public Education Secretariat (SEP). It is the third largest one in the American continent in terms of student enrolment after the United States and Brazil (INEE, 2016). The 2015-2016 academic year was integrated by a little over 36,392,832 students—49.9% were male and 50.1% female—and 2,066,073 teachers, distributed in almost 260,000 schools (SEP, 2016). There is a 12 years mandatory basic education, which groups 85% of the whole edu-

cational system (SEP, 2016). It includes three years of preschool, six years of primary, three years of lower secondary, and three years of upper secondary. The percentage of the population in relation to the coverage of the educational systems is presented in the following chart:

Table 3. Education coverage (% of population)

Level	Mexico	Jalisco	Sonora
Preschool	71.9	71.9	59.9
Primary	98.6	97.8	92.5
Lower Secondary	87.6	89.9	92.6
Upper Secondary	57.0	50.6	61.7
Higher Education (18-22 years old undergraduate students only)	30.2	30.1	38.3

(Note. Adapted from INEE, 2016 and from SEP, 2016 for Higher Education).

As can be seen there is almost full educational access for primary education, and a relatively high one in secondary, which is not the case for preschool and upper secondary levels. The difference in coverage reflects the history of the educational levels: preschool became compulsory in 2002 and higher secondary in 2012, whereas primary education has been compulsory since 1907 and secondary since 1993. The increase in coverage has been constant in over 30 years (Márquez Jiménez, 2016). This increase has also marginally reversed the historic tendency of the gap between men and women regarding schooling levels: 10.3 is the current average of school years for women, for men is 10, furthermore 52.5% of women have achieved higher secondary education in comparison to 49.4% of men (INEE, 2016). An increase in coverage, however, has not gone hand in hand with promoting more equal schooling experiences in the country. Martinez Rizo (2012) argues that the educational advances keep the existent asymmetry in the distribution of educational opportunities. The inequities are especially linked with differences of socio-economic status, ethnicity and place of residence.

Overall, the schooling average of the population has increased over the years. In 2015 the average was 9.3 school years for those in the 15 and 24 age range, 10.7 for those in the 25 and 34 age range, and 7.6 for those between the

age of 55 and 64 (INEE, 2017). The illiteracy rate has also dropped for younger generations, it is 1.1% for the first age range, but it is still high (10.4%) for those between the ages of 55-64. The improvement of literacy and schooling levels is however not equally distributed across the country. Four examples illustrate this situation:

a) The illiteracy rate for people between 15 and 24 years old with a disability is 24.8% vs the national average of 9.3%.

b) The average schooling level for a 15-year-old non-indigenous person is over nine years, whereas for an indigenous person it is six years.

c) In Chiapas, one of the most marginalized states with a higher percentage of indigenous population, the illiteracy rate is 15% on average vs 1.5% in the country's capital Mexico City (INEE, 2016).

Inequalities are also present in the types of Mexican schools, not only in regards to public vs private systems—the latter having more resources and, in some cases, better academic results—but among the types of public schools, where the large majority of the population attends. Mexico's education is imminently publicly financed. In 2015, 91% of all primary schools were publicly funded (INEE, 2017). Public expenditure in education represents 17% of the total national expenditure, six percent more than the OECD average of 11% (OECD, 2017b). About 5.4% of the country's GPD is spent on education (OECD, 2017b). The share of the federal government is about 80% of the public expenditure, and there is also participation from the states and the municipalities. In 2015 there were 89,070 public primary schools in Mexico, 5,859 in Jalisco and 1,885 in Sonora. Nationally, they group almost 13 million students and over 500,000 teachers (INEE, 2017).

Public primary schools are of three types: General, Indigenous and Community (also called CONAFE schools). General primary schools have two modalities:[5] regular schedule and full-time schedule. This research focuses on regular general primary schools, the most common in Mexico, which have either morning or afternoon shifts of between four and four and a half hours. Most primary schools are of the general type, 93.5% of the total. Indigenous primary schools are 5.7% and only 0.8% of the total are community primaries

[5] Recent changes have extended schooling hours in some regular schools, which could be considered a third type of primary schools.

(INEE, 2017). Indigenous primary schools offer bilingual/bicultural education to indigenous population. Community schools are located in areas with low population density, they usually have between one and three teachers looking after all grades. Both indigenous and CONAFE schools are located in rural locations with high levels of social and economic marginalization (INEE, 2017). Such communities usually have the lowest levels of schooling (Juárez Bolaños and Rodríguez Solera, 2016) and their schools have an historic and systematic lack of resources. In terms of infrastructure for example, 98.2% of general primaries have running water, in the case of indigenous or CONAFE schools the percentage is reduced to 80.1% (INEE, 2016).

Inequality is also present the characteristics of the teaching staff across schools. The basic general primary school staff is constituted by class teachers and one principal per school. Class teachers are mostly women (67%) (INEE, 2017), a majority which is not maintained in the higher hierarchical levels, since 56.8% of the principals are male (INEE, 2016). Teachers and principals usually work for 30 years, between the ages of 25 and 55 (INEE, 2017). There is a high teachers' placement rotation in the country, particularly in the case of schools in rural or marginalized contexts, which represents a challenging scenario for educational institutions. According to a study made by the Public Education Secretariat (2006 in Juárez Bolaños and Rodríguez Solera, 2016), teachers in these contexts change schools because they want to move back to their place of origin or have a desire of improving their personal and family life. This study also depicts the lack of incentives these teachers have for staying beyond one school year. Moreover, there is a pervasive perception that rural or marginalized schools are for newly trained teachers or worse, that they are "punishment" placements. High teacher mobility—like the one experienced in one of the researched schools, where half of the staff changed during the time of fieldwork—has implications for long term base projects, attention to school violence and a general construction of school community relationships, as I will present later on.

Regarding educational results, it is generally considered that Mexico public primary schools do not achieve the expected learning outcomes. The 2015 evaluation called PLANEA (Learning Assessment National Plan) carried out by the INEE—which assesses curriculum skills such as comprehension and deduction—shows that a large proportion of students are located in the level I of *Insufficient* achievement, 49.5% in the area of Language and

Communication, and 60.5% in Maths. In contrast, only 17.2% of students reach the *satisfactory* and *outstanding* levels III and IV of achievement for Language and Communication and 20.6% for Maths.[6] Academic results also show the inequities between the types of primaries: the students from CONAFE and indigenous primaries have the lowest results. Less than 7% of indigenous students reach levels III and IV (INEE, 2016). These results are closely related to issues of "over-aged" pupils, underachievement, repetition, low completion and high drop-out rates, issues also present in the researched schools. Students are considered "over-aged" when they are two years above the educational level's age group. In primary, 3.1% of students are in this category. The percentage increases to 15.8% when they reach secondary (INEE, 2016), which means that over 10% of the students do not study the six years of primary without interruption or repetition. Repetition is especially serious in rural schools, where 26.7% repeat at least a grade, in contrast, urban schools present a percentage of 12.9%, which is still high considering there is currently a policy preventing students from failing whole school years in primary. In this sense, general underachievement is an issue for the whole country. The INEE estimated that only 556 students from a 1000 will finish primary and secondary school in nine years (INEE, 2016). Although completion in primary is almost complete at a national level (98.2%)—even if students take over six years to complete it—the percentage drops with the increase of academic levels: 86.8% in lower secondary and only 67.3% in upper secondary. Jalisco and Sonora also have similar patterns for completion, but their average is slightly lower than the national mean. The following chart reflects that:

Table 4. Completion in 2014-2015 school year (% of population)

Level	National	Jalisco	Sonora
Primary	98.2	96.2	98.6
Lower Secondary	86.8	85.0	85.3
Higher Secondary	67.3	63.7	63.7

(Note. Adapted from INEE, 2017)

[6] The results are lower than the national average in the case of two researched schools, as will be presented in chapter 8.

The low results in academic outcomes shown in national assessment exercises and in international ones such as PISA and Talis (OECD, 2017b) —complemented by a general sense of the need to improve quality in education— have been used as a rationale to foster educational reforms in the last years (Patrinos, 2007; Aguera & Zebadúa in Flores Andrade, 2017). Although these reforms tend to recognize the unequal traits of the educational system, they seem to be driven more by efficiency rationales that emphasise improvement in results and do not significantly tackle inequality. Previously, decentralization and modernization efforts had also fostered reforms of their own. As in other Latin American countries, in the late 1980s and in the 1990s Mexico experienced a series of neoliberal oriented economic and social reforms, greatly influence by international organisms such as the World Bank (Malgouyres, 2014; Ornelas, 2000). These reforms generally fostered a reduction of the State capacity and spheres of influences with the same aim of making it more efficient (Di Gropello, 1999). In the case of the educational system, through the 1992 "National Agreement for Basic Education Modernization" (called Agreement from now on and TFS) the federal government transferred economic and managerial functions to the states. The federal government however did not pass control of education, retaining the ability to dictate general norms, curriculum, and evaluation of the system, as well as the channelling of compensatory and extraordinary resources to the states (Ornelas, 2000). The Agreement, and the subsequent general law of education promulgated in 1993, has marked the general orientations of the educational system to date. In the following years, three other important reforms[7] have included further changes to the curriculum, organizational structure, assessment, types of social participation in schools and teacher training, assessment and working conditions, all of those happening almost every government six-year period (Márquez Jiménez, 2016).

During the time of the research a complex reform was being implemented. Some of their main foci were improving educational quality, strengthening school autonomy—and accountability, I would add—, increasing the amount of full time schools, entitling the INEE with autonomy and the task of coordinating the Educational System, and regaining the "State's authority over the

[7] This were the "Social Commitment for Quality of Education" in 2002, the "Agreement for Quality of Education" in 2008 and the 2012-2018 educational reform as part of the so-called "Pact for Mexico" (Flores Andrade, 2017 TFS)

national educational system" (Pacto por México, 2013 TFS). The reform, started in 2012, also included changes to the teachers' professional progression system. This last aspect is perhaps the most controversial one, since it included new assessment criteria for teachers' entrance, permanence and placement in the educational system. It generated clashes with teachers, particularly with the *Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación* (CNTE, Education Workers National Coordination) a teachers union that is not recognized by the Mexican State[8] (Flores Andrade, 2017). As will presented in chapter 5, among the changes implemented in the current reform was positioning the improvement of school *convivencia* as a priority of the educational system and as part of the New Educational Model (SEP, 2017).

These reforms have also introduced the notion of social participation in education. The Agreement introduced the figure of the social participation councils which aimed to foster not only parental participation, but also the involvement of other members of the community at a school, local, state and national level. According to Zurita (2011), the Agreement represented an innovative and democratic way of fostering decision power making and involvement of families and community members in the demands for quality and accountability. The figure of the social participation council and the diversification of the forms of participation have not really been implemented in schools across the country, and more traditional ways of participating have remained, as in the case of the two schools of this research. Ornelas (2004, 2000) state that this is partially due to the constraints marked by the teachers' union, who have blocked external involvement in pedagogical and managerial aspects. Zurita (2011) also highlights as problems for the councils' implementation the lack of information, disarticulation of different programmes, limited understanding of participation and the excessive work load teachers and principals have at school. Although the forms of participation remain limited, subsequent reforms and specific programmes have maintained the rhetoric of parents as part of the school community and the importance of their involvement in the managing of school resources (Martínez Bordón et al., 2007). The New Educational Model of the 2012-2018 reform aimed to foster a more

[8] Officially, the Mexican government only recognizes the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE, Education Workers National Union)—the largest teachers union in the American continent—which was created by the PRI government in 1943 (SNTE, 2017; Tello, 2013).

active, organized and co-responsible participation of parents, giving them an accountability role (SEP, 2017).

The characteristics of the Mexican Educational System are, as has been presented, closely associated with the general characteristics and challenges of the country. Both are reflected in several of the situations experienced by the study's local communities and schools and will be further discussed in the later chapters. The following chapter presents the methodological path followed to analyse the school-community relationships, before moving on to the research main findings.

IV. Research Methodology: An Ethnographic Approach to School *Convivencia*

The research presented here is an ethnographic study of *convivencia* in primary schools in Mexico. As I have stated in the introduction, it characterizes and analyses the relationships between the schools and its local communities in relation to processes of participation, inclusion and conflict management. Its main objective is to study the implications of such relationships for the *convivencia* patterns in the school. In this chapter I will present the methodological path carried out in this project. As I stated in the introduction, a detailed account of the methodology is relevant not only because it addresses the study's rigour, reliability and validity, but because school *convivencia* as a field requires stronger theoretical development and this chapter aims to show possible paths for such constructions. I will start by addressing how ethnography is a suitable method for the study of school *convivencia*. Accounts on the fieldwork and analysis processes carried out will follow, which include the general descriptions of the two schools selected for this project. I will finally close stating the analytical structure that will be developed in the following chapters.

1. Ethnography as a suitable method for the study of school *convivencia*

Ethnography is a long-standing approach that proposes constructing knowledge by accessing and remaining in a setting long enough to gain a deep understanding of the actions and the meaning of the people that comprise it. It is "grounded in commitment to the first-hand experience and exploration of

a particular social or cultural setting on the basis of (though not exclusively by) participant observation" (Atkinson et al., 2007, p. 4). It is one of the best recognized methods in the qualitative tradition and therefore, there are multiple understandings and uses of it. In this research ethnography was chosen as a particular way of conducting qualitative field research. Ethnography therefore is understood as:

> the study of people in naturally occurring settings or "fields" by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally (Brewer, 2000, p. 10).

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 3), some of the most important features of ethnographic research are that people are studied in their everyday context, data derives from a range of sources and the research is generally small-scale, focusing on only a few cases to facilitate an in-depth study. Ethnography also uses the researcher as the main instrument to generate data for the study, he/she must then observe and participate in the social situation, and although one uses the common practices of social engagement as basis, what is distinctive is that

> it involves a more deliberate and systematic approach than is common […], one in which data are specifically sought to illuminate research questions, and are carefully recorded; and where the process of analysis draws on previous studies and involves intense reflection, including the critical assessment of competing interpretations (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 4).

There is also an "unstructured" quality in terms of the data collection and analysis. Researchers do not have a predetermined research design at the start and categories of analysis are not pre-established either. Both the data collection and the analysis process are defined throughout the research process. Finally, ethnographic analysis involves "interpretation of the meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local, and perhaps also wider, contexts" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 3). The method aims to produce descriptions, explanations and theories.

Ethnography is particularly suited for the study of school *convivencia* since firstly, it involves a predominant close contact with the setting, a groundedness that is necessary to observe, experience and analyse in its everyday life the multiplicity of relationships that shape *convivencia*. Secondly, the "unstructured" orientation regarding aims, fieldwork and analysis allows maintaining an open perspective that does not require a setting of rigid goals and data treatment processes from the start. This is a useful stance in cases of insufficiently explored areas, as it is the case with school *convivencia* at its community level and the relationships with the students' families that are this research's focus. At the same time, the systematic nature of the ethnographic process can help in the development of theorizations that might shed light on distinctive elements of the fluid concept of *convivencia*. Thirdly, ethnography can allow for a deep and complex understanding by taking into consideration different voices and social positions that inhabit the setting (Altheide and Johnson, 1994)—a crucial aspect to consider in an analytical comprehensive approach to *convivencia* (see chapter 2).

Ethnography takes a inductive stance (Brewer, 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). By observation and participation, the researcher can construct knowledge about the people's culture and experience of the social world. Under this perspective, objectivity is gained through the process of systematic observation-participation. Ethnographers are expected to treat the context and actors that are being researched as *anthropologically strange* (Geertz, 1994), and thus, make explicit the presuppositions the culture members, including sometimes the researcher's her/himself, take for granted.

The traditional configuration of ethnography has been subject of diverse criticism, originally by positivistic approaches and more recently by feminist, post-structuralist and postmodernist accounts, what Hammersley (1998) calls anti-realism critiques. The failure to recognize issues of power, values, gender, class and race, as well as the points derived from the understanding of science as a social construction and the critiques to the intended universality of truth add to what is called by Denzin and Lincoln (2011) the 'double crisis' of contemporary ethnography.

The issues raised by such questionings are crucial for understanding the nature of the social sciences and specifically the possibilities of developing knowledge in ethnography. Although I concur with these authors on the criticism made regarding the possibility of producing universally valid

knowledge, I maintain that an ethnographic approach is an appropriate path to address issues of social relationships and *convivencia* in Mexico since is the one that has best allowed me to represent a complex social situation that needs addressing. However, the approach cannot claim in any case a 'neutral' researcher' position or 'neutral and objective' knowledge derived from the research process. Ethnography requires therefore self-reflection as a process that raises awareness. It implies being "explicit and open about the circumstances which produced the extant data, recognizing that ethnographers (like all researchers) are within the social world they seek to analyse" (Brewer, 2000, p. 43). It also entails the need for the researcher to be aware of the way the data is being analysed and understood to produce an account of the social reality. The following sections describing the processes carried out during and after fieldwork are presented oriented by this reflexivity frame.

2. Fieldwork process

The research was developed between January 2014 and October 2017 and fieldwork was carried out for 9 months in 2015 and 2016. In the following section I will present the process of selection of the settings, a description of each of them, the process of collecting, or better said *constructing*, data. In this last part I will highlight some of the ethical implications dealt with, as well as the role of theory and of the researcher.

2.1 Selection of the settings

Two schools were researched in this project, the first one was in the city of Guadalajara, in the state of Jalisco and the second school was in Ciudad Obregón, in the state of Sonora. Choosing two schools was intended for facilitating the complex exploration of school *convivencia* without aiming to present a comparison of the two cases. The localities were chosen they were important cities in their regions which had also an increment in violence due to poverty, inequality and organized crime related violence. Such contextual characteristics were relevant because they reflect the social conditions of the settings of many urban and semi-urban educational institutions in Mexico. The problems present in these communities are commonly interrelated with issues of school violence.

The two schools were purposefully selected, using a mixture of what Patton (1990) calls intensity and criterion sampling. I chose information-rich cases where the phenomenon of interest was manifested intensely, but not necessarily in an extreme way. The selection criteria were as follows:

1. General primary schools one with a morning shift and one with an afternoon one.[1] They should have at least two groups per grade and a full staff (one teacher per group and a principal at least).
2. Peripheral semi-urban schools.
3. School actors, at least principal and teachers, must explicitly characterize their own school context and community as violent and/or problematic for the schooling experience. They make references of troubling issues with the community, the parents and/or school violence.
4. Schools have intentional institutional practices to interact with the local communities, such as assemblies, social councils, parents associations, parents-teachers meetings, etc.
5. Possibilities of access and informed consent of the research participants.

I was able to visit several schools and two schools were selected as possible settings. To present the project and gain first consent of the participants in both schools I had a meeting with the teaching staff, went to the different classes to present the project to the students and send and information sheet to the families. In all cases, I informed them of the general aim of the project and of the participant's rights to refuse or stop participation at all times. Further consent mechanisms were set at different times of fieldwork, as will be presented later on.

2.2 Descriptions of the schools

The Guadalajara school was founded around 25 years ago as a rural school in the municipality of Zapopan. Now it is part of the metropolitan area of the city of Guadalajara. Its afternoon shift had a schedule of 2:00 to 6:30 pm and included the mandatory primary grades first to sixth in two classes of 30 students in average for each grade. There were 13 teachers, each of them in char-

[1] See chapter 3 for the types of Mexican schools.

ge of a specific class and one of Physical Education. All of them had over 20 years of work experience and had been in the school between 2 and 15 years. They lived relatively close to the school, but not in the neighbouring community. In total, there were ten female teachers and four male ones. There was also a male principal, who had been in that position at this primary school for two school years. This school also had the service of USAER (Unity of Support Services for Regular Education). This was a team of a full-time female pedagogue and a female psychologist and a female speech therapist, who came to school two times a week. There was a male janitor who retired at the end of the 2014-2015 school year. In the following one, one of the school mothers was hired directly by the school since a replacement was not sent from the educational authorities.

There were 373 students, most of them aged from 6 to 14 years old. This school had some of "over-age" students, including some older than 12 years old, the common age for leaving primary. The school had 250 families—many with more than one child in the school—who typically lived in the neighbouring community. Most of the fathers worked outside of their home and most mothers in their home. The fathers' employment varied, they were mostly construction workers, drivers and factory workers. The mothers that worked outside of their home were convenience store, domestic and factory employees; some also worked in the informal market selling food. Of these families, ten mothers—and later 2 fathers as well—participated in the Parent's Committee.

This was a one-storey school with two main buildings that included the classrooms, a common hall, the principal's office, toilets and a cement open-air basketball court. The school space was very limited, and when the students were outside their classrooms, they occupied all the outside area. For this reason, students were expected not to run or play very active games during recess. A wall surrounded the school; its exterior side was covered with graffiti, mostly about football teams and couples' names. It also had some initials and tags that seem to be about gang membership.

The school is in the northeast side of Zapopan, the largest municipality of the city of Guadalajara. The area where the school is located has had a high urban development in the last five years. It had a combination between industrial corridors, working class homes and high and middle class gated communities. Working class homes were the most common around the school, but

there were constant new constructions of middle class gated areas in the vicinity. The school neighbourhood was a combination of cement streets and cobbled streets, many of which were in need of repair.

The students come from this neighbourhood and from others in the vicinity. Sociodemographic data of the area (INEGI, 2010) shows that out of a population of 23,733 people living around the school 31% were children between the ages of 0 and 14 years old, with similar proportion between boys and girls. In average, families had two children and males, 77%, headed most of the households. From the 23% of the households headed by females, 22% were homes of single mothers that had children under 18 years of age. When separating the sociodemographic data between the working and middle-class areas situated in the community around the school, a sharp contrast between the two types emerges[2]. For example, there was an average of 7.7% of mothers between 15 and 19 years old in the area's population, but around the school where the socioeconomic status was lower, the percentage rose to 16%. In terms of health services, 71% of the population had them, but in the working-class areas 33% of those services were given by the *Seguro Popular*, the public service given to the people without jobs or without a permanent position, while in the middle-class areas, only 4.7% attend this service.

In terms of education, 97% of the 6-11 years old population attended primary school, and 94% between the ages of 12-14 went to secondary school. In average 30% of the population over 15 years old did not complete basic education, but again, in the working-class areas the percentage rose to 53% and in the middle-class parts went down to 1.2%. This contrast was maintained in the higher education part, 47% of the middle-class areas had completed at least on year of higher education against a 4.9% in the working-class areas. There was a 60% of economically active population, male in its majority. 80% of the houses in the area had three rooms or more and practically all the population live in a place with water, light, toilet, fridge and television. In the working-class area, only 29% of households had a computer and 17% had internet.

[2] I am equating what the national statistics (INEGI 2010) call "medium degree of marginalization" with working class and "low degree of marginalization" with middle class giving the characteristics of the neighbourhood and the homes, as well as the type of employment of the families. In Mexico there are high and very high degree of marginalization communities which were not the ones of this study. These poorer areas are usually located in rural and indigenous regions where there are precarious homes and a scarcity of education and health services. It is important to mention however, that some of the schools' families did live in very precarious conditions.

The primary school located in Ciudad Obregón was founded around the same time as the one in Guadalajara. The morning shift had a 7:30 am-12:00 pm schedule, but usually classes started closer to 8 am. This school had two classes of 28 students in average from the first to the sixth grade of primary education. During the first part of fieldwork there were 12 class teachers, a teacher of Physical Education and two English teachers. There were nine female teachers and six male ones in total. Most teachers had been in this school for over five years, but three of them were constantly changing since they did not have tenure. Teachers lived in Ciudad Obregón, but not close to the school, and two came from a nearby city, Navojoa. In the second part of fieldwork—the first semester of the 2015-2016 school year—there was a large rotation of teachers. Only half remained. Temporary teachers substituted the rest and one of the classes was left without a teacher for over a month. The school had two principals at the time of fieldwork. The first had been the head of this school for six years and stayed until November 2016, when she retired. The second was an interim principal. She stayed from December 2017 to March 2016. A third principal was put in place in April 2016 after the second refused to take the evaluation required by the new educational reform. Apart from this principal, two more teachers were suspended for this reason and substitutes were sent to the school. The school also had a female janitor. There was at times a night watcher, hired by the principal and paid by the families since the school was vandalized and robbed on several occasions. The terrain where this school is located is particularly large, almost three times the size of the Guadalajara school. There were four one-storey buildings where the classrooms, library, computer room, toilets and principal's office were. There was also a basketball court and a volleyball court.

There were 340 students in this school ranging from ages 6 to 13 years old that belong to around 250 families; a few of the students from the first to fourth grade were "over aged." The students and their families lived relatively close to the school. Most fathers worked outside of their home and in the case of the mothers almost half worked outside of the home and the rest took care of their household. The parents were mostly employed in factories and convenience stores. Some of the fathers were also construction workers and the mothers were domestic workers. There was also in this school a group of 7 mothers that participated in the parents and other committees.

The school is in the southeast part of the city of Ciudad Obregón, in the municipality of Cajeme. The south area of the city was populated in the 1980s

mainly by families moving from different rural areas to the city. The neighbourhood is organized around two central horizontal, east-west, avenues which were cemented. The rest of the streets—including where the school is located—were dirt roads organized in a grid pattern.

Most of the school's families live in this neighbourhood or in neighbourhoods nearby. According to sociodemographic data (INEGI, 2010) there were 23,681 people in the area. From that 29% were children from 0 to 14 years old, and around half of this percentage was formed by children from 6 to 11 years old. 27% of the households were headed by females and from these families, 25% were mothers that had children under 18 years old. 53% of the people were economically active and from them 96% were currently occupied. The education data from children attending primary school was the same as in the school in Guadalajara, 97%. However, there was a higher percentage of people between 12 and 14 years old that attended secondary school, 96%. In people older than 15 years old, the illiteracy rates in the area were of 3.2% and 27% of them did not finish basic education. Secondary education in the working-class area had a 20% rate. Finally, only 9% of the population had attended at least one year of higher education.

77% of the population attend public health services. This area also showed a contrast between the participation in the *Seguro Popular* of working and middle-class areas. In the first one, 52% of the people with health service went to *Seguro Popular*, in contrast with 14% of the people in the middle-class area. Here too the lower-class areas were closer to the researched school than the middle-class parts. Most of the houses were privately owned and 73% of them had three rooms or more. Practically all of them had light and water service, television and a fridge. 38% of the households in the working-class area had a computer and 26% had internet. In the school's neighbourhood there was also a community centre run by one of the state's universities, one of the reasons it was located in this particular neighbourhood is that there was a high presence of gangs in this area and in general the neighbourhood is considered one of the most dangerous ones in the city.

2.3 Fieldwork process and data construction

Ethnographic data is collected through a range of techniques and sources, observation and participation being the two constitutive features of the ethnographic work (Atkinson et al., 2007; Gobo, 2008). In the case of this re-

search, the data was constructed through over 400 hours of participant observation in the settings. I generally attended schools for 4 hours for at least 4 days each week. I started by observing general school processes for the first three months and then I focused on particular moments: recess, entrance and exit to the school and to the classrooms and school activities, as well as meetings between the parents and the teachers and the principals.

Since the beginning I started taking notes and engaged in informal conversations. Teachers and I talked about the relationships with the parents, particular classroom interactions or the current school reform; students came to report other student's behaviour, tell me about their peer or teacher relationships, talk about their families or activities that they were doing in the classroom. Parents and other family members discussed their own and other parents' participation, their perceptions about specific teachers and asked questions about my role in the school. We also discussed places of origin, clothes, family configuration (married status, number of children, etc.), festivities and other "small-talk" topics. These conversations were always initiated by the actors and were constant but brief. When I was alone or after leaving the school, I would complete my notes in the same registry with more details and explanations. Later on, I would transcribe the notes adding details. During these times I also developed memos which will be discussed later on.

My continuous presence in the school allowed me to develop close relationship with students, principals, teachers, and with the parents that were most present in the schools. I was able to identify as well the parents that more sporadically came to school, meet other family members that were the students' carers, and recognize some of the students whose families were not present at the school. These interactions permitted me to develop a 'researcher' role, which was not a figure that the actors were familiar with. I constantly explained the aims of the project and what my role in the school was, actively refraining from correcting the students' behaviour or evaluating the teachers. The first months were especially important for shaping the role and were useful when later on sensitive situations occurred, particularly regarding students' maltreatment or conflict among parents and teachers. In such cases I tried to clarify what my involvement could be and if I was an observer of the actual situation, I tried to open communication moments to see if the parts wanted to discuss it with me. In this sense, consent was not something undertaken only at the beginning of the research, but I tried to develop a sensitive

approach that observed or directly asked for consent *during* the different interactions. It was also important to make evident not only the promise of anonymity in the final report, but generally proving confidentiality, which meant not discussing the actors' views or experiences with any other than the particular actor him/herself.

During the first moment of fieldwork—January to April 2015—, I focused more on the participant observations and developing close ties with the actors. During this stage I only did four interviews, to the principals and two teachers. I also applied a survey with all the schools' parents and another with students from third to sixth grade. It explored the social and schooling characteristics of the families as well as general perceptions on school climate indicators and family participation regarding schooling both in school and at home. Transversally I explored socio-demographic data of the AGEBS (Geo-Economic Basic Areas in INEGI, 2010) close to the school and to the families' places of residence and collected policy and school documents that were analysed later on.

In the second stage of fieldwork—September to January 2016—I focused half of the time on doing more systematic interviews with school actors. In total I carried out thirty-eight interviews in the schools: seven interviews with the principals, twelve interviews with teachers, eleven group interviews with mothers and grandmothers and eight group interviews with students. Selection criteria varied depending on the actors and were oriented through the principle of theoretical saturation (Corbin and Strauss, 1990) and aimed to find a wide scope of different perspectives.

As part of a reflective approach, during fieldwork I tried to be constantly aware of how my personal characteristics and background could be influencing both my relationships in the setting and the way I constructed and processed the data. In this sense, it is important to consider that I am Mexican, as were my participants, and therefore we shared language—Spanish—and a general culture, but they were other multiple elements that connected and/or separated us. Some of the most relevant have to do with gender, social class, professional and family characteristics. In terms of gender and family traits, I am female, in my thirties and married which helped me connect with the majority of the adult participants who also had these characteristics. I was a woman with no children though, which distinctively separated me from the relationships that were analysed. I have been, however, a student with a family,

and while exploring these relationships, I felt my own familiar experience reflected but also worked in tension with the conceptions of the 'appropriate family' that will be discussed further on. Regarding social class, it is important to acknowledge that I was studying working class families and schools situated in vulnerable contexts, when my own background is high middle class and my skin colour and height—whiter and taller than most Mexicans—tend to be associated with higher social classes as well. Although my own schooling trajectory was quite different from that of the participants, since I was the person with higher levels of schooling in the schools and communities, my own professional experiences as a researcher, teacher and teacher trainer, have allowed me to work in a wide diversity of contexts—from indigenous rural settings to elite universities—which helped me to be aware of the complexities in the field.

Perhaps the most challenging part was—is—the tension in connection to the family, community and school violence that was lived in the settings. As Mexican, I shared with my participants the common and growing sense of insecurity, the need to be careful and aware, especially as a female, and the fact that in our general decision making we take risk in consideration: where to go and at what time, what to wear, who to talk to, etc. I also shared the general mistrust and anger towards public security authorities and a certain hopelessness that emerges, perhaps, from the escalation of social violence. I however did not share with them the experiences of family and school violence that many of the participants in the research had. The cases of physical violence seen or shared by the participants—a verbally and physically abusive male teacher, a mother of the parents' committee that was stabbed by her husband, a student that was hit with an electric cord by his mother for instance—were extremely hard for me and were challenging in terms of how to deal with them in this research. I tried to approach them from my researchers' role, but they were nevertheless causes of personal stress and sorrow.

In addition to my personal characteristics and experiences, it was important to be reflective as well over the role of theory. During fieldwork, although I did not have a strict view of empirical data to 'find', it was clear that I was oriented by the literature review I had conducted before, which could be a way to understand the role of previous developments as "sensitizing concepts" (Charmaz, 2003). In this sense the descriptions constructed by me and the direction of the questions in both the interviews and the surveys were not

a direct representation of the reality (Rockwell, 2009), they were more a dialogue between my personal and theoretical orientations and the empirical elements.

This dialogue was an intrinsic part of the analysis during fieldwork. In ethnography, analysis is a continuous process that starts from the beginning of the research process and carries on until the final writing (Brewer, 2000; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Rockwell, 2009) and therefore analytic processes were carried out during fieldwork to explore emergent questions and lines of thought. They were generally oriented by the grounded theory approach, especially by the work of Corbin and Strauss (2015, 1990), Clarke (2005) 2011, and Charmaz (2014, 2003). Apart from the field observation registers, I used a researcher's journal plus the writing of analytic memos (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Rockwell, 2009) as ways to develop an analysis practice during the field. Later, I also constructed loose situational maps based on Clarke's (2005) approach to identify and link particular elements—mainly actors, discourses, spaces, objects, practices—together.

3. Analysis post-fieldwork

The analysis undertaken during fieldwork can be considered a first stage of analysis. After that, five more stages were developed through a grounded theory-informed approach and these are presented in the following table. The registries from the participant observations, the transcripts of the interviews and the analytic records were the core of this analysis, and they were complemented by a study of the policy documents, the information from the surveys and the socio-demographic data. For all stages of the analysis the software Atlas.ti was used, but many schemes and situational maps were produced by hand as well. Table 5 provides a breakdown of the states of analysis, specifying the key processes carried out in each stage and the main analytic product.

Table 5. Analysis stages

Stage	Main Processes Carried Out	Analytic product
2	Systematic review of data and division into four large segments.	Data in 4 analytic areas: students' needs, family participation, *convivencia* policy and conflict.
3	Recodification of analytic areas to gain more specificity of the observed processes.	Data re-codified in 8 analytic areas: *Convivencia* policy into: · School rules · Formal curriculum Conflict into: · Conflict diagnostic practices · Conflict management practices Student's needs into: · Students' well-being needs · Students' academic needs Family participation into: · Family participation in school's needs · Parent Committee's work
4	Open and axial coding (Corbin and Strauss 2015) of each specific area. Definition of "practices" as units of analysis and identification of key practices in each area. Analysis of such practices through relational analysis maps (Clarke 2005) and memos (See appendix 6 and 7).	Construction of 15 key practices, presented in the next section.

5	From 15 practices emerged the construction of scheme based in two large categories of analysis. Definition of four subcategories based on the above-mentioned key practices.	Construction of an explanatory scheme of school *convivencia*, presented in the next section.
6	Axial coding of particular practices as a tool to organize and develop the writing.	Relational scheme that integrated categories, practices and extracts of data that were used as outlines for the writing.

(Note. Created by the author)

In these stages an iterative, systematic and reflective process was developed to construct the analytic scheme proposed in this thesis. In the analytic process, translation between Spanish and English played an important role, since it is a complicated process, and one loses some of the fine details of the original utterances. As an example, *"se nos ablanda el corazón"* said by a male teacher was translated as "it breaks our heart," which does not necessarily include the connotations related to assumptions of rationality and strictness in the teacher's role that the phrase in Spanish had. Insults and negative connotations were hard to translate as well, such as *"chismear"* that was translated as "tattletale" or "grass," but the expression tends to be strongly connected with the notion of "gossipy woman" and therefore it was used to state that boys were behaving in a woman-like manner. A positive outcome of translation was that I had to make explicit some of the aspects that could have been taken for granted if the whole process was done in Spanish.

Before I present in more detail the analytical scheme, it is important to acknowledge that a number of ethical tensions emerged during the process of analysis post-fieldwork. The recognition of similarities and differences between the actors' views among themselves and regarding my own "voice" as a researcher, and the weight that should be given to the different perspectives in

the analysis was especially challenging[3]. Also, it was difficult to decide on whether to focus more on everyday processes of what traditionally happens in schools or on the more unusual situations (e.g. the protests of parents outside the school). As a response I tried to develop an analytic treatment of the data that reflected this diversity and tensions in a balanced way. Such treatment was oriented by the proposed criteria of *analytical realism* of Altheide and Johnson (1994) and Brewer's (2000, 1994) *injunctions for good practice* and *ethnographic imagination* that among other things highlight the need for multivocality, reflexivity, and of recognizing and making the links between micro and macro processes and between the data and more general political and theoretical frameworks. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that what is presented here is my own construction of *convivencia* in these two schools and there is always a risk that particular orientations or bias have gone unchecked.

4. Analytic structure

The analysis process presented here developed an explanatory scheme to account for the relationships among the researched schools and their local communities and the implications of such relationships for school *convivencia*. For this study, fifteen 'practices' were deemed key to explain the patterns of *convivencia*. The term 'practice' is used descriptively to name a set of observable and relatively stable performances of the school actors, which can be grouped under a recognized intention by the same actors that perform them, as well as by others participating in the setting. It is necessary to keep in mind that these fifteen practices are not the only ones that shape *convivencia*, but they were chosen because *a)* they are essential to explain the general situation of *convivencia* in the schools and *b)* they can be considered practices that integrate the community level, since first they involve relationships among students, teachers, principals, parents and other family members, and second, they involve particular treatments of the community characteristics (risk management, expectations, etc.).

[3] I have written more about the tensions in an ethnographic approach to convivencia in Perales Franco (2018)

Nine of these fifteen practices were openly recognized by the school actors as practices to improve or deal with school *convivencia*. The six remaining were not explicitly identified, but they had important implications for the way *convivencia* was shaped (see chapter 8). The first of these types of practices are called here *explicit convivencia* practices, and the second *tacit convivencia* practices. They represent the two analytical axes that structure the explanatory model developed in this thesis. Two categories integrate each of those axes and each of them clusters key practices that shape *convivencia*. The following table represents the central analytical elements developed in this research.

Table 6. Analytical elements

Analytic Axes	Central Categories	Key analysed practices
A. Explicit *Convivencia* Practices	1. Preventing conflicts	1.1 Setting and socializing of rules 1.2 Diagnosing aggressive and violent incidents 1.3 Formative actions linked to school *convivencia*
	2. Managing conflicts	2.1 Reporting conflicts 2.2 Intimidation 2.3 Physical aggression 2.4 'Dialogue' 2.5 Separating conflicting parts 2.6 Exclusion from school activities
B. Tacit *Convivencia* Practices	3. Dealing with students' needs	3.1 Responding to students' underachievement 3.2 Attending to students' absenteeism 3.3 Protecting against community's risks
	4. Dealing with school's needs of maintenance and improvement	4.1 Economically contributing to the school 4.2 Assisting in labour tasks to maintain or improve the school 4.3 Participating in parents' committees

(Note. Created by the author)

All these aspects are dealt with in chapters 6-9, which are organized through the analytic axes and categories. In these chapters, more specific attention is given to explaining how the relationships in the key practices shaped particular patterns of *convivencia* than to specifically accounting for each of these fifteen practices. Nevertheless, all fifteen practices were mapped and explored in depth during the analysis.

Before moving to develop the explicit and tacit practices of school *convivencia,* I will first present a chapter analysing *convivencia* policy at a national and state level. As will be argued, the educational policy presents orientations that are enacted in particular ways in the two researched schools. It is a framework that gives certain inputs and possibilities of understanding and working with school *convivencia* that has implications for the patterns of *convivencia* that were found.

V. School *Convivencia* Policy in Mexico

In the last ten years Mexico has seen a wide development of policy documents regarding school security, violence and *convivencia*. In this chapter I will present a review of such instruments, aiming to examine how school *convivencia* is presented, justified and managed. It is important to consider them not only as contextual elements of educational practices, but as specific discourses that first, show an understanding on how issues around *convivencia* are perceived and where the importance of school relationships is placed, and second, as regulatory processes that form part of the schools' everyday life. Although these documents show multiple elements that are brought together to adjust school relationships—since they represent normative frameworks where school actors interact (Sebastião et al., 2013)—, these policies are not enacted in a linear way. Their interpretations and performances depend not only on the requirements put forward by the state authorities, but on the way school actors interpret and use such elements. These "ways" are shaped by contexts as "active forces" that integrate specific histories, material resources, professional cultures, etc. (Braun et al., 2011) and by particular relationships, as will be discussed in the following chapters.

School *convivencia* at a policy level in Mexico emerges and is connected mostly to issues of school violence, discipline and security[1] due to the historical reasons and social demands that were presented in chapter 3. The documents regulating school *convivencia* can be understood as closely associated with State views on social needs for the country, and as linked to specific

[1] At a marginal level *convivencia* is also associated with democratic practices in some instruments, as in the General Law of Education's article 7, but is not a fully developed approach.

orientations delineated by the National Development Plans of the 2006-2012 and 2012-2018 governments. The first one established a "Crime Prevention and Delinquency Combat Integral Strategy," whose prevention approach—called *Limpiemos* México (Cleaning Mexico)—included the programme *Escuela Segura* (Secure School), the first national programme aimed at the establishment of secure environments in schools. As a strategy emerging from a public security approach, it was focused on areas of the country with the highest delinquency and substance abuse rate. Its aims included the eradication of school violence, bullying and crime in schools (Zurita Rivera, 2013, 2012b). In 2012 a new federal government from a different political party was elected and the emphasis changed. The 2013-2018 National Development Plan pointed out that Mexico demanded a stronger social pact (Pacto por México, 2013). It established that actions must be developed at schools in favour of a healthy and safe *convivencia* through an integral and preventive approach. This definition lost the emphasis of crime prevention and public security that the previous strategy had, but it kept the focus on school violence, explicitly highlighting the effects school violence on the learning processes (SEP, 2015).

The policy documents that were analysed will be presented through four categories:

1. Laws at a federal and state level.
2. Rules of procedure for schools developed at a state level.
3. Frameworks of reference for school administration and specifically for school convivencia.
4. Guidelines for the work of Schools' Technical Councils.

In these four categories I will focus on the instruments that were *a)* current at the time of fieldwork, (2014-2015)[2] and *b)* are used in the states of Jalisco and Sonora, where the two schools of the research are located. Apart from my own examination of the documents, I also consider the analysis made by Zurita Rivera (2013, 2012a, 2012c, 2012b, 2010) regarding security, violence and *convivencia*, since she has closely followed policy development in Mexico.

[2] Since then, a new government from a different political party (Morena) was elected for the 2018-2024 period. In 2019 the General Law of Education was reformed, as well as other policy instruments and programmes. These are not subject to this analysis since they are not relevant for the research presented.

1. Laws that regulate school *convivencia*

1.1 Federal level

Three central referents at a national level delineate elements associated with *convivencia*: the General Law of Education (published in 1993 with multiples reforms since then); the General Law of the Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence (2007) and the General Law of the Rights of Girls, Boys and Adolescents (2014). These laws are the basis to regulate relationships in schools and mark the general orientation of the rest of the policy instruments. The first of these instruments, the General Law (GL) of Education, established in 2013 the improvement of human *convivencia* as one of the criteria to orient the education that the State provides. The notion of *convivencia* presented here explicitly supports fraternity and human rights equity for all people, avoiding race, religion, group, sex and individual privilege (DOF, 1993). In this conceptualization human *convivencia* is positioned as positively transformable through education, and personal, family and societal levels are interconnected within the concept. The GL of Education succinctly deals with school violence, but without making an explicit link to *convivencia*. It establishes that schools must generate indicators about their methods to prevent and eliminate any type of discrimination and violence (art.30), and that they must take measures that ensure the protection and care of the student's physical, psychological and social integrity. It highlights as well the need to train teachers about the rights of the students and their obligation to protect them against all forms of maltreatment, harm, aggression, harassment, trafficking and exploitation (art. 42) (DOF, 1993).

The other two GL also address the need of protection of the children and adolescents in schools. On the one hand, the GL of the Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence makes explicit reference to violence exercised by teachers, emphasizing the hierarchical relationship and the need to protect the female students from discriminatory acts due to sex, age, social and academic condition, limitations and or physical characteristics, as well as to eliminate sexual harassment from schools (art.10-15) (DOF, 2007). On the other hand, the GL of the Rights of Boys, Girls and Adolescents commands the authorities to establish mechanisms for the prevention, attention and channelling of the cases of maltreatment, harm, aggression, abuse or any other form of

violence against girls, boys and adolescents in the educational centres (art. 57). This GL devotes great part of the chapter on education to address issues of school violence explicitly linking them to the need for the creation of environments free of violence in educational institutions, where a harmonious *convivencia* and the integral development of girls, boys and adolescents is promoted. In this law, the notion of *convivencia* is connected to the generation of mechanisms for discussion, debate and peaceful conflict resolution and to the right to a quality of education (DOF, 2014a). All these federal laws command the educational authorities to generate more specific policies, frameworks and programmes to address the protection of students against school violence and the promotion of a *convivencia* labelled as non-violent, peaceful and harmonious. Two of the most important ways this has been considered is either through the creation of specific state laws to regulate school *convivencia* or to eliminate school violence, or through reforms in the state laws of education, developments that will be presented next.

1.2 State level

Each of the 32 Mexican states have a law of education at a state level. They mostly follow the guidelines established by the federal law, but some elements get specified or redefined. In the case of the state laws of Sonora and Jalisco, for example, the general orientations of *convivencia* and violence reflect the same perspective of the federal GL regarding the improvement of human *convivencia* as one of the orienting criteria for education (Gobierno del estado de Jalisco, 1997; Gobierno del estado de Sonora, 1993). State legislators in most of the states have also regulated school *convivencia* in the last 12 years. Their constructs link this concept with issues of school violence and school and public security through a nationwide production of laws on these matters. By 2014, 27 out of the 32 states had a specific law or additions to existing instruments about these issues. Before these, there were no specific guidelines or regulations on how to deal with school *convivencia*, violence and/or security (Zurita Rivera, 2012a). It is important to point out that these laws emerged in the context of the national strategy for public security already stated, and therefore, they derive from risk and violence analysis, not from explicit educational needs.

An important characteristic of these instruments is that schools are understood as part of a specific context, as strongly tied to its immediate environment and the society in general. In consequence, the laws promote and establish the participation of diverse actors through particular arrangements. Some of them were already part of the educational system, such as the school councils or the social participation councils, but others were created to carry out particular crime prevention and denouncing functions, like the security brigades in the case of states like Sonora, Tamaulipas, Puebla and Nayarit (Zurita Rivera, 2013). Although these laws establish an increase of the participation of different actors, in the majority of them school principals and teachers have the most of responsibilities.

The Law for School Security of the State of Sonora was published in 2009 and focuses on establishing norms with the aim of promoting "actions to generate a security climate in the school and close environment, to strengthen a prevention culture in an integral way" (art. 2 Gobierno del estado de Sonora, 2009a). It also states that "the programmes and actions will be focused on modifying attitudes and shaping habits and values of the students aiming at preventing insecurity" (art. 5). This law includes an emphasis on monitoring, detecting, avoiding and denouncing risky behaviours and criminal activities—particularly drug trafficking—within and in the proximity of schools through the establishment of a school security programme and a security brigade, formed by teachers, students, parents and people that live close to the school. In this law the term *convivencia* is not explicitly mentioned, and there are only a few references to promoting a collaborative, participative and secure school culture, respecting the dignity of the students and promoting non-violent conflict resolution.

In Jalisco, the 2012 reform to the state law of education included a whole section labelled "On school *security* and *convivencia*." It seeks to stablish a *convivencia* culture among the school actors with the aim of preventing school violence, declaring that the state's education secretariat must take adequate measures to "guarantee *convivencia* in the educational centre" and "safeguard the physical and psychological integrity of the students" (Gobierno del estado de Jalisco, 1997). The law also states the school community's responsibility to participate in activities that promote *convivencia* and to obey the rules of conduct authorized by the education secretariat. This last point is important be

cause it entails that schools in Jalisco are no longer responsible for deciding on their own behavioural rules, but they are to follow *one* normative framework.

The construction of school violence associated with the discourse around school bullying is also particularly relevant. The law understands, firstly, school violence and harassment as acts of indiscipline (art. 174), without explicitly recognizing differences between acts such as physical aggression among students, for example, and class disruption. Secondly, it establishes only the students' participation in school violence, since it is defined as the systematic action of physical, verbal, psychological, sexual (by writing or touching) violence among students (art. 175-177), making a connection with the possibility of some conducts to be classified as crimes (art. 179). In this conceptualization school violence is clearly reduced to bullying and *convivencia* is subsumed under this frame, since and the activities to promote it are mostly directed towards "disseminating information and prevent school harassment and violence" (art.188). The law finally states a well that schools should make a registry of incidents and that parents of the students involved should be notified, a practice that was particularly important in the research's schools[3].

The actions that the laws demand to the educational system transform in important ways the social role of the schools. They establish as part of their responsibility the need to deal with school violence and ensure the protection of the students, emphasising crime prevention, bullying and violence among students. It is important to mention that the creation of laws in Mexico to address social issues is a common path that does not necessarily immediately translate to practice, since there are hardly any strict monitoring for their implementations and in general there is not a strict law abiding culture (Pérez Correa, 2007). However, since the laws entail the creation of further and more specific policies regarding the rules for schools and the creation of programmes for *convivencia*, they can be understood as key referents in the following instruments that more closely regulate the schools' practices.

[3] I have written in Perales Franco (2019) more about this registry as a policy instrument.

2. Rules of procedures for schools developed at a state level

Deriving from the state laws, the expected behaviour of school actors is regulated at state level by policy documents establishing rules for schools. In the case of Sonora and Jalisco these documents present "the regulation of the school's actors *convivencia*" and the "creation of a culture of *convivencia*" respectively as their main aims. The "Schools' rules of procedure for basic official education of the state of Sonora" is a document published in 2004, previous to the state law of security, but it was still current at schools. It regulates all schools' main functions, and it includes the rights and responsibilities of students, parents, principals and teachers. It is important to note that the responsibilities of the students, are understood in terms of expected behaviours and they include elements such as "follow the instructions and recommendations that teachers, principal and administrative personnel regarding academic and disciplinary aspects" (art. 11 Gobierno del estado de Sonora, 2009b). The "Rules of procedure" also includes a detailed title of 14 articles on discipline and indiscipline conducts and measures. In Jalisco, the "Rules of behaviours for basic education schools" (Gobierno del estado de Jalisco, 2012) document was created in 2012 in direct response to the state law of education referred above. It aims to avoid practices that generate violence in educational institutions, and it is focused on issues around behaviours and discipline. This instrument mostly regulates the conduct of students, but it also states the responsibilities of the parents in terms of their children's behaviour.

Both of the "Schools' rules of procedure" of Sonora and the Jalisco's "Rules of behaviours" documents include a large description of different acts of indiscipline on the part of the students. Such acts are divided in three levels of severity. Some common examples of the indiscipline acts are the following:

Table 7. Examples of indiscipline acts

Level	Type of act
Mild	Lack of paying appropriate attention to the teacher
Serious	Verbally harass or insult other students or the school personnel

Major (Sonora) or Very serious (Jalisco)	Physically attack other students, personnel or visitors to the school (Sonora) Physically, verbally, psychologically, sexually and cyber bully other classmates (Jalisco)

(Note. Adapted from Gobierno del estado de Sonora, 2009b and (Gobierno del estado de Jalisco, 2012)

The measures to be taken at each level of severity of the indiscipline act are also stipulated. They go from giving the students a verbal warning at the minor level, to calling the parents for a meeting and having both parents and students sign a commitment letter at the serious level. The worst acts of indiscipline are dealt with separating the student from school activities and changing the student to another class or school. In these documents the expected conducts of students are basically presented in terms of discipline and although some positive expected behaviours of the students are stated—such as being participative in their own learning and developing cooperative and critical attitudes—they are not addressed in terms of defining and developing such behaviours at school. In terms of the parents' participation both policy instruments state that parents are co-responsible for the students' behaviour and learning process. They state the right of the parents to be informed of the situation and of the disciplinary measures to be taken, and they are responsible for covering the damages originating from their children's behaviours. Parents also have the right to complain against particular disciplinary decisions in the case of Sonora. In the case of Jalisco, this is not stated on the document, but the right to complain to the relevant authority is guaranteed at the federal GL and it is accepted in practice. These documents shape the practices around conflicts and indiscipline at schools and are important for the analysis presented in the next chapters.

3. Frameworks of reference for school administration and specifically for school *convivencia*

The change in government in 2012 brought with it an educational reform (see chapter 3) that has had impacts at the school level especially in elements concerning school administration. One of such changes is an emphasis in strengthening the so called "school autonomy" by making explicit the need for principal and teachers to make decisions to organize the schoolwork, while at the same time aiming to increase their accountability through assessment procedures. These orientations are transversal in instruments that include or are focused on school *convivencia*. Here I will present first two instruments at a federal level to then pass to the particular instruments in the cases of the states of Jalisco and Sonora.

3.1 Federal level

The 2014 "Guidelines for the development of the school administration programmes" (DOF, 2014b) aim to strengthen school autonomy and in this document school *convivencia* takes a central part. Firstly, it readdresses the orientation of transforming school *convivencia* by stating that federal, local and municipal authorities should "establish norms and mechanisms that promote a better school *convivencia."* Secondly—and extremely relevant for the work on *convivencia* at school level—a good or positive *convivencia* is framed here as a priority. The "Guidelines" stablish that

> A safe and orderly learning environment must be ensured in each establishment to promote effective learning, peaceful *convivencia* of the school community and the education of citizens with integrity. It must be based on the mutual respect among students, family mothers and fathers or tutors, teachers, directives and school personnel (DOF, 2014b).

Positioning positive *convivencia* as a priority trickles down to specific strategies to be considered in the schools yearly and monthly planning as will be seen in the next section. It was also how *convivencia* was positioned in the researched schools: as a "priority." The understanding of *convivencia* presented in the "Guidelines" links together issues of safety, order, learning, peace and

citizenship. It is also relevant that the idea of relationships as the basis for convivencia is not explicitly recognized in this construction.

In 2014 a pilot programme called PACE— Project in Favour of School Convivencia—started in some full-time schools; in 2015 published a "Framework of reference for the management of school *convivencia* in the public school" (SEP, 2015). This instrument continues to present *convivencia* as an educational system priority and is a wide frame of understanding school *convivencia* that includes the distinction that Gómes (2008, in IIDH, 2011) make between types of violence from the school, against the school and in the school. This pluralistic approach to the types of violence widens the perspective used in previous documents and it includes a critique to restrictive approaches that concentrate solely on bullying.[4] The framework ends conceptualizing *convivencia* more in line of what has been presented in this book including the dimensions of inclusive, pacific and democratic *convivencia*. Although this document was not directly used in the schools researched, it oriented some of the examples given for the strategies to be developed at schools during the work on Technical Councils that will be addressed in the following part.

3.2 State Level

Both Jalisco and Sonora developed in 2015 a local framework of reference for *convivencia* in basic education. These documents were not used in schools during the time of fieldwork,[5]/ it was not until I visited the school in May 2016 that these instruments were mentioned. In Jalisco, the framework is basically centred in dealing with school peer harassment and bullying (SEJ, 2015). This document mentions the federal framework stated above as a reference—including a definition of *convivencia* based on the quality of the interpersonal relationships that construct an institution and as an essential goal of education (Fernández, Del Barrio y Echeita, 2003 in SEJ, 2015, p. 11). However, although the local frame acknowledges that there are different types of violence that happen in schools and the importance of social relationships for *convivencia,* these aspects are only mentioned once and the focus of the framework remains in dealing with bullying from a punitive—denounce, investigate, notify

[4] It is most likely that they were following the ideas from Fierro (2013), but is not cited as such.
[5] Jalisco's frame still had a "preliminary document" stamp, so is not completely clear how these documents are being articulated to the schoolwork.

parents, sanction, make sure intimidation is not repeated—perspective, in connection to the 2012 addition to the state law.

In a different orientation, samples of commitment letters to be signed by students, parents and teachers included at the end of the document present a wider approach on *convivencia*. Besides acknowledging having read this framework and agreeing to follow the rules of conduct, they also include elements such as "sharing with my parents everyday what I experienced in schools" in the case of the students, "participating in meetings and activities of the school" and "let the school know if there is any significant change in my child's health and well-being that might affect his/her ability to learn" in the case of the parents; and for the teachers they agree to "avoid in all moment signalling out students and making destructive critiques, constructing a healthy self-esteem with positive and comforting words that will allow for the development of his or her skills" (SEJ, 2015, pp. 31-36). The difference in orientation from the focus on eradicating peer harassment and the practices stated in these commitments around care and trust might mean that there is a conceptual confusion of what *convivencia* entails, but it also might show that there are wider needs apart from bullying that need to be addressed to deal with *convivencia* in schools.

The local framework of school *convivencia* of the state of Sonora takes a different approach by trying to articulate all the previous instruments into a set of guidelines that aim to "regulate the needed norms to achieve the improvement of learning outcomes through a democratic, pacific and inclusive *convivencia*, establishing a co-responsibility of all actors that integrate the educational community" (SEC, n.d., p. 2). It presents *convivencia* as a dynamic process in constant construction and as a set of positive interrelations among the school actors, in a closer accordance to what the federal frame of *convivencia* stipulates. It introduces the figure of the "School c*onvivencia* agreements" as a set of regulatory guidelines constructed at school level, although it is not completely clear who are the actors involved in their construction. The framework also presents how elements of *convivencia* link to the different actors stablishing responsibilities for the principal, teachers, students and parents, as well as for school collective figures such as the technical council and the parents' committee.

There are, however, elements in the Sonora framework that are not completely aligned with the federal framework that connects more with a

comprehensive *convivencia*. One of such cases is the type of students' responsibilities that are listed, more closely associated with traditional views on behaviour management and respect for authority. For example, the title of "social skills" includes "respect and follow the teacher, principal and school's personal instructions" (SEC, n.d., p. 18). Another problematic element is the implementation of correcting measures from the disciplinary board figure and the use of the 2009 "Rules of procedure" since they clash with promoting students' rights at some practices, such as allowing for temporal and permanent exclusion of students from school. It is also worth noting that is only in the case of students and parents' responsibilities where "participation in actions for pacific, inclusive and democratic *convivencia"* is listed, while the principal's and the teachers' responsibilities are more focused on preventing, avoiding and eradicating school violence, harassment and bullying. These incongruent or confusing elements emerge, in my view, from the desire to put together existing regulations that do not necessarily have the same orientations. The document therefore does not take an explicit stance on what the work on democratic, pacific and inclusive *convivencia* entails which would serve to articulate the different actions more coherently. Opposing elements are also problematic for schools since they are the recipients of a constantly increasing number of demands from very different political, ethical and pedagogical positions without much guidance on how to act. These elements will be considered when analysing practices that the actors associate with *convivencia* in the following chapters.

4. Guidelines for the work of schools' technical councils

School technical councils have been a historic figure of basic education schools in Mexico. They are spaces where teachers and principals get together to discuss, plan and assess different elements of the schools' everyday activities. The emphasis on school autonomy and accountability that the 2012-2018 government has made technical councils central spaces where policy was reviewed and pedagogical and school community actions were planned and assessed. Classes were suspended once a month in all the basic schools to allow the teachers to work together following a set of activities presented in documents made at a federal level entitled "Work guidelines for the school improvement

route." The guidelines also represent policy documents that, in contrast with the other ones presented, these are better known to the teachers and have a definitive relation to the work they carry out in schools. School *convivencia* took an important part of the "Work guidelines" activities.

The work of the school technical councils is organized around the "Improvement Route," which is understood as the instrument that "expresses the decisions of the teachers collective to construct a better educational institution," "it is about […] moving from the planning process to the effective implementation, monitoring, evaluation and accountability" (SEB, 2015, p. 4). At the beginning of the year the school staff sets improvement goals and activities which must be implemented, assessed and accounted for during the school year. These activities must consider tackling four priorities in order to improve the students learning conditions. School *convivencia* is one of such priorities,[6] along with "improvement of the learning outcomes in reading, writing and maths," "abolishment of students' under-attainment and desertion" and what is called "minimum normality," which includes basic conditions for school activities like: all classes must be covered by a teacher and start on time, and schools must work during all of the days the school calendar mandates (SEB, 2014a, p. 11).

The focus on working on specific strategies for these four priorities is maintained in the guidelines of the two school years when the research was conducted (2014-2015, 2015-2016). However, what these priorities mean, why they are important and how they must be addressed is hardly established in the guidelines. School *convivencia* is only defined in terms of first, its importance to avoid the "reproduction of violence in the school context" and, second, in order to "generate optimum environments for the learning achievements and a nice and safe school climate for the student, so school can be perceived as a space of protection and development" (SEB, 2014a, p. 13). The priority is framed in terms of constructing an environment of a healthy, pacific and free-of violence *convivencia* (SEB, 2014b, p. 12). In the concept of

[6] Although school convivencia is positioned as a *priority* in these Guidelines, its importance was already present as a curricular formative field entitled "Personal and *Convivencia* Development" since the curricular reform of 2011, addressing elements related to "learning to be" and "learning to live together". In the researched schools however, there was not an explicit connection between the curriculum and the priority, perhaps because the curricular field is transformed at primary level into the "Ethical and Civic Education", "Physical Education" and "Artistic Education" and *convivencia* as a concept or goal to engage with becomes more diffused.

convivencia presented in these guidelines relationships are not addressed, and neither is the idea of looking at *convivencia* as an educational goal in itself. The emphasis on preventing school violence is seen particularly in the type of monitoring and reports the teachers must make during these sessions. A strategy that is carried out month after month was the monitoring of students that are aggressive "constantly, occasionally, and never" (e.g. SEB, 2014c, p. 11), which was turned into a report of incidents to be presented to the educational authorities.

There are however some spaces proposed in these guidelines that could open up different perspectives on *convivencia*. One of them is the diagnosis instrument proposed on the intensive session of the 2014-2015 school year that includes an invitation for dialoguing on how the school attends to diversity, how people treat each other in schools, how rules are created and dealt with and how participation is carried out in school (SEB, 2014a, p. 32). There are also a couple of examples of general strategies that connect different school actors— including the parents— and open spaces for addressing issues wider than aggressive acts, like activities around self-esteem and conflict management. Unfortunately, the time given to teachers to work on and analyse these perspectives is reduced. Also, if one follows the sequence in the work guidelines, the examples are given after the activities for the following month are planned which reduces the likelihood of such strategies being considered, as was the case in the two schools researched. Finally, it is important to mention that there is no explicit connection between *convivencia* activities and the other priorities, and that *convivencia* is focused only on the students' behaviours and relationships.

5. Key implications of school *convivencia* policy in Mexico

The federal and state laws, rules of behaviours, guidelines for administration, frameworks and work guides for technical councils presented here make visible the importance given in the country to issues of societal and school *convivencia*. The variety of approaches they integrate have in common a general understanding that the relationships among people and particularly among students can be negative or at least problematic, and they show a desire to transform them. The instruments introduce elements that are key to reflect on

how *convivencia* is understood, promoted and regulated in the schools, and link the notion specifically to human rights, security, violence and actors' roles and responsibilities. On this final section central implications of the constructions in the instruments presented will be discussed in terms of school *convivencia*, leaving open some threads of thought to be continued in the analysis of the empirical data chapters that follow.

The first aspect to consider are the two underlining discourses presented or implied as justifications for these instruments. All the documents refer to the framework of human rights and rights of children and adolescents to justify the importance of dealing with issues of school *convivencia*, violence, discipline and security, which provides a basis to promote relationships based on participation, respect, dignity and care. In this sense, this frame is congruent with guaranteeing a *convivencia* in the schools where such rights are the basis of the interactions among actors, the underlining logic at the basis of most of the literature on school *convivencia*, as has been discussed in the theoretical chapter (e.g. Donoso, 2012; Smith, 2006). However, as Zurita (2015) indicates, there is a second discourse that is highly pervasive in the configuration of the policy documents, particularly when establishing preventing and correcting measures: the notion of a pernicious context that invades schools and that must be prevented, avoided and eradicated. Schools are presented—especially at the state laws and rules of procedures—as insecure spaces where violent acts occur. Although this approach was more explicit at the initial emergence of these documents, in connection with the federal strategy to fight crime, there is a clear orientation to protect school spaces and make them secure. If we consider that "educational policies are formulated to handle perceived problems" (Bickmore, 2004, p. 94), the 'dangerous school' can be considered as the problem that the different instruments discussed here are trying to 'fix'.

The need for protection of students' integrity could be considered a common element between these two underlying discourses and it is important since there is an attempt to addresses the possible physical, emotional and intellectual negative consequences associated with violence (UNESCO, 2009 in Garner, 2014). However the way violence is constructed in relation to the second discourse presents implications that might in fact oppose the frame of human rights, since most of the instruments present students as either objects of protection more than subjects of rights (Landeros and Chávez, 2015) or, perhaps more worrisome, as the reason for the "dangerous schools,"

positioning them as the main and sometimes solely vessels of violence. Except for the federal general laws and the federal framework for managing school *convivencia*, the rest of the documents situate the actions on the violent behaviours of individual students. This leads to two, sometimes combined, paths.

The first one pathologizes the behaviour of individual students, by focusing exclusively on the negative dimensions of students' identities (Liasidou, 2016), leading to individual interventions by the schools and specialists outside schools (psychologists, family protection institutions) to modify the student conducts. Such view is mostly present when issues around peer harassment and bullying are emphasized. For Liasidou (2016)—analysing the production and management of social, emotional and behaviour difficulties (SEBD) in school—the practice of signalling out disenfranchised students and labelling them according to their individual pathology, "and the assumption that they should be diagnosed, contained and normalised through expert intervention" (p. 228) ignores issues of power and results in "a reductionist, simplistic understanding of 'problem behaviour' that fails to acknowledge the complex, intricate dynamics of individual, family, educational and social transactions" (p. 229). A second path is linked with schools security and in here students' behaviours are viewed and treated in the framework of crime prevention and eradication—e.g. denouncing possible criminal acts or perform random searches of student's belongings. In this path, the actions classified as violent and criminal should be prevented and identified at school level, but dealt outside of the school mostly by public security institutions. In the schools analysed the first path had a stronger presence, but there were some traits of the second as well, especially in the school in Sonora. Both paths can be linked to what (Kennedy-Lewis, 2014, p. 170) calls "a safety discourse" that focus on "the need to keep schools 'safe' by prioritizing the needs of the group over the needs of individuals; asserts that students' behaviour results from conscious, well-informed choices; and advocates for punishments severe enough to deter potential perpetrators" (see also Nieto and Bickmore, 2016).

The second aspect to highlight is the particular construction of school violence as mainly a problem of girls, boys, adolescents and young people, which presents a narrow view on violence (Zurita Rivera, 2013, 2012b) on several accounts. Firstly, it does not consider issues regarding structural violence (Furlán Malamud, 2012; Galtung, 1969). The emphasis on individual behaviours

although sometimes acknowledges problems linked to delinquency, drug dealing and drug trafficking, leaves apart other issues of poverty and social exclusion which penetrate the school and are expressed as social distress and in multiple forms of violence (Onetto, 2005, p. 1127). Secondly, it does not recognize the violence derived from the school as an institution through possible hierarchical, authoritarian and discriminatory practices (Abramovay, 2006; Gómez Nashiki, 2005) that promote a punitive environment where violent acts are part of the "normal" culture of the school. The lack of recognition of multiple forms of violence seem to imply that students' wrong behaviour is understood as independent from specific contexts which in fact contribute to create or promote it (Bickmore, 2011; Kennedy-Lewis, 2014). The particular focus on bullying of laws and regulations also obscures the fact that the actors of violence can be numerous and that the relation between perpetrators and recipients of violence is much more fluid than the strict distinctions of bully-victim, criminal-victim allow us to understand. It is important to note that this narrow view of school violence common to most policy documents also shows that even if there seems to be a movement from a concern for school security to violence and bullying prevention, and then to ideas around safe *convivencia*, the blame for the lack of peace, order and security continues to be placed on the students (Zurita Rivera, 2015) and therefore limits the possibility of more comprehensively approaching school *convivencia*.

A third key implication is that the juxtaposition of orientations between human rights and violence prevention brings with it a multiplicity of aspects that must be addressed by schools. Security, social violence, school violence, bullying, protection of children and young people, safety and risk prevention are joined by ideas around democratic, inclusive and pacific *convivencia* without much specificity on what the different concepts entail. There is not a clear line that explains and articulates all these elements at the different levels of policy, and although this could in principle allow for wider interpretations of both school violence and *convivencia*, most of the documents tend to focus the different policy actions on how to deal with problematics of violent behaviour of the students—e.g. through intervention protocols—which positions this as a priority and shapes the school practices associating them more with a peacekeeping approach rather than fostering peacemaking or peacebuilding processes (Bickmore, 2004), as will be presented in the following chapters.

In the policy instruments, less attention is given to actions regarding prevention and education, since only general ideas around participation of the school community members, teachers' training or public campaigns are mentioned. In this sense, I argue that the documents analysed focus more on the punitive and protection elements than on the formative ones and do not emphasize the idea of "learning to *convivir*" in terms of comprehending "the differences, to appreciate the interdependence and the plurality, to learn how to deal with the conflicts in a positive way and to promote the mutual understanding and peace through democratic participation" (Carbajal Padilla, 2013, p. 14 TFS).

The actions and constructions on *convivencia* these documents address are centred especially on the school as an institution and decisions about the management of the students, but there are nonetheless some elements that can be situated in the community level of school *convivencia*. The first one is that schools are mostly understood as linked to certain contexts. It is interesting that this recognition is used only to distribute the responsibilities of the educational authorities with other governmental institutions—particularly public security and health secretariats—in terms of their role in dealing with school violence and safety, but not present a more holistic way of understanding the situation of schools, and their violence, as part of particular communities and as integrated by particular actors. A second one is the also shared notion across the documents of school community as integrated by students, teachers, principals, parents and administrative personnel. The notion of community does not translate however into a definitive emphasis on common actions: it is clear that the majority of responsibilities stated in the policy are placed on schools' principals first, and secondly on teachers. Other members of the community have less active participation in the policy instruments. Parents are seen as co-responsible for their children's behaviour and should collaborate with the school measures, but there is not an explicit guidance on how to do this. Students are responsible for the violence, but are not constructed as agents in the modification of such conducts or in any general conflict management strategies. This understanding of responsibility regarding violence and *convivencia* is not necessarily how it was interpreted in the schools analysed in the following chapters, and the way that *convivencia* conflicts are prevented and managed, as will be further explained, show that responsibilities on problematic issues are commonly "moved" from the teachers to the students' families.

From the analysis presented in this chapter, one can conclude that in the documents analysed the work on school *convivencia* is subsumed to the aim of preventing violence, which situates its understanding at a policy level in a restrictive approach (Carbajal Padilla, 2013). Although the notion of an appropriate *convivencia* to achieve the expected learning outcomes is at times presented, it is not developed and linked to issues of school attainment, for example, and there is no mention of a type of *convivencia* as a goal in itself for education. *Convivencia* is also rarely recognized in terms of the multiplicity of relationships that construct the living together and the dimensions of democracy and inclusion are absent in most actions established in the documents, focusing the discourse on non-violence, social harmony and peace.

If we agree with Fierro Evans et al. (2013a) that the peace dimension of *convivencia* is greatly constructed through practices of inclusive and democratic *convivencia*—that allow a recognition of diversity, participation and co-responsibility—then the particular idea of harmonious behaviour through the eradication of violence in schools presented in the instruments analysed—a school *convivencia* mainly managed by principals and teachers—lacks the foundation to achieve sustainable peace relationships and transform school practices that might be contributing to violent interactions. In the following chapters I will present the analysis of the practices explicitly associated by the different school actors with the work on school *convivencia*. These practices have some direct links to the policy presented here, but they also include other curricular and disciplinary elements, as well as some specific actions.

VI. Explicit Practices of School *Convivencia*: Preventing Conflicts

While talking to the principal outside his office, I see Teacher Sandra[1] approaching with two fourth-grade students, Mario and Raúl, crossing the patio. Mario was weepy and flustered, Raúl came with his shirt ripped and was serious. Teacher Sandra told the principal that that day the two of them had fought, but that she did not know exactly what happened, she had only seen Mario crying. The principal got close to Mario, bent over to meet his eyes and asked him what they had done to him. Mario sobbed. The principal told him to be calm, and to explain to him what had happened. Mario told him, now in an angry tone, that he could no longer stand them, that they were always saying all sorts of things, pushing him, threatening him. The principal asked him who it had been, and Mario pointed to Raúl. "I did not start it, I did not say anything to you, it was Guillermo" said Raúl.

The principal asked other two students that were looking around to go and get Guillermo, while Raúl explained that it was Guillermo who had insulted Mario, that he had only "pushed him a little." Once Guillermo was there, the principal asked Mario what Guillermo had said. Mario's response was only heard by the principal. The principal stood straight and, in a much louder and angry tone than his regular one, told Guillermo and Raúl "why are you calling him that?!," "why are you pushing him?!," "you cannot call him that!" Guillermo and Raúl looked up to the principal and remained quiet. The principal told Mario that they were not supposed to tell or do anything to him, that if something happened, he had to tell him or the teacher. He told the other two that they had to stop behaving this way, and if they didn't, he would have to call their parents.

[1] All used names are pseudonyms.

The students and teacher Sandra went back quietly to the classroom. The principal told me then that Mario had transferred from an indigenous primary school, and that his Spanish was not very good. He thinks that perhaps that is the reason why Guillermo has decided to pick on him, "one more issue with Guillermo," he said, "I fear a physical fight is going to happen at some point" (FN, GDL)[2].

Guillermo's behaviour was seen as one of the problematic *convivencia* cases in the Guadalajara school. Reports on his aggressive conduct, lack of discipline and general disengagement with school were common. He also could "barely read and add" (Teacher, female, GDL) and had special support due to learning difficulties, but his behaviour was a more pressing concern. He was seen as a problem by his teacher, Sandra, and the general teaching staff. Complaints about him were also constantly made by his class peers, the class parents, and by other students from different classes. In this school other *convivencia* related problems were aggressive teasing, verbal insults, and physical fights between different classes or between students of the same class. In the case of the school in Ciudad Obregón aggressive behaviours such as verbal insults, throwing of stones or physical fights were also a common concern for teachers, students and parents. These behaviours occurred most days, among different students and across the different groups. One of the teachers stated school *convivencia* "tends to be violent […] in terms of verbal and sometimes physical aggressions […] among the children" (Teacher, female, OB). In some cases, however, there were more chronic patterns of aggression among particular students, like in the case of a clique of four girls in sixth grade, who constantly "quarrelled among each other" and "had conflicts with other kids in the group and in others" (Teacher, male, OB).

The sixth-grade clique and Guillermo's situations present interesting elements to start explaining how the work on *convivencia* was understood and dealt with in the schools analysed. Although in neither of the schools these cases would be considered the norm, they are representative of the type of situations referred as problems of school *convivencia* or more commonly, *convivencia* conflicts.[3] The first aspect to consider in this analysis is that *convivencia*

[2] The empirical data will be marked stating the source, gender and place. FN stands for fieldnotes, GDL for Guadalajara and OB for Obregón.

[3] I use the term conflict, violence and dialogue in the way used by the research participants in this chapter and the next three, contrasting them with the theoretical constructions presented in chapter 3.

was important for principals, teachers, parents and students *because* it was problematic, and this notion oriented their shared meaning and directed the actions on school *convivencia*. When the actors[4] discussed and made personal, class and school-level decisions about *convivencia* the emphasis was not on the fostering of particular types of relationships, but on the different problematic issues that needed to be addressed. The centrality of the problems of *convivencia* is therefore the axis in which all the practices analysed in this research are organized.

The second is that the *convivencia* conflicts were always understood by the actors as issues among the students that affected the schooling processes. The cases here presented, for example, were discussed with worry by the actors because they reflected the aggressive and unruly behaviour of the students and the class disruption they caused. Although the conflictive situations were also related with problems of exclusion, underachievement, and absenteeism, the focus while dealing with these situations was placed on the managing of the students' behaviour to achieve a desirable school order. From the teachers and principals' perspective the work on *convivencia* was therefore understood as the improvement of the student's behaviour and the reduction of aggressive incidents among them. They all agreed that a particular order was needed to have adequate teaching and learning processes:

> During the technical council meeting teacher Araceli referred to the work on the "Activities for everyday *convivencia*." For her this was particularly important because "if *convivencia* is improved, the indiscipline will be lower," "in my view, discipline is the basis for everything, if it is ordered one can learn," "we must find the way so the child can do things harmonically" (FN, GDL)
>
> For me, an extremely important priority, perhaps the most important one, is school *convivencia*. Because if there is no *convivencia*, no respect, not a rule, no discipline, the whole of the group is harmed. Where there is a group with no *convivencia* one is constantly sitting students down, asking them to be silent […] and therefore they all lose, there is no improvement in learning […] A disciplined group is a group that learns, why? Because I am not all distracted sitting and quietening down students, bringing them inside the classroom […] School *convivencia* for me is then the most important […] since all the improvement of learning happens starting from there (Teacher, male, OB).

[4] The term "actors" will only be used when referring to all teachers, principals, students, their parents and carers.

The managing of the problematic situations—with the aim of controlling students and reducing violent incidents to reach the required order for learning—group together a set of practices that can be understood as *explicit* practices of *convivencia*. These are practices that are recognized, fostered, planned, carried out and sometimes assessed in formal and informal ways. The *explicit* practices are the first central category of analysis and there are three sets of key practices that are openly recognized as work on *convivencia*:

1. Setting and socializing of rules.
2. Diagnosing aggressive and violent incidents.
3. Managing convivencia conflicts.

One must consider that there are also other practices that shape ways of living together in the schools, and some of them will be addressed in chapters 7 and 8, but these three sets have in common the institutionalized and accepted performance of them at the schools as work on *convivencia*. They are also closely related with the actions mandated and regulated by the educational policy discussed in the previous chapter. Although the explicit practices are mostly situated at the classroom and school levels, they integrate community elements that will be expressly highlighted here given the nature of this enquiry. Practices related to setting and socializing of rules and the diagnosing of incidents can be situated as practices generally aimed at preventing *convivencia* conflicts and will be addressed in this chapter. In the next, I will present the managing of *convivencia* conflicts practices, which address the *convivencia* conflicts once they have gone beyond the prevention practices. I will start by addressing the practices related to the schools' regulations in the next section.

1. Setting and socializing of rules

School rules were the foundation in the narratives for regulating the behaviours linked to *convivencia* in the analysed schools and they were an important reference for all the actors, but especially for the teachers and principals who understood them as basis for the ordering of school relationships. Such rules adopted different formats in the schools, but they were based on the state regulations for Jalisco and Sonora presented in the previous chapter. Two

types of rule codes were used in the schools: a general school code that was presented by the teachers to students and parents at the beginning of the year, and a set of class rules that presented a reduced set of indications for the students on how to behave. The rules in the school of Ciudad Obregón included the expected behaviour of all the school's actors, while in Guadalajara it only included the parents' and students' responsibilities. In contrast, the class rules only focused on students' behaviours.

For the students, the class rules were more relevant in their everyday interactions. They usually stated the permitted or prohibited behaviour without giving any justification for it, or giving a very general one, like the need for respect or politeness. The emphasis was therefore placed on managing the behaviour of the students at an individual level, and dealt with issues of discipline and ways of complying with school activities. The prohibition characteristic was the most highlighted by the students, whom in all cases refer to the rules as "things you are not allowed to do in school" (fifth-grade student, male, GDL). There was only one case, in the classroom of teacher Marcela in Ciudad Obregón where the emphasis was placed on fostering self-esteem and care and had indications such as "take care of myself and the others" or "recognize how I and others feel" (FN, OB). The difference in orientation in this case was also evident in the type of relationship this teacher in particular fostered with students and parents, and will be addressed again in other analysed practices.

The class rules were made almost exclusively by the teachers. Although most teachers acknowledged the need for the students to agree to the compliances of the rules, only in a few cases, like in the classes of Teacher Alejandro of Guadalajara and Teacher Andrés in Ciudad Obregón, the class rules were set in conjunction with the students, a highly significant aspect for these children since they recognized their specific contribution and the possibility this space generated, as they stated in an interview:

> Student 1: We made some rules on the first day of school, he (the teacher) said "I want you to make the rules we want," and like that, (we made them) from all the sheets we gave him […]
> Researcher: And is it better that you make them or the teacher? […]
> Student 3: Better that we make them, because we have more options than the teacher because we are many. All the ones we made that time were well made, it wasn't an

> injustice of how things should be in the classroom (fourth-grade students, males, GDL)

The students in this conversation highlight the diversity the different opinions bring, and how a sense of fairness is reached through this exercise. The teachers of both groups were very reflective on the characteristics of their groups and had high expectations on their class environment. Neither of these teachers, however, explicitly recognized this exercise as relevant to the work on *convivencia*, focusing their narratives on the importance of following the rules. Parents and teachers gave more priority to the school rules, particularly when conflicts emerged since they stated types of situations and the expected consequences for them, which were not generally present in the class rules. These consequences will be further discussed on the next chapter. I will now present an analysis of the most important relational implications of the way these rule codes were used.

1.1 Convivencia implications of the rule codes

Rules in schools had both a socializing and a controlling function and were the most referenced instrument in terms of shaping students' behaviour. They allowed the teachers to specify what the expected students' conduct was. Although both students and parents acknowledged the existence of rules, what articulated the practices and narratives associated with school and class rules was the notion of a written reprimand and the importance of avoiding the sanctions associated with not following the rules, making the threat of the possible consequence more pressing than the rules themselves: students might not know all the rules, for example, but they all referred to what happened if they were not "well behaved":

> If the school rules are not respected, including the ones from the classrooms, they give us a written report, and if we still don't follow them, they suspend us three or four days (third-grade student, female, GDL).

The possibility of the written reprimand or a harsher sanction is also a commonly used reference to shape the behaviours of the students in the anticipation of a situation, and teachers constantly warn students on what might

happen if they do not behave accordingly. A big issue for students and parents, however, was precisely that this wide use of the threat of sanctions as a resource to prevent wrong behaviour was not accompanied by a parallel implementation of such consequences. They perceived that it all depended on the view of the teacher, since they were the ones that mostly made and implemented the rules, and therefore the actual relevance of the normative instrument was harshly questioned:

> Mother 3: Last year they showed the rules that the school has, and yes, they told us about the sanctions, and everything was crystal clear, perfect, but I see that they are not followed. When that thing happened with Laura, they did nothing to the other girl.
> Mother 2: It is a document in the file, just that (Mothers, OB).

The follow up of the assumed wrong behaviours was limited in both schools and fostered a general perception that rules were not actually instruments that regulated the practices, because "there are children that think 'I can do whatever the hell I feel like and if they give me a written report so be it'" (sixth-grade student, female, OB). The expected infringement of the rules generated uncertainty, distress and anger among parents and students who felt that things were unfair since not the school's requirements were not the same for all the actors, as two of the mothers discussed in their interview:

> Mother 2: It should be even stricter, because it is a rules code.
> Mother 1: Yes because, in my case I have three (children) and I struggle to get them their uniforms and there are other people that you see them, and their kids come all…
> Mother2:… unkempt, with other shirts or with the uniform's shirt all wrinkled […] the school should demand them, since it is like in a house, there are rules, and as I say to my son, "wherever you go there are rules," and "that is why you are supposed to obey" […] and in here I think they should be strict in their rules. (Mothers, GDL).

Teachers recognize that there is a constant tension between the demands for rigorously applying the consequences of breaking the rules, and the need for flexibility. They all stated that they do not make decisions based on a particular act, but consider the students' characteristics, which include how they usually behave, expectations of future behaviours and their family characteristics:

> I think flexibility is needed, because you can't treat them all the same. There are kids that break the rules, let's say, once a year […] you are not going to treat them the same as kid that every day is breaking the rules […]. The thing with their parents also influences, because one says "poor kid," so I feel one should be a bit flexible with the rules. One can't have a categorical treatment. You should follow the rules with everyone, but you also need to be very careful, because if others realize (you are making differences), you lose authority. So there should be flexibility, but with discretion let's say, otherwise I lose authority and the rule code would lose value (Teacher, female, GDL).

Most of the teachers explained then that the decisions on how to deal with students' undisciplined or aggressive behaviour were therefore based on who was the student breaking the rules. In practice this meant that for students perceived as well-behaved, or that needed some type of protection, the consequences of breaking the rules were not strictly imposed. In contrast, with students positioned as conflictive or aggressive, sanctions were more quickly and more constantly applied. The difference tended to generate a profound gap among the students, who were very critical of the unfairness of the situation, and in fact made more difficult for the 'badly behaved' students to modify their behaviours, since they felt the teachers' responses were 'personal' and 'against them'. Overall, the situation generated resentment on the part of the students and their families. This was the case of the girls in the sixth-grade clique, who although they recognized that they misbehaved, also felt that were treated unfairly, were very reluctant to change and openly opposed their teacher:

> The teacher does scold me and everything, but it upsets me that we are the only ones being told off. […] I talk back to the teacher until I get tired and (even) when he threatens me to tell my dad. I don't care, I'll tell my dad myself: "dad, if the teacher tells me so and so, how am I supposed not to reply?" (sixth-grade student, female, OB).

For students in general, the way consequences for breaking the rules were implemented was a crucial element in their relationships with the teachers, continuously pointed out the difference between teachers being 'strict' by implementing the proper consequences, valued positively, 'unfair' when they ignore issues or applied sanctions that are seen as unrelated to the norm and

'bad' when they applied sanctions that were perceived to be too harsh, such as being yelled at, making them stand in the corner of the classroom with their hands up or being hit by a teacher:[5] "that teacher was the worst in the whole world" one of the students said when referring to a teacher that had pulled their ears (fourth-grade student, male, OB). The implementation of consequences also reflected a crucial part on the perceptions families had of teachers and had important connections with the way and frequency in which the parents and other students' carers participated in schools. One of the main reasons parents gave for not attending meetings, seeking out teachers or generally participating in schools was this perception of "unfairness" on behalf of teachers. The mother of one of the sixth-grade clique girls, for example, had stopped attending meetings once she decided the teacher was not being fair with her daughter.

In both schools the common expectation that students were going to misbehave and that consequences were not going to be carried through generated a sense of weariness in the relationships. Parents complained that teachers "gave indications, that's it […] they tell them what to do, but do not get involved" (Mother, OB). Teachers feel that the rules were "a good instrument for order," but at the same time "regretted some sanctions that cannot be imposed" (FN, GDL). Students recognized that "more vigilance was needed," but that the teachers either did not care or there were not enough of them to effectively control discipline (fifth-grade students, males, GDL). Limits to the powers of rules were also quite evident in dealing with the more serious conflicts. Sandra, Guillermo's teacher, for example, constantly expressed how rules were irrelevant for dealing with his case because "it is a dire situation […] I hear about the rules and everything, but I stay quiet since nothing happens, even if the rule code is quite large and it says how to behave, nothing changes" (Teacher, female, GDL).

The analysis shows that the difficulty in implementing the rules in these schools partly resided in the fact that teachers and principals were the only ones in charge of the rules, and therefore they were not accepted as common agreements to regulate the behaviours and interactions in schools. Furthermore, the emphasis on individual behaviours did not consider the fluidity and complexity of the everyday interactions and therefore the managing of the

[5] I did not see it physical aggression directly, but it was a powerful referent in the narratives not only for the students that had experienced, but for the students that saw it or heard about it.

convivencia through the rules was often limited. Another issue that generated tension was the fact that, in congruence with the educational policy, the prohibited behaviours stipulated were only differentiated among themselves in terms of intensity, they went from less serious to more serious offences. The rule codes did not recognize the possible differences in terms of nature or implications for the school order and relationships of the diverse types of undisciplined, aggressive or violent behaviours. This meant that the path stated to address such infractions was understood as a single one, formed by different escalating consequences. While in practice, the actors did differentiate in the way infractions were dealt with, the criteria and reasons for the adaptations were not made explicit and contributed to the sense of unfairness. In general, diversions from the singular path marked by the policy were not viewed as a positive thing, and practically all the actors supported a view that more control was needed without considering alternative paths or parallel actions to the enforcement of rules.

Some of the more critical teachers discussed the limits of using the rules as the sole resource for regulating the students' interactions and fostering an appropriated school *convivencia*. They stated that the rules were good to set limits and they marked the beginning for the work on *convivencia*, but recognized that they were not sufficient to improve students' behaviour and relationships. The USAER pedagogue in the Guadalajara school, for example, highlighted the importance of including programmes of socio-emotional development and conflict management and teacher Marcela in Ciudad Obregón stressed the need to help the students understand the reasons for the rules and the importance of care and self-esteem, because "they are supposed to be like a little community."

Connected to the idea of rules shaping students' behaviour, these regulations were also perceived as the main instrument for socializing the parents into the school functions and into their role. The principals in both schools were very clear that the rule code needed to be known by the parents to show them how things were done in the school and what was expected of the students and of them as parents, to show them that "the public school is not a holiday destination, the school must be moving forward towards its formality" (Principal, male, GDL). The rules also mediated the demands of the families to the school by setting a boundary in the type of interactions and expectations allowed. This use of the rules to socialize families highlights a crucial

element, which helps to understand how *convivencia* relationships are perceived in the two schools being analysed: although the authority of the setting and implementation of the rules resided with the teachers and principals, the responsibility for the actual following of the rules—and in consequence, for the good behaviour of the student—was placed by all actors on the parents. In all the conversations with the students' mothers and grandmothers for example, they constantly mentioned how rules and good behaviour were actually brought from home to the school and that the school rules only acted as a reinforcement. The families and teachers also constantly discussed how it was challenging for the school to enforce the rules on the students that "were not raised properly" (Mother, OB) and the low expectations they had on making a difference in the students' behaviours, as one of the teachers stated:

> I think that the parents are the only ones that can help us reinforce this, but in here one also notices that the parents themselves are the ones that start particular violent situations in the street, outside school, so, how can they support inside the school? (Teacher, female, GDL).

How much parents complied with the rules was also used, more subtly, as a criterion to categorize which of them were "responsible" (e.g. Teacher, Male, OB; Mothers, GDL), associating this compliance to their participation in schools and to the attention they paid to their children, or, conversely, associating non-compliance to parents who were irresponsible and did not participate with school. This symbolic distinction will be further explored, since the role of the parents as the final responsible actor for the students' schooling experience was one of the most important rationales in explaining the situations of *convivencia*. Before moving to these aspects, I will address in the next section strategies the schools used to diagnose and prevent violent incidents that worked in conjunction with the setting and socializing of the rules.

2. Diagnosing aggressive and violent incidents

A second set of explicit practices to improve school *convivencia* were the ones regarding processes of diagnosing the state of violent incidents in the schools and developing strategies to prevent them. Violent incidents were understood

as aggressive acts the students made against each other, the school building and materials or the teachers. Given that *convivencia* was understood in terms of *a)* preventing school violence and *b)* focusing on the students' behaviours, the diagnosis process was also based on those two premises and therefore its aim was to find what violent incidents were happening in the school, how many, and which students were carrying them out. For this diagnosis, the Work Guides for the schools' Technical Councils established that an incidents report was to be constructed by the teachers and principals of the schools each month, as a record of the situation and as a means to assess the results of the preventing and correcting strategies (see chapter 5). Incidents reports were therefore carried out in both schools during the two school years that this research covered.

In Guadalajara, students' behaviour was monitored by the teachers. If a student broke the rules, the teachers would usually verbally reprimand him/her and write the student's name in a specific form, noting the category of incident that had occurred: insults, shoving, disobeying instructions and physical fights. For the principal and teachers, the instrument allowed them to have a better sense of the dimension of the aggressive situations in the school, but also enabled them to locate the 'unruliest' students in order to work more specifically with them and their parents. This practice represented a joint effort on behalf of the whole teaching staff who were very active constantly registering students, especially during the first year when it was implemented.

Although the registering practice was conducted by the teachers, the students actively participated in the process, using the incidents report to denounce or 'grass on' other students, play among themselves—e.g. mimicking wrong behaviour in small cliques and "risking" getting seen by a teacher, pushing or taking a peer towards the teacher jokingly stating they had misbehaved—and discussing the other students' behaviours with teachers. During fieldwork, situations like the one described below were common during break time:

> During break, a group of four students runs through the back of the patio. Teacher Flora sees one of them and tells him: "the rule is not to run." The student stops running and says "he hit me" pointing towards another student from that group. All the group comes close to the teacher. The teacher tells them "don't be mitotero (nosy and gossipy)." The pointed student says "he hit me first" and teacher Flora says "don't tell

> me more, I will write you up twice." The runner and the student who has been pointed at complain saying "no teacher," "but teacher." Teacher Flora writes them up in the incidents form, and when she lowers her head to make the mark, both students turn to each other and smile. At that moment four more students arrive and one of them asks the teacher "what did they do?" to what she responds "*Ay mitotero*, I will write you up as well" and records his name (FN, GDL).

The school in Ciudad Obregón also monitored student's behaviour, but in here, students were the ones in charge of writing up other students. This school had implemented a programme called "Anti-bullying guardians" that on the one hand aimed at monitoring the incidents to develop charts and a report—as in the previous school—and on the other, at making students responsible for checking each other's bullying behaviours. The programme was developed—"given that we are in a conflictive community" (Teacher, female, OB) by the English teacher, who questioned the behaviour of the students and proposed a monitoring system. The programme consisted in having ten students constantly checking behaviours before, during and after the break and writing up all incidents associated with bullying in a special grid. The students involved in the programme were from third to sixth grade and they rotated week by week.

The term "bullying" was used in English, and there was not a unified description of what it entailed. For the English teacher "bullying" was "to constantly hurt or humiliate another person" and included examples such as insulting someone, telling lies or spreading rumours, and physically or emotionally hurting someone. For the students, the notion included all the aggressive incidents and infractions of the rules, and the decision to discriminate among situations generated heated discussions on what exactly they were supposed to record:

> A sixth-grade girl arrives when the third-grade girls are saying that it is to "say bad words." She tells them that is not what bullying is. The third-grade students say that it is, and a discussion is carried out among them about what is and what isn't bullying. The sixth-grade student finally says "it is like fighting" and the other ones reply, "yes, we said that" (FN, OB).

The emphasis made in the literature of understanding bullying as a repetitive aggression carried out through time and the emphasis on power unbalance

(Olweus, 1994) was not considered. It was understood more broadly as aggressive behaviour of one student against another. Guardians reported other students because they were fighting each other, because one student made another cry, or because they were playing tag too roughly. Some guardians even wrote up their close friends "because she just called me fat" (FN, OB), and then the reported friend would do the same when she was a guardian. For students, the importance was placed on writing as many incidents on what they felt could be an aggression. At the end of the day, they gave the grid back to the English teacher who in turn would check the behaviours and eliminate items that she did not think were instances of bullying, "like climbing up the trees" (Teacher, female, OB).

Rewards had an important role in this programme. One consisted in a little token for being a guardian, such as a pencil with a tag stating, "I am an anti-bullying guardian." Gaining this prize was associated by the students with writing a lot of incidents**.** A second type recognized the students that were not reported by a guardian: they would enter a raffle to gain prizes at the end of the month, and larger prizes, like a movie ticket, if they were not reported during the year. Rewards were stated by students as reasons for participating, and in general students liked being involved. Teachers and parents recognized such motivation, but they also emphasised the need not only to reward the students who were not reported, but also to 'punish' the students that were, because, as the English teacher put it: "it cannot only be that 'you have been written down' and that's it." In the Guadalajara school the incident report was not linked to any type of positive or negative consequence during the first year that the practice was implemented. In the second year, sanctions and rewards were put into place, such as: researching a moral fable about respect if a student was reported, or watching a movie if a whole class were not registered. These consequences made the incident report more relevant in the narratives of the students and there was even a case in fifth-grade, where a third of the students would sit in a formation line outside their classroom instead of playing during break time. One of these students stated that they would rather stay there because "all the fun is prohibited" and that way they will get to see a movie (FN, GDL).

In both schools, the formats were later systematized and made into charts and graphs to be presented to the educational authorities. They were regularly discussed in the sessions of the technical councils in the Guadalajara school.

In Ciudad Obregón only a few of the aggressive incidents were discussed during technical council meetings, and there was not a continuous link between the evidence gathered in the Anti-bullying programme and other actions planned to improve *convivencia*. This programme was nonetheless appreciated by all the teachers because they valued the students' engagement and because it had seriously reduced the amount of gossip they received from students on a daily basis. The guardians acted as filters, actively going around the school and listening to the constant reports of students misbehaving. Since the students would still report the more extreme cases of aggression, the staff felt that they would still be aware of any serious incidents.

The practices used to diagnose *convivencia* conflicts in the Guadalajara and Ciudad Obregón schools represented an explicit attempt to delineate the dimension of the problems of school *convivencia*, giving the principals and teachers an idea of how the aggressive incidents and the 'bad' behaviours were distributed. More importantly, for all the actors the diagnostic practices themselves were also strategies to regulate the behaviour of the students and manage the violent incidents. They represented mechanisms that shaped the understanding of *convivencia* and the practices for their improvement, and in turn carried important implications that will be discussed in the following section.

2.1 Convivencia implications of the diagnostic strategies

The diagnostic practices presented here were a central component of the way the educational policy of *convivencia* as a priority was enacted in schools. They were actively performed in most of the days and since they were carried out for two school years, they helped to gain a greater awareness about the need to improve *convivencia* as a continuous process of the whole school. As one teacher said, "whether I have monitor's duty or not, I am still supposed to be checking" (Teacher, male, GDL). Through these practices the view of improving *convivencia* through managing the students' wrong behaviour became "a natural thing," and part of the "school culture" (Teacher, female, OB). In this sense, most of the actors stated that the diagnostic practices were working well because there had been a decrease in the indiscipline behaviours and accidents reported in the school in comparison with the previous years. These practices increased the constant monitoring of the students, which worked as a mecha-

nism that stopped certain inappropriate behaviours. As one of sixth-grade clique girls put it:

> (Our classmates) do calm down, but they say "I don't care," but they do calm down, they know they aren't supposed to do it and even when they say "I don't care, tell the teacher, do what you want," they do get scared about the report (sixth-grade student, female, OB).

Students, parents, teachers and the principals positively valued the diagnostic strategies since they believed that students' bad behaviour was monitored and, in some cases, prevented and blocked. What was less clear was what happened after the reporting. Teachers and principals were able to discuss the evidence gathered in the technical councils but for students and their families the strategies ended with the written form. There were no explicit follow up measures and therefore, for them, these strategies seemed only to record and stop the inappropriate or violent conducts:

> Mother: Well, it is fine that… how should I put it? That the kids know that there are other kids that are observing […] their behaviour, yes. But I don't know if the teacher follows through with "I am seeing the report, these kids have been written down" sending for them and then asking, "so children, what is going on?"
> Researcher: So, you don't know what happens after they are written down?
> Mother: No, I only know that their name stays in the sheet and that's it. But I don't know if the teacher later has a talk with those kids (Mothers, OB).

It is important to point out that although in most of the observed moments the presence of the monitors in both schools did seem to prevent or cut inappropriate behaviours, this was not maintained when the monitors were not present, and the actions even seem to increase. Also, for more serious physical fights or conflicts that were carried out across time, the incidents occurred in other places outside of the monitors areas. For example, the fight referred to at the beginning of the chapter among Guillermo, Mario and Raúl that the principal feared, did in fact happen, but a month later and outside the school.

In general, these strategies did not explicitly consider opening spaces to discuss, reflect and transform the conduct of the students. The way they were designed seems to assume that the continuous stopping of the conducts was

enough to reinforce self-control, when in fact, most students were left knowing what they were not supposed to do, but not having clarity on why or on alternative paths of interactions among each other—for example, when students reported their schoolmates with me, I would ask them what the student in the wrong could do differently, they always looked at me surprised and I did not get any response apart from 'behave well' (FN, OB and GDL). The strategies were also very time consuming and challenging for teachers, who had to collect and systematize the information. At the end of fieldwork, the involvement in the discussion of the cases had diminished. Although most of the teachers recognized the importance of the evidence and of having a space to discuss it, the focus of the policy and supervision demands was in fact on producing an accountable record, limiting the possibility of analysing the situation in more depth.

From all the teaching staff only the principal in Guadalajara acknowledged that these strategies also allowed them to reflect on the teacher practices by "taking away a priori perceptions to analyse why the children are like that and why are the teachers like that" (Principal, male, GDL). There was hardly any chance either to plan strategies that could be less centred on students' misbehaviour and more in terms fostering inclusive, democratic and pacific *convivencia*. There were some teachers that, through analysing the specific *convivencia* cases, developed additional activities to promote not only better behaviour, but also respect and solidarity among the class. They would work or play with some of the students during break, develop group dynamics or independent activities during class for particular students. Such activities were sporadic and not necessarily linked with other curricular activities. Nevertheless, for students and their families they were very significant: students shared with their families what they did in these dynamics, and were seen as proof of the care and attention the teacher had for the students. One of the third-grade mothers, for example, explicitly recognized the work of the teacher in this matter, particularly with one student that was constantly aggressive and at least once brought a penknife to school:

> Teacher Delia instils more the importance of friendship, of collaborating, of being in peace and tolerant. We notice as parents […]. There was a huge change with my daughter's friend, Sofía […] the teacher helped, the girl did her part and the mum as well […] Her mum now has the satisfaction that Sofía has good grades and good behaviour (Mother, GDL).

Some of these strategies were only sporadically shared by the teachers during technical council meetings and in other spaces. When questioned about this lack of discussion, some of the teachers that implemented them stated that they did not want to "overshare" since it might feel like they were bragging and pointing out their colleagues "faults," a point connected to the idea of professional autonomy that will be discussed in chapter 8. Contrarily, the sharing of problematic cases or corrective strategies was a common element in all the sessions attended, which helped to reinforce the notion that *convivencia* focused only on the problematic behaviour of the students. It also helped to emphasise the lack of support of families in the *convivencia* issues, since teacher used to associate these cases with families that were either in opposition to the teacher or disengaged with the school. The reverse experiences of families that did participate or strategies that ended up involving some absent parents were hardly discussed.

A second set of implications refer to the students' relationships and participation in the school. Students in both schools interacted with each other through these strategies: they reported schoolmates that were doing "something wrong," they hid from the monitors, they played aggressively challenging the report, they discussed and supported each other when they thought a report that was unfair, etc. In general, there was a consensus among the students that the monitoring was positive in terms of protecting them. They recognized the risks associated with aggressive or careless behaviours and felt that it was better to have the teachers and the guardians around, even if they were critical about particular unfair teachers or guardians. For the students of Ciudad Obregón the "protection" role was an important referent when describing their work as a guardian.

> Student 1, male: Because when there isn't a guardian, they hit you, and when there is one, they don't.
> Student 2, female: And the teachers only say "move away from there," they don't do nothing (third-grade students, OB).

The protection did not come only from protecting others, but in the case of students that were more chronically picked on, or harassed, they felt, through being guardians, that they could denounce the classmates that were hurting them:

> Researcher: And do you like being guardians?
> All the students: Yes!
> Researcher: How do you feel?
> Student 2: Fine, because for me, before, when I was in third the students from sixth bullied me a lot […] they hit me, they did everything to me […] when we left the school they slapped my head, hit me, everything.
> Researcher: And being guardian helps?
> Student 2: Yes, they don't do anything anymore (fourth-grade students, males, OB).

Both diagnostic strategies in this sense helped to open some communication channels between teachers and students. The diagnostic practices and the emphasis in the wrong behaviours therefore allowed moments of interactions between students and teachers, which were particularly important because apart from that, there were hardly any other types of interactions that were initiated by the students[6]. When teachers and students related to each other, usually it was in a teaching-learning context and interactions were mostly initiated by the teachers. Unfortunately, the students-initiated interactions did not grow to foster other types of relationships apart from policing the rest of the schoolmates.

Monitoring practices also opened some spaces for the students to be more actively involved in their school. Students openly reflected on their relationships, and some students felt validated by the emphasis on *convivencia* to try to shape their classmates' behaviours. Some of the Anti-bullying guardians took their role very seriously, walking around school defending younger students, and a few children in Guadalajara attempted to take over some of the monitoring roles. The anti-bullying guardian role also had implications for how the teachers and principals in Ciudad Obregón understood student participation. They saw that the students that were constantly absent would come during the whole week if they had the role of guardian. This led in some of the classes to assign other types of roles as a strategy to fight absenteeism—a huge problem which will be addressed in relation to underachievement in chapter 8:

[6] There was always the one student or a clique that showed or discussed something with the teachers out of their own initiative, but the tattling or reporting of the student misbehaviour was the most common way of relating with teachers. Through the diagnostic practices this form of interaction became institutionalized.

> We observed there were many kids that had plenty of missed days, but then, oddly we see Monday to Friday, all present marks, they came five days straight… and then the teacher goes "ah, it's because during that week s/he was a guardian." They seem to be motivated by the fact that they are going to have a role. And here in the school we […] said "well, we are going to do a role of activities permanently" […], for example "you are in charge of cleaning," "you are in charge of the classroom library," "you are in charge of the geometry sets" […] And then there are very creative teachers, for example in 3rd A she even gives a sheriff star to the student in charge of the discipline (Principal, female, OB).

These actions were very limited, involving only a few pupils and focusing on managing the problematic situations without further repercussions on more active involvement of students on designing and carrying out school activities. It is important to point out that the diagnostic strategies also generated conflicts among students, and they often referred to practices of intimidation by other students if they decided to report them, especially in the case of the Anti-bullying guardians. The students also explained how the monitoring of both the teachers and the guardians was used to retaliate for previous offences. If a student was perceived as particularly aggressive, s/he would get reported to different monitors, or they would take revenge of a student that had previously reported them by writing him/her up, as one of the mothers explained:

> And do you know what happened with that? I'll tell you what happened. It was fine, it sounded really nice that thing of the "Anti-bullying guardian" and everything, but when the students wrote someone down, that someone, when it was s/his turn to be a guardian… "ah, you owe me, I will write you down now" (Mother, OB).

As months went by however, the number of conflicts among students derived from these strategies lowered significantly. This was due in part because they realized there were hardly any consequences of being written in the format and in part because being reported became a joined experience. The students also trusted the teachers to act as mediators in disagreements or unfair situations. This was not the perception, however, of the students classified as the most problematic. For them, the diagnostic strategies also served to position them as constantly aggressive and misbehaving, and they seemed to act as reasons for further mistrust and detachment in their relationships with other

students and the teachers. If a student reported Guillermo to a teacher in Guadalajara, for example, s/he would usually write him in the incident format without much more exploration of the situation. In Ciudad Obregón the girls of the sixth-grade clique stated that although some of the reports about their behaviour were right, they were sometimes wrongly accused and the teachers in such cases "never" believed them.

> Well, they wrote our names in the form, but we also had to tell the teacher all that had happened. They wrote me down because apparently I had hit Vicky and it wasn't true, I had never hit her, but they quarrelled with me, and then I let them write me down, I said "ok, then, I hit her, write me down, who cares?" And then I went with the teacher, and she didn't believe me, she believed her. A friend told me that Vicky had hit her hand on purpose, so it would be red and the teacher could see it (sixth-grade student, female, OB).

A third set of implications involve the relationships with the students' families. Although diagnostic practices were based on the interaction among students, family members participated by reinforcing or questioning the strategies, and by actively discussing their pros and cons. The parents in general had a positive view on the increase of monitoring practices and they used the emphasis given in schools to orient their children on how to behave:

> On that matter, of *convivencia* […] I tell my girl how to behave and relate. For example, I tell her "don't interact with the older kids, especially with the boys," or "look, don't let them take advantage of you, hit you or anything." I mean, one tries to give them advice (Mother, OB).

The families were quite engaged in the Anti-bullying programme: the parents would ask for a photo when their children were guardians and some of them also started to refer to themselves as "guardians" monitoring the students in the school periphery. Some of the students also discussed the issues associated with the Anti-bullying programme with family members, whom in turn would weigh in and give recommendations, as two of the sixth-grade girls talked about:

> Student 1: I tell my mum and she tells me that is fine, so kids don't bully each other, and they stop fighting. […]
> Student 2: Yes, my dad says that is good that we have the programme, so there isn't any bullying or so they don't bully me, like they did before.
> Researcher: And what happens when you get written down? […]
> Student 2: I tell my mum when they report me because I did something, or when I didn't do anything […] Also I talk to my fifteen-year-old sister about it […] she told me once that I have to participate and if I write someone's name down, I have to really check if they did it, because if I do it wrong, it might have consequences […]. She told me "just like they wrote your name and you hadn't done anything, you might also write someone wrong" (sixth-grade students, female, OB).

Regarding the teacher-parent relationships, a very important reason of why the incident report was valued by teachers, principals and other parents was that it became proof for families of certain students' misconduct or aggressive behaviour. There was a general perception that some families did not accept when their child was misbehaving and did not properly support the teachers and principal. The incident report was used then as evidence to manage not just the particular student, but also his or her family. The following interview extract shows the reasoning of a teacher in the Guadalajara school:

> Teacher: serious is when they hit their peers which isn't the most common. Verbal insults and disobeying instructions is what we mostly have here. They are all recorded in the incidents report.
> Researcher: And you didn't know about those behaviours before the report? […]
> Teacher: We did know about them beforehand, I know my kids, and I know that if I let them be during break time, I know who will cause the first problem. Before taking out the form, one already knows which students in each group will cause trouble and, since we are everyday in the patio, we know who they are, even if you aren't recording them.
> Research: So, what is the function of the report? […]
> Teacher: It is so much work, but it works to control those same students […] It is used as evidence, as evidence to have that it was in fact him, he is the one that broke the rules.
> Researcher: And that evidence is enough to get the student to modify his/her behaviour? […]

> Teacher: Well, it only is useful to inform the kid and his parent that in fact he is infringing some school rules (Teacher, female, GDL).

Teachers in both schools constantly reflected on how the parents' perceptions and involvements with the school had changed, and how their authority and recommendations were less respected, an area that will be further explored on chapter 7. For now, it is important to acknowledge that the incidents reports were used, in response to this perception, as evidence to convince or confront the parents on what the families were supposed to do to support the school. However, this type of interaction generated tension between families and teachers, and teachers felt reluctant to engage in these types of conversations with parents since they often felt they should not need to prove their expertise and the correctness of their judgements on the specific students through these reports.

3. General implications of the practices to prevent conflicts for school *convivencia*

In this chapter I have analysed two sets of practices aimed at preventing *convivencia* conflicts: the setting and socializing of the rules and the diagnosing of aggressive and violent incidents. The relevance of these practices for the school actors reflects a particular understanding of school *convivencia* that first, positions the relationships as problematic and in need of improvement, and second, narrows the path for dealing with such relationships by focusing only on the perceived wrong, aggressive or violent behaviour of the students—a perspective which reaffirms the construction made by the educational policy presented in chapter 5. Both practices represent an acknowledged path to manage and improve school *convivencia*, and therefore are part of the *explicit* interactions carried out by teachers, principals, students, parents and other family members. Codes of conduct are relevant to analyse school *convivencia* since they reflect some of the ways schools have to "organize their internal life, clarify their ethical principles and establish priorities regarding what should be safeguarded" (Landeros and Chávez, 2015, p. 124 TFS). The content or the rules, the way they are constructed, implemented and the consequences for following or breaking them are part as well of the conditions that guarantee—

or not—the exercise of human rights in schools (Landeros and Chávez, 2015). Through the analysis presented here, it is clear that such rules had both a socializing and a controlling function, by presenting an 'appropriate' way of being in school, and even more, an emphasis on the 'undesirable' or 'prohibited' behaviours. Practices related to diagnosing aggressive or violent incidents are also important to explain school *convivencia* since they represented a particular enactment of the *convivencia* policy, and reflected how the actors understood, identified and reported the situations perceived as *convivencia* conflicts. These two sets of *explicit* practices were seen as strategies for reaching and maintaining a particular school order, along with the conflict management practices that will be presented in the following chapter. In this last section I will explore their relevance in terms of the approaches to *convivencia* and the implications for the school actors, in dialogue with some of the theoretical perspectives previously presented.

The practices presented here highlight the perceived need in both schools for stopping or at least reducing the unruly, aggressive or violent behaviours of the students, which were referred to as *convivencia* problems or conflicts. The notion of *convivencia* conflicts for the actors was more closely associated with issues of indiscipline and school violence, than with the general quality of the relationships among students. It presents the conflict as negative, as will be explored in the following chapter, and it does not consider either the relationships or participation in conflicts of teachers or family members, except in terms of responsibility of and authority over the students' behaviour, as will be discussed later on. This particular conception of '*convivencia* conflicts' is in line with a narrow perspectives on school violence (Brown and Munn, 2008) that only addresses the students involvement. The '*convivencia* conflicts' were only differentiated as well in the explored practices in terms of their—perceived or stipulated by the rule codes—seriousness, instead of recognizing the differences between indiscipline, microviolences and violence that Debarbieux (1998 in Abramovay, 2005a) and others has pointed out. In relation with the differentiation of types of violence that Charlot (2006) and others make (Abramovay, 2006; IIDH, 2011), this particular understanding of *convivencia* conflicts recognized *violence in the school* and *violence towards the school*, the later only when perpetrated by the students, but failed to address the violent manifestations that are originated by the schools—*violence of the school*—such as extreme disciplinary measures or the possible physical or verbal abuse of teachers. It is

important to acknowledge, however, that although the focus was almost solely located in the students' behaviour in the preventing practices, once the incidents were managed, reflected, narrated or connected with other issues, additional elements-such as family dynamics—became important as reasons for or explanations of their development or consequences, and became part of the other *convivencia* practices that will be addressed in the following chapters.

The position of these two practices as the most important for preventing *convivencia* conflicts shows an orientation towards a punitive management of school order. They addressed the work on *convivencia* in terms reducing or blocking the aggressive or violent behaviour of the students, since only a few strategies with particular teachers were found to significantly transform the conducts or relationships among students. In this sense, the practices reflect a restrictive approach to *convivencia* (Carbajal Padilla, 2013) that focuses more on peacekeeping processes (Bickmore, 2004). As I have discussed they were not entirely successful in managing the school order since there was usually a perceived lack of continuance and uniformity in both following the rules and applying the sanctions related to their infringement. What Abramovay (2008) calls the "make-believe" where "students pretend they do not know and the staff pretends not to see" (p.6 TFP) and the differentiated experience that particular students had—particularly the ones positioned as "problematic"—in the managing and reporting of wrong behaviours generated weariness, anger and distress among the actors, who felt the process was unfair and hindered the possibilities of trusting the preventing practices to achieve the desired order. Abramovay (2012) also states the clarity of rules and the systematic management of discipline is related to the perception of social justice in schools and the described way some of the preventing practices[7] were carried out might in fact increase the undisciplined or aggressive behaviour and contribute, as Blaya and Debarbieux state (2013, p. 345), to generate an "anti-school culture."

It is important to acknowledge that even though there was an emphasis on working on *convivencia* from a controlling perspective, both schools did in fact have other educational activities that dealt with elements of school *convivencia*. There were features in the curriculum related to moral values, practices of

[7] The analysis made of rules codes in Mexico (Landeros and Chávez 2015) and other Latin American countries (e.g. UNICEF 2011) also highlights that the ambivalence of the application of sanctions is negative element that hinders democratic practices.

inclusion and no discrimination, and normative elements such as laws in the Mexican constitution and human rights; aspects which were part of the Ethical and Civic Education subject (SEP, 2008) and that can be related to the comprehensive view of *convivencia* presented in the theoretical chapter. There were also other transversal elements in the curriculum, such as students' cooperation and team work (similar evidence is found in Bickmore et al., 2017). Most actors however did not view the work done in the school regarding *convivencia* as linked with these contents and they separated the curricular aspects of their work in the classroom, and the *convivencia* problematics that were experienced in the schools. In this sense, one can argue that the curriculum is an underutilized resource (Bickmore, 2011) that could clarify and strengthen *convivencia* orientations towards the development of peaceful, democratic and inclusive relationships.

There were also some programmes or activities related to issues of violence, security and *convivencia* that were developed by actors external to the school, focusing on diverse aspects like socio emotional intelligence or crime and sexual abuse prevention. In general, these educational strategies were carried out as occasional practices that addressed specific issues, without much connection with other curricular activities or with the schools common experiences. They also were not articulated among each other. It is important to remark that the educational practices found emphasised more an individual shift in minds and attitudes (Nieto and Bickmore, 2016) than a change in relationships patterns in school.

As I have discussed in the theoretical chapter, international literature has provided sufficient evidence to show that the most effective programmes are the ones which that are "multifaceted; implemented thoroughly, including professional development support for teachers; and sustained in frequency and duration" (Bickmore, 2011, p. 651; also in Ortega Ruiz, 2006; Shaughnessy, 2006) and has shown that punishment-heavy approaches are mostly ineffective (e.g. Furlong and Morrison, 2000; Jimerson et al., 2012; Smith, 2006) and present a possibility of violating the students' human rights (e.g. Furlán and Spitzer, 2013; Rodino, 2013). The educational processes observed at these two schools do not appear to systematically contribute to the improvement of *convivencia*, since they were fragmented and, in some cases, included contradictions of orientations, principally in the case of programmes aimed at fostering children's rights and others more focused in preventing crime. Even if the

external programmes could more explicitly deal with *convivencia* related topics and be considered an extra resource for the schools, these initiatives were seen by teachers and principals either as impositions or as desirable but extra tasks in an already heavily loaded curriculum. Hence in the schools' daily activities, educational or formative spaces dealing with *convivencia* elements had a minimum presence in comparison with the diverse practices aimed to control the students' aggressive incidents. Such treatment also shows that school *convivencia* was generally not positioned as an educational goal in these schools, as the comprehensive approach aims for (Carbajal Padilla, 2013).

I will now move to explore in more detail some of the implications for the schools' actors of the two analysed sets of practices for developing peaceful, inclusive, and democratic relationships. Firstly, the emphasis made in these two schools in the negative behaviours of the students as a way of addressing *convivencia* can be linked to more traditional ways of understanding discipline and, as I have presented at the beginning of the chapter, some of the teachers directly used the term *convivencia* as a synonym of discipline. This orientation was reaffirmed by the accountability demands made by the educational authorities that, especially through the 'incident reports' presented in the diagnostic practices, focused the improvement of *convivencia* on measuring the aggressive or violent incidents, requiring a decrease in their frequency. Teachers—already stretched thin in their obligations—tended to work in compliance with the educational authorities demands, and therefore the focus on the students' negative behaviour could be explained by the teachers' need to manage their workload. In fact, in the presentation made of the preliminary results in the schools in May 2016 a few teachers recognized that there could be other orientations for *convivencia*, but since there was a requirement to focus on violent incidents of the students it was "hard to get to them" (FN, OB).

Some studies in other countries show how these accountability or bureaucratic measures in fact overwhelm the teachers' work and hinder the possibilities of a better *convivencia*. In the case of Canada, for example, Pelletier et al. (2002), in a study to explore teacher management style, reported that the more pressure teachers perceive from administration, the less self-determined they become in their teaching and found that they tend to become more autocratic and controlling with their students. Also, in her analysis of "anti-bullying" approaches Bickmore (2011) makes a case for "(re)building healthy, reliable, inclusive, and equitable relationships that are embedded in the regularized business of living together" (p. 677) but warns as well:

> If the difficult long-term goals of building just and healthy relationships become obscured by the minutia scratching the surface of daily school life, violence prevention will retain an unfortunate, self-sustaining pattern: coping with surface conflagrations and never getting to their sources (p. 678).

Although a systematic analysis of the violent incidents and of the general patterns of *convivencia* can lead to a more efficient process of improvement in schools, this research found that in general the process of generating the evidence hindered more than helped the development of positive relationships in the schools for the teachers themselves since the need to control students' behaviour took a large part of the academic and pastoral work of the teachers and limited the spaces for developing other activities that could lead to developing a knowledge of each other, trust and diverse spaces of communication.

It is important to link the analysed practices as well to the opportunities and implications they present regarding participation, particularly for the students and their families. In the case of the setting and socializing of the rules, I have presented how they were mostly made either by the educational authorities or by the teachers. This process represents a direct opposition to the aim of establishing democratic *convivencia* in schools, since it only conceives students—and in some case their parents—as subjects of authority, not as participants in the creation of regulations that organize the life in common in the schools. In Brazil, Abramovay (2006) found that such closed practice leads to an undemocratic exercise of power that does not recognize the social identities of the school participants and establishes coercive relationships among them; which might hinder therefore the development of a sense of belonging and the creation of school community, as Ianni y Pérez (1998) discuss. It is important to state as well, that the content of the rules did not openly set and legitimate spaces for students' participation, and therefore it did not comply with the children's rights of participation and of being consulted on their lives (Landeros and Chávez, 2015). As I have presented, there were two reported cases where students were co-responsible with their teachers to make the rules of the classroom, which was something the students recognized as positive. It would be important to consider such experiences explicitly linking them to the work on *convivencia* to promote more inclusive processes of rule creation and implementation.

The same participation approach can be seen in the diagnostic practices. Students are mainly considered subjects of the practice, but not active participants. In the everyday life, however, students were involved through monitoring each other's behaviours, and in the "Anti-bullying guardians" programme, by having a recognized active role and responsibility for the incidents that occurred in the school. The diagnostic strategies were generally positively valued by the students who felt more protected by the teachers. This reason also helped family members to trust the teachers more, since they though that checking their behaviour showed that they cared about the well-being of the students. Neither students nor their families, however, established that their participation helped to foster more positive relationships among them, highlighting almost solely the control of the undisciplined or violent peers. Some students in both schools—through the acknowledgement of the need to reduce school violence—also developed some pace-making practices oriented towards non-violently managing disputes among their peers, by pointing out their wrong behaviour and suggesting alternative ways of relating. Delegating more tangible responsibility to the students could set the base for fostering a variety of options for active student participation and student leadership practices, elements that have been associated with more peaceful schools (Bickmore, 2011). It is nonetheless required that these be developed with a different orientation regarding human rights and inclusion, conditions that underline peacebuilding processes and transcend the emphasis on wrong behaviour, which would allow to effectively transform the interactions towards peaceful and democratic relationships.

Both analysed set of practices also had implications for the socialization of the families as a whole. The setting and implementation of the rules, and their reinforcement through their diagnostic practices aimed to show the students and their families what was expected of them, and the incidents reported were used as proof to foster a change in behaviour to meet such expectations. In that sense, one can state this is a model of *convivencia* promoted by normativity, more than by reflection and a joint agreement of the desired life in common (Onetto, 2005), and that only applies for the school, isolating it from the public life of which it is part (Abramovay, 2012). The socializing function of the preventing practices was especially important in relation to the view of the families the teachers, principals and some of the parents held. There was a generalized perception that the behaviours the students brought from home

or from their neighbourhood were not appropriate and therefore, they should be changed. As I will develop in the following chapters, there was an assessment of particular families as unsuited and/or uninterested in school processes, and therefore, diverse strategies should be carried out to show, educate, or demand certain ways of engaging. The setting and socializing of the rules and the evidence provided by the diagnostic practices were used as tools in this socialization process, but also as one of the ways to differentiate among types of families, which situated the students' carers as *supporters* or as *problems* (Vincent, 2000). Families that followed the rules were usually considered as supportive of their children's academic processes; in contrast, those who did not and/or did not accept the "evidence" of the incident reports were "conflictive" or "did not understand how the school worked." These practices also start to show how families were also immersed in peacekeeping processes that made them solely responsible for the students behaviours, which—as Bickmore and Nieto (2016) also argue—tended to ignore political and justice dimensions and public/social responsibilities that might cut across the school, neighbourhood and country, naturalizing "the persistence of social injustices as the unavoidable result of bad or irresponsible choices made by individuals and families" (p. 123).

The setting and socializing of the rules, and the diagnosing of aggressive or violent incidents represent the first subset of the explicit practices carried out in schools to prevent *convivencia* conflicts. They go hand in hand with the practices that will be developed in the following chapter, aimed at managing such conflicts. Both the rules and the diagnostic incidents reports are in line with what the educational policy proposes for managing and improving school *convivencia.* In the case of the next subset there is also a strong relation with such policies, but other elements related more closely to the particular school and community cultures are also significant. In the following chapter I will present two levels of managing conflict and six specific practices performed in the school by teachers, principals, students and their families.

VII. Explicit Practices of School *Convivencia*: Managing *Convivencia* Conflicts

The previous chapter introduced the category of explicit practices of *convivencia*. They are understood as the practices that are recognized, fostered, planned, carried out and assessed as work on school *convivencia* by the different school actors: teachers, principals, students and parents. They are based in a notion of *convivencia* focused on the problematic behaviour of the students in terms of indiscipline and aggressive/violent situations. Such behaviours affect the schooling processes and therefore, as part of an educational policy priority, they must be addressed and improved in the school. The last chapter focused on two sets of explicit practices that aimed at the prevention of *convivencia* conflicts: setting and socializing the rules and diagnosing aggressive and violent incidents. In this chapter, I will explore a third set: the ones dealing with managing such conflicts. I will address them at two interlinked levels. In the first one conflicts are managed through reporting to the responsible adult or performing intimidating or physically aggressive behaviours. The second one includes practices of what is called 'dialogue' and its consequences of separation of conflicted actors and of exclusion from school activities.

As I have explained, the types of conflict that were mostly associated with school *convivencia* varied in severity and frequency. Physical fights among students and insults to teachers were considered the most serious ones. Rumours, students shoving each other, verbal insults and aggressive mockery were more frequent but were not perceived as serious as the previous ones. Other indiscipline behaviours—such as not following instructions—were linked to the general situation of *convivencia*, but were seen as the least serious issues. It is important to state early on that conflicts were seen in all cases as negative elements that had to be dealt with, making no connections to notions of

conflict associated with opposition of needs, interests or points of view, or to opportunities for transformation (Fisas, 1998; Lederach, 2000). There was one significant difference between the adults (teachers and parents) and the students regarding how they understood conflicts associated with *convivencia*. All the actors characterized the relationships among students in the school as "problematic," "sometimes aggressive" or "violent," but for most of the adults the issue was centred challenging cases that needed to be dealt with. This view was not shared by the students, who generally spoke of more pervasive aggressive or negative patterns of relationships among each other, even when highlighting a particular student's behaviour. The following fragment, for example, shows a commonly described experience:

> Researcher: And how do the kids of the school get along?
> Student male and Student female: Sometimes we fight.
> Student male: Sometimes they hit us and sometimes we hit them […]
> Student female: We hit each other a little, because they start running.
> Student female: I've never fought a little kid […] only when the big ones catch you […]
> Student male: The little ones act all smug; they think no one can hit them because they are little.
> Student female: They tell me and my friends that we are stuck ups and that we walk like this [moves like she is showing off].
> Student male: They call me fatty, but I'm not even fat (fourth-grade students, OB).

This narration shows students recognized the presence of aggressive behaviour in the schools and how they negatively affected them, but also their common participation in them. They were victims and aggressors in many of the cases observed, and even in this small fragment there are glimpses on how some indicators of social positioning such as age or economic capital come into play in the *convivencia* conflicts. This different view between children and adults at the school is important, because the institutional practices of conflict management, based on notions of individual behaviours, did not generally address *convivencia* conflicts as a joint experience of peer groups, classes or the whole school community, and often positioned students as passive actors in the actual dealing with the conflicts, especially in the second stage of conflict management.

Although the managing of convivencia conflicts shared with the preventing practices an underlining notion of convivencia based on the students' behaviours, in the managing of conflicts other elements gained more weight than in the previously discussed practices. The particularities of the context and the families' characteristics and type of involvement with the students and in schools were powerful narratives that came into play in the relationships involved in the management of the conflicts. It is in this line that it is important to understand first the attributed reasons for convivencia conflicts, which will be presented next, since they provide a framework to understand the meanings related to such conflicts and shape how they practices were carried out. I will then address the two levels of conflict management practices.

1. Reasons for *convivencia* conflicts

In congruence with the notion of *convivencia* in these two schools and in the policy, students' behaviour is understood as the main source for conflicts of *convivencia*. A common perception is that some of the students misbehave, do not follow the rules or are aggressive or violent and such conduct generates problems in the schools. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, these types of behaviours are condemned by all the actors, but they are also normalized, since there is an expectation that wrong behaviour is going to occur. Two central narratives link community elements to *convivencia* problematic situations in terms of the agreed reasons of why such conducts occur and are expected. The first one is that disrespectful, aggressive or violent behaviour is somehow seen as "natural" due to the context where the school is situated, as one of the teachers discussed:

> The main convivencia problems (are) violence, fights, because in this community there are many bums […] (students) are in the streets with their friends who are bums that don't go to school, and they see aggression and they bring here that aggression; profanity, a vocabulary that is not appropriate, and they bring here. So, I see that the violence […] they bring it from the context they are living in (Teacher, male, OB).

These community situations were seen as the reality where the students and their families live, and therefore there was a common expectation that thefts,

verbal insults and physical fights will happen "since for them violence is always present in their life as something natural" (Teacher, female, OB). In addition, although there is also the recognition that these incidents should not occur in school, there is in many of the actors a feeling that the contextual characteristics overtake the school. The perception of the community as a dangerous place was particularly present in the narrative of the parents, which often spoke of rumours of children being robbed, families being robbed on the streets or aggressive neighbours. For them, schools were safer places, but there was also the risk of those dangerous community characteristics penetrating the school. One of the mothers of Ciudad Obregón, for example, narrated how her child was injured with a brick from the outside while in school:

> One day he came home with his shirt all stained with blood, and I asked him "but why?" […] And he told me "it's because someone hit me with a brick" […] and I came to school and asked the teacher and she said "well, they were the old kids from that other classroom," and nothing was done, because it was thrown from outside the school […] and now when I leave them here (I say) "may god take care of him and the virgin," only that (Mother, OB).

The students in general spoke less on the risk associated with the outside and focused on the interactions and development of the situations inside the school. For them, a second type of narrative was more often used to explain the reasons of the *convivencia* conflicts. It revolved around the characteristics of the students' parents and families. For all the actors, problematic pupils that misbehaved did so, because the parents were not paying enough attention to the students or did not act responsibly towards them. The following quotes illustrate the point of view of the students:

> Researcher: And what do you think could be done […] so there won't be problems in the school?
> Student 1: Help them or expel them from school […]
> Student 3: Talk to them and figure out if they are suffering, if they have problems at home.
> Student 2: Yes, because if that is happening, they come and do the same to others (fifth-grade students, male, GDL).
> Well, it depends on how they are educated by their parents, if they don't pay attention

> to them, well, it's obvious that they'll talk like that, and they won't be civil or polite or nothing, and they'll be troubling all the others (sixth-grade student, female, GDL).

Teachers and parents often spoke as well on how family situations affected the students' behaviours and were placed as the main explanatory reason when incidents arose. They stated that with the problematic students their parents generally did not understand what was going on or did not want to see the reality of how their children were acting. During the meetings regarding school issues, for example, family situations as possible or definitive causes of the *convivencia* conflicts were discussed at length. Here is a fragment that shows how this narrative is commonly presented. It is an interaction observed during a meeting between a grandmother (G), a male second-grade student and the principal (P) in Ciudad Obregón:

> P says that there have been many complaints about this boy, he has been constantly hitting his peers and not listening to the teacher. G says that she is always telling him that he should not hit, but that it only happens with that particular teacher, because in the house, he behaves well […] "maybe I have to come and sit at his side, so he'd behave…. Although I have seen that when the teacher turns around, all the kids act up." […] P. states that in that case, she has to find the reason of why in the school the student "feels free… because he feels free to do what he wants." The student at this moment says "because I want to go to the smurf's school" [in reference to the cartoon character painted on a different school's walls]; "and where is that?" says the principal addressing G. She says there is where the kids of a lady close to their home go to. G., then says she is worried because the boy is hungry all the time, like "he is very anxious" […]. She also says that he has had some trouble speaking because his tongue was "attached." She explains then that she is his grandmother and takes care of him, but that his parents go and get him in the afternoon and then return him to her house at 8 pm because of their work.
>
> P. tells her that they should then see how the boy is treated in her daughters' house; because "many times the parents try to give them everything, so they don't feel bad about leaving them." G. says she sees that in her daughter's place they feed him anything he wants. P. replies, "well, then that is the problem, that at home he is given everything, and he is in conflict between the different houses… it is all a matter of you agreeing, and that she follows the limits" […] "That is why he does not listen to the teacher, because for him, the parent figure is of indulgence" says P. "Well, he (the tea-

> cher) should not listen to him," concludes G. The conversation ends with P. asking the G. to reach an agreement at home, to set limits and consequences for the boy (FN, OB).

The incident described here puts elements of the conflict management process which will be addressed in the following parts of this chapter. I would highlight now how, from the many possibilities of understanding the students' behaviour—his lack of interest in this school, his speech difficulty, the teacher class management skills—the conversation ends in an agreement that the reason for the behaviour is the family dynamic. This is also linked with a particular figure that often arose in the adults' narrative: the idea of a "dysfunctional family" that did not respond to the students' and school's needs. This figure cuts across the different *convivencia* elements and it is linked with a critique to the irresponsibility of—not all but plenty of—the parents. It includes elements of instable emotional couple's relationships, lack of attention to the children, absent parents, and the presence of extended family members, especially grandmothers, as inappropriate carers for the students. One of the teachers described his perception of this families' dynamics:

> By rule the marriages here are dysfunctional […] Dad is on one side, the kid on the other, and the kid bounces in a circle mum-dad-grandad, grandmother-mum-dad-uncle […]. So, the kid doesn't have a… something permanent […] So I think that the fact that s/he moves in that circle, the going around, I think it affects him/her in two ways: in the learning and in the convivencia (Teacher, male, OB).

The use of narratives around the characteristics of the context and of the families as the most important referents used to explain the situation of *convivencia* closed up expectations and possibilities of actually positively transforming school *convivencia*. These understandings implied that first, the attributed causes of *convivencia* issues were placed outside the school, and second, that while the focus of the work on convivencia is to improve students' behaviour, the narratives show that the wrong behaviour is thought to be a consequence of elements that are outside the same students' control. The centrality of these narratives also obscured other issues linked with *convivencia* that were pointed out by some of the teachers, students and parents, such as the lack of appropriate class management, aggressive teasing or harsh reprimands, or having

mixed messages about the types of allowed behaviours in the school. These situations were considered to be contributing factors of problematic situations, but not the "real" causes of the students' behaviours, which were almost solely attributed to contextual and family referents discussed.

Other school dynamics stimulated the emergence as well and/or continuation of problematic situations, but they were not explicitly recognized in the actors' narratives. The most important identified was constituted by patterns of competition which were part of formal academic practices: which of the teams had the best poster or story, for example, or which of the classes had the best assistance record. These strategies generated motivation and excitement, but also friction among the students and among the teachers that had some chance of winning, as well as apathy and resentment for students or classes that felt they did not have any opportunity of being the best, which in some cases contributed to exclusion and disengagement with school activities of particular vulnerable students. The competitive patterns of relationships coincidentally were also present in students' everyday interactions who continuously performed practices of positioning themselves in struggle with other groups: cliques facing other cliques, older students versus younger students, girls against boys, class B in comparison with class A. These competition patterns were constantly explicitly and implicitly encouraged at the schools, even in some of the preventing practices already described, while cooperation, empathy and solidarity interactions, although present in some cases, were not as preeminent and were more sporadically promoted by the teachers' strategies.

2. First level of conflict management: Reporting, intimidation and physical aggression

The ways of dealing with *convivencia* conflicts in the analysed schools varied depending on the type of situation, the actors involved, the history or development of the conflict, etc. In this section I will address a first level of conflict management. Practices of reporting the situation to an adult, intimidation and physical aggression were constantly seen and referred to as ways of dealing first-hand with problematic issues. It is important to state that these were not established as appropriate ways of dealing with conflicts by the educational policy, but they were explicitly recognized by most of the school actors as part

of managing school *convivencia*. They also acted as triggers for the practices in the second level of conflict management.

The most common and initial way to deal with conflicts in the school was the verbal reporting of seen or experienced wrong behaviour, which was understood in terms of "tell the responsible adult." I have already explained as part of the diagnostic strategies that students constantly were interacting with teachers through informing or 'grassing' on class or school peers. This was done to stop the behaviour of said peer, retaliate or get a particular student in trouble. The practice also was done with parents and carers, whom in turn took particular actions or gave instructions to the students on how to deal with the issue, as one of the interviewed grandmothers commented:

> My grandson tells me that they hit him often in school, a fortnight ago […] (I asked him) "why do you have those huge black bruises?," "In school they hit me a lot," […] so I told his dad "go and talk to the principal, or if he's not there, go and talk to the teacher"; but he told me "no mum, he has to learn to manage it himself because we can't take care of him, you because you're old and me because I work and I need to sleep." "So" we told him, "Rodrigo, you have to take care of yourself, when you get hit, even if it is by a ball […] run to the principal's office and show the teacher where they hit you. If you know them, tell them their name so-and-so" (Grandmother, GDL)

In this experience, the student is driven by his dad to tell the teacher as a way to deal with problematic situations. Such a strategy was a common recommendation across families. Parents and carers also reported other students to the teachers as a way of deterring the wrong behaviour, but interestingly they often reported directly to other parents, since they felt they were the responsible actors for reprimanding and making the student change:

> Outside the 4thB class before classes start […] a woman arrives with her son, Brian, who goes into the classroom. A second woman, with her daughter Karla, approaches her and tells her "Lady, I have a complaint about your kid." Brian's mum turns around facing her and asks her what had happened. "He called my daughter 'four-eyed'" says Karla's mum […]. Brian comes out from the classroom and his mum asks him "did you call her 'four-eyed'." Brian answers quickly "no." Karla's mum bends to her daughter's eye level and asks her "are you sure it was him?" Karla says "yes" in a low voice. Brian and his mum get into the classroom. He stays there, but his mum comes out

> again. She tells Karla's mum that perhaps he did it to be in good terms with the other boys. Karla's mum responds that she found it strange because "your son is very serious." She tells her that Karla has just started wearing glasses and that it's been hard for her […] Brian's mum nods and goes back inside the classroom. Karla turns to her mum and says mockingly "'he looks very serious'… not at all, he sometimes does not do the work in the classroom." Her mum laughs and embraces her (FN, OB).

For many parents directly reporting the student to his/her parents was done as a way to immediately tackle the issue at hand and support their children. If the parent showed signs of addressing the situation, such as in the previous fragment, no further action was taken. Directly reporting was also understood as a way of protecting the relationships among parents, since they felt that it could be addressed as a more private matter; "I did not tell the teacher because I did not want to make it worse" said a mother in Ciudad Obregón, for example.

"Tell the teacher, principal or parent" was used as a first stop to deal with conflicts by indicating the issue and with it deterring the wrong behaviour. The practice included however some problematic elements for the students, because even though it was promoted there was a fine line between telling the adults and 'grassing' or gossiping, which was not seen as positive. Students often received contradictory messages because although reporting was promoted, if the student seemed too involved or did it too frequently, they would get reprimanded for doing so. Particularly the students positioned as more conflictive were often told off by teachers when reporting their peers with remarks such as: "you are the one that is always there bothering others, but something happens and you are here complaining" (FN, OB) or "if they are not doing something to you directly *mijo* (son), you best stay quiet" (Teacher, male, GDL). Reporting the behaviour placed the responsibility of dealing with the conflict on someone else—the teacher or the parent—who also were responsible to asses if the complaint was valid. However, apart from stopping the behaviour and producing a verbal reprimand there were no clear expectations of what should happen. There was hardly any evidence as well of complementary or alternative strategies for supporting the students to deal with the issues themselves.

Teachers also used this strategy to report informally on particular student's behaviours to their parents, as a way of asking the parents to explore and fix

these situations at home. The report became more formal if it was done by the principal or if it included an explicit meeting, which then triggered further conflict management practices such as the 'dialogue' that will be presented in part 3 of this chapter. Verbal reports were also used to set precedents about the continuity of problematic conducts—especially if it was done in conjunction with the diagnostic practices from the previous chapter—and helped to position the cases of the most conflictive students. It was also promoted as an appropriate alternative to other ways of initially responding to conflict, such as intimidation or physical aggression.

The first of these, intimidation, was also common in dealing with *convivencia* conflicts. It consisted of practices that verbally or physically threatened someone for retaliation or defence. Verbal insults, threats of future consequences (such as telling the teacher or the parents), aggressive looking or standing, pushing each other or throwing objects were used by all the actors as ways to stop the conducts perceived as wrong or harming. The following fragment shows how the students use this strategy and how they bring with them their family experiences for managing this situation:

> Student: Emilio sometimes tells me bad things, so I […] also tell him bad things, because it's not fair that things are left just like that […] If he tells me or calls be something bad or sticks out his tongue I tell him "go on, stick it out again and I'll tell the teacher."
> Researcher: And does he calm down?
> Student: Yes, one day he was sent to be seated next to me, and he always takes up so much space! His schoolbag was really close to me and I moved it more to his side and he told me "you'll see with the teacher, why are you moving my schoolbag?!" and I told him "your schoolbag isn't going to die" […] (I do it) just like my mum, when she was in secondary they called her 'frog', and my gran told her "just mock them in the same way" and she did and they all stayed quiet, they did not call her 'frog' any more (third-grade student, female, GDL).

Parents or other adults sometimes intimidated as well their or other children, and other parents or carers as a way to deal with issues of school *convivencia*, they did it mostly by aggressive arguing to prove whose fault it was in particular situations:

> Mother 1: A little while ago the students were going into school and three mums come up to me and tell me "Ma'am, are you Nidia's mum?," "Yes," "Well, let me tell you that she stole, she took my kid's crisps!" […] I confess to you that I even cried because they all ganged up on me, and their other kids, they were all… how can I say it?
> Mother 2: Aggressive
> Mother 1: Yes, that's right!, and there was a young woman next to them, and the lady that was accusing my Nidia said to her "it's true right?," but she did not say anything, she just left, and I told them "how come you're asking the girl and she doesn't say it's true?" […] and another mum that was there told them "you'll see, you'll have to apologize to her," but they even insulted her, they were rude, really rude those mums (Mothers, GDL).

Although this was not directly seen, teachers often reported on the aggressiveness of some of the parents when approaching them. This was perceived as extremely disrespectful and seriously damaged the relationships between them. When these situations were shared during their meetings, teachers referred to these parents as "aggressive," "fierce" or "vile" (FN, GDL and OB). Most of the teachers used subdued forms of intimidation themselves, such as threatening to tell the principal or the parents, but in some of the most problematic cases more aggressive words or body positioning were used to impose authority over the students perceived as unruly, violent and disrespectful. Although this did not happen often, it generated nervousness and anger in the whole class, which saw it as a characteristic of the "bad" teachers who could not control the students through appropriate ways. These incidents were not observed with the principals, who seem to have less challenges on their authority and emphasised more what was the appropriate path to dealing with conflicts.

Physical aggression, understood as physically attacking someone, was also used as a way of dealing with conflict but it was less frequent. There are narratives in the interviews of teachers physically hurting the students, and parents assaulting other parents, teachers and students; however, during fieldwork, physical fights among the students in the school were the most common. For many of them it was a way of defending oneself against situations that had escalated and could not be controlled otherwise. Some of the older students, including the sixth-grade girls' clique, spoke on how difficult it was to stop themselves from engaging in fights when they felt they had no other support of the teacher or of the other students:

> Researcher: And do you fight often? […]
> Student: Sometimes. Only when they make me angry […] it's because we tell the Teacher, when they make us angry […] and he doesn't pay attention to us […] We don't do anything to them anymore, so we don't get into trouble and all that, but […] there is so much yelling and it bothers me, and I explode! I tell them so many things, even things that shouldn't be said, I exploded, and I just jumped on her […] And then the next day they started again calling me names and bothering me, so I exploded again, and I had to hit them (sixth-grade student, female, OB).

For most of the actors, physical fights are understood as "wrong" ways of dealing with conflict, but nevertheless, they were justified as last resource for defending oneself. Students, both boys and girls, spoke of the necessity of fighting to show that one is not "weak," teachers also understood when students reached a limit and physically reacting was seen as necessary, and parents often recommended to 'defend themselves' if it was necessary, as one of the mothers stated:

> I tell my daughter […] "do not fight, but if they attack you, go and tell the teacher or the principal […]. but also, if they are—to give an example—, kicking you or hitting you, well, don't go along with it, you shouldn't let them" […] "no mija (daughter), you must defend yourself, you know how […], you can also tell them "hey, don't hit me," or at least pinch them hard or something," because she shouldn't just give in (Mother, GDL).

This acceptance from all the actors, ultimately reflects the lack of options the students had to address conflicts in positive, transformative ways, since in the appropriate path that will be discussed in the second level of conflict management, they are not considered active participants of the transformation of the conflict. Time after time, when the students were asked what they could do in a conflict only four strategies were mentioned: ignore the student bothering them, tell the teacher/parent, verbally defend oneself and physically defend oneself. It was not until further discussion that students starting to explore the possibilities of discussing the issues with their peers or try to become friends as alternatives.

The first level practices presented here accomplished in many of the cases a change in the behaviours and the process of conflict management stopped at

this point. However, they sometimes lead to actions by the teachers and the principals as well that provided a follow up and a more established way of dealing with conflicts. In the next section, I will address the most common of such formal practices in the schools.

3. Second level of conflict management: Dialogue, separating conflicting parts and exclusion from school activities

After a problematic situation is defined as a *convivencia* conflict by the teachers—either because they witnessed the intimidation or aggressive incident or because they had verbal report—several actions were put into place, escalating the consequences depending on the perceived seriousness or continuity of the situation. Even though the processes observed and discussed were very fluid and depended on the actors involved on the situations, in this part I will focus on three key conflict managing practices that can be identified as general patterns. First, I will present the process referred to as 'dialogue'. I will then explore two consequences of such dialogue: the separation of the conflictive actors and the exclusion from school activities.

'Dialogue' was an expression often used to characterize a set of actions to address conflicts that needed a follow-up beyond a verbal reprimand or indication to the student to change his/her behaviour. One can distinguish between two basic types of dialogue. In the first one, teachers had conversations with the students. Although it was done by all teachers, only some of them explicitly recognized this practice as part of the conflict management process. These teachers were usually the ones that had the lowest levels of problematic *convivencia* incidents in their classes. The dialogue at teacher student level was generally carried out like this:

> I try to talk with both parts and try to understand why did the problem emerge, where it came from and if both parts are to blame […], it's very unlikely that one starts and the other one doesn't do anything […] They usually try to get even, get revenge, so, what I try to do is to see why did it start and apply the same punishment to both parts. I try to be as fair as possible […] I try to solve it between them, but if that doesn't get us anywhere, I have to go with the principal and call their mothers (Teacher, female, GDL)

In this case teacher Cecilia, used the space to figure out the 'truth' of what happened, show the students how the two of them were involved and develop a 'fair' consequence to their action. Specific consequences included actions directly linked to the situation—if a student littered, they would be asked to pick up 30 pieces of rubbish after break—or more generic punishments that were not necessarily linked to the situation—staying inside the classroom during break time, extra homework—which were more frequent. Although this space includes some interactions intended for the students' reflection, this more formative aspect took second place in relation to the aim of modifying their behaviour. An interesting exception was the case of teacher Marcela, of whom we talked about in the previous chapter. She more explicitly emphasised the need to develop educational spaces to help the student reflect on and modify his/her own behaviour without necessarily emphasizing the setting of punishments as the main mechanism for change:

> (What's right) is to talk first to the student, and talk about it individually, so s/he doesn't feel signalled out. […] I feel all the kids I've dealt with get the point, they get why rules are important, why we should maintain some discipline, recognize that it's important to have respect and they want to be part of the group. So, the fact that they want to be part of the group fosters that they respect those rules, but sometimes they have previous convivencia habits […] so I only ask them to get some control, to recognize where they are, to get that they are inside the school, that not all the students have the same habits, or get along in the same way, so maybe in their house that's how they get along with their siblings, cousins or parents, but in here it might be different. Many times, that is all it takes to manage the problem, it's only a matter of reminding them, but it doesn't need to go beyond the student. But there are other times that the behaviour is too frequent, and one must let other people know, like the principal or his/her parents (Teacher, female, OB).

This type of 'dialogue' was used at different times and in different manners depending on the teacher and of the students. It is important to notice than in all the cases mentioned the dialogue happened through the teachers. The students were hardly involved in discussing the situations among themselves and there was no evidence of them leading reconciliation or retribution processes. Teachers in both schools stated that if the situation was more serious or continuous, such as flagrantly disobeying the teachers or hitting a fellow student,

the written reports already mentioned were used and a second type of dialogue was initiated. The written report served as evidence for the school, and it was included in the student's file. It was also used as a mechanism of communication between the school and the parents since they were expected to sign it, but they also expected certain home actions to be taken correct the students' behaviours.

The report led as well to the channelling of the student to the principal, which meant, for all actors, that it was a more serious issue. The principal would have a meeting that could include students, parents, principals and teachers. In none of the observed cases all the actors were together, it was more common to see one of the students and his/her parents with the principal, or the teacher, principal and the students involved, or a group of parents and the principal. There was an assumption that if all the parts got together the conflict could escalate, so principals and teachers usually divided the students and their parents in different configurations. In the chapter's first section I included an extract of a meeting of the principal with a grandmother. The following extract is another meeting, this time between the principal and two of the 6th girls' clique that had been fighting each other:

> The principal calls the students in. One of the students, Roxana, is crying. The other one, Betzani, looks very serious and angry […] The principal asks them what happened […] Roxana tells her that she doesn't want to be with Betzani anymore, that she bothers her too much and says bad things to her […] (the girls narrate how this situation started since they were in fourth grade) […] Betzani says that Roxana is always fighting her[…] She also says that one day while leaving school Roxana's dad arrived […] and that he told them "If you do anything to her, I will mess you up and your parents as well, they will even end up in jail." The principal responded angrily "ay, you already took this outside school and involved your parents as well" […] The principal tells them that what they have to do is "learn to be tolerant among yourselves," "being tolerant is being able to stay with people one doesn't get along with" […] The girls keep telling the principal that they hate each other. Betzani says that she tries to ignore Roxana, because she doesn't want to get suspended, but today she just couldn't do it, and she pushed her. The principal tells them in a stricter tone "you've made this into a big situation" and that she doesn't "care if you hate each other," "you must separate from each other," "stop talking to each other, stop even looking at each other." The students stop talking and lower their gaze. The principal tells them that they are here to learn, to work, and that

making friends comes after […] That the first thing they'll do is to get away from each other […]. She also tells them that if this continues, she will have to call their parents and even suspend them from school (FN, OB).

All the observed cases of 'dialogue' about *convivencia* conflicts had similar elements to the ones presented here:

A. The highest authority—teacher or principal—questioned what had happened which was followed by a short narration by the students. There was hardly a follow up on the different versions or a joint agreement on what had happened. The facts were usually summarized by the authority into a statement of what had occurred and who was responsible "you have made this into a big situation" in this fragment, or the same girls' teacher telling them: "but, do you realize that you are the ones causing this situation" (Teacher, male, OB).

B. Teachers or principals often gave facts to refute some of the understandings of the conflict presented by the students or their parents. This seem to show that they, as authority figures, actually had explanations that went beyond what was being discussed, for example, in one of the dialogues between Guillermo, the principal and his teacher, Guillermo was complaining that the principal did not believe him and only believed the teacher to which the principal responded: "the teacher has told you, I've told you… you've been behaving well for two days and then you start to deliver punches" (FN, GDL). These explanations usually stopped the verbal engagement of the students who remained quiet, became aggressive or started to cry. Guillermo, for example, shouted "you never believe me, you always believe them!" and stormed out, crying, of the principal's office. Students in these situations did not generally see the 'dialogue' spaces as places where they could explain what happened, and understood them more as places where sanctions were put into place. These facts were usually given in a more sensitizing and calmed way to the parents, but teachers and principals still presented an authoritative narrative of the situation.

C. Usually, the communication exchange was followed by a summary of what the students or the family should do—"you must be tolerant," "you have to be separated" or "reach an agreement at home"—and a reminder that if there is any problem, the student should tell the teacher or the principal first, a link with the reporting practice previously presented. If the whole communication was done in an amicable manner, students and parents would usually nod or state their compliance; if not, they would remain quiet.

D. If the space involved only the students, the interaction was ended by letting them know that their parents would be contacted. If it involved the parents, in some cases it ended by suggesting or requiring the channelling of the student to other specialists, like psychologists, or institutions, like the DIF (Family Integral Development system) or the communitarian centre in Ciudad Obregón, to attend to the students' particular needs, which could not be supported by school resources.

This process of locating a problematic convivencia issue, writing a report, setting up a meeting with the students or with the parents and setting of consequences was outlined in both the school rules and in the school policy as the path that should be taken to address *convivencia* conflicts and it was accepted as common practice in both schools. It is interesting, however, that there was a low expectation that changes in students' behaviour would actually happen as a result of this process, situating the change more in the participation and follow up of the students' families. Following this understanding, teachers often spoke of the difficulty of communicating with parents, getting them to come to school and had little trust in the consequences that could be applied at home.

Most of the students, however, stated that if their parents were called, consequences were in fact implemented at home. They would not be allowed to go out to play, electronic devices would be restricted, or they would be hit as punishment. Only when the relationship between families and the school were severed mainly due to mistrust—like in the case of the sixth-grade girls' clique—parents will openly ignore the teachers and principals requests. It is important to acknowledge however, that for students living in extended families and having more than one carer the setting of the consequences was less clear, because it depended on who came to the meeting, where were they living, the family relationships etc.:

Student 1: My dad, my dad grounds me.
Researcher: And what happens if at that time you're living with your grandparents?
Student 1: Then my gran.
Researcher: So, it depends on where you're living?
Student 1: Yes.
Student 2: In my case, for example, I'm going to live with my aunt after the holidays, and she'll tell me what I can and I can't do, because they left me under her care […] because my mum has to work (sixth-grade students, female, GDL).

The lack of definition often meant that school processes and requests from teachers sometimes slipped through the parents' awareness: Grandmothers that came to the meetings were later asked by students not to tell their parents, students stated that their parents were working, and they could not come to school, etc.

In terms of the consequences of the 'dialogue' process it is important to highlight the two most significant. The first one is understood as the 'separate from each other' practice. As happened in the previous observed meeting between the principal and the sixth-grade clique girls, a common path given to the students was the idea of distancing the involved parties. This practice was promoted at the end of most of the dialogue spaces, but it cut across the different moments of the conflict as well. Students were often suggested or commanded by adults to separate from each other to prevent conflicts from emerging again or to stop them from escalating. Common expressions of "just ignore him/her," "move away," etc., were used quickly as a way to address *convivencia* problematics, which did help to contain the situations in the short term. Students however were very critical of this strategy and recognized how difficult it was for them to be apart, since they were together in schools every day. Students in Ciudad Obregón, for example, specified how common this path was:

> Student female: The teachers only say "get away from there," they don't do nothing […]
> Student male: They only tell us "get away from there," "do not play with or talk to him" […]
> Student female: That's the only thing they tell us.
> Student male: "Stop" is the only thing they tell us (third-grade students, OB)

This strategy had implications for the schools' *convivencia* because, first, it only stopped the conflict momentarily without giving the students any possibility of dealing with it. Time after time students stated that the situations repeated, and problems were dragged across many school years. This strategy also did not help the particular cases of bullying, when one of the perceived weaker students was harassed systematically by others the most common teacher recommendation was "do not interact with them anymore, because they were too rough" and "just tell the teacher when something happens" (FN, GDL), which in fact helped to evade the issue and left the bullied student feeling

dismissed and vulnerable. The strategy was also problematic because it created a division among the students with some of them being understood as conflictive and 'not good to be around or work with' which slowly reinforced their exclusion from class activities and peer groups. In Guadalajara there was the case of one girl, Arantxa, who was thought to steal money from her peers, the following happened when an incident was reported to her teacher:

> During break T Elisa from first-grade comes to talk to T Delia of third-grade and tells her that her student, Arantxa, took the money of one of the first-grade students. Arantxa tells T Delia that she didn't, that she only asked for it because her mum hadn't given her money today. T Delia tells her to give the money back, T Elisa leaves and Arantxa stands in the hallway […]. Three students of third-grade, who listened to the conversation, approach T Delia and tell her that she had also broken a correction pen and lost an eraser. Arantxa replies that that isn't true. T Delia asks the three girls "why do you lend her things?" The students keep referring to the things Arantxa had done, to what T Delia replies "don't lend her things anymore," "you have to learn not to share things with her," "just separate from her." Arantxa moves farther from the group and sits on the planters' fence by herself. T Delia looks at me and tells me in a low voice that Arantxa's mum doesn't come to school. The three girls start asking T Delia about a story and they tell her they want to play princesses […] T Delia suggests mounting a play. Arantxa looks at them, still sitting on the fence (FN, GDL).

Some months after this incident Arantxa shared that she did not like the school because she did not have any friends and that she often asked her mum to stay at home. In Arantxa's situation, her social positioning as someone that stole, broke or took things without asking legitimized why she was excluded. However, in all the conflictive cases other factors of exclusion were present, but not necessarily recognized when the 'get away from the bad student' strategy was indicated. Arantxa suffered from vitiligo that was shown on her face and hands, her economic capital was lower than the one from most of her peers, and, as the teacher remarked, her mother did not come often to school and lacked academic support at home. 'Getting away' from the students that are bothering you or causing problems, although it seems quite logical, it helped to promote exclusion patterns especially for these conflictive students. The separation from peer groups was not stablished by the educational policy but was nevertheless clearly used as part of the managing of the conflicts and was

extremely common and significant for the way the relationships were structured in schools.

The second important consequence was, in contrast, part of the policy. It consisted of the separation of students from class activities and from the school in a temporarily or permanent basis. Temporarily excluding the students from the classroom, Physical Education classes or break time were the most common forms of separation but if the incident was considered serious enough by the principal or sometimes the teacher, or it was a repetitive behaviour, the student would be suspended from coming to the school on a temporary—one to three days—or permanent basis—having to find another school. This was the more serious consequence and was contemplated as a strict measure to deal with *convivencia* conflicts. The principal in Obregón summarized the whole process during the interview, establishing how the rules policy regulated the procedure:

> We have dealt with it just like it says in there (in the school's rule code) […] Because the rule code starts with articles that indicate the mild, moderate and severe causes and consequences […] So we can follow it as it is, because it gives us very nicely all the things a student can do, what things s/he can do wrong, the consequences and it's very adaptable. It's very easy to follow. And there is number 11, which is the most serious sanction, when the student needs to be taken out from the school, because it couldn't be managed here, and we have to send him or her to an institution outside the school (Principal, female, OB).

The policy stipulates that the separation from school can happen as a last resource. In both schools temporary suspensions happened, but not often. Permanent expulsion was only seen in Ciudad Obregón. In this school if the behaviour was repetitive and there was no support from the families to modify the students' behaviour, there was an understanding that it was no longer responsibility of the school to keep the student. The principal in Guadalajara, on the contrary believed it was the school's responsibility not to give up on the students and try to provide as much support as possible. This difference is linked to the support systems in each of the schools and will be further explored in the next chapter. In any case, both principals recognized that was their duty to make sure the student would not lose the chance to go to school and therefore would coordinate with the supervision office to find another place for the expelled students.

Along with the written report and the call to parents for a meeting, the possibility of being suspended from the school was a key referent in the management of conflicts and the fear of it was present in most students and parents' narratives. Teachers did not implement this consequence often, but the threat of suspension was used as a way of making sure students and families got involved in school activities. Interestingly, there were no complaints registered about the use of these threats, which might be because if participation did not happen, students would not actually get suspended. Carrying out exclusion from activities was in fact troubling for the principals and teachers because they felt there was a risk that parents would complain directly to the educational authorities which could cause trouble for the school. For the principal in Ciudad Obregón this was a major weakness of the conflict management process:

> A weakness I see […] is that a supervisor many times go along with the game of the parents […] we give a student a suspension from school and then the parent goes to different offices of the Secretariat […] and they send the kid back, they make you take him/her again […] For me it's very contradictory, I don't know why they are afraid of the parents, they don't have any authority to come and impose a kid into the school […] The parents no longer sees us… we're no longer an authority for them (Principal, female, OB)

4. Implications of conflict management practices for school *convivencia*

This chapter has addressed a third set of explicit *convivencia* practices: the ones of managing *convivencia* conflicts observed in the schools and narrated by the schools' actors. Here, the attributed reasons for *convivencia* conflicts were first discussed. Students' aggressive or wrong behaviour, the cause for conflicts, was seen by all the actors as a somewhat "natural" outcome of the community characteristics where the school was situated and, more importantly, of the families' characteristics. These shared narratives frame the way conflicts were understood and dealt with and are an important referent in the low expectations the actors had for improving *convivencia* in both schools, since the reasons for such conflicts—and the consequent responsibility—were mostly

placed as external to the educational institutions. Even with this framework, however, the actors performed in the school a multiplicity of practices to deal with conflicts and that had implications for the schools' *convivencia*. The chapter addressed two levels of *convivencia* conflicts management. The first one included the practices of reporting to the responsible adult, intimidation and aggressive behaviour. All the actors performed these practices as explicit ways for managing behaviour, although they recognized that they were not appropriate in some cases—especially regarding aggressive behaviour—or not sufficient to deal with the issues, so a further development of the conflict management process was needed.

The second level was therefore mostly triggered by the first level practices. Three practices were highlighted. The first one refers to the conversations processes referred in the school as 'dialogue', carried out between teachers and/or principals in the one hand, and parents and/or students on the other. The analysis of the interactions carried out show how the authority is placed on the teachers and principals who are responsible for assessing the situation and implementing consequences for students at school and/or suggesting actions at home. Two practices were highlighted as related to such dialogues. First, the strategy of separating the conflictive actors, and second, temporarily or permanently excluding students from school activities.

The practices related to the managing of *convivencia* conflicts analysed in this chapter also reflect a restrictive approach (Carbajal Padilla, 2013) to school *convivencia*. In this last section of the chapter will discuss some of the key aspects that justify this claim and show key implications for the possibilities of *convivencia* in the schools. The first element to highlight is the shared notion of "conflict" as the aspect that needs to be improved through the explicit practices of *convivencia*. For Fisas (1998) a conflict is an interactive process that usually emerges from the existence of antagonisms or incompatibilities, but that has the possibility of being managed, transformed and/or overcome. A conflict can be understood as a social construction that can be judged, perceived or performed as positive or negative, but that is different from violence or from a pathology (Jares, 1999). A negatively managed conflict can lead to aggressive behaviour or violence, but that is not the only possible path of conflict development. In these two schools conflicts related to *convivencia* were however only seen as negative interactions that needed to be avoided or stopped. This construction meant that attitudes towards the conflict (Cascón

Soriano, 2000) of competition, submission or evasion were mostly present in the first and second levels of the management practices, while possibilities for cooperation and negotiation were hardly fostered. A negative view of conflicts also blocks the possibility of using them as "opportunities to make visible the tensions or differences that require attention, and even to evince situations of inequity or injustice that prevent a peaceful environment" (Landeros and Chávez, 2015, p. 33 TFS). In this sense, conflicts, although recognized as a normal path of the everyday in schools, were not recognized as a dynamic process that opened up opportunities for learning (Nieto and Bickmore, 2016) and for shaping particular types of inclusive, democratic and peaceful *convivencia*. Nevertheless the practices explored here did represent learning experiences on how to deal with conflict and how to relate to each other, which highlighted particular configurations in relation to participation, authority and fairness; and helped to create a shared notion among the actors of school *convivencia* as a "social problem," which "poses a threat to the prevailing social order, constituting a social condition that is viewed in overwhelmingly negative terms" (Jamrozik and Nocella, 2000 in Brown and Munn, 2008, p. 228).

A second important element is that the practices considered most "appropriate" for managing *convivencia* conflicts—tell the responsible adult and 'dialogue'—are closely related to peacekeeping processes. The focus on individual negative behaviour of the students at the centre of the notion of *convivencia*, means that the aim of the managing conflicts is to block the students' wrong behaviour, and although it acknowledges the need for change in the students' relationships, it does not take into consideration the participation of other school actors in the conflict, as well as other needed formative or reflexive resources or participatory processes to promote behavioural change more associated with peacemaking or peacebuilding (Bickmore, 2004), as I have explained in the previous chapter. In the case of the 'dialogue' practice for example, although the used term might lead one to think of a fluid exchange of ideas and teachers and principals did emphasise the need to listen to the different accounts of conflict, the way in which it was developed does not allow for dispute resolution, negotiation or open discussion. It is important to acknowledge that even when the 'dialogue' is carried out in a sensible way allowing some reflection, fostering awareness of the characteristics of different spaces and the need to recognize others' differences, the process is still aimed

at modifying the particular behaviour and not transforming the relationships and it also depends on the authority of the teachers and principals.

The peacekeeping emphasis is especially evident given that 'separation' of other classmates or of school activities are the two most important consequences of the conflict management process, which match the dissociative characteristic of the peacekeeping approach that Galtung (1976) highlights. Even the accepted—but not judged as appropriate—practices of intimidation and aggression aim to change the perceived wrong behaviour and are ways of creating a separation between the different actors of the conflicts. The 'separation' resource also has in some cases and unintentional effect of reinforcing the undesired student behaviour since undisciplined, aggressive or violent behaviours are also used by students as ways of avoiding class or school activities, as Osher et al. (2004) also found. Some teachers also use—or threaten to use as in the practices explored in the previous chapter—these consequences as quick ways of managing behaviour, closing the possibility of developing more dialogic or reflective processes, which in turn might promote what López et al. call a "cycle of schooling exclusion" where the "institutionalized procedures […] do not allow these students to participate in the learning classroom spaces" (2011, p. 21 TFS).

A third important aspect is that the ways conflict management practices are carried out also positions the actors in particular and defined roles. In the explored practices students are first positioned as responsible for the conflict, but opportunities for being involved in peaceful, democratic and inclusive ways of transforming conflicts are severely limited. As I have explained, students participate in both levels of conflict management, but are much more active in the first one, since they specifically react to the conflict. In the second level, where only blocking the behaviour is not enough, students adopt a much more passive role and are positioned more as objects of conflict and less as actors of reconciliation. The different reviewed literature gives strong evidence to state the importance of changing the role of students in conflict management. Bickmore (2011) for example found in her analysis of Canadian schools, that the most noticeable difference between the more peaceful focus schools and the less peaceful ones "was that the peaceful schools had implemented relatively rich networks of student engagement activities, whereas the schools with high violence rates put higher proportions of energy into control and punishment." (p. 682). The children involved in this research, particularly the

older 5th and 6th students, had experience in being involved in conflict and in managing it, and when asked about their relationships and those of their peers they were able to identify some elements underlying individual aggression, highlighting particular contextual, school and family patterns that also influenced their interactions. What they were less able to identify were particular strategies for actively dealing with such conflict in a positive way, which made them feel frustrated and unhopeful that things could change, in a similar light to what Bickmore et al. (2017) also found.

It is important to acknowledge here that apart from the practices for conflict analysed in this chapter—reporting, intimidation, aggression, dialogue and setting of consequences—there were other practices that represented possibilities for reconstructing relationships among the actors of the conflict. For example, there is evidence across the data of interactions aimed at apologizing and making amends suggested by the teachers that allowed the students to stop fighting and remain friends, which were significant in the narratives of students and parents, even if the events happened years ago. There were also practices of consoling students by teachers which presented a model on how to support one another and made students reflect on the right or wrong of their actions. Students used strategies in their peer groups that dealt with explaining likes and dislikes and naming their feelings, or reaching agreements by applying consented rules from their peer groups or by using the ones provided from the school. Students also spoke on how they were able to "become" friends again by apologizing and taking actions to show a change in intentions. These strategies, however, were not recognized by any of the actors as common ways of addressing *convivencia* conflicts, even though they were observed and, in some cases—after explicitly discussing the conflict process in interviews—, people expressed the possibilities of doing things apart from the 'report, threaten, fight, separate, expel' approaches. Such practices would need to be acknowledged by the actors as appropriate and everyday ways of dealing with conflicts so they could be fostered and then integrated to the explicit management process. If schools are interested in developing peaceful, inclusive and democratic relationships, the managing of conflict must also adopt these characteristics and should aim to promote autonomy of the students by opening more possibilities of participation.

As I have described in this and the previous chapter, teachers and principals take an authority role in all the explicit *convivencia* practices. In the case

of the managing of conflicts all the 'appropriate' practices are led by and through them. They decide which are serious conflicts or not, what to accept as a valid account of the conflict, how to deal with it and which consequences to implement. Depending on the teacher or principal and on the student involved in the conflict, such authority can be exercised more or less autocratically, with more or less flexibility and sensitivity, and sometimes involving the students' parents in different capacities, but conflict management is still mostly focused on the teachers' views and decisions around the conflict. The large gap between students' and teachers' opportunities for dealing with conflicts created some undemocratic practices where it would seem that everything is the teachers' or principals' decisions (Sebastião et al., 2013), particularly when there is the expectations that the rules will not be followed as presented in the previous chapter. In particular the 'tell the teacher' practice as the first appropriate step for managing conflict encouraged "hierarchical monitoring" (Bickmore, 2011, p. 657) and positioned as invalid or inappropriate a more autonomous managing of the conflict by the students. For Krauskopf (2000, p. 128 TFS) this shows an "adult-centrism" that "designate in our societies an asymmetric and tensional relationship between adults (+) and young people (-)." What the 'tell the teacher or the adult' practice shows is that there is not a fostering of a gradually developing autonomy process regarding conflict management, which has implications as well for the development of democratic practices that require critical thinking and the taking of a personal stance.

The fact that teachers and principals were positioned as the sole carriers of authority also made the process of conflict management very demanding and time consuming for them, as they were unable to deal with it all. An unsuccessful managing of the conflict also fostered the involvement of the actors in the practices of intimidation and aggression. In this sense, Abramovay (2005) suggests that the physical aggression among students is in many cases "the manifestation of the absence of ways to work through a misunderstanding through other mechanisms" (p. 855 TFS) which was not the case not only for students, but for parents and teachers as well, who all saw how their conflicts drag unresolved for a long time, even years. The lack of more horizontal involvement of the conflicts' actors also contributed on the one hand to the prevalence of practices that excluded particular students that were seen as "always in trouble"—like the case of Arantxa, Guillermo or the sixth-grade girls' clique. These students often had lower economic and cultural capital as well—a

trait seen across different studies (Bickmore, 2011; Osler and Starkey, 2005; Skiba et al., 2002)—which contributed to put them in a precarious position in conflicts with their peers and teachers. On the other, it homogenized the 'normal' students' demands for conflict management, and hindered the possibility of identifying or dealing more deeply with the cases of students that were actually being bullied—repetitively being harassed by their peers—since the channels for addressing it and the practices that derived from the identification of the *convivencia* conflict were the same. In this sense, the analysis shows that the main practices for conflict management found in the two schools—since they are aimed at peacekeeping—promote the maintenance of the school order without necessarily transforming it into a more inclusive, peaceful and democratic *convivencia*. Such orientation tends to re-establish the status quo among groups as a result of peacekeeping process without necessarily addressing the structural violence that might be the cause of the conflict in the first place, as Galtung (1976) highlights.

Parents and students' families were also considered important actors in these schools given the symbolic weight they carry in the *convivencia* conflict management practices, since they are understood first as the causes of the bad behaviour of the students and second as the direct and sometimes only responsible party for students' change. Such construction of the parents is similar to what Abramovay (2012) (2012) has found in Brazil, López et al. (2011) in Chile and Sebastião et al. (2013) in Portugal, who have highlighted how the narratives of "family breakdown," "lack of care and interest," "students poorly socialized and irresponsible families" respectively are positioned of the causes of violent behaviour and indiscipline. As I have presented, the narratives of the "dysfunctional families" along with the problematic and risky characteristics of the context are positioned as the key elements given by the actors to understand the problems of *convivencia* in school. Even when there seems to be evidence in the school violence literature to argue for a connection between contextual characteristics, particularly more general exclusion and marginalization conditions, and violence and indiscipline in schools, it is not a mechanical and direct relationship (Kaplan, 2016 see also Osher et al., 2005, Astor and Benbenishty, 2005). In this sense, following Debarbieux (2003, p. 597), "while school violence is [or might be] constructed outside, it is at least jointly produced internally."

The shared meaning found in these two schools of the causes for indiscipline, aggression and violence as external and unmanageable by the school become naturalized expectations that prevent more complex understandings of *convivencia* conflict and obscure the role of the schools and their teachers and principals in their development and possible transformation. In connection with the emphasis on security and crime prevention that the policy carries, they also construct a separation between schools and communities (Nieto and Bickmore, 2016) that hinders the possibility of developing co-responsible, care and trust processes among the actors. They contribute as well to position particular families as problematic, uncooperative or uninterested, as I will develop further in chapter 9.

Finally, I would like to problematize the emphasis on the behaviour to address *convivencia* in opposition to a possible alternative that stresses relationships as the centre of the interventions. As I have explained, the restrictive *convivencia* approach focuses on the wrong behaviour of individual students that needs to be corrected or redirected to a particular definition of school order, which in general is not discussed or collectively decided. Two implications can be stressed now. The first one is the tendency of treating these students as problematic *cases,* and symbolically—and sometimes physically—separating them from the general school context that is nevertheless embedded and involved with such students' interactions. For López et al. this involves "deficit ideologies," systematic practices that "tend to understand students from their shortcomings and deficiencies and ultimately to 'pathologize' their difficulties" (López et al., 2011, p. 20 TFS), which further positions the causes and possible actions away from the schools. The second is the emphasis on controlling the behaviour as the main aim of the interventions (Jimerson and Hart, 2012), which does not necessarily mean an improvement of the interactions among the school actors. Such emphasis leads toward short-term approaches, an immediatism (Abramovay, 2012, 2005b) that only deals with the wrong act, and not with its causes and implications, the fluidity of the interactions and especially their systematic presence in the schools' life. For Landeros and Chávez this is a crucial point, since "the most serious aspect of the conflicts […] is not their intensity, but their chronicity" (Landeros and Chávez, 2015, p. 31 TFS), and is one of the biggest critiques the students make to the conflict management practices of these two schools.

A change in orientation towards relationships and not towards behaviours opens up alternatives to step away from these implications. It can promote a shift from an emphasis on the individual student to the school community, as a product of a joined reflexive experience (Onetto, 2005), since a peaceful, inclusive and democratic *convivencia* is not something that can be reached individually. It also acknowledges the participation of all participants in the school as actors of *convivencia,* and not only the students, which can foster horizontal ways of addressing conflicts. In this sense, an emphasis on relationships highlights the need to develop different types of knowledge, skills and attitudes to address conflict, since the improvement of *convivencia* might require changes in all actors. A relationship focus also means that is not enough to consider the explicit practices presented in chapters 5 and 6 to give a sufficiently complete account of how school *convivencia* is experienced by students, families, teachers and principals. To better understand how relationships are constructed and performed it is necessary to integrate other types of practices that intertwine with these explicit approaches, and shape the type of *convivencia* in the schools. These practices will be explored in the following two chapters that present what I have called the *tacit* processes of school *convivencia*.

VIII. Tacit Practices of School *Convivencia*: Dealing with Students' Needs

The previous two chapters explored the explicit practices of preventing and managing *convivencia* conflicts in the researched schools. As discussed, these practices were based on controlling the students' behaviour and dealing with the conflicts among students, which situates the understanding of *convivencia* and the interventions carried out for its improvement in the restrictive approach described by Carbajal Padilla (2013). Focusing the analysis only on such practices, however, is not sufficient to explain the whole situation of *convivencia* in both schools. The restrictive emphasis found obscures how other multiple actors and levels of *convivencia* (classroom, school and community) are intertwined in the everyday practices, and how they shape the relationships of both the *convivencia* that exists and the type of *convivencia* that is desired. It also fails to acknowledge that other school processes—which are not viewed by the policy and by the teaching staff as *convivencia*—do in fact shape the type of relationships that the actors have and the ways that "living together" exists in these schools. These practices, which form the schools' patterns of relationships but are not recognized as part of the work on *convivencia* that the schools promote are called here *tacit* practices— the second main analytical category of this research— and their analysis implies bringing out the relational elements that shape them, as well as explaining how they are performed at schools and the implications that they have for school *convivencia*. This analytical recognition of the need to expand the scope of the research takes on board some of the orientations of the comprehensive approach to school *convivencia* (Carbajal, 2013), which highlights the need to look beyond the students' problematic behaviour in order to understand *convivencia* as a set of interrelations that shape process of participation, equality, inclusion and quality in education.

Tacit *convivencia* practices were shaped by interactions, socio-economic elements, educational policies, geographical spaces and the ways that people relate with them and in them, narratives, shared meanings and a diversity of socio-emotional elements related to trust, care, sense of belonging, communication and responsibility. The interrelation of these aspects was present across all the fieldwork data, interlinked in the everyday life of schools with the explicit practices discussed previously. The following students' narrative illustrates this point showing the importance of considering the tacit practices. In this fragment four female students of third and fourth-grade discuss what they would like their school's *convivencia* to be. They integrate the explicit element of the lack of fights among students, in congruence with the notion and scope of *convivencia* presented previously, but they expand it by including needs of nourishment, inclusion, dialogue and co-responsibility:

> Researcher: How'd you like school convivencia to be?
> Student 1 3rd: I'd like that all of us conviviéramos [live together with a positive connotation] and that none of us would fight.
> Student 3 4th: That if there were kids that did not have anything to eat, that everyone else would share their food with them.
> Student 2 3rd: To share.
> Student 4 4th: That we'd invite the others to play and not exclude them.
> Student 1 3rd: Never reject others' games and always support their ideas.
> Researcher: And do you think that can happen?
> All: Yes.
> Student 3 4th: Yes, if we talk to them and we become friends (Students, GDL).

Even when recognizing the fluidity in the tacit practices and the different levels their study might take, in the analysis of the relationships between the schools and their local community a large distinction can be drawn between tacit practices of *convivencia* aimed at dealing with students' needs and practices that manage the needs of the school in terms of its activities and its infrastructure's maintenance and improvement. Both areas are particularly important to analyse *convivencia* at a community level since they take into consideration socio-economic contextual elements and require and promote a direct involvement of the students' families. Their analysis allows one to understand more deeply the relationships between the schools and their families, and through

them, their local communities. In this chapter I will focus on the tacit *convivencia* practices that deal with the students' needs and address the schools' in the following one.

Students' needs integrate aspects relating to the learning process and academic requirements, but also more general physical, socio-emotional and material well-being necessities. The meanings, expectations and practices around these generated and shaped relationships among the actors and were brought up in their narratives about school relationships and in the observation of the problematic *convivencia* situations presented in the previous chapters. To give a more detailed analysis, I will focus in the chapter on practices presented in both schools around the issue of school underachievement, which was one of the biggest concerns, along with the related school absenteeism and the previously addressed *convivencia* conflicts. To give a general sense of the types of students' needs besides underachievement the analysis of school practices considered, I will provide three examples. The first one refers to the practices to 'make adaptations around school materials and uniforms'. Since it was recognized that families could not always provide the school materials students needed (notebooks, pencils, complete uniform, etc.) most teachers made adaptations to the established policy that specified the students' responsibility to bring all the needed supplies. The adaptations included asking to borrow other students' materials, working in teams to share the resources available, teachers collecting or buying resources with their own money and letting the students bring other clothes besides the uniform. These practices implied, among other things: bending of school rules, support of the family situations, actively taking care of avoiding students' exclusion from school activities, managing conflicts around material (families not agreeing with sharing, broken or stolen things), etc.

A second example are the practices of 'accompanying students to and from the school'. The actors recognized that the community around the school presented risks for the students: car traffic, drugs and gangs presence and the fear of kidnapped children were the more widely spoken about. Most of the students would therefore be dropped and picked up at the school gates by either their parents or by a member of their extended family (grandmothers and aunts usually). An action which was seen as the most basic act of responsibility by the families since helped to ensure that the students would attend school—a problematic issue since the percentage of students absent from school

constantly reached over 20%. The practice also helped parents or carers to be in closer contact to the school experience of the students by asking how school went or looking at the interaction among classmates. It also fostered some interaction with the teachers or with other families. In the case of some families, when the adults could not go to school, they would develop ties with their neighbours that could take students to and from school. Interestingly, the accompanying of students to and from school was also a highlighted characteristic by teachers and some parents and students to divide the families who were perceived as giving value to the school and as involved in their children's life and were therefore 'responsible', and those who lacked attention to the children, were' lazy' or absent from their homes and were therefore 'irresponsible'.

A third important example related to the students' well-being was the 'protection against abuse' practices. In both schools there were situations of verbal and/or physical abuse from teachers or from parents or family members towards students, which had implications in terms of attendance, peer relationships and school achievement for the particular students, but also for the class, and the general school. They also had implications for the relationship between parents or carers and teachers. When the abuse was known, it generated a series of practices: students or teachers consoled the abused student and helped him/her with school or homework; teachers developed strategies to avoid a repetition of the abuse- for example, a student was hit with an electric cord at home after the teacher told the mum he had misbehaved, when the teacher found out, she decided "she was never going to report the student again" (FN, GDL); several mothers closed down the school in several occasions to demand for the removal of a teacher that was verbally and physically abusive to his class. These situations showed the vulnerability of many of the students both at school and in their home, but they also integrated elements of rejection, avoidance, care and responsibility that shaped the type of relationships in the schools.

Each of these examples include a multiplicity of elements that contribute to shaping the tapestry of relationships that form school *convivencia* and closely relate to the practices to deal with underachievement that will be analysed in this chapter. I will describe first the issue of underachievement in the schools and the reasons of it given by the actors. I will then address two of the schools' mechanisms for dealing with it—the detection and report of

students with academic needs, and the setting and developing of spaces for particular support —examining the relational elements that are embedded in such mechanisms to conclude highlighting the implications of the tacit practices that focus on students' needs in relation to school *convivencia*.

1. Underachieving in the research's schools

Underachievement was a common problem in both analysed schools with a high percentage of students demonstrating low academic competencies. The 2015 PLANEA exam, a national diagnostic exercise on learning achievements, situated most fourth-grade students examined in the lower achievement level in language and communication (around 70%) and in maths (around 80%) for both schools (INEE, 2015).[1] Although these scores are not comparable with previous results, since it was the first time the instrument was used, in the case of the Guadalajara school the low results are consistent with previous scores in assessment exercises (ENLACE exam), while in the Ciudad Obregon school there was a decrease in achievement levels from the 2013 previous scores (SEP, 2013).

Particular and more extreme cases of students lagging behind were a common theme of the technical council meetings and all the teachers reported students that could hardly read and write. There were also the cases of "overage" children that had not been previously schooled or that had to repeat a year. In such cases, the decision to retake the grade was taken with the approval of their parents, given the current a policy in place that prevents students from failing. The school in Guadalajara had a particular high percentage of students in the severe underachievement category, around 30% in the teachers' estimates. This high proportion was partially fostered by the existence of the USAER team—the already mentioned support unit (see chapter 4)—which implied that at risk students who needed academic support were sent there from other schools.

The underachievement status of many of the students had implications for how these two schools were perceived by the community, since there was a common expectation, or prejudice, that they were "not very good" because the

[1] Exact percentages are not used to protect anonymity of the schools.

students were less smart or *burritos* (little donkeys), since they were situated at the edge of the cities in some of the most vulnerable areas, a situation that in the case of Guadalajara, was seen as even more precarious by being in the afternoon shift, which is thought to be worse than the morning one. Although teachers, parents and students recognized underachievement was indeed a problem, they commonly rejected the "not very good" representation, and focused the explanation of the issue on particular students or family cases—in the same logic of "problematic cases" of the previous chapter—with common reasons as causes for lagging behind.

2. Reasons for school underachievement

The schools actors' explanations for underachievement presented a common thread with the reasons for *convivencia* conflict presented in the previous chapter: the main reasons for students academically underachieving—and related issues of disengagement and absenteeism—were placed on the lack of proper involvement by the parents in the student's schooling and the general precariousness of the families' situations, as one of the principals commented:

> We hardly ever see in the school the parents that have underachieving kids. The parents whose kids are doing well, they're always here […] One do not see that type of mutual help in the kids that are doing poorly […] the teachers always work in a help triangle that involves the parent, the teacher and the student. If one of those three elements doesn't work inside the help triangle it's when the teaching-learning process doesn't yield fruits. So, the parents of children that have difficulties don't help them, it's usually that way (Principal, female, OB).

Interestingly however, the discussion of such reasons constructed a more complex understanding of the relationship between the community, the families and the schools than did the reasons immersed in the *convivencia* conflicts. In this section, I will address the particularities of the families and general context characteristics the actors associated with underachievement, since they also give an insight on the type of relationships that constructed the schools' *convivencia*. To start with, parents, teachers, students and principals all agreed that students needed their parents support to develop academically, which cons-

tructed an explicit role for the families' participation. In the cases of students lagging behind there was a common understanding among these actors that parents were absent or unable to provide the proper type of help they needed. This situation was partially understood as a consequence of the type of work the parents had, since they laboured in harsh contexts, with long hours, double and night shifts, and long commutes, as teacher Andres explained:

> The problem of the students is economic, it's economic. Just as an example, I left them homework they had to do in pairs, and I told the kids "your parent, your mum, your dad it's your partner, you are the work pair." Once I check their homework, I realized there is a girl who did the work wrongly, "Hey, what happened with your partner? Didn't s/he help you?," "No, s/he couldn't, s/he went to work, s/he left at 4 am." So, the kids are left alone (Teacher, male, OB).

Some students also reported their parents leaving at 5 am and getting back home at 11 pm, others stated being on their own before and after school for the large part of the week. Some students therefore were left without an adult present at home for long periods and sometimes the responsibility of deciding to go to school and doing homework was solely left on them. A few of the parents, on their part, expressed that they worked very long hours—12 hours on the textile factories for example—or far away from home which took over four hours of commuting time. From the parent's point of view, particularly for the mothers, there was a tension between providing for their families and therefore having to adapt to the job conditions, and being a full-time parent, responsible for attendance and other school activities, a tension that was often discussed with the principals and the teachers:

> In here it is the case of 'either I come to the meeting or I feed my child', it's like that really […], "Ma'am, your son doesn't come to school, or doesn't do homework," "oh teacher, what can I do?," "I either feed them or stay at home to help them with their homework" (Principal, female, OB)
>
> The main reason is "I can't stop working," so it's their job, "because if I stop working none of us will eat" (Teacher, female, GDL).

Another important element to consider was that in many cases, especially in the Guadalajara school, the parents' jobs were temporary, and the families

were forced to move often from place to place, which involved a change in schools and therefore the attachment of the students to the school and the formality given to attending and doing homework was very fragile. Some of the teachers referred to the school as a "transit school" and these students as "swallows," given the amount of movement of the students during the year.

Lower literacy levels among the parents were also understood by teachers, parents and some students as a reason for underachievement in the school, since parents that had not completed basic education were seen as having difficulty supporting the academic development of their children, as two mothers in an interview shared:

> Mother 1: I don't know much either, I only went until third-grade of primary, I also don't… I struggle a lot […]
> Mother 2: My kids take after their donkey mother, I also only studied primary, I was a struggle, but I did it, but there are many things that, just like her, I don't understand (Mothers, GDL).

Data from the survey conducted for this research with the school families showed that 20% of the parents of the Ciudad Obregón school had not completed basic education, a percentage that rose in the case of the Guadalajara school to 29% in the case of the mothers and 37% for the fathers.[2] Some of the students placed as underachieving students did in fact have parents that had low schooling levels, but it was not a characteristic common to all of them. The schooling levels of the parents and in general the lack of cultural capital were also used as reasons in some observed conflicts around teaching methods. According to teachers, parents sometimes did not understand what the teacher was trying to do and did not support them and the teacher appropriately—they would use outdated approaches for teaching their children how to read at home for example. Some parents expressed that they "do not know the type of work she [the teacher] did" (Mothers, GDL) because although they received some information on the type of activities, they did not feel they could ask

[2] Comparing this percentages to the general ones for the schools' communities, in Ciudad Obregón the parents' literacy is slightly better than the average, since the general percentage is of 27% of adults over 15 that did not finish basic education. For Guadalajara, the general trend is maintained in the case of the mothers, but for the fathers is worse since for the general population in the school area 30% did not finish basic education. The fathers' low schooling level might also be connected with the fact that the Guadalajara school is an afternoon school which tends to group the lower capital members of the communities.

about them to the teachers. They also complained that teachers were sometimes too slow on getting their children to learn basic things, left too much or too little homework, or were suspicious of activities that involved children playing or doing things different (experiments, projects) from how they understood proper schoolwork (reading, writing, multiplication tables, etc.).

Even when all the actors reported an awareness of the jobs' challenges, the different understandings of the "proper" schooling methods and the low schooling levels of the parents as reasons for underachievement, more often—as was in the narratives of the *convivencia* conflicts—the cause for not attending school was constructed as a lack of responsibility of the parents and a general sense that schooling was not valuable for these families.[3] Under this perception many of the parents were seen by all actors as actively contributing to the students' disengagement by letting them stay outside the school, not ensuring the proper fulfilment of the homework requirement or covering for them by providing false excuses for missing schoolwork. As mentioned before, a change in the policy now prevents primary students from failing a whole school year as measure to prevent students' permanent exclusion. For most of the teachers and many of the parents this policy took away some of the power the school had to make the families care about attendance and good school results, serving as a reinforcement for a poor involvement:

> I feel that the parents, the only thing they hope for, it that they get through the school year […] they see the school as a day-care centre […]. There are parents that say "what am I going to do during all of the vacations with them?" I feel they don't give school enough importance. I feel we all lost so much when the Secretariat decided to take away the failing of the school year. Since they can't fail, they don't give a damn. I have children that collect over 100 absences in the year. Last year I had a boy with 90 and more absences and he could not be failed. I feel that we tell the parents and then they say "it's not like s/he can fail the year" (Teacher, female, GDL).

In connection with the perception of the lack of responsibility, principals, parents and teachers also agreed that the particular families' dynamics were important to understand school underachievement, a trait absent from the students' narratives about this issue. Some of the situations commonly associa-

[3] I will also discuss these opinions further on the next chapter since they are closely connected with more broad families' participation interactions in the schools.

ted with poor academic performance were understood as responses to changes in the family structure. Couples would split up and take the children to one side or the other which sometimes meant absences from school and general disruption of the school routine. In such cases, students would often be in charge of younger siblings when the parent was at work or when she or he was sick. New reconstituted families were also formed, and this sometimes diffused the responsibility of the children's schooling, a situation that was linked to children being absent, not presenting homework or claiming to have left school materials in another household.

The role of the extended family was also a relevant referent in this case. Given the type of work the parents had, the precariousness in the families' resources, the instability of the couples' lives and the general community culture, most of the students lived in a household that included at least one member of their extended families—grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and godparents. The student's survey collected for this research showed that just over a third of the students in both schools reported living in a father-mother-sibling only household. Adults in extended families acted in many cases as co-responsible for the children, and grandparents or aunts were often the students' main carer either because the parents were at work most of the time, or they no longer lived with them. For the teachers and some of the parents this was a less than ideal situation. There was a general understanding among the schools' adults that these family dynamics were prejudicial for the schooling process of the students and the term "dysfunctional families" (Teacher, male; mother, OB; teacher, female; teacher male; mother GDL) was also constantly used as a reason for the low achievement, even when they represented the majority of the school community. A principal from Ciudad Obregón mentioned in this sense, that some students "are products of those dysfunctional families, so the kid comes to us dysfunctional as well, with integration, motivation and expectation shortcomings" (Principal, female, OB). This notion seems to imply an understanding of the 'appropriate' family in reference only to the traditional nuclear terms with important implications for school *convivencia*, an idea which will also be developed in chapter 9. For the time being, it is important to state that in terms of understanding the problem of underachievement, the actors linked the characteristics of the extended or reconstituted families with not having a sole responsible adult in charge of making sure the students properly developed in school.

Another family dynamic that was connected to situations of underachievement and absenteeism, but was less openly expressed, were the situations of physical violence among the family members, particularly regarding spouse and child abuse. The knowledge about these situations was shared mostly among the schools' parents and students, who would talk about why a particular student had not come to school, why s/he seem distraught or sad. With less frequency the teachers found out more details on the "family problems" (FN, OB) and they tended to refrain from asking more questions about the matter because "it breaks our heart" and it was tough on them as teachers (FN, GDL). Violent interactions of the families were linked in extreme cases with other forms of violence including crime, like in the case of Max, a first-grade student who stopped going to school all together. When I asked the teacher about him, she explained that his father was in jail in another state, and his mother came to live with her family in Guadalajara. When the father got out, the mother decided to leave the city with Max so the father could not find them (FN, GDL).

Also infrequently discussed by the actors were cases of students missing school or failing to do homework because they were working to either make money themselves or in aiding in their parent's occupation, especially when the parents prepared and sold food in the streets. There was a case of a particular fourth-grade student in Ciudad Obregón that worked as a bagger in a fruit shop and often missed school, but she firmly stated that she did it because "her mum was good for nothing and she had to get money for school materials" (FN, OB), she lived with her grandmother and two older brothers and all of them worked to maintain themselves. Although in these cases the teachers stated that the students "had to work," the students expressed it more as their choice and a possibility for having an extra income and with it, supporting their schooling process.

Reasons for underachievement related to school dynamics were almost absent from the teaching staff narratives, they were however present in parents' and students' views. Teachers' absences from school were one of the most highlighted by the parents. In such cases, the schools' principals were supposed to find a substitute, which did not always happen because it was not known in advance or the school lacked funds to pay for it, another element that will be explored in the next chapter regarding parent's ways of participation. Those days a whole class would be sent back, and they would miss the day. Even

when a substitute teacher was present, parents sometimes decided to take the students home, since they felt the new teacher could not effectively cover for the class teacher or they did not trust him/her. As there was no absolute certainty of when the teacher would be back, students often failed to attend school and do any type of schoolwork on the days following the absence. If the situation was reiterative—a teacher missing more than three days for example—it created a feeling of frustration or resignation among the parents who felt it was better not to come to school until they knew for sure. A few of the teachers remarked that some parents did not understand the situation and did not support them in their needs, which related to the view of the irresponsible parent that "did not want to take care of their children" because "they got in their way" (FN, OB), without recognizing the changes that a cancellation of classes might have to work schedules or to students' safety.

Students made more reference to particular peer and teacher-students dynamics as reasons for disengagement, lack of understanding and failure to ask for help. Exclusion situations while at school were often discussed by students and by some teachers. They referred to students being left out of teamwork because of poor academic performance for example, since groups tended to be formed first among students that were able fulfil the academic work and, in many cases, low performing students would be left either together or doing independent activities. They also talked about how other factors such as lice, cleanliness and economic status also affected their peer relations and schoolwork. Due to the nature of this research, I will focus in the next sections on the implicit *convivencia* practices interwoven in the strategies to address underachievement, where family-school, teacher-students and students' peer relationships are performed and have implications both for the possibility of improving the learning and for the different possibilities for school *convivencia*.

3. Institutional strategies to deal with school underachievement

Since academic underachievement was an important issue in both schools—and ensuring proper learning outcomes especially in reading, writing and maths skills was also one of the priorities set by the Public Education Secretariat—there were different formal and informal strategies that were set

by the school actors to support the students lagging. As I have explained, although they were not recognized as *explicit* convivencia practices they nevertheless shaped the relationships among actors particularly in terms of inclusion and participation. In this section of the chapter, I will focus on two institutional strategies to address underachievement and analyse the relational elements interwoven in them. The first one is the detection and report of underachievement cases and the second one is the existence of support spaces for particular students. Both are formal school mechanisms led by principals and teachers. Apart from those two, there is evidence on families implementing their own support mechanisms at home which include aiding students with their homework—or getting a neighbour or family member to help—, talking as a family about school situations, contacting the teachers for well-being situations, monitoring the students' friendships outside the school to prevent disengagement, etc.

3.1 Detection and report of cases of underachieving students

Students lagging were usually identified by the teachers.[4] They used general class observation and monitoring of the students grades and homework as their main tools. During 2015 they also used the PLANEA exam and other diagnostic instruments. In many of the detected cases the students' problematic issues were not only related to academic performance but to problems of class behaviour and peer interaction. For teachers, it was easier to 'spot' the underachieving students that also were involved in *convivencia* conflicts; calmer or withdrawn students were less visible and staff recognized that sometimes "they flew under the radar" (FN, OB). Teachers agreed that their first action once a case was detected was to notify the student's parents and let them know of the particular situation. In such cases, there was an expectation of parents' support of the teachers' views and recommendation. Teachers perceived there were two issues at the very beginning of the support process. The first one was that in many cases the parents did not attend the school when they were called for individual or whole group meetings and therefore a communication channel was not established. The second was that when a meeting

[4] Only in very few cases parents detected first academic issues with their children and addressed the teacher and principal on this regard. In these cases, the fact that the principal or the teacher was perceived as nice, amicable or open was the most highlighted element that motivated them to seek them out.

did happen, teachers often felt the parents were reluctant to accept the student's situation, and if they did, they did not necessarily show support in the way teachers expected them to, which generated conflict and mistrust among the parties. Discussing the relationships with parents, teacher Cecilia stated that the parent-teacher relationship "would be better if they would only accept me (as a teacher) giving them the way in which they can support me" (Teacher, female, GDL). In most cases, the notion of parent support regarding underachievement was constructed as directed *by* the teacher and given *to* the teacher, and not directly to the student.

The parents that participated in the interviews manifested accepting the teachers' diagnosis of underachievement, but they were not completely sure what it meant in terms of the students' possibilities of learning and were even less sure in how to specifically support the students. They were usually given general recommendations such as "check the homework," "read at home," "penalize if they do not do schoolwork," which they said they tried to follow. Some students were also channelled with specialists (psychologist or pedagogues) but in many cases this service had an economic cost if not for the sessions, for the transport there, which was grievous for the families' economic situation. Regarding the parent-teachers relationship most of the parents, especially the ones with low school levels, felt embarrassed to ask teachers for further explanation and in the cases where they did not accept their diagnostic, they usually did not directly challenge the teacher's views and instead continued to relate with their children regarding school in the usual way.

Apart from the actions regarding notifying parents and asking for their support, teachers made curricular and pedagogical adaptations to respond to the students' needs which included pairing students with other higher achieving students, developing special exercises, focusing only on maths and language skills, etc. These adaptations are their official responsibility and are expected as part of their planning and class implementation. In parallel some of the teachers asked the student about their family situations to get a better idea of what was happening. Some of the reasons regarding the context and family situations presented in the previous part were explored through these conversations. The fact that the teacher knew the student situation better had major implications. First, it sensitized the teacher to the student's needs, it changed perceptions that students were lazy and most of the teachers did not blame the students for lagging behind. It also generated a closeness between

the student and teacher, since both actors highlighted the importance of listening to the student's situation and the developing trust. However, highlighting family and contextual problematics also meant that many teachers placed the causes for underachieving outside of the school and outside of students' control. In many cases this analysis translated into teachers modifying or lowering the student's required work or assistance to school because "it was not their fault," the teachers felt they could not "over demand" and they ended up "giving in" because they "did not want to add to the trouble" (Teacher, female, GDL; FN, OB). In his interview, Teacher Andrés narrated his point of view on the matter:

> I like to know what the kid's situation is, because at times we demand too much of that kid […] and s/he cannot give more, one has to know what type of problems they have, because that puts them in disadvantage in relation to the ones without problems […] Last year I had a student that didn't fulfil the work, he didn't bring homework, didn't do class work, I was seeing he was doing poorly, and I […] was very demanding, as I am with all the students. Until I heard through the grapevine that his dad was an alcoholic, his mum wasn't at home, he was left outside his home when school was out, or it was mealtime. He had to chase his mum or dad to be able to get into his house… Can you imagine, who would feed that kid? […] so, I started lowering down the demands, because he couldn't have done what I was asking of him. He was an abandoned child. A lady was the one that told me about this student's situation, and I started, well, understanding the boy. If I hadn't known, I'd have continued. And school would've been hell, just as home was hell, can you imagine? (Teacher, male, OB).

Although lowering the academic demands as a strategy reflects concern of the teachers for the student and care for their situation, it also shows how low the expectations of parent involvement are, and the teacher's resignation in the face of the family and contextual situations. The adaptations made by the teachers in such cases might also have as an unintended implication a limitation of the agency of these students, who are generally not positioned by adults as able to decide by themselves and transcend their harsh family and neighbourhood context. The adaptations carried a risk therefore of fostering even more these students' academic underachievement since it could limit the participation of the student in school activities.

In terms of relationships, the strategy of lowering the school demands also separates the actors and limits the collaboration between them, since it does not foster further connection with the students' families. Different implications were seen, however, when some teachers changed the patterns here explained and dealt with underachievement in a way that fostered cooperation and stronger relationships. I will present here Karina's case as an example of dealing with underachievement that brings out other arrangements around care, trust and responsibility. Karina was a sixth-grade girl in the Guadalajara school from a low-income family. She lived with her mum, her aunt, her younger sister who was also in the school, and her cousin that was in preschool. There had been some incidents of physical violence from Karina's dad, who no longer lived with them. Karina had low grades and had difficulties especially in maths, but was not one of the worst cases in her group and therefore she did not receive the special support service of USAER that I will be discussing further on. She was usually quiet in the classroom and consistently failed to turn in her work, which meant that instead of going with the teacher to the front of the room to have her check her work—which was the most common way for class and homework assessment—she would remain seated. A deeper exploration on the situation showed that Karina had made a choice about not getting her work checked due to fear of students making fun of her mistakes and that Karina was not the only one carrying out this action. While discussing the relationships with their peers, she and two other girls from her class they provided an explanation for their reluctance to hand in their work:

> Student 1: I feel embarrassed to be in front of everyone.
> Student 3: Because they go and say "hey, you don't know anything" […]
> Student 1: Or when the teacher asks […]
> Student 2: They say you don't know anything because you aren't paying attention.
> Student 3: And there are times when you haven't even talked […]
> Researcher: And how do you feel about it?
> Student 1: Bad, I feel bad sometimes.
> Student 3: Bad, embarrassed, I think "is it true or not?," but I think it isn't true. I (still) wonder and remain all nervous.
> Student 1: Sometimes there are things you understand and you want to go to the front, but there are also times when the teacher says all the sudden "come to the front" and you don't know anything […] and you are all embarrassed, because you are only going

> to the front so you don't lose grades, but you aren't going to be able to explain anything.
> Student 3: And all the kids will laugh at you, all of them, there is always someone.
> Student 2: There are times that I feel they will mock me, they will make fun of me during break; I rather don't get up (sixth-grade students, females, GDL).

Peer mockery was a common type of relation in her group and most of the children interacted in such way among each other. Karina said they had started to relate in this way since fourth grade, but by fifth grade she was too "nervous" about being teased that she decided she was not going to stand on the front anymore. Her sixth-grade teacher Beatriz noticed that she was actually working, but did not turn in her work even if she asked for it directly. After a group meeting, teacher Beatriz called Karina in and asked her mum to stay for a bit. Differently from other teachers' approaches, which tended to report the low achievement of the student only to the parents, Beatriz told Karina's mum in the student's presence "I want to ask you to talk a lot with her, support her and cuddle her," she then explained what in her view was happening and told the mum that she felt it was an issue with feeling secure and that perhaps "her self-esteem was a bit low." Karina started crying and her mum and teacher immediately embraced her. Her mum said she always tried to support her, but that she did not know a lot, but that she would start asking her uncles to help her. Beatriz told them she would also take care of her and that they could both talk to her whenever they needed. Karina and her mum left embracing (FN, GDL).

In the analysis and presentation of the situation teacher Beatriz: *a)* identified school elements as well as family and contextual situations that were influencing Karina's performance and *b)* addressed her mother in term of Karina's security and self-esteem needs using the underachieving elements as indicators of these issues. The interaction also fostered later cooperation among Karina, her mum and the teacher since blame and responsibility were not highlighted and instead aspects that could be directly addressed by the actors (such as cuddling, talking to each other) were addressed. This conversation also allowed them to move forward in dealing with the underachievement situation: Beatriz started asking all the students to come at a different time to be checked, in an effort to protect them against further mockery and the girls in later conversations explained how important it was to be able to feel safe in asking the teacher their doubts. It is important to acknowledge

that even when in this situation the pattern of interaction with the parent and the expectation of the student improvement was different, what did not change was the lack of recognition of Karina's agency on the matter. Both teacher and mother focused on changing the condition for Karina's learning, but Karina herself was not involved in the process of discussing the situation or coming up with alternatives. Teacher Beatriz also addressed this as individual underachievement cases and not in relation to a common class dynamic. Both aspects are congruent with the view on student's participation presented in the previous chapters, but also on the focus on individual students' behaviours in terms of *convivencia* conflicts, and needs in this case, instead of the general common relationships.

The interactions between Karina, her peers, her mother and her teacher show how relational elements are involved in academic processes, but also that the way issues are dealt with have implication for how the relationships are carried out in the schools. Parents often recognized their children and their own lack of confidence as learners and conversations such as the one referred above fostered dialogue on these issues. It also fostered trust in the teacher, since parents felt they actually care for their students and often highlighted the need for teachers to focus on the whole student well-being and education not only in the teaching of contents:

> Teacher Marcela is very committed, very responsible, anything she feels that for example, is wrong with the kids or something, she lets us know individually, she never makes the kids feel bad or ridicules them, she pays a lot of attention to them (Mother, OB)

Teachers that promoted interactions of this nature with parents tended to refer to the families in more complex ways, specifying the different type of involvement they had with the school and with their children and using less frequently the narrative of 'most parents are irresponsible' to characterize his or her class. They were also more verbal during meetings and everyday interactions about the importance of parents' involvement in all school activities and on developing communication with them. However, in all cases, these teachers promoted such relationships only regarding their class, and they did not critique their colleagues' practices or openly promote a change in the whole school's relationships with parents. Teacher Marcela reflected on the matter:

> Last year I realized that […] I assumed something that wasn't true: that all teachers fought to get the parents interested, to have them come to school, maybe not physically, but at least through a message or a note, but to foster that they kept an eye on their kids. But I realized that wasn't true, that there are teachers that say "no, leave him/her be, your child must be able to, s/he should take care of it, s/he should know about homework, you shouldn't have to, they are the kid's homework," so I said "I thought we all wanted the same thing, to involve the parents, to have them taking care of the students, but we don't all think the same way." It was a surprise for me! Now I think we should unify our approach, but it's hard, very hard and it gets harder with a larger staff number (Teacher, female, OB).

As in the case of the lack of exchange among teachers of positive interventions regarding improving *convivencia* (see chapter 6), the shared notion of professional autonomy is key to understand the type of participation the families could have in the schools. Each teacher, as autonomous in the leading of his or her class, was responsible for developing their own way of approaching and relating to the parents and families. Such interactions were therefore not 'discussable' by the other teachers, and only if the basic requirements of organizing five parent meetings a year was not met or if there were many parent's complaints they would be discussed with the principal.

Overall, as has been shown in this section, the way underachievement cases are detected and reported to the parents included not only the recognition of the student's academic needs, but in fact put in practice a set of relational elements. The way relationships were performed in these practices—influenced in many cases by family and contextual expectations—facilitated or hindered the possibility of dealing with such underachievement. They also contributed to shaping the type of relationships among the school actors overall. I will now turn to explain a second set of tacit *convivencia* practices regarding institutional spaces of support for underachieving students, highlighting its relational perspective as well.

3.2 Setting up and development of institutional spaces of support for underachieving students

A second type of institutional actions was the establishment of institutional spaces of support for underachieving students. I will discuss in this section two

spaces, one regarding independent support of the class teacher to low performing students and the other regarding USAER, the support unit in the Guadalajara school. Regarding the first space, in both of the analysed schools the teaching staff were conscious of the need for further support of the students with the lower levels of academic achievement, which could not be given in a regular class, since they were also solely in charge of the rest of the 25-30 students and had no other types of in-class support, such as teaching assistants. A project of setting up independent moments for supporting these children emerged in both schools: in one, teachers would ask these students to come a bit earlier or stay a bit later than the other students, or in some classes holidays started earlier for the regular students; in the other, school finished an hour earlier once a week for the general student population and teachers would work independently with the students that were lagging behind. Some of the students that were involved in such spaces recognized that it was helpful to have the teachers' full attention and ask questions, but others stated that they did not like them because it was extra work, and it was unfair that they were the only ones that had to do it. The fact that the students also knew who was labelled as having academic difficulties also placed them in a vulnerable position regarding mockery interactions with their peers.

These spaces ran for the first part of the 2014-2015 school year, but by January they were cancelled. During the technical council meeting in Guadalajara teachers debated if they should keep the spaces opened, but decided that it was counterproductive because these students rather missed the whole day of school instead of staying for a bit more, or their parents or carers would sneak them out with the rest of the students so they would not have to stay. The teachers also spoke of angry mothers who "dragged them out" of the independent workspace (FN, GDL). In the Ciudad Obregon school, the spaces were cancelled around the same time. The main reason to stop the initiative was the lack of support and in some cases explicit rejection of the families who felt the action was discriminating again some of the students by separating "the *donkeys* from the ones that know" (Principal, female, OB). Two of the mothers in Ciudad Obregon explained to me the situation during one of the interviews:

> Mother 2: Teacher Lidia […] used to stay, school is out at 12:20, she'd stayed until 1 with the lagging behind kids and the parent's didn't let them stay […] later on the

> teacher didn't want to do it anymore because the parents got angry; (in another class) the kids that were more progressed, they got vacations sooner, so the teacher could stay "especially with these that I can't… […] let's see if something can be done" […]
> Mother 1: The parents got angry, asked "why," that it was "the discrimination," and the teachers told them "no, it isn't discrimination, I want to give them special time," but they didn't understand, or they didn't want to see it that way, they thought it was wrong (Mothers, OB).

For the teachers, the lack of support and confrontation reinforced the idea that the parents did not value school and their work, because they did not understand that the extra attention came from the concern and desire to aid the students, since these spaces were not part of the teachers' responsibilities, and they were not getting paid. Some of the parents who were more involved with the school and closer with the teachers complained constantly that the other "irresponsible" parents did not take into consideration the "teachers' sacrifice" and that they were not supported (Mothers, OB).

Analysing this practice with a focus on the relational element is important to highlight first that these spaces were a decision taken by the teachers unilaterally. It was not consulted with the families and there was no explicit consideration, at least in the narratives collected afterwards, of the families' routines or time allowances—such as having two children in the school and only one attending the support spaces or neighbours taking the students home—or of the way they were understanding their children's academic issues. Some parents and students viewed it as an imposition that went beyond the school activities, and thought it emerged from the incapacity of the teacher of dealing with these students during regular class.

The spaces generated mistrust and resentment in some cases since the families of the underachieving students, who were often some of the most vulnerable in terms of economic and social capital, were signalled out. Parents repeatedly responded aggressively to any insinuation that they were not doing things right and felt the need to protect their family against critiques. This rejection and need to defend themselves could be understood going back to the perceived reasons for underachievement. As has been presented, for most of the actors the main reason for students lagging behind is the lack of proper involvement from the parents, and therefore these remedial spaces symbolically acted as a strainer that separated the "responsible" families and students,

from the one that were not. The parents with underachieving students often felt therefore they needed to reject this category, oppose the teacher's judgement on their children and block the support spaces. This type of relationships between families and the schools will be also taken into consideration chapter 9.

I will now address a second space of attention of underachieving students that was particular to the school in Guadalajara. As I outlined in chapter 3, this school had a USAER (Regular Education Support Services Unit) working to support particular students and school processes. This service was originally developed as a way to integrate students with disabilities into the mainstream schools but in the recent years the scope of the service has expanded to support students with learning barriers, which include severe cases of underachievement or in need of psychological diagnosis. The unit is formed by a pedagogue who is permanent in this school, and a psychologist and a speech therapist who come twice a week. It supports around 25 students during the school week, and it has been in the school for over six years. In general, this space is positively assessed by all the actors, who highlight the helpful outcomes of the service. The pedagogue who has been in the school for all six years is well liked and her opinions are taken to be expert opinions on students learning process and behaviour. More than analysing the work that this team accomplished I want to highlight here some of the implications of this space for the schools' relationships and some of the particularities of the school ethos that the analysis shows are influenced by this space.

In contrast with the teacher support space that was cancelled, the USAER service is well accepted, although the teachers and pedagogue recognized that it has taken a while for it to be seen as part of the regular school activities. The pedagogue stated that at the beginning, some of the teachers viewed it as a critique on their work and felt she was going to impose a way of working that threatened their autonomy. This service however is grounded in the acceptance of the parties receiving the service. The class teachers have to first accept the aid of the unit, and then when the students are diagnosed and offered the extra support their parents must agree on it. This is a major difference compared to the previous case, which was viewed more as a requirement for the underachievement students' families. It is important to recognize as well that this is a unit that has institutional instruments to diagnose the students presenting a "learning barrier" and as such, it is more likely that the pedagogue will explain to the parents and teachers the particular students' issues, as well as the

type of work that will be carried out. This conversation acts as a sensitizing experience for the actors involved which serves to lower the reluctance of families and of class teachers. The students supported by USAER liked the space and bitterly complained if a session was missed. Some of the mothers whose children receive USAER support highlight this experience in terms of understanding their children's needs and of their own development. They also speak of the trust it generates towards the school and the pedagogue, as one the mothers shared:

> The assignments from teacher Fatima (from USAER) aren't that hard […] She (daughter) is learning and I'm learning as well, because I used to […] mix capital and lowercase letters (the other mothers in the interview say, "me too"), I didn't took the time […] For me, writing the name was enough, I'd say, there is the name, and I don't do that anymore because teacher Fatima has told me "look, when it's a proper name or last name, well, you put a capital and then continue with a lowercase" (Mother, GDL).

The fact that the students with a disability or severe academic needs receive institutional support has wider implications for the whole school community. A common discourse among the teachers in this school was that there was a responsibility to provide an educational service for *all* the students, no matter what their characteristics, which in practice meant avoiding the temporary or permanent exclusion of students that had learning difficulties and/or misbehaved. These teachers explicitly talked of why the students with problematic situations had the right to be in this school, which was a different discourse from the one is found in the school in Ciudad Obregón, which highlighted the need of the other regular students not to have their education compromised by these problematic children. One can draw from the analysis that this discourse was at least partially influenced by the USAER service since it aided in lowering the uncertainty on how to deal with such cases. It provided a sense that learning difficulties could be spoken of without hindering their authority and professionalism as teachers. The reinterpretation that USAER provided was also interlinked with the principal's view and conflict managing practice which mostly aimed to reintegrate the students into their everyday activities through the dialogue process already presented.

This view was also carried out in the interactions inside the classrooms where teachers often made explicit recognition of the academic improvement

the students in USAER made—having the class cheer when a student was able to read without stopping and explaining why this was important for that particular student, for example—and asked other students to aid them with certain activities. The right of the students to be in the school was also used to address conflicts with parents that complained about differential treatment or about students that were problematic, as in the case of Guillermo in the previous chapter. The following fragment addresses the practice of teacher Mauricio regarding the inclusion of a student in the autistic spectrum and the sensitizing process he carried out with another parent of his class, as well as some of the struggles it entailed.

> A boy, he was more severely marked by his little problem, another dad came, and we were talking, and he told me "you didn't give my daughter that material." (I replied) "because your daughter doesn't need it, she has already developed that skill," (but he said) "and what about them? What about that boy? Are they the donkeys?," (I told him) "No, I don't have any animals, here are the ones that can, and the ones that can't, your daughter can, congratulations, but since they can't, I need to give them extra material," with that the dad lowered his tone, but he really came here fighting for the material that I give to the kids. On the one hand we need to make them aware, but I did get angry that he'd use that word, because he also said about that boy that we was "like retarded" and I was about to tell him much more, but "calm, calm" I said to myself "there are moments for that" (Teacher, male, GDL).

The inclusive ethos characteristics found do not mean they were not problematic issues in the school involving the students lagging behind or with disabilities. For example, a girl with intellectual and visual disabilities was falsely accused of stealing from a younger student, which led to a discussion among the students' mothers outside the school—as presented in the previous chapter's intimidation practices. Neither that the tendency to attribute low academic results to the students' precarious situations was not maintained. It did mean, however, there was a particular shared discourse among all the teachers and many of the students about the importance of avoiding discrimination due to academic performance which was not found in the Ciudad Obregón school and in other Mexican schools previously visited. These characteristics also provided a background of trust about the possibilities and responsibilities of the school regarding the attention of all the students and allowed the tea-

chers to generate some common actions to deal with underachievement that included collaboration activities among school levels and sharing of strategies among teachers.

4. Implications of the practices to deal with students' academic underachievement for school *convivencia*

The present chapter has addressed the attributed reasons and practices in response to student's underachievement in the two schools involved in this research. Underachievement was one of the biggest concerns for principals, teachers and student's families (see also Fierro Evans et al., 2010; Fierro and Carbajal, 2003). In many ways it is one of the issues that better shows the limits of the schools as institutions to fulfil one of their central social functions: the achievement of particular learning outcomes in all the students' population. Responding to it requires not only the identification of a diversity of learning rhythms and needs, but also specific interventions and adaptations. In here, I have presented two sets of practices present in the schools as ways of addressing it—the detection and report of underachieving students, and the setting and development of the institutional spaces for supporting them—and highlighted how the perceived characteristics and assumptions of the students' families and their contexts, as well as the way the family-schools relationships are managed have implications for the carrying out of these practices. Some of the implications for school *convivencia* of these practices will be developed in this last section of the chapter.

I will start first by pointing out the importance of including what I have called tacit practices in the analysis of school *convivencia*. These are basically understood as institutional practices—that although not explicitly recognized as work on *convivencia* by the school actors—do shape the relationships that take place among them and have general implications for the patterns of school *convivencia* (Hirmas and Eroles, 2008). The analysis of the practices responding to underachievement issues, along with other strategies that deal with academic and well-being needs of the students, shows firstly how the quality of the interpersonal relationships can foster or hinder the learning outcomes of the students (Casassus, 2005; Esperanza, 2001; OECD, 2013; UNESCO, 2008) by promoting settings that are able, or not, to support the

specific students' needs. In the practices relating to underachievement for example, peer mockery among students, general students and families' disaffection, along with many teachers' lack of trust on the families hindered the possibility of dealing with underachievement.[5] In contrast, more successful interventions included the development of empathy, trust and collaboration through more stable processes.

Secondly, these tacit practices also reveal how schooling and learning experiences shape general school relationships developing socio-emotional elements of trust, care, responsibility, communication, respect and sense of belonging (Perales Franco et al., 2014), and therefore how the shaping of *convivencia* at these schools actually goes beyond the prevention and management of the so called *convivencia* conflicts. Tacit *convivencia* practices can be considered in this sense a sort of unrecognized *convivencia* curriculum—in a similar way as Bickmore (2004) uses the notion of implicit citizenship curriculum—since they present permitted and sometimes naturalized ways of dealing with diversity, particular needs and conflict. Even when they are not recognized as such, they represent powerful learning opportunities of the possible ways of relating to each other for the students, teachers and families. The inclusion of tacit practices in the analysis of *convivencia* helps as well to make more nuanced the understanding of the relationships—as plural and multifaceted (Abramovay, 2012)—since there is not a clear-cut agreement among the actors in terms of what corresponds to a positive or negative strategy. In this chapter for instance, all the practices were aimed at helping underachieving students—which is viewed as positive for all actors—but their development and outcomes varied significantly depending on their relational quality and there were strong disagreements among the actors on what was a desired and appropriate support for the students.

Secondly, the analysis through a community level perspective of the particular underachievement practices allows one to explore the participation processes of all of the school actors, and in them, what Lareau and McNamara Horvat (1999) call the "moments of inclusion and exclusion".[6] It is pertinent

[5] Evidence relating learning and bullying, aggressive teasing or school violence can be found in Abramovay, (2005a) and Debarbieux and Blaya (2011), and disaffection in Osler & Starkey (2005).

[6] For these authors, the interplay of factors such as interactions, forms of capital, institutional responses and context "can produce moments of reproduction or moments of contestation, challenge, and social change" (1999, p. 42). Although the analysis of *convivencia* that I have been developing does not exactly follow the focus on the relationships between capital, habitus and field—as Lareau and Horvat do using

therefore to emphasise some of the characteristics of the family-school relationships in the explored practices with the focus on their implications regarding participation, inclusion and exclusion. Orientations in the educational policy and in the Mexican school culture in general recognizes the role of parents in terms of the schooling process of their child, since their participation is deemed necessary for an appropriate academic development. It is in this sense that the teachers and principals in these schools spoke of the "help triangle" (Principal, female, OB) between the teachers, the students and the parents to achieve the intended learning outcomes. When there is underachievement, however, there is an imbalance in this "triangle," which creates tensions, and the attributed reasons for this tension—and the development of the practices to deal with it— reveal some elements of how family-school relationships are shaped and understood. Two important aspects to consider are the perceptions and expectations of the families and the assumed role of parents in these schools (Baquedano-López et al., 2013).

I have explained how characteristics and configurations of the students' families are considered the most important factors in the detected cases of underachieving students. Parent's low literacy levels, their harsh working conditions and especially their non-nuclear (father-mother-children) family configurations, like reconstituted or extended families for example, along with a perceived lack of responsibility and low social value towards school were the main arguments used to explain underachievement in the two analysed schools. The analysis shows however that these strong negative perceptions placed the causes of underachievement outside the school—as was in the case of undisciplined, aggressive or violent behaviour—obscuring school processes that might also play an important role in preventing a successful improvement of underachievement, if not even fostering it (Hirmas and Eroles, 2008). The understandings about the children's families helped, for example, to create low expectations regarding the general possibility of all the students to successfully reach the intended learning outcomes and the possibilities of parents appropriately supporting the students that were lagging behind. Such low expectations were not recognized in any case as possible factors to contribute to underachievement (Blanco, 2006), when in fact they might be related to a

the work of Bordieu and his associates (1977a, 1977b, 1983; Waqcant 1992, 1993 in Lareau and Horvat 1999)—, the lens these authors propose in this study regarding parent's involvement has been helpful to open up the practices of this and the next chapter.

decrease in the quality of teaching because students are not expected to manage well (e.g. Reese et al., 2012). Elements of school dynamics that fostered school absences and more general disaffection such as teachers' absences or physical and verbal abuse were identified by students and their families, but were not found to play an important role in how teachers and principals understood underachievement and implemented practices to address it. Placing the blame for underachievement in the families' attitudes, characteristics and configurations also prevented the consideration of more structural understandings that relate low achievement to marginalization, poverty and inequity (Juárez Bolaños and Rodríguez Solera, 2016).

Relationally, the emphasis on the characteristics-as-deficits of the families to understand and address underachievement therefore fostered a gap from the start between families and schools that in fact obstructed the possibility of punctually addressing underachievement in many cases (Martín-Moreno, 2006 in Hirmas and Carranza, 2009, p. 118) but more widely hindered the possibility of tighter relationships between teachers and families, since academic support is one of the two most important areas where parents are expected to participate. The other area is the maintenance and improvement of the school buildings and infrastructure and will be explored in the next chapter. More generally, these reasons—and the practices they help to shape—reflect a tension between the "expected" role of the majority of parents as "problems" and the "desired" role of parents as "supporters" (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Vincent, 2000), that only particular families, distinguished among other things by social class related elements (Lareau, 1987; Ryan et al., 2010) seem to fulfil as will be explored as well in the next chapter.

Thirdly, it is important to consider first how socio-emotional elements shape the practices explored. In them, teachers due to affective reasons decided if they want to explore more or less the family situations of the underachieving students; verbalized concerns for a student allowed to foster trust between the students family, teachers but also other families that were aware of the situation; and the families' perception of 'the teacher cares' developed through these practices seemed to be related to the general participation of the parents in meetings and other school activities.[7] How the actors managed these socio-emotional elements in their relationships had implications both for

[7] A discussion on how teachers show care can also be found in Bickmore, Awad & Radjenovic 2017. It relates as well to attending material and general well-being of the students.

dealing with underachievement and for the construction of the school's identity and *ethos* and the general *convivencia* situation (Fierro Evans et al., 2010). Some of the descriptions of the practices, for example, show that particular developments fostered a separation of the actors and even the cancellation of the practices—as was in the case of the student of Teacher Andres' class and the teacher's support spaces—while others promoted cooperation between families and the school—as in the cases of Karina and USAER in Guadalajara. These later ones opened the possibility of other types of configurations in the relationships between families and teachers, since they address less the "blame" on the situation and more the co-responsibility in supporting the student. The most successful interventions also set the basis for the development of wider processes of trust, empathy and dialogue (Fierro Evans et al., 2010) and there was a connection between the teachers that carry them out and the cases of conflict management that promoted more dialogic and reflective ways of addressing *convivencia* conflict.

Practices responding to underachieving reflect as well the way the diversity is addressed in school and the steps taken, or not, towards inclusion. They derive from the recognition of different needs and the identification of cases that require a different way of approaching the learning process. If inclusion can be understood a as a "systematic response to diversity" (Lianeri, 2013, p. 44), such recognition was a first step towards the inclusion aim. Particular attention to specific needs can also be thought of in terms of peacebuilding, since it addresses in some sense the inequities (Bickmore, 2004) present in school that might hinder students' academic development, as is the case of the USAER support space in the Guadalajara school which had encouraged empathy and solidarity, and had contributed to change the school *ethos* in terms of specific learning needs. This manner of carrying out underachievement practices can widen the approach of *convivencia* towards a more comprehensive stance (Carbajal Padilla, 2013), since it addresses ways of educating that orient more towards the recognition of difference and the right of education and in some cases—like in the views of the Guadalajara school's principal and some of its teachers—inclusion represents an explicit goal to be developed through schooling.

Opting towards an inclusive way of living together and learning to live together in schools represents an opportunity for a radical transformation of school relationships (Abramovay, 2012). It requires not just integrating

students with different characteristics into school, but changes in terms of "contents, practices, policies and cultures" (Lianeri, 2013, p. 44) that not only address a celebratory, accepting or self-sacrificing perspective of difference but the elimination of all types of discrimination and exclusion (Fierro Evans, 2013; Hirmas and Carranza, 2009) which includes a recognition of the power imbalances and hierarchies (Nieto and Bickmore, 2016) in schools, its community and general context. In this sense, the patterns of *convivencia* found in the practices explored in the chapter have important limitations that would need to be addressed. The first of them is making an explicit difference between blame and responsibility. Even if it is true that many of the students that present underachievement are in a vulnerable position generated, in part, by their family and contextual circumstances—which also include the schools' resources and dynamics—understanding responsibility for the situation in terms as an "attitude to take charge" (Onetto, 2005, p. 88) can better foster collective action and cooperation. In contrast, blame—as many of the narratives seem to construct—fosters separation among the school and one-sidedness in the understanding of the situation. A more inclusive *convivencia* based on taking charge and not blaming would promote what Fierro Evans (2008) calls *respons-ability practices*, which are understood as "complex forms of human activity, situated in specific historical, cultural, social and institutional context, which require a participation in consensus" to "meet shared needs and whose constant repetition turns them into privileged spaces of collective *convivencia* learning" based on "the care of oneself, the others and the world around us" (p. 267 TFS).

A second element refers to the actors' possibilities of participation. As happened in the practices to prevent and manage *convivencia* conflict, the lead and authority in the practices responding to students' underachievement was located in the teaching staff. They identified the cases, suggested or promoted paths to address the issues and required support to their work by parents or other external actors to improve the student's academic achievement. The other important acknowledged actor were the parents, whose involvement I have discussed. Students however, although recognized in the "help triangle," had a much more passive role and their learning in the cases of underachievement was positioned more as a result of the interaction between parents and teachers, and less as an area of students' action. By analysing the students' interactions and their narratives it is clear that they do perform in managing

their needs—as is the case of the students that work—and more robust and complex development of *convivencia* practices should consider their importance as active participants in the school relationships. The other missing actor in responding to students' needs are the members of the students' families other than the parents. Aunts, cousins, grandparents and older siblings are recognized by all the actors involved in this research as central carers of many of the children, and the negative implications of their participation in the students' life was discussed at length regarding the reasons for underachievement—as was in the case of *convivencia* conflicts. Their actual involvement in school actions to address the students' needs however—like the support grandparents or more schooled aunts and uncles give regarding homework—was hardly recognized or promoted by the teaching staff and only in some cases by the parents. An inclusive orientation for responding to students' needs would need to include the students' family, recognizing and including their different configurations, and not only identifying its deficit (Hevia, 2006) in relation to traditional views of family. Responding to students' needs requires the creation of social networks that are able to articulate aims and strategies with other social actors (Gallardo Vázquez, 2009; Hirmas and Eroles, 2008), including the extended families. Their inclusion in strategies that integrate the whole school and its community might also have further positive implications for the general strengthening of the community social fabric (Fierro Evans, 2013) and address some of the factors that might hinder the peaceful, inclusive and democratic *convivencia*.

The different practices explored in chapters 6, 7 and 8 have presented, among other things, the need to integrate family participation in relation to school *convivencia* in a more complex way, since the relationships between schools and families have important implications for understanding and responding to issues relating to *convivencia* conflicts and student's needs. In the following chapter, these relationships will be explored with more detail. I will present first three practices to deal with school maintenance and improvement needs where families have an essential role. They are considered also as tacit *convivencia* practices. Following this, I will address four modes of *convivencia* between schools and families that separate and characterize the different possibilities of relationships and link together some of the issues presented in this and the previous chapters.

IX. Tacit Practices of School *Convivencia*: Dealing with School's Needs

Apart from the practices to respond to students' needs, as well as to prevent and manage *convivencia* conflicts explored in the previous chapters, a key area where community and school interact is in dealing with school's needs. It is also where parents take a front role since it is their most important space of involvement. Public schools in Mexico require families' participation in generating and administering resources for everyday activities—from notebooks to cleaning products—as well as material and labour inputs towards the maintenance and improvement of school infrastructure—cleaning the spaces, fixing broken school furniture, roofing the patio to protect students from the sun, etc. These resources are generally not provided by school authorities or local governments, which basically only provide teachers and principals' wages, the school building, and textbooks. Although these are processes that connect with the general trend of school-based management and autonomy fostered by the 2012-2018 reform (see chapter 5), the parent's involvement in maintenance and improvement is a long-standing tradition in the Mexican schools, since the 1992 Agreement that fostered school's decentralization (Gertler et al., 2012). Obtaining and managing resources in the two analysed schools generated a particular set of relationships, possibilities and strains between families and teaching staff that went beyond purely academic practices, as the principal in Ciudad Obregón stated:

> It is of course exhausting […] in other institutions the worker doesn't take care of any of that. The worker comes, if his/her computer works s/he works […] and if not, he lets maintenance know or some financial department gets what s/he needs. But it isn't like that in here, we have to find the resources, buy it so it can be used, and then apply it in

> educational terms. It is very hard […] because not all the resources are there, stationary, cleaning supplies, they aren't here […] the school needs to apply for them, and the school is the principal along with teachers and parents (Principal, female, OB).

This ninth chapter aims to analyse the practices developed to address the schools' needs and their implications for school *convivencia*. There was a real demand and expectation for families' contribution to sustain the school's activities, buildings and grounds and different actions were put into place by the principals, teachers and families themselves which had significant implications for the way relationships were performed. These actions can be grouped in three main practices that will be briefly described first in this chapter:

1. Economically contributing to the school.
2. Assistance in labour tasks to maintain or improve the school.
3. Participating in parents' committees.

These are understood as a second set of tacit practices of *convivencia*. An analysis of these practices gives out a more rounded view of the way *convivencia* takes place in the schools, since they are key to understand the families' involvement and strongly intertwine with practices explored in the previous chapters. Through the examination of these three practices four modes of *convivencia* between the school and families are presented in the second part of the chapter: alliance, confrontation, detachment and collaboration. It is important to state at this point that although there is a general culture and particular policy orientations about the role of the parents in primary schools, the practices of family participation that will be addressed show that they seemed to depend more on the relationship among the specific people. Parents, for example, did not talk of supporting the school in general, instead they spoke of their reasons for aiding (or not) the principals or teachers. In this sense, one can argue that families' participation was not completely institutionalized and in fact a minority of the parents permanently contributed to school. The actual practices were more closely related to the type of relationships families and teachers had, which makes their analysis from the lens of *convivencia* particularly relevant. I now move on to describe the three key practices to deal with school's needs to later address the four modes of *convivencia*.

1. Practices to address the school's needs

1.1 Economically contributing to the school

One of the main ways parents participate is through is their economic contribution to school. There were two main models of participation. In Guadalajara, economic contributions were given at the beginning of the year. In Ciudad Obregón, local authorities were supposed to economically provide to schools—through a programme called PAE (*Programa de Apoyo Escolar*, School Support Programme)—but in the two school years of this research funds were not delivered and parents had to contribute, mainly for the payment of a night-time security guard (due to robberies and vandalism) and for the resources for two fund raising festivals. Families in the schools were also in charge of buying students' school material apart from textbooks. In this case, both schools' principals stated they would reduce the list of items the federal educational authorities asked of parents to obtain resources like soap and toilet paper that the school could not provide. In Guadalajara, the money was collected and administered by the parent's committee and in Ciudad Obregón by the teachers and principal. The role of the committee and its differences between the two analysed schools will be explored in practice 3 further on. As stated, teachers also voluntarily contributed for class and school materials, as well as to some food for festivals and celebrations, especially if they felt a particular student would be left out.

When discussing the relationships among families and school, issues around economic contributions and school resources were highly signalled. In both schools it was a struggle to encourage the parents to participate economically. Although recognizing that families had monetary restrictions, there was a general view that parents' choice of not contributing to school was independent of their capacity to do so, as one of the mothers of the parent's committee stressed:

> It's because they don't want to contribute […] those parents who are in the list don't pay because they don't want to […] In that family the man works, the lady works and a young woman […] there are three people that work in that family […] but they are parents that say "the government says we should not pay" (Mother, GDL)

The narrative included in this quote of "the government says we should not pay" was a source of constant tension in schools. Economic contributions are by law voluntary and no pressure or negative repercussion should happen to families that fail to pay the proposed fees. However, the truth is that monetary resources from families were needed in the two schools to be able to function.[1] Hence different strategies were put into place to encourage parents to contribute. Phone calls or talks at the school gates were made by the parents committee, written messages were sent to students' homes, and teachers or principals hinted or directly appealed for parents' contributions during meetings. When discussing their opinion on the work of the parents committee, for example one of the mothers commented on their insistence: "Well, if we pay the fee, they almost don't bother us at all, but if you do not pay, they call, and call and call" (Mother, GDL). In Guadalajara at least 70% of the parents contributed at the beginning of the year with the required fee of 250 Mexican pesos per student (£11 approximately). In Ciudad Obregón parents were supposed to contribute $5 per week (£0.2) and twice a year with around $30 (£2.6) for the inputs of the fund-raising festival and for the celebration of children's day. In this school the participation fluctuated between 30% and 60% of the families depending on the class, activity and time of year.

The money and other resources collected were understood as common inputs by the principals and the parents in the committee and were equally distributed. The need to take care of the whole of the students and avoid discrimination due to lack of contributions was a common feature in both schools. This does not mean however that there were no frictions regarding this matter. Most of the complaints came from economically contributing parents that felt the other families were taking advantage of them:

> We were paying for the security guard but […] we were always the same ones, and sometimes we couldn't complete the amount needed. At the end, the guard resigned because we couldn't pay him. And it's not like I can easily pay, I have three sons. I gave my fee, but I can't give the others', I can't support them all (Mother, OB).

[1] Schools also gain resources from what is called the CAS programme. Particular parents or external people have a contract that allows them to sell food as long as they give a small fee per-student to the school. This money, however, is not enough and it is used mainly to pay for substitute teachers or for urgent building fixtures.

For some of the families, however, there was little trust on how the money was going to be spent: "just imagine all the school kids, how much are they gaining? Maybe they will take a cut" **(**Mother, OB). Additionally, in Ciudad Obregón there was also the issue of the school often getting robbed or vandalized, so parents spoke of the worthlessness of contributing for fixing or improving the school, as one of the mothers in the committee pointed out:

> It isn't fair that one makes the effort to buy the children's material, and they come, leave it all in the classroom and then, the damned kids who came in to steal burned it all. They destroyed it all. It is not only the economic cost, it is so sad, because we make sacrifices for our kids, and they aren't conscious of the damage they make […] there are so many children now that can't work (Mother, OB).

Economically contributing to the school was therefore related not only to the economic capacity of the families, but included other relational issues such as mistrust, which will be specifically addressed in the modes of *convivencia* presented in the second part of the chapter.

1.2 Assistance in labour tasks to maintain or improve the school

Besides the economic contribution, parents' assistance was needed to maintain and improve school through labour tasks such as cleaning the patio, classrooms, plant areas and toilets, fixing up the schools' furniture or painting walls. Participation was also required for preparing and carrying out fundraising festivals, where parents had to prepare the food and sell it. Finally, parents' support was required to ensure the students' safety: take care of them coming in or out of the school, forming a school patrol to guard the street crossing and, in Ciudad Obregón, guarding the construction zone.

Petitions for the needed actions were usually presented during class meetings or school assemblies, which were the main spaces of communication between families and teaching staff. At least three meetings were carried out at school level and five in the particular classes. In both schools the majority of family members that attended—and more generally helped out—were women, mostly mothers, but grandmothers, sisters, aunts and godmothers participated as well**.** Participation in school assemblies fluctuated generally from a third to half or the students' families, and there even were meetings cancelled

due to the lack of a minimum quorum required. Class meeting attendance was slightly better, with most of the classes gathering between half and two thirds of the students' carers. However, there is evidence of some classes with very low participation where merely five out of thirty expected people attended. Only one of the classes, the one of teacher Marcela in Ciudad Obregón, registered constantly an almost full participation.

Labour assistance is solicited and encouraged in these meetings, but the participation in the actual tasks was, as one mother mentioned, "terrible […], we don't support the school […], no one cares" (Mother, OB), especially in the older classes. Only around 3-5 parents per class took care of all the major needs regarding activities and school maintenance. The lack of participation in meetings and activities to address school requirements was seen by some of the more active parents and many of the teachers as further evidence of irresponsibility of the families, as one of the mothers stated in an interview: "because if a parent is responsible, s/he is responsible in their home and s/he is responsible here in school" (Mother, OB).

It is important to consider that meetings happened during school hours and were called and lead by the teachers and principal. Teachers were also in charge of determining when the meetings would be conducted, which was contingent to the teacher's availability and was generally not formally established until a few days before the event. As a result, for many of the working parents coming to meetings was not a possibility, since they could not skip work. An important assumption seems to be at the core of the way this practice was carried out: Parents, if they are truly interested in their children's education, are expected to be present in the school activities. In practice, this means they are expected to come to school when the teacher requires them. The spaces and times of parents' participation were therefore not a joint agreement among the actors, and there was hardly any consideration in the teachers' narratives for parents' times and needs, only the school's needs were highlighted. Such assumption is closely related to views on the families' appropriate relation to the school and will be addressed in the modes of *convivencia* section.

1.3 Participating in parents' committees

The requirement of economic contribution and labour participation was mainly dealt through the involvement of groups of parents that performed particu-

lar roles. The most important figure was the parents' committee, formed by 6-10 parents in each school. Other roles were the class representatives, the supporting group for applying for economic aid in Guadalajara, the security brigade and the breakfast committee in Ciudad Obregón. The parent's committee is a legal figure required in all Mexican schools, their main functions are encouraging, collecting and administering the parents' economic contribution, reaching agreements with the principals regarding the expending of the money, as well as coordinating and collaborating in the maintenance and improvement of the school building. The people involved in this role were also active participants in other school activities; they would organize the festivals, work in the food stands, manage the library register, guard the school gates, check students for lice and, since schools do not have administrative personal, sometimes aided the staff in constructing grades and attendance reports. Although these activities are not permanent, the committee's parents were present in the school for most days of the week.

The specific actions these parents carried out varied in the Guadalajara and Ciudad Obregón school, but in both cases, they understood supporting the school and the principal as their main role. The committee saw themselves as contributors to improving the schools in an overall sense, and felt recognized by such work by the other school actors, as one of those mothers explained:

> We—in fact the teachers also recognize it because there are teachers that tell us "this time you really worked a lot"—[…] did several cleaning jobs that hadn't been done in years […] the tables with the children's gifts […] We succeeded in getting paint […] and they're little things that one says "goodness, it's only a little bit, but we really accomplished things." So […] we worked and worked, doing this and that (Mother, GDL).

In Guadalajara, apart from the aspects mentioned in the above quote, the committee also applied for funds with educational, municipal and states authorities, contributing with the principal in filling out formats, taking them to the public offices and, in order to get a roof for the patio for example, "chased down politicians" (Mother, GDL) that could deliver the funds. They were in charge of the families' contributions and had them in an account administered by the treasurer. They gave account of incomes and expenses to the educational authorities and to the rest of the parents during the school assemblies. In Ciu-

dad Obregón although they were very active as well, they let the lead role in the hands of the principal who "would call for our help and ask if we agree, […] she considers our opinion" (Mother, OB). The principal in this case was also charge of the money. Parents in Ciudad Obregón did not want to be responsible for the economic contributions since they felt unsafe if the other parents and community members knew they were administering it, since it would be known in the community they would have more money than usual. Overall, the committee in Obregón had a much more passive role in coming up with actions for supporting the school, and in general less of the improvement and maintenance actions registered came from the parents' initiative. The principal in this case applied for funds and managed her contacts and institutional possibilities to deal with the school necessities. In this school, account of the money was also given to the authorities and to the rest of the parents, but it was done as well by the principal.

The overall willingness of the schools' families to participate in the committees was the lowest of the three practices presented in this chapter. According to the policy and school guidelines (DOF, 1980) all parents or legal guardians have the right to be chosen in an open election and they remain in the committee for two years. In practice however, the group of parents that agree to be considered is limited. The people involved in these committees were mostly mothers that usually had previously been involved in other school activities and that knew each other. These mothers also speak of having to be "convinced" by teachers or the principal to participate. Usually during the election there are not many candidates for each position (one or two in each role). The main reasons given for not participating were lack of time, the unwillingness to carry the responsibility it entailed, the uncertainty of what actions they were supposed to perform and especially that they risk of engaging in conflicts, as one of the mothers in Ciudad Obregón clearly pointed out after being asked if she was willing to participate: "No, I don't want to […] because often the mums are, how can I put it?, they are very brawly […] To get into trouble, no thank you […] and even less if I have to handle money, no I don't do money" (Mother, OB).

The work of the committee was perceived therefore as highly contentious due to the difficult relationships among the parents themselves, or with the teachers, that could and were developed and that will be explored in the modes of convivencia. Nevertheless, the parents in both committees stated

they were proud and happy to support the school, principal and teachers. They placed a high value in contributing to improving school appearance, which was linked for many of the parents with the overall quality of the school:

> I would like to improve the walls, the roofing so it'd look nice, since just for that they qualify us as a marginal school, a poor one (Mother, OB).
> The school has improved, before, the classrooms on that side were all made of tin sheets […] all of this was dirt and now, no, now it has even benches. It has improved (Mother, GDL).

The participation of the parents in the school committee and the contributions both of money and of labour allowed the schools to carry out their activities and were part of their everyday processes. The way the relationships are carried out in these practices will be analysed in the following section.

2. Modes of *convivencia* at the community level

Four modes of *convivencia* between families and the school are presented in this second part of the chapter:

1. Alliance
2. Confrontation
3. Detachment
4. Collaboration

They are initially derived from the analysis of the actors' involvement and participation characteristics in the above referred practices, but include concrete links with practices previously addressed regarding *convivencia* conflicts (chapters 6 and 7) and students' needs (chapter 8). They revisit especially how notions of 'responsibility' and 'family' come into play in specific patterns of relationships that shape the way *convivencia* is formed and experienced in these two schools. The modes here presented should not be considered a typology of families. They are put forward as analytical approaches to understand the relationships between the actors. In that sense, it is important to understand that relationships were fluid, and although certain patterns are observed

and reported here, particular teachers, principals, students, parents and other family members moved across the modes depending on a variety of influences and decisions. The three most prevalent of these modes were alliance, confrontation and detachment. The fourth one, collaboration, can only be positioned as a mode in the class of teacher Marcela in Ciudad Obregón, although other elements that could be associated with it are also presented.

2.1 Alliance

The first mode of *convivencia* involved principals, most teachers and particular families that were more frequently present at school. In the relationships that form it, clusters of carers acted in alliance with teachers regarding school activities and the general schooling processes of their children. The teaching staff often spoke of the same small group of reliable parents attending meetings, contributing economically, and assisting in labour tasks: "when it's about participating in the different activities promoted by the school, the parents' participation is low as well and […] usually it's the same people that support the school" (Teacher, male, OB). These parents—who also had friendship or family ties to each other—also recognized their specific positioning in the school as well as the expectation that these relationships brought within:

> I remember bringing my girl here and I told her "Teacher, it's so good that you have my daughter" […] And it turned out that the teacher was already enrolling me in things of the class, she was already involving me, "because I know I can count on you," she told me, and that "with you, I won't have any trouble" (Mother, OB).

Alliance relationships were predominantly performed between the people involved in the parents' committee and the principals. As stated in the above section, the mothers interviewed often spoke of supporting the principal, who in turn, recognized and were grateful for the work the committee carried out in the school:

> There are always the same ladies […] (those) mothers are really bold, really cooperative and even when they know they'll have to take care of the activity, like now with the festival we want to do; they know that only half of the group will participate (Principal, female, OB).

There was overall a certainty that at least out of the whole families' population this group of parents would participate, "because I know […] that the school does not run by itself, there are three parts, which are student, teacher and mother" (Mother, OB). The parents of the committee and some others sometimes linked to them (relatives, neighbours and friends also in the school) generally volunteered after calls for participation were made during school meetings. However, more often they were directly asked to be involved in particular activities, since they were perceived as "responsible" parents that could be counted on. As will be analysed, the direct invitations had implications for the other two modes of *convivencia*, as they tended to limit the potential participation of other families. The allied parents saw participating as 'helping' or 'contributing' to the school, but particularly understood their support as validating and showing appreciation for the principal and teachers. The interactions carried out in this mode fostered a sense of trust among its participants, like teacher Sandra explained:

> It makes the work feel more pleasant, you feel at ease. In my case for example, I have more trust in those parents, so if there'll be a general cleaning, I know they'll participate and I feel fine in telling them "Mrs, do you think you can help us?" (Teacher, female, GDL).

The characteristics of the family members involved in this *convivencia* mode give some insight into their possibility for more constantly engaging with the schools. Most of them were mothers or young grandmothers, who tended not to have a job outside their home, or—less frequently—collaborated at a family business, which allowed for a more flexible use of their time. These women were likely to have finished secondary school (until ninth grade) and explicitly stated the value of education for them and their children. In their narratives, elements of social mobility expectation through schooling can be identified. This group of carers attended practically all class and most of school meetings. They also contacted teachers to directly enquiry about their children, which further tightened their relationships with the staff. Economically contributing to the school and participating in its activities was perceived as a characteristic of the 'responsible' parents and for them, it was evidence of their care for children and their education, setting their own participation as example for their family and for all the students:

> It is really about seeing the happiness in them, because they've seen me work here. Maybe when they are older, they'll say "my friend's mum was there, and like her, I'd like to be part of the committee." It's a value for the future. There are things that shouldn't be lost, but unfortunately, they are, because the parents don't dare to participate. I've always said that one as a parent is the mirror for the children. So, if the parent doesn't participate with anything, the child won't be there either (Mother, GDL).

The allied mothers and grandmothers also recognized their participation as valuable in terms of improving their own confidence and general family conditions. It is in this logic that they were often demoralized—"because it is very tiring" (Mother, OB)—by the low involvement of the other school parents and felt, especially in the case of Ciudad Obregón that the school situation was hardly going to improve:

> That is what makes me sad about this school. I'm really sad and feel powerless, because I'd like that as much as I care about it, other parents would too. Because this is the only thing we can leave our kids: education (Mother, OB).

The engagement of the allied families was therefore reflected in an overall supportive way of relating to the school and their children, which included the way practices analysed in previous chapters were particularly carried out. These parents were involved in their children academic progress by regularly providing aid with their homework, for example. Also, if a student was lagging behind, they involved him/her in support spaces in and outside school, and some of the families tried to complement the school processes by engaging their young in sport activities, artistic lessons or participation in church groups. Students were also accompanied in their home-to-school journeys. The way engagement was performed in this mode shows therefore a particular use of resources from the families to foster the general academic progress of their children. In terms of *convivencia* conflicts, although most of the students at these two schools were involved one way or another in problematic situations (chapter 7), the students from these families were not usually positioned as the ones responsible, or if they were, problematic behaviour was more often dealt with by an informal dialogue between parents and teachers. It is relevant as well that in such cases their parents tended to accept perceptions and recommendations of teachers.

Interestingly, the actors involved in this mode of *convivencia* delineated their interactions and highlighted their positive impacts for school through differentiating it with the way other actors engaged. Clear border making processes were performed to set these families apart from the others and significant notions of 'responsible' and 'reliable' were hence made relevant in comparison with the other families. The following fragment is an example of a narrative shared by the allied actors; it presents as well a connection with the confrontation mode that will be analysed next:

> "Crikey, they are in the committee… it's because they have nothing else to do at home," it's a traditional thing the parents say here. I tell them "no […] before I get here, I have to leave dinner ready, the clothes washed, do all the house chores. It isn't like I don't have things to do, I just do them quickly" (Mother, GDL).

Their position was constantly strengthened by their presence in school and their participation in its activities, but also because the allied family members often saw themselves as protectors of the staff against the hard conditions of the context or against the other families, as the next testimony shows:

> "But it's not the principal's fault," I told them (parents that were complaining at the gate), "it could be the case with any of our kids, we have to support the school." They said "the teachers this, the teachers that," they always go and blame the teachers, but they don't realize what really happens (Mother, OB).

The narratives and interactions associated with this mode constructed a dominant view on the expected appropriate relationships with the school, and they are situated in tension with the following two modes. It is important to state however, that the role of parents as "supporters" although increasing their involvement with the schools, did not effectively foster more horizontal power relationships among families and the teaching staff, whom were still positioned as authority of the school. In the allied mode, the students' carers were not seen as "partners" and their appropriate participation was delineated constantly explicitly and implicitly in the everyday interactions. For example, the possibility parents in the committee had of surveilling teachers, was a constant source of conflicts—as the mothers in the Guadalajara discussed—since for the teachers it meant that they were stepping out of their role and complicating the work they were doing:

> Mother 1: Well, that exactly was the conflict, right? That they (teachers) thought we were watching them […]. There were times when they didn't even let us come in, right? When the principal didn't come to school, they didn't even let us in.
> Mother 2: Or they would only let us do the very specific thing that we had to do, and then they'd say "now, can you step out?" (Mothers, GDL).

Surveillance from parents was therefore only encouraged when it regarded the status of the school building or particular situations of the students or the families. Too much participation, especially in terms of the academic processes, was not particularly desirable in the view of the teaching staff:

> It's a double-edge sword, because they are actually doing things, and it's fine that they see what we do and how are the children, that it's not all easy, but at the same time to have them here every day, every day, every day, no thank you. I think there should be some limits […]. As long as I see they are not just there, that they are doing something, fine, they are doing things for the school and in the kid's benefit, fine. But better if they give us some space (Teacher, female, GDL).

Although the relationships in this mode of *convivencia* were usually amicable and parents and teachers were at ease with each other, it is important to acknowledge that the participation of the families is therefore restricted. The principal in Guadalajara, for example, although constantly being open to parents' initiatives, still stated that he had to "talk with the new committee, mark, delineate well the action spaces of each one and tell them why […]. I'm glad they have the confidence to come forward but […] the fact that they are the committee gives them power" (Principal, male, GDL).

2.2 Confrontation

A second mode of *convivencia* was the one formed by the relationships between certain parents or groups of parents in opposition with teachers and/or principals, or with the allied parents referred to above. Confrontation happened by face to face clashes, but more constantly the actors engaged in interactions aimed to undermine the other side's views, position and authority. For the allied parents and teaching staff, this mode was generally seen as a clearly inappropriate way of relating, and placed the blame of it on specific "brawly"

(FN, OB) families who did not aptly contribute and that in general took an illegitimate position in school's situations, as one of the mothers commented:

> We do invite them, but they don't even clean up the classroom, they only wash their hands on the matter. They don't get involved at all […] and then they are good for coming and complaining about the teacher, they are all happy to come and say "why did you give my kid that grade?" Why?, if you never came to ask how your kid was doing, how was s/he behaving, if there was homework to be done, if s/he is doing the class work, how dare you to come and complain to the teacher (Mother, OB).

Confrontational interactions have been pointed out in this and previous chapters and therefore I will now only highlight three important issues. The first relates to the work of the committee. The refusal of certain families to contribute economically or through labour was the main reason for confrontation according to the parents on the committees, and aggressive arguments around these issues were an important part of describing the difficulties of the work they did. The opposing parents, however, mostly placed the confrontation reasons on the perception that the committee worked for the principals and teachers, feeling they left them "alone" in particular conflicts (Mother, OB) and did not empathize with their economic and family situations. They stated the committee did not really act as their representatives and instead carried on "as they were the owners of the school decisions, of the school itself, when it should not be like that" (Mother, GDL). In relation to their general participation in school, these parents often talked about a desire to participate, but perceived that their voices were not welcomed and recognized, since the participation positions were already occupied by the allied parents, as one of the mothers in Guadalajara explained:

> That first time we had a meeting this year I wanted to be… at least the representative in my son's class, but she had already been elected. I don't know when, how, but the class already had a representative. I also wanted to be in my daughters' but since she reached third grade it's always the same lady (Mother, GDL).

Relationships under this mode were shaped as well through the management of *convivencia* conflicts analysed in chapter 6, where the confronting teachers, students, parents and other family members were usually associated with ac-

ting aggressively, being involved in intimidation practices and not respecting each other's views. In such conflicts the actors placed the responsibility on the opposite sides, as the following fragments show:

> A lady and her friend, both with daughters at the school, were discussing that a male student was pulling their daughter's hair. They said they were going to talk to the principal, because he was responsible for what happened in schools, that they couldn't do anything from home (FN, GDL).
> They hardly come, but if they do it is to complain to the teacher, they ask "why did you give my son a report if he behaves lovely," whey it is the opposite sometimes. We don't want to participate in what we should, be we do want to complain about what we as parents aren't doing for our children (Mother, GDL).

An important source of conflicts between 'confrontational' actors were the distribution of resources—how new furniture was being distributed or the material particular students had—or changes in the common practices that seemed as unilaterally decided. As an example, the following incident happened in one of the general assemblies, where a mother complained about the new way students in the first grade were being taken out from the school:

> A woman says that she is speaking on behalf of her son, who is in first grade and gets distracted easily. She says she has to work and that she is a single mum, and for that reason her mum—who is elderly—comes for her son. She says she doesn't agree that the students are taken out from school to be collected by their parents, because it is impossible for the teacher to take care of 30 students outside […] they are putting them at risk. She also says that she pays a lady to bring her son, because she works, but that last week they cancelled classes because the teacher didn't come [her baby was sick] and that besides the cost, her son is at risk because she thought he was in class (FN, GDL).

The suspicion of inequality and the risk of discrimination was a constant in the narratives and interactions of the opposing families, which often felt their needs were not supported by the school, a characteristic that is shared as well with the detached mode of *convivencia* that will be presented next.

Dealing with students' underachievement was the third practice where confrontational relationships were especially relevant. Explicit opposition was

evident in the complaints presented in chapter 8 that lead to the cancelling of the support spaces for underachieving students. For the principal in Guadalajara such situations derived from a lack of understanding of the school's aims and processes: "there is a big problem here between parents and school, the parents have their own school perception and for us, (the idea of school) is very different" (Principal, male, GDL). Nevertheless, dialogue spaces for discussing those differences were usually not promoted and, in these cases, teachers ended up cancelling the supporting strategies for underachievement.

A closer analysis of the characteristics of the perceived 'brawly' families shows that they tended to be composed of younger mothers and/or fathers that both worked outside their home in some of the harsh conditions described in the previous chapter. Overall, they had more restricted time for both participating in the school and supporting the schooling practices of their children. There was also an involvement of the extended family members that often shared the role of main carers of the students. In this sense, the families associated with this mode of *convivencia* tended to be perceived by the allied parents and teachers as belonging to the category of 'dysfunctional' that has been previously addressed. Some teachers in this sense tended to unify a negative perception of both the families and the students and, as I have addressed in previous chapters, had a lack of expectations for their appropriate involvement or changes the students' situation, academic performance and/or behaviour because the "whole family was problematic" (Mothers, OB; FN, GDL) and did not care about school.

The 'confronting' parents however recognized the importance of schooling for the students' life—although less emphasis was placed on ideas of social mobility than in the previous case—and were in fact generally involved in the students' activities, but their engagement with school was intermittent, not attending all the meeting and hardly volunteering for participating in labour tasks. These families seemed to be more aware as well of some of the contrasting discourses about what schools were supposed to do and used them to justify their opposition. There was a situation in Guadalajara, for instance, where a family with four children in the school did not contribute economically and had been recommending other families to do the same, because they knew about a political party stating it was unlawful, which generated tensions with the committee's parents and principal. Students also played an important role in these families' involvement since they managed the type of

participation they wanted their family to have in school: they chose when to ask for help and what information to share between families and school. Such students manifested, for example, letting parents know which meetings to attend or deciding not to tell the parent about them because "they have work, they can't come" (fourth-grade student, male, GDL).

Finally, in terms of the spatial location of these interactions, in contrast with the allied relationships that were usually performed in the more institutional spaces of the school, such as classrooms, patio, or the principal's office; the confrontation relationships happened more often in the peripheral areas: confronting parents often gathered at the school gates—"parents have this style, I don't know how to put it, of making cliques right outside school" (Mother, GDL), teachers discussed and gossiped about the disruptive situations in hallways and at the end of meetings—"sitting outside the classroom […] teacher Giselle tells teacher Marcela […] 'I would not recommend this class, there are *those types* of mothers" (FN, OB), and face to face confrontations often happened in the thresholds of classrooms, the principal's office or the school's gates as has been presented in previous chapters.

2.3 Detachment

The third mode of *convivencia* refers to the loose and unengaged relationships among families, teachers and principals. Although the degrees of disassociation varied, this could be considered the most common mode in the two visited schools. It is characterized by a strong separation between families and schools in terms of common activities, ways and spaces for communication, a dissatisfaction about how these relationships are constructed and a lack of expectation for improvement in the processes or relationships among the school actors:

> Because we as parents, we are tough, we don't want to come and ask "what is the problem?" We don't come and say "we can support you" […]. There is no communication. I feel we fly from all those sorts of trouble (Mother, OB).

The actors engaged in this mode perceive each other as avoiding their appropriate responsibilities and obligations to school and children. Although the weight on the blame tended to be on the perceived 'irresponsible' or 'detached'

parents—"they only send their kids to school and already think they fulfil their duty as a parent" (Mother, OB)—, such parents considered as well that the school's teachers and committee had failed the families, as one of the grandmothers shared:

> That is why I don't feel like coming to school, because […] they are supposed to […] those people are here to help you, to represent you […] and they don't. I've seen it many times and I feel is a great injustice towards me and towards a lot of people (Grandmother, GDL).

Some of the practices explored in this and previous chapters shape this mode of *convivencia* and integrate particular ways in which families, teachers and students engage with school. In this mode families' participation in school activities can be considered as absent, or sporadic at best. These families are often formed by young parents that live with other family members and the role of caring for the students is shared, if not taken solely, by other member of the extended family, usually grandmothers or aunts. Their family configuration often is not permanent, and where the students live and who they live with changes constantly (Personal Survey, 2015). As with the previous mode these families are generally perceived as "dysfunctional" (Teacher, female, GDL; Teacher, male, OB) by some of the teachers and parents.

Testimonies reflect two distinctive mistrust perceptions that characterize this mode. The first one shows that families are dissatisfied with schools because they feel their demands are too high and do not trust the way processes and resources are distributed. The difference with the confrontational mode is that in here, they do not demand change, they seem to assume that that is the way things are, and that teachers and committees are not interested in taking their views into consideration. Their lack of participation is due therefore, to a low expectation of improvement and a desire to avoid being taken advantage of which prevents families from generating close ties to the schools, a recognized interaction by one of the principals:

> When a parent comes, his/her expectation is first, if we are going to scold him/her, after, if we are going to charge them with anything they owe us, and the third option is if we're going to ask them to do some chore. That's the idea many parents have, and they pull away, they pull away (Principal, male, GDL).

This estrangement is also reflected with some of the previously analysed practices. For example, in regard to dealing with students' underachievement, the 'detached' parents did not openly oppose the support spaces promoted, they simply stopped sending their children to schools on those days.

The second mistrust position places the deficit not on the schools, but on themselves as parents or carers. For many of them, the obstacle for participating was that they felt unprepared, unworthy or without the economic resources to contribute to the school, which is linked as well to the lower economic and cultural capital of these families in comparison with the allied and the confronting ones. Mothers and grandmothers often spoke about feeling embarrassed which prevented them from engaging—"due to nerves one does not do many things" (Mother, GDL)—or the feeling that their voices were not wanted:[2]

> That day the principal spoke to us in the meeting, I'd like then to talk about all this, but I feel like, like I think they aren't going to consider my opinion, like they won't listen to me, and I rather stayed quiet (Grandmother, GDL).

Interestingly, when these carers were addressed by teachers and especially by the 'allied' parents on their lack of participation, they did not explain the two mentioned perceptions as reasons, but tended to respond aggressively, defending themselves and the way they were participating. Two of the allied mothers discussed this reaction when I asked about involving differently or more the students' families:

> In fact, I had a little trouble with a mother. I told her "look, why don't you pay more attention to your girl?," "and who says I don't" she told me. She really got angry (Mother, OB).
>
> They quickly tell you "I can't" […] (I leave it there) because the face they pull, the way the answer back counts a lot, it makes me say "I won't ever say anything else, because they will swear at me" (Mother, GDL).

[2] These two positions could be related to the variety of schooling degrees these parents presented. The first one seems to be more associated with families with higher schooling than the second one, but not sufficient evidence was collected to make a definitive claim.

Although it is true these invitations were usually perceived as a form of disapproval—and therefore it could be understandable for the 'detached' families to defend themselves— the fact that the aggressive response was practically the only one registered seems to be related to the lack of positive conflict management strategies analysed in chapter 6 and speaks as well of the vulnerability of this group of families that do not feel as part of the school community. A contributing factor in their low of sense of belonging is that these families are often the ones with less social ties. The parents interviewed often spoke of not knowing anyone—except for other members of their family—that also had students in the school, or of not having strong ties to their neighbours. Teachers also recognized this characteristic in the majority of the students' families and linked it to a "lack of unity" (Teacher, male, GDL) among the different classes.

The role of the students is particularly important in this *convivencia* mode. Students of these families tended to be more disengaged with the school, being more constantly absent and falling behind in academic work. Many of them made the school journey by themselves, which contrast with the other two modes where students were accompanied. Interestingly, these students mediated between schools and families, being almost solely responsible for delivering information from teachers to parents and vice versa. They also had a negative perception of their families' presence in school, associating it only to *convivencia* conflict management processes and commented on it using expressions like: "no, if my mum is here […] I will get punished" (fourth-grade student, female, GDL). Teachers that engaged in detached relationships shared with these families the sense of mistrust, and often reported being tired of trying to engage with the parents and having "given up" (Teacher, female, OB) on their participation. Their overall strategy was to try to avoid problems, which in some cases led to reduced school activities, as was the case of the Physical Education teacher in Guadalajara, who stopped taking the students to basketball tournaments to "escape the ruction" (FN, GDL) the families made.

This mode was hence reflected in specific and common everyday interactions that cut across all the analysed practices, consolidating it as the most prevalent way of engagement between families and schools. As an example, in practically all my school visits teachers highlighted the fact that family members were absent by explicitly complaining, dropping hints about

irresponsible parents, or stating to present parents during meetings "I am so glad that there are *still* parents that *do* show an interest" (FN, OB). Such action actively positioned the 'detached' parents as the commonality in the schools. Another example was the differentiation of home and school behaviour as a reason to explain *convivencia* conflicts, making explicit the need to foster students behaviours in school that were "different from what they are used at home and in the streets" (Teacher, female, OB) to prevent such conflicts, which seemed to imply to the families that the way they were educating their children was not appropriate.

The temporal dimension of the actors' interactions also fostered the prevalence of this *convivencia* mode. In the two analysed schools instability was a common trait of the families' relationships due to first, the changes in their internal configurations (see chapters 7 and 8). Mothers and grandmothers interviewed often shared such transformation, and how these situations were related to their interaction with the school and its activities:

> My boy […] tells me "mum, I want you to support me, I got separated from my wife" […] I told him "think it through, because I don't want the kids to be here and there, bouncing between homes." […] And he thought about it, it took him two months and he brought me the children. They had a problem, they still do, they haven't overcome it, they cry a lot for their mum, even here in school, they don't want to come (Grandmother, GDL).

Families were, secondly, instable in their relationships with school, since these changes and their economically vulnerable position often made them change their place of residence. Some of the students were therefore enrolled in the schools for a year or less, especially in the case of Guadalajara where, as has been explained, a third of the student population rotated each school cycle, which mattered in the "academic outcomes […] even in *convivencia* itself" (Principal, male, GDL), since it hindered their and their families' possible integration to the school community. Instability was thirdly derived from the school itself. The educational reform that started in 2012 presented a general context of uncertainty regarding teachers' labour status that came across in their own expectations, security and involvement in their job. Additionally, in Ciudad Obregón teachers rotated often—half of the staff hired on a temporary basis, ranging from a school year to a couple of weeks—which preven-

ted teachers to engage in fostering participation from the families, carrying out long term strategies and developing a sense of co-responsibility as a class, as the principal explained:

> One seeks to take care of the relationship and participation of the parents. But the teacher that knows will leave soon doesn't create that relationship […] doesn't make the commitment because s/he says "I'll leave, I won't be here" […]. For that reason, the parent pulls even further from school […] the interim teacher feels as well that the parents don't pay attention to her/him […] because many of them tell them "I won't be here, I might leave," and the parent thinks "s/he won't be here" (Principal, female, OB).

Overall, this mode shows a lack of communal ties among the actors and diminished sense of responsibility on the schooling process. Families commonly engaged in providing and taking care of their family without considering the school part of its responsibilities. Teachers centred their jobs on the academic curricular work with the students and used the disengagement of families as the main reason stopping them from improving what they consider problematic issues: *convivencia* conflicts and academic achievement. The actors in this sense complained about each other, but there was no expectations or actions to change participation and relationships.

2.4 Collaboration

The alliance, confrontation and detachment modes referred above are the three relational configurations that best explain the *convivencia* between the families and the schools. There is evidence, however of particular practices that could lead to a collaborative way of performing relationships, which will be explained in this final section. The class of Teacher Marcela, in Ciudad Obregón, is perhaps where these relationships more often constituted a mode of relating to each other. In this case, families were the most constantly involved of the two schools in terms of attendance to meetings, economic cooperation and participation in labour tasks to maintain the school. The interactions in this class were based, on the one hand, on a better—and less judgemental—knowledge of who the students were and their characteristics, including who were their families and what arrangements they had with the

school. On the other, these actors collectively discussed and shared wider processes happening in the class apart from formal academic work or particular school demands— the educational reform, specific class projects and personal situations, such as the teacher's family. For teacher Marcela, the forming of more holistic interactions helped to engage the families more, actively relying on their members and placing the student at the centre of a joint effort between families and the school. She perceived the close relationships as part of a normality that should be encouraged:

> Some teachers are afraid, they think "we'll have them here all the time," "they'll be watching us," but sometimes when we give them that space and they see all that we do, I think they recognize us more, when they see what we do, how we are, how we work… The parents realize, I've seen that the parents that observe the work we do in the group give it more value and they become more interested. I feel we shouldn't be afraid of giving them that power, because we are not giving them anything other than what by law they already have (Teacher, female, OB).

More normalized and continuous spaces of participation were opened in this class. Both students and parents spoke often of feeling supported by the teacher, and having knowledge of the reasons why particular actions were needed. Mothers and grandmothers talked also about being heard in terms of ideas or recommendations, as one of the mothers commented: "plenty of times we can share with her 'look teacher, my opinion is this'" (Mother, OB). It was evident as well that all the class actors had a more positive view of each other, and even when students explained their peer conflicts, they agreed on how it was possible to still get along, playing and working together. The families in this class also were engaged in more improvement projects for the classroom and interestingly, although not all families collaborated equally, there was no recrimination about such difference. It is important to notice, however, that this mode of *convivencia* only happened at a class level and these relationships did not transcend to the whole school. Parents that had children in other classes did not relate to those teachers in the same ways and recrimination did happen in regard to the whole school's families. When the students changed grade, for example, the parents in this class fought to take with them the furniture they had fixed: "Now they changed them to another classroom […] but we brought with us the desks, we told the teacher and the principal 'we are taking the desks, because it is unfair that we have to repair them" (Mother, OB).

Across both schools, certain interactions carried out by other teachers, principals and families could be associated as well with this mode of *convivencia*. Four important ones are, firstly, the approachability of the actors: the possibility of calling on each other any given day and presenting their questions or difficulties helped to foster trust and dependability. Often collaboration was further strengthened, secondly, if dialogue processes based on a flexible attitude and a desire to understand the other were promoted. The perceived difference between judging and understanding the situation was crucial to form close relationships. Thirdly, relationships became more stable—which was important to provide a sense of certainty and trust—if both families and teachers had shared knowledge of defined moments and ways of interactions, which included clarity on demands from the school to families and set dates for meetings and activities. The weariness generated when actors felt that more and more things were asked from them reduced the possibilities of collaborating in dealing with school demands, addressing students' needs and managing the school *convivencia* conflicts. Finally, high expectations of support and recognition of contributions helped to foster collaboration. This characteristic was different, however, to the one presented in the alliance mode. There, support and recognition were given and expected under the perception that the majority of the families will not participate, and therefore in comparison, support from those particular 'responsible' actors was necessary and celebrated. In the collaboration mode, support and recognition happened based on an agreement of a shared situation, without positioning the difference in participation as the main driver of action and placing the emphasis on the joined need, effort and achievement.

3. Implication for school *convivencia* of the school-families relationships

The analysis presented in this chapter rounds up a more complete view of the family-school relationships. In here, I first introduced the three practices—as part of the tacit *convivencia* practices—that constitute the most explicitly recognized spaces for families in schools. Differently from the underachievement practices explored in the previous chapter where the families' involvement is only demanded when there is a particular situation that requires support, in

the practices that deal with schools' needs all families' engagement is needed and expected. As I have stated, schools in Mexico require parental participation for generating, applying, distributing and accounting for resources to ensure the activities of the school. The first of these practices corresponds to the economic contribution parents or families make to school. These could be done at the beginning of the year, as in the case of the Guadalajara school, or in relation to specific needs, as it happened in the Ciudad Obregón school. In parallel, families were also involved the practice of assisting in labour tasks to maintain or improve the schools. Such tasks were mostly coordinated during school and class meetings, the main space of contact between teachers and parents. The third practice was participating in the parent committees or other representative roles. The committees were in charge of supporting schools' activities and organizing and doing the work of cleaning and maintenance. They were expected to administrate the families' economic contributions and account for their use, but this only happened in the Guadalajara school; in the case of Ciudad Obregón, the committee did not take care of the money, since they felt insecure if they had it.

These three practices had a low involvement. The first practice in Guadalajara was the one where most families participated, 70%, but in Ciudad Obregón and in the other two practices in both schools less than 30% of the families were usually engaged. In all practices cases mothers were the ones involved the most, followed by grandmothers. The prevalence of female engagement with schools was also the case for the conflict management and underachievement practices presented in the previous chapters. The characteristics of the involvement found in these two schools are congruent with other studies of parental participation that state that Mexican parents mostly understand the support of the schooling system in terms of aiding their children in particular—through homework support, taking them to school and feeding them—and not in terms of being involved in school activities. These studies have also found that mothers are habitually in charge of the children's schooling (Azaola, 2011; Sánchez Escobedo et al., 2010; Valdés Cuervo et al., 2014b). Some of these studies roughly conclude that parents need to be better aware of school processes and should be trained on that regard (e.g. Valdés Cuervo and Urías Murrieta, 2011). The analysis on *convivencia* undertaken in this research shows however that the involvement of the parents relates not only to their awareness level, but to multiple cultural, social and economic

characteristics of both the school and the communities, and especially to the way relationship patterns develop between families and schools.

Four *convivencia* modes were therefore constructed as a way to explain such relationships: alliance, confrontation, detachment and collaboration. These four modes join relational characteristics of the families' involvement in school requirements, but they are also linked to the practices regarding students' underachievement and well-being, as well as conflict management. In the first one, a small group of parents participated in alliance with teachers and principals to carry out the school activities. The allied relationship basically ensured the schools' everyday functioning by supporting teachers and principals. The second mode was constructed by the confronting relationships between families and teachers. In it, the actors opposed and undermined each other's' positions especially in terms of conflict management, distribution of resources and responses to underachievement cases. In this mode there is a desire to change some of the practices in schools and/or in families. The third mode was detachment. It presented loose and unengaged relationships among families, teachers and principal. In it, the actors understood each other as avoiding their responsibility and obligations. This mode was the most prevalent one and, in contrast with the previous one, the mistrust in each other resulted on low expectations of and actions for improvement. The final one is the collaboration mode, which only happened in one class. In it the relationships were based in a recognition of each other, a better understanding of school and family processes and in the notion of co-responsibility for the student well-being. It led to collaborative patterns that involved most of the families and created strong ties among them and the teacher. The different modes illustrate Jares' (2006) argument that the patterns of relationships present in the models of *convivencia* have different consequences for the quality of life for the different people. The expectations, needs and practices of the school were not homogeneous and had different implications for the families, and for developing inclusive, peaceful and democratic *convivencia*, implications which will be addressed in the rest of this section.

The four modes show, first, a connection to the parents' roles that Vincent (2000, 1996) and others (Abrams and Gibbs, 2002; Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Lareau, 1987; Lareau and McNamara Horvat, 1999) have explored. As I have presented in chapter 2, roles are understood here as "ways in which understandings of 'appropriate' parental behaviour and relationships

with other parents and teachers are reached, disseminated, accepted, challenged and/or subverted" (Vincent 2000, p. 2). In the two schools researched the most appropriate role of parents is "supporters" (Vincent 2000, Lareau 1989 similarly refers to a "helping role"). The most common construction however was the positioning of parents as "problems" (Baquedano-López et al., 2013), but a differentiation should be made between families involved in the confronting and detachment mode, as I have presented. The relationships in the different modes show exclusion patterns— and a few inclusion ones— that need to be addressed. I will explore next the implications of the alliance, confrontation and detachment modes since they are the most representatives at these schools, and will retake the collaboration mode at the end of the section.

The first aspect to consider is that even in the construction of the "appropriate" role of the allied parents as "supporters," the relationship between parents and teachers were unequal in terms of power distribution and the opportunity to decide on school's processes. Martin and Vincent (1999) state that parents "voice" depends on the one hand on social, cultural and material resources the families possess, and on the other on the school's view of the aspects of their children's education with which parents should be concerned. In the explored practices and relationships in the alliance mode—including when teachers were sensitive to the families' situation and trust was developed—teachers were positioned as the authority and, in many cases, as the only ones that are able to state what is best for the student (see the 'dialogue' practices in chapter 7) (Lareau and McNamara Horvat, 1999). Differently from other reported contexts where at least the narrative is of a partnership between families and home (Epstein, 2010) are stated, in these schools such construction is not present. In them, the appropriate role of parents was as supporters that should adhere to the school's objectives and ways of being (Azaola, 2011; Lareau, 1987; Munn, 1993). The argument is that supporting schools and teachers will help in turn the well-being and academic development of the students. Such construction might hold in part because these allied parents, although generally the ones with higher economic and cultural capital in schools, do not have the middle class characteristics associated with the "partnership" construction, for example high schooling levels and a sense of entitlement (Lareau and McNamara Horvat, 1999). Since these allied families however do have a strong desire for social mobility and place high value in

education, they mostly leave the educational leadership to the teachers and understand their role in terms of ensuring the best possible schooling experience for their children.

The limitation of opportunities of participation and unequal distribution of power in school were even more pronounced in the confrontation and detachment modes. Both of them were constructed through a deficit understanding of the families (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Vincent, 1996) that characterize them as limited or unfit to care for the students in academic and well-being terms due to the perceived families' aggressive or uninterested engagement with school.[3] It is an understanding that emerged from a school culture that emphasises *a)* the interdependence between home and family, *b)* the subordination of the second one to the first and *c)* the treatment of parents as sole valid interlocutors from the students' families. In contrast to the deficit construction, families that detachedly related to the school promoted an independence between home and school by separating the teachers' obligations to their own. 'Confronting' families did not make the same separation between home and school, but opposed instead the subordination role established. In both cases the care of the children, and therefore the relationship with the schools, was not only developed through the parents since extended family members were actively present in these schools. For Lareau (1987), the ability of parents to respond to school demands more, or less, appropriately is due to class cultures, and in particular working class parents struggle to relate to schools in what teachers consider an appropriate way.

The participation of 'confronting' and 'detached' families was also severely limited for what Newman & Chin (2003) call time poverty, due mainly to working conditions, which hindered their possibilities of organizing their home life in a matter that met the teachers' and principals' ideas of appropriate involvement with the school. These relationships promoted exclusion patterns for these families since they were in general disaffected with school and therefore less likely to be involved. The propensity of non-involved families to be

[3] Similar evidence has been found in studies regarding Africa-American and Latino families in the United States (Lareau and McNamara Horvat, 1999; Ryan et al., 2010 and the systematization made by Baquedano-López, 2013). In the research's schools the ethnicity/race differentiation is not as strong as in other contexts, since overall the Mexican population is perceived to be either *mestiza* or indigenous, and practically all the families in these schools were considered *mestizas*. There were practices of what can be called micro-racisms documented, but a more detail analysis with that focus would need to be carried out to better see how they connect with the *convivencia* modes.

excluded was also found by Abram and Gibbs (2002) in United States, who even pointed out that more inclusive school reforms on families' participation have the potential of widening their roles, but not for non-involved families.

Analysing the diverse modes of *convivencia* allows us to see not just the particular interaction between a family and the school, but the collective patterns these interactions take. In that sense it is possible to analyse the relationships among parents themselves (Abrams and Gibbs, 2002). Border-making processes among the school families were extremely important in establishing the differences between them. When discussing their engagement, they did not only refer to the relationship with the teachers, but also with other families, making explicit references to some social class identifiers such as education, time, material capital and social ties. Teachers' social class characteristics also seem to play a role in the types of engagement in the *convivencia* modes within school groups. Although the three most prevalent modes—alliance, confrontation and detachment—could be identified in all the classes, classes lead by teachers with a higher economic and cultural capital tended to engage more in alliance, and in teacher Marcela's case in collaboration. In contrast, teachers that can be considered having lower economic and cultural capitals tended to have more often relationships in terms of confrontation. 'Detached' relationships were present in all classes, but they tended to concentrate more as well with teachers with lower economic and cultural capitals.

It is important to acknowledge that although material and cultural capitals are important lenses to understand the relationships patterns in the school, the interactions among the families and schools showed a fluidity that integrated other elements, out of which, the affective one is perhaps the most important. Socio-emotional patterns were inseparable in the relationships carried out by students, parents, extended family members, teachers and principals (Perales Franco et al., 2014) and they often determined the perception of the actors, the possibility or not of creating ties and the movement of the teachers and families through the different modes. In the case of a verbal and physically abusive teacher, for example, the parents' perception of the lack of care and respect of the other school teachers quickly disengaged not just the families in that class, but others in connection to them who felt empathic. Another example is the differentiation among teachers made by families which had to do with their perception of the interest they showed on the students' wellbeing and with the respect shown to them. Teachers, on the other

hand always stressed trust and respect—or the lack of them—as the main elements characterizing the relationships with the parents. Such socio-affective elements could be consider "affective capitals" (Ahmed, 2014) and they did not correspond to the person or a family, they were performed, created and recreated in the everyday interactions among the different actors in a fluid exchange, in relation of course, with the other elements related to social class highlighted above and most likely to aspects related to gender and ethnicity that have not been considered in detailed in this research and that would need to be better addressed in the future.

Three central arguments proposed and developed through this study have been, first, the need to consider the relationships among all actors as part of school *convivencia* and its improvement. Second, how everyday practices – in particular the ones related to participation, attention to specific needs and conflict management— are directly intertwined with those relationships. And third, a wider more comprehensive approach (Carbajal Padilla, 2013), beyond the aim of controlling of students' behaviours, is therefore needed to better understand and intervene in school *convivencia*. The modes of *convivencia* presented in this chapter propose a way of exploring the multiple relation between the actors—students, parents, extended family members, teachers and principals—and the connection with the above mentioned practices. They could also be tools to explore the relationships among each set of actors. In the case of this research, particular attention was placed in the interactions between the families themselves, but the notion of modes of *convivencia* could also be used in subsequent research to explore with more detail the relationships among teachers and among students. From the findings presented one can conclude that if democratic, inclusive and peaceful *convivencia* wants to be developed in schools, changes therefore should happen in terms of the relationships with the school's families.

The analysis presented shows that there are at least three areas that would need to be specially strengthened. The first one refers to the patterns that lead to discrimination and exclusion of particular families. Although there seems to be in both schools a better awareness and sensitivity towards students' academic and well-being needs (see chapter 8), discriminatory patterns still exist based on the families' characteristics—clearly expressed in the narratives of 'dysfunctional families' as causes of the more challenging school issues. Both schools thus present narrow views on families that do not consider

alternative family configurations, such as single or working mothers or extended families, as appropriate school 'partners'. Specific practices—the setting of meetings with not enough planning for instance—and policies—like the demand for parents to be responsible for the school's maintenance—seem to be based on the expectation of stay-at-home mothers that are able to engage with schools in such way. These demands ignore the reality of the working or non-traditional families, which are a majority in these analysed schools. They also aid in reinforcing the notion that parental involvement in the school is a reflection of the value parents place on education and in their children's well-being (Lareau, 1987) when, as Goodall and Montgomery (2014) propose, they are not necessarily the same and a distinction should be made between involvement with the school and engagement with the child and his/her learning, which is a practice that can happen—as is the case in many of the 'confronting' families—outside the school. The assimilation of these two processes and the related lack of fulfilment of the schools' expectations has generated tense interactions that weaken the relationships and the possibilities of collaboration. A truly inclusive school *convivencia* would not only accept and endure this families, but requires the transformation of narratives, practices, policies and cultures to respond to the diversity of situations and social configurations in order to foster closer social ties, co-responsibility and cooperation.

There is also a need for promoting more stable relationships among school and families. Unstable job situations, changes in the families' configurations and the educational reform that modified teachers' positions often create a temporary and uncertain context that requires an explicit establishment of clear and agreed criteria for school processes and relationships (Onetto, 2005), and its consequent implementation in a stable long-term process. It is not, therefore, enough to trust the social value of the school, or to only regulate the behaviour of the students to set the *convivencia* criteria and worry about the "operation and efficient functioning of the school service" (Landeros and Chávez, 2015, p. 127 TFS) as the policy of school *convivencia* seem to point to (chapter 5). An explicit criterion about the relationships among the actors oriented by notions of social justice and human rights could strengthen school identity, sense of belonging and of fairness but it can also give the relationships more stability. The importance stability and of long-term processes has been highlighted in terms violence reduction and positive conflict transformation (Bickmore, 2004; Debarbieux, 2003; Sebastião et al., 2013). Standing

from a comprehensive *convivencia* focus, relationships would need a certain stability and certainty in order to foster a positive transformation (Gergen, 2009; Silas Casillas and Perales Franco, 2014) in school *convivencia*.

Finally, democratic, inclusive and peaceful school *convivencia* requires the participation of all school actors and the possibility for them to make choices and to take joint actions, but also the possibility of creating alternative narratives for the collective life and the transformation of conflicts (Bickmore et al., 2017). In this sense, the collaboration *convivencia* mode developed in the classroom of teacher Marcela opens up the possibility of understanding of schools as public spaces (Hirmas and Eroles, 2008; Kaplan, 2016; Onetto, 2005) where family members and teachers can act as citizens, since they can shape agreements on how to live together in schools and in the community.[4] Developing and engaging in a collaboration mode requires awareness and recognition that stem from a notion of families as part of the school. Although, in principle at least, the parents are considered part of the school community, the analysis carried out here shows that in many cases they are conceived as additions—and other family members as sometimes poor substitutions—and not as full members of the school community. A re-positioning of the parents could also help to open the family roles to other possibilities (Abrams and Gibbs, 2002). In the same line, a democratic *convivencia* requires an understanding of students as actors capable of contributing to making decisions and transforming conflicts, and not only as objects of education or subjects of protection as has been illustrated in chapters 6, 7 and 8.

In the next and concluding chapter I will summarize the main elements and contributions of this research, discuss its limitations and shortcomings, and explore possible areas for further research into a comprehensive approach to school *convivencia*.

[4] Starting from that base, other elements related to the ensuring of rights and the relationship with the State (Jerome 2012) could also be developed, but such process would not be linearly progressive and other practices would have to be developed. Especially in terms of using the schools as spaces for relating with the State, other institutional mechanisms would have to be established or strengthened, like it is the case of the existing figure of the Councils of Social Participation (Bazdresch 2010; Zurita 2011) mentioned in chapter 3.

X. Conclusions

> Aggressive children and adolescents are part of violent families, where they do not have their parents attention because they work full time and, in the best scenario, the children are left in the care of grandparents (Arvizu, 2011)

The above cited quote taken from a newspaper article was expressed by the Director of the Crime Victims Attention Centre of Mexico's Attorney General's Office (PGR, Procuraduría General de la República) in a seminar with the Deputies Federal Chamber about bullying prevention in 2011. The statement clearly shows how the narrative of families as responsible for violence and general convivencia issues that has been explored in this research is a pervasive understanding across the country. The fact that it was produced by high level public security officials in such a nationally relevant space also shows the importance given in Mexico to concerns regarding social and school violence, an aspect crucial to understand how relationships are understood, regulated and intervened in schools. In this country, the perception of a dangerous context—linked to the government emphasis on fighting crime—as well as the recognition of the need to protect children and ensure their human rights in schools situated school convivencia as a national priority and schools are expected to take steps for improving it. As I have explained in chapter 2, school convivencia is a Spanish term used to refer to the experience of living and learning to live together, which is shaped by the multiplicity of relationships among actors in the everyday life of educational institutions. In many Mexican schools situated in harsh contexts—including the ones researched—teachers, principals, students and their families, often find that improving school convivencia is, at the very least, challenging, if not impossible, since

there is a general perception—as the above-mentioned quote states—that conflicts of convivencia originate outside of the school. The causes of convivencia issues are generally placed in families and communities that do an inappropriate job of raising and socializing the children, and school actors perceive the influence of the context as so strong that there is little room for improvement.

This study set out to explore this understanding of school *convivencia* in Mexico. Specifically, it aimed to analyse the relationships between primary schools and their local communities and to provide an explanation of what the implications of such relationships for school *convivencia* were. I examined how two Mexican primary schools and their local communities interacted and how those interactions shaped certain patterns of *convivencia* in schools, as well as their corresponding implications for peace, inclusion and participation in schools. These schools were situated in vulnerable communities in two different cities, one in Guadalajara and the other in Ciudad Obregón. During the analysis process it became evident that, first, the community was mainly understood in schools as the risk their external context constituted for school actors and, more importantly, as the embodiment of the contextual—cultural, historical, economic, social, political, etc.—characteristics that the students and their families 'brought' to school. Second, it became clear that *convivencia* was relevant for the schools' actors in terms of the problematic issues associated with it. I used these observational foci to select key institutional practices present in both schools that *a)* were performed to address issues that the actors found problematic—like violent or aggressive incidents, underachievement or the lack of school resources—and *b)* were shaped by relationships among teachers, principals, students and their families.

The main questions the research presented in this book tried to answer were the following ones:

1. What forms of relationship exist between school actors, including parents and other family members in two primary schools in Mexico?
2. How do these relationships shape and how are they shaped by more general patterns of convivencia in the schools?
3. What are the implications of the relationships between schools and families for developing peaceful, inclusive and democratic school convivencia?

This research analysed therefore the types of relationships that existed in schools, as well as their characteristics, qualities and meanings. I examined how actors participated and how they dealt with contextual features of the local communities such as diverse family configurations, violence, poverty and marginalization. The research included an overall inquiry of the actors' understandings of *convivencia* and the school practices set up to intervene and improve it. It also considered how school *convivencia* was constructed and regulated in the educational policy. I will present next the key aspects of this process and the study's main findings. I will then address its contributions and conclude by considering its limitations and highlighting possible lines for further research.

As a theoretical starting point, I placed the notion of *convivencia* at the centre of the research and argued for an analytical approach in its study (chapter 2). The theoretical framework constructed emphasised the work and improvement of *convivencia* in schools based on its relevance for learning and human rights. It also developed a distinction, based on Carbajal Padilla's classification (2013), between restrictive and comprehensive ways of understanding and intervening school *convivencia*, discussing their implications and connections to school violence, socio-emotional and moral processes, democratic citizenship, inclusion and peace processes. This framework also pointed out the gaps in the *convivencia* literature on the relationships between schools, families and communities. To address these relationships, I integrated contributions from the field of sociology of education regarding parental participation, in particular the different roles attributed to parents in the educational institutions.

Methodologically (chapter 4), I opted from an ethnographic approach that allowed me to gain a deep understanding of the complex and articulated relationships that took place in schools, and to identify which patterns are shared across different practices and how they are connected with wider meso and macro social contexts. Data was collected through participant observations and interviews with students, their mothers or other carers, teachers and principals. Additionally, I conducted a survey with students and parents, and analysed socio-demographic data, policy and school documents. Through a six-staged analysis process I developed an analytical framework based on the notions of explicit and implicit practices of *convivencia*. The former referred to the practices openly identified by the actors as work on *convivencia* and the

later, to institutional practices responding to other needs that were not recognized as work on *convivencia*, but that nevertheless had important relational interactions that shaped the patterns of living together in schools. The scheme allowed me to analyse the relationships on these practices, and to explain how they relate to the general patterns of the schools' *convivencia*, and their implications for developing peaceful, democratic and inclusive ways of living together.

This research found that there is a restrictive understanding of *convivencia* in the schools researched, in agreement with the construction presented in the educational policy (chapters 5-7). The work on *convivencia* in the schools focused on preventing or controlling students' 'bad' behaviour, and in that sense was closely linked with school discipline and a need to maintain order. Although the actors and the policies give importance to the need to protect children and their human rights, the emphasis on punitive measures directed towards misbehaving or violent students meant that:

> *a)* School violence and aggressive behaviour was only understood in terms of the students' interactions, without considering other types of violence such as violence perpetrated by adults, violence from the school as a hierarchical institution, or structural violence.
> *b)* Students' protection was mostly based on peacekeeping processes (Bickmore, 2004; Galtung, 1976) aimed at stopping the aggressive or violent behaviour of other students. Explicit formative strategies in terms of *convivencia* were scarce, and other pedagogic or curricular elements that could be associated with an improvement of *convivencia*—like group work or topics around values—were not considered part of school *convivencia*.
> *c)* In relation to the so-called '*convivencia* conflicts', the notion of conflict usually had a negative connotation that tended to promote attitudes of competition, submission and evasion, instead of negotiation and cooperation. In these cases, students were considered victims and/or perpetrators and they hardly ever adopted active roles in what were considered to be the appropriate conflict management practices, such as dialogue processes. Active roles in the explicit practices were mostly performed by the teachers, principals and in some cases by parents (chapters 6 and 7).

C*onvivencia* in these schools was therefore addressed as instrumental to reduce violence and foster school order. Its improvement was mainly considered by the actors as a way to mend the behaviour of the students, without recog-

nizing it as a constitutive part of the educational process and as an educational goal in itself. The explicit practices associated with this understanding of *convivencia* did not usually foster peace processes in the school, since they hardly changed the status, hierarchy or the relationships dynamic, and were generally not directed towards promoting other more peaceful or collaborative types of interactions among the students. These practices were also particularly unsuccessful in terms of achieving inclusion, since the students that were considered to be the 'most problematic' tended to be excluded from class activities and peer interactions as, for example, in the practices of separating students from each other (chapter 7). Since they presented a common path for all *convivencia* conflicts, the explicit practices also did not take into account the unbalanced and challenging situation of especially vulnerable and harassed students, and did not set up specific strategies to support them. The way conflicts were addressed also had implications for the relationships with the students' families, and in the case of the problematic and/or more vulnerable students, fostered a separation and mistrust among teachers and family members.

The explicit practices—associated with the restrictive understanding of *convivencia*—did not fully account for the patterns of *convivencia* at the schools. Given that they emphasised the perceived or constructed 'anomaly', the 'wrong behaviour', the 'special case' they did not consider the more common ways of relating to each other. If one understands that relationships are the core of *convivencia* and that they are produced, reproduced or transformed in the school's everyday interactions, then a wider more comprehensive view of the interactions was needed to explain the patterns of *convivencia* found at these schools. This project therefore argued for developing an understanding that considered first, the relationships among all school actors—not just students—, and second, the inclusion of other intertwined practices that are part of the experiences of living together in schools. Institutional strategies for detecting, reporting and dealing with students' underachievement, and practices to respond to the maintenance and improvement requirements of the school were analysed (chapters 8 and 9). They give evidence, first, of the importance of relational elements for the development of learning processes and construction of the schools' processes and ethos, and second, of how those practices shape the general patterns of *convivencia* in schools.

In both the explicit and tacit practices analysed, the important role that families played in the *convivencia* of the two analysed schools was evident.

Although the explicit work on *convivencia* did not focus on the relationships with families, significant interactions that included them were carried out and understandings were constructed in the schools' everyday activities that shaped the general *convivencia*, and fostered or hindered processes of participation, conflict management and inclusion. As was discussed, families were deemed responsible for the students' behaviour, difficulties in students' learning and the possibility of improving the school infrastructure, all of which were considered problematic in these two schools. In the practices performed to address these issues, particular patterns of relationships were found and four modes of *convivencia*—alliance, confrontation, detachment and collaboration—between families and schools were proposed to help understand these relationships (chapter 9). These modes grouped different types of interactions between families and teachers, which were associated with the roles of parents as supporters, partners or problems (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Vincent, 2000, 1996) and with elements of social class and gender, as well as socio-emotional and values configurations.

In explaining the relationships between families and schools, chapters 7, 8 and 9 discussed the notion of what was called in the settings 'dysfunctional families'. The term 'dysfunctional' was mostly used to refer to single-parent, reconstituted and extended families. The analysis showed, first, that these types of families—who were a majority in these two schools—were associated with the confrontation and detachment modes, and were perceived to deviate from the expected appropriate ways of participation. For most of the teachers and families relating to school through the allied mode of *convivencia*, these non-traditional families were not able to support the school or their children 'appropriately'. This research found how school practices—such as the way meetings were organized—limited the possibilities of participation of the so called 'dysfunctional families', fostering separation, confrontation and mistrust among them and the school. In contrast, in the collaboration mode the construction of the 'appropriate' families' involvement in school was changed by promoting, first, a better understanding among the teacher and her class' families of both the situations at the students' home and the school processes, and second, emphasizing co-responsibility and an avoidance of blame in conflicts, underachievement and the need to support the school economically and through manual labour. Although this mode was only found in one class, other elements found in both schools, like the perception of approachability among

teachers and families as well as high expectations of involvement, open the possibility that this mode of convivencia could be better consolidated in the schools.

Finally, this research also problematized the perceptions on the role of the schools' local communities. It gave evidence that although the harsh and vulnerable context of the students and their families had implications for the school in terms of the cultural, social and economic resources and practices, schools were not mere receptors or victims of their contexts. In these settings, multiple interactions shape the schooling experiences and have different consequences for the particular actors and the whole of the school, depending on the relational patterns they create. For example, it was found that school actors perform relational processes that separate and even exclude specific students through a disapproval of their families. These "moments of exclusion," to use Lareau and McNamara Horvat's term (1999) are reflected in the low expectations of improvement regarding behaviour or learning, in the lack of communication between some teachers and some parents, and in the rejection of other family members as appropriate carers for students. It is also reflected in the difficulty of creating a school community that relates more in terms of collaboration.

These findings were common to both schools analysed. It is important to acknowledge, however, that although this research focused on practices shared among the two schools and highlighted the common traits and some differences in the relationships that shaped these practices, each of the schools were particular in their own context and in their ways of carrying out everyday *convivencia*. I will briefly address here some of the most important characteristics of each individual school in terms of the dimensions of conflict management, inclusion and participation.

Firstly, the Ciudad Obregón School presented three traits that strongly relate to the *convivencia* relationships found in this school: a strong separation of roles among the actors, little value and acceptance to diversity and an unstable context. In relation to the first of these, most actors understood their role and participation in schools as somewhat independent from each other. They believed, as I have stated, that teachers were responsible for teaching and that the behaviour was the responsibility of the students and of their families. The separation was also reflected in a strong sense of teachers´ autonomy, where each of them was responsible of their group and the relationships with their

student; the principal in this sense respected that role and only overviewed the school process and addressed the conflicts that could not be dealt by the teachers. Interestingly, such separation had implications for the participation of students in conflict management processes. The students in general were more actively engaged than the students in Guadalajara, adopting the role of peacekeepers by participating as anti-bullying guardians and more frequently managing the conflicts by themselves through the first level practices addressed in chapter 7. The strong separation also had implications for the parents, who frequently managed conflicts among themselves without involving the teachers. The autonomy of the teachers also fostered the wide variety of styles of the 'dialogue' processes that were explained in chapter 7 and could be considered as contributing to the development of the independent and positive relationships seen in teacher Marcela's group.

In terms of inclusion, there was also a difference among the two schools in terms of how they understood behavioural, academic or well-being needs (see chapter 7 and 8) of particular students. Most of the actors in Ciudad Obregón emphasized the well-being of the majority of the students and families over the specific cases. In this sense, the teachers and principals opted to ask the families to deal with the students´ needs and problematic behaviour outside of the school, and experiences of temporarily and permanent exclusion were found in this school. Except in the case of teacher Marcela and teacher Andrés, little recognition was given to the right to education of the students who were considered problematic. Finally, the context in the Ciudad Obregón school can be considered unstable at an institutional level. In this school teachers constantly rotated and most of them openly opposed the educational reform, which not only generated uncertainty but fostered earlier retirements and the change of two principals in less than a year. Economically, the school was also more vulnerable than the school in Guadalajara—given than they did not ask for a yearly economic contribution from the families—and everyday activities were not guaranteed by the funds the school had available. This situation generated extra strain among families and with the teaching staff. In general, it can be said that the processes in Ciudad Obregón were less institutionalized than in Guadalajara and as such the relationships were more constantly being negotiated, which was challenging for the actors but also generated more frequent interactions.

The Guadalajara school, in contrast, had more stability, an orientation towards inclusion and a centralized leadership of principal and teachers, elements that shaped the type of *convivencia* relationships present in this case. In this school, the teachers had been there for many years—between 2 and 15—and there was a strong identification with the school. These teachers were also less openly opposed to the educational reform and most of them had complied with the new requirements, which increased the likelihood of remaining in this school. Although the notion of autonomy was also present there was more interconnectedness in the teaching staff than in the Ciudad Obregón school, that was reflected, among other things, in common actions including the diagnostic strategies presented in chapter 6. Differently from the principal in the Ciudad Obregón school, the principal in Guadalajara had an involved leadership style that dealt with students behavioural, academic and well-being situations frequently and, connected to this, less diversity was seen in how conflict was managed. In this school, processes were more institutionalized, in the sense that the different actors knew better what to expect from each other and there was a clearer feeling on knowing 'this are how things are done'. These processes included the economic and social participation of the parents and, partly because of this characteristic, open problematic conflicts between families and the school were less serious than in the school in Ciudad Obregón. It is important to state that the stability on the processes made the configuration of the relationships less dynamic and control and authority was more tightly exercised by most of the teachers, which in some sense gave less participation spaces for students and their families in shaping the relationships. There was a stronger separation between the school and the community, reflected for example, in the fact that family members were not allowed to openly come into the school, as they were in Ciudad Obregón.

A positive trait found in this school was a common recognition among the teaching staff of the need to guarantee the right to education of all students and of providing specific support to those with specific behavioural, academic and well-being needs. This agreement, which was constructed through several years, further strengthened the interconnectedness among teachers and fostered the development of relationships patterns based on recognition and solidarity among the different actors. It is important to recognize the role that the USAER team—presented in chapter 8—played in developing

this orientation, which gives evidence of the need for further support of teachers and families in order to develop more effective inclusive processes.

The differences found on the two analysed schools show how important it is to understand and assess the *convivencia* processes as part of a wider institutional, social and cultural context. *Convivencia* is shaped by the everyday interactions and each of the school contexts presents challenges but also possibilities for the development of its inclusive, democratic and pacific traits. The more unstable and autonomous context in Ciudad Obregón has allowed, for example, to have classes like teacher Marcela where there is an emphasis on creating a community and relationships based on trust, co-responsibility and a sense of belonging are fostered. The challenge is how to move from a class level to an institutional level that can benefit more students, families and teachers. In the case of Guadalajara, the stability and interconnectedness of the teaching staff allowed the generation of common initiatives and enabled teachers to work with families throughout the primary years of the students. The stability however also constrains the possibility to generate strong transformations in the school culture, particularly in terms of opening spaces for participation and decision for students and their families. Intervening school processes from a comprehensive approach would need to foster the recognition of how the school relational and contextual characteristics interact and how to take advantage of the opportunities presented by them to develop peaceful, inclusive and democratic *convivencia*.

In regard to the research's contributions to the academic literature, this study gave prominence to the concept of *convivencia*—and not only to its specific manifestations, general importance or associated concepts as is most common—by first making the underpinning of the notion explicit, and second by building on the restrictive and comprehensive approaches pointed out by Carbajal Padilla (2013), specifying the main elements and logics of both approaches and linking them to relevant literature on school violence and family participation. Through this theoretical frame it was possible to first contribute to the theorization of the concept from an analytical—in contrast with a normative—perspective, and second to study *convivencia* considering the community level and the participation of the schools' adults, aspects that were not consolidated in existing literature (Fierro Evans et al., 2013a; Furlán and Spitzer, 2013).

The two analytic schemes that were referred above can also be considered a contribution. The first one proposes to analyse *convivencia* through the

notion of implicit and explicit practices. Such framing allows to keep the interactions among the actors situated which protects against the oversimplification present in other studies (Perales Franco et al., 2014). The second scheme is based on the construction of the four modes of *convivencia*—alliance, confrontation, detachment and collaboration—to examine the relationships between schools and families. This scheme, on the one hand, highlights the importance of family—school relationships in *convivencia* patterns and its importance in considering families to improve *convivencia*. On the other hand, the *convivencia* modes contribute to the parental participation literature, by addressing the dynamic nature or relationships between schools and families—not only parents—, and the diversity of the characteristics and modes of interactions of those parents or families that are considered problematic for schools.

Although the research findings are based on the situations of two primary schools, they can help to address broader issues regarding school *convivencia* in Mexico. The proposed framework, and its emphasis on the patterns and quality of relationships could also contribute to the analysis of the school contexts in other countries. Based on the evidence presented in this research, specific modifications in the way *convivencia* is approached in schools can be recommended. It is necessary to consider, first, that everyday relational processes are a constitutive part of the learning outcomes and of the quality of the school outcomes. In this sense, the more comprehensive approach to school *convivencia* should be promoted, changing the emphasis on controlling the student behaviour. Schools therefore should base their *convivencia* work on a notion that considers the situated, contextual relationships between all school actors—not only the students—as the constitutive elements of it. Improving convivencia requires as well an acknowledgement of the value and need to consider and integrate students and their families as agents in the school, and to treat them as capable of making decision and shaping the *convivencia* configurations.

Developing sustainable democratic, peaceful and inclusive *convivencia* requires, therefore, a recognition and transformation of everyday interactions to shape patterns of relationships that actively and intentionally develop trust, care, respect, communication, sense of belonging and co-responsibility. This certainly can be fostered by particular, explicit projects and interventions, but it might be more effective—particularly given the workload of teachers, but also of the students and their carers—to reflect, identify, shape, transform

or consolidate the common practices already present in schools. If actors are able to identify, for example, the relational implication of competition patterns and how this might have implications for solidarity and collaboration, they could opt to use other ways of fostering engagement among classes. Part of this including recognising how the taught curriculum and its enactment can be used or should be transformed to promote democratic, inclusive and peaceful *convivencia*. These actions to improve *convivencia* most like will have to be different among the classes and certainly across different schools, given that in order to respond appropriately they must be adapted to the particular needs and cultural and social context characteristics of the actors.

The schools analysed in this research seemed to react to the problems of *convivencia* and other conflicts, without necessarily promoting a differentiated way of relating to each other from the one traditionally established in school, family and community contexts. The findings of this research show how limited this approach is and points to the need for wider understanding and actions to positively transform *convivencia* and to address the problematic issues identified and experienced in these schools. Improving school *convivencia* requires an explicit commitment by the whole educational system to actively prevent and counteract exclusion at an institutional practice level, but also at a symbolic level, dealing as well with some of the cultural narratives that act in conjunction with specific practices hinder equity and inclusion of some of the students in these schools.

This entails the inclusion of all students' families since "one cannot be for children and against their families" (Koerner and Hulsebosch, 1996, p. 353) and would include a transformation of practices that are not necessarily considered as work on *convivencia*, such as setting teachers-parents meetings with enough time to foster participation of working-parents, promoting multiple communication spaces and giving more economic resources for schools in vulnerable areas so that the cost of sustaining the school does not lie with families. It would require as well more radically transforming the notion of what an 'appropriate' family is. Although there is evidence of that changes in family dynamics might represent risks for children (see studies presented in González, 2009; INEGI, 2016g), setting up school-families relationships mainly based on negative assumptions about 'non-traditional' families hinders, in the end, the possibility of providing a better school experience for the students. It restricts the possibility of understanding and taking advantage of the resources

the families possess (Moll et al., 1992), or of achieving effective collaboration, like the participation of grandparents and other relatives in the caring of the children. Further, it limits the possibility of understanding the families' situations, and of fostering care and protection for the students that might need it, as in the case of family violence or children abuse.

It is also necessary that the understanding of students and their families´ situation emphasizes care and co-responsibility, and that the better knowledge of their situations is not used, in contrast, to attribute blame and limit the possible responses to the students' particular needs. In this sense, teacher training that helps to understand how contexts of poverty, vulnerability and marginalization relate to educational process and children´s general well-being can be fostered to promote critical consciousness of teachers that work and/or live in these areas. Such spaces could open the possibility of accessing further resources to respond to students behavioural and academic challenges, while respecting and promoting the children and their families´ characteristics, configurations and dignity. Ideally these processes would allow participants to identify the possibilities that the schools have to respond to the issues presented, but also to recognise the strengths and knowledge the families and children bring to the schools.

The findings presented in this study are, however, limited and further research would need to be undertaken in order to better understand the processes of school *convivencia* and the relationships between communities and school. As was stated in the introduction, the community-school relationships were studied in terms of their implications *for* school processes, and since families were the main representative of the community, the focus was placed there. Broader studies are required, therefore, to analyse the participation of other community actors in school and not only families, such as educational authorities, community groups, students from higher secondary schools and universities, public security and DIF officials, etc. Much can be gained as well to study family-school relationships in terms of the families' home and neighbourhood processes in relation to participation, conflict management and inclusion, to see how patterns of living together are formed and what the relations and implications might be for processes that occur in schools.

This study opted to include the relationships of students, teachers, principals, parents and other family members, focusing on how the different types of actors related to each other. It would be important to study as well how the

actors establish *convivencia* patterns among themselves. Although there is academic literature regarding students' *convivencia*—and of course of their participation in school violence—the work on *convivencia* among teachers is more limited and should be explored to attend to aspects that remain unresolved in this thesis, such as how the notion of 'autonomy' seems to prevent sharing among teachers *convivencia* experiences that can be considered more positive (see chapter 8). It is also crucial to continue to research how, at a class level, alternative models of *convivencia* are performed, especially since this research showed that even in contexts that promote a restrictive understanding of *convivencia,* particular teachers promoted spaces where other types of relationships were possible—as was the case of teacher Marcela or, albeit in a more limited manner, of teacher Beatriz. In this sense, the cultural agreement of schools regarding teachers´ autonomy might also work to create alternative spaces for transformation, and therefore it would be valuable to have a better understanding of how they came to be and how such practices can be fostered at an institutional and policy level. Further analysis is also needed regarding the 'detached' families who can be understood as be the most vulnerable. Even if this research managed to include their experiences, since they were not often in school, less was known about their family and neighbourhood situations than of the families involved in alliance or confrontation *convivencia* modes.

Finally, this study also opted to use an analytical approach to school *convivencia* that was oriented towards a more comprehensive stance (Carbajal Padilla, 2013; Fierro Evans et al., 2013a; Nieto and Bickmore, 2016) and that constructed its importance in terms of schools' learning outcomes and, more broadly, in terms of promoting ways of living together and learning to live together in schools. This approach was useful since it positions *convivencia* as a constitutive part of school processes and the promotion of a *convivencia* that is peaceful, inclusive and democratic as an educational goal in itself. The study opened up to include a variety of school practices and to see the implications of the relationships in connection to the dimensions of *a)* democratic citizenship and participation, *b)* diversity and inclusion, *c)* peace and conflict management and *d)* socio-emotional and moral processes that were presented in chapter 2. To continue to develop the comprehensive convivencia approach it would be valuable to assess possible links with other related frameworks to strengthen the commitment towards equity and social justice as orienting criteria of the comprehensive approach. It would be important to further explore,

on the one hand, the literature regarding human rights-respecting schools as well as restorative justice approaches in relation to peacebuilding, and, on the other hand, alternative understandings of school violence and relationships from a sociology of childhood perspective.

The analytical approach to explaining *convivencia* could be strengthened further as well by using other conceptual apparatuses to research relationship patterns through different lenses. Here, I established some links with ideas of cultural, economic and affective capital, and, briefly, to gender. A more consistent intersectional analysis (see for example Liasidou, 2016) that links together elements of class, gender, race/ethnicity, disability, etc. could be used in future research to explore in more depth how these characteristics relate to the schools' models of *convivencia*. A better understanding of school convivencia could also include further constructions and analysis regarding power. In this research I have discussed elements related to hierarchy and authority, as well as symbolic configurations that integrate power configurations; however, a more consistent analysis of how power could or should be understood from a comprehensive *convivencia* perspective and how it is integrated in the models of *convivencia* could be fruitful to analyse the spaces of resistance and the opportunities for transformation.

To conclude, it is necessary to state that just as important as the recognition of the active role of schools—and principally of the ways that the authority of teachers and principals can shape relationship patterns—is the recognition that they are not the only responsible actors for fostering relationships. Public media and opinion also have an impact more broadly on the perceptions of increase violence and risk, and magnify the emphasis on security and punishment, focusing often on the 'threat' presented by vulnerable young people and their families. Mexican educational policy also sets a frame, as it was presented, of how to construct school *convivencia*, in terms of the general organization and functioning of the schools and more concretely, through the accountability demands they impose to teachers. The educational system and its policy would need therefore to orient and support the transformation of the notion and practices of *convivencia* in schools. I would specially encourage fostering the improvement of school processes through guidance and assessment in the process, more than stressing the accountability through evidence products, especially the ones designed from the top that do not allow for contextual adaptations.

To develop more inclusive, democratic and peaceful relationship in schools it is necessary therefore to encourage understandings of the social reality, constructing educational policies and school practices that not only react to perceived problematic issues and highlight the difficulties of the social life in common. It is essential to actively construct and perform alternative ways of relating to each other in and through schools. By proposing a way of identifying relationship patterns and emphasizing the need to consider all actors, this book attempted to show not only the complexity of living together in schools, but the constitutive role relationships have to reach the expected outcomes and social functions of educational institutions. My hope is that his research can lead to further analysis on how the right of education can be ensured in schools, giving insights to the lived processes that shape possibilities of constructing peaceful, democratic and inclusive relationships.

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In Mexico, as in other Latin American countries, school relationships—crucial for ensuring the right to education—are framed under the concept of school *convivencia*, which refers to the experiences of living together and learning to live together. In Mexico the need to improve *convivencia* has gone hand in hand with concerns about citizen protection and social violence. Educational policies have fostered the role of schools in this regard, but schools are often perceived as victims of an external harsh context that hinders the possibility of transformation.

The ethnographic research presented in this book analyses the relationships between two primary Mexican schools and their local communities, particularly in terms of families' engagement, and the implications of such relationships for school *convivencia*. Educational policy and 15 school practices related to processes of conflict management, inclusion and participation are examined. From this analysis, four modes of *convivencia* between families and schools are presented: *alliance, confrontation, detachment* and *collaboration*.

The author argues the need to change the orientation from the work on school *convivencia* from students' behaviour control to the development of practices that effectively construct processes of inclusion, participation and peacebuilding. The book also presents evidence of the resources and practices that are already present in schools, that could be used as foundations towards this aim.

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