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Commitment as Struggle:
Teachers Serving Students in the Face of Socioeconomic Adversity

by

Miguel Angel Ordenes Gonzalez

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Heinrich Mintrop, Chair
Professor Erin Murphy-Graham
Professor Claude Fischer

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ABSTRACT

Commitment as Struggle:
Teachers Serving Students in the Face of Socioeconomic Adversity

By

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Heinrich Mintrop, Chair

Through an in-depth, multi-case study of five schools and forty-seven teachers, I examine how teacher commitment to students plays out under conditions of socioeconomic adversity in elementary and middle schools. Relying on different sources of literature, I theorize that commitment is the degree of educators' determination to respond to student needs. Empirically, I explore how individual teachers perceive and respond to student needs in a context where students bring more needs than educators can handle. I also analyze whether conventional factors drawn from the literature are associated with they way teachers respond to student needs.

The findings show that teachers express their commitment as a trade-off between responsiveness and boundary-setting in the face of student needs. In the midst of this struggle, teachers are forced to draw a line between the needs that they are able to handle and the ones that they are not. Following this rationale, four types of commitment were identified: alienated, restricted, conditional, and boundless. These four types of commitment describe a spectrum of determination to respond to student needs from the lowest (alienated) to the highest (boundless). Findings also show that none of the factors theorized – expectations, self-efficacy, ethic of service, deservingness, and self-interest – distinguish teachers with stronger commitment from those with lower commitment in a straightforward manner. Rather, a set of more subtle factors differentiates more committed teachers from less committed teachers: hope, internal locus of control, a sense of meaning from transforming social disparities, valuing students as morally deserving, and meaningful integration of organizational demands with student needs.

This study makes three contributions. It understands commitment as a phenomenon that involves behaviors and attitudes. It advances a new understanding of commitment as a trade-off between responding to student needs and boundary-setting, which softens the conventional dichotomy between committed and not-committed educators. Finally, it offers a set of novel attributes that describes higher commitment to students in the midst of the struggle to serve children in extraordinarily adverse circumstances.

Implications indicate that school leaders and policy makers should pay careful attention to teachers' struggles to serve students who bring more needs than educators can handle. Understanding this discrepancy may lead to better strategies to soften the

effects of poverty on teacher work. Also, understanding commitment as a trade-off between responsiveness and boundary-setting opens a space of influence for school leaders to gauge and support teacher work beyond the conventional dichotomy between "committed" and "not-committed" educators.

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INTRODUCTION

Educating the poorest students is an extremely difficult endeavor. Study after study has shown that children coming from poverty perform systematically lower than those coming from middle-class settings. Literature on schools facing challenging circumstances has shown that organizations that serve the poorest students persistently fail, partly due to the multiple obstacles associated with an adverse socioeconomic environment (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Easton, & Luppescu, 2010; Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, & Russ, 2004). Living in poverty and marginalization may expose children to a myriad of adverse circumstances that create disadvantages (Jenvey, 2013). Students who have experienced adversity bring to schools thorny real-life experiences and socio-emotional needs that make the job of schooling poor children much more difficult (Berliner, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Adversity experienced by students in their lives can create adversities for teachers on a daily basis: facing students who are hungry, unhealthy, neglected, and familiar with violence. Dealing with students who are unable or unwilling to concentrate on learning or to abide by classroom norms can challenge teachers' everyday work.

Educating students in the margins of society requires teachers to act and advocate in the interest of students who are often below the teachers' own social class and their own expectations of performance and comportment. Serving students with these characteristics requires a distinct *commitment* on the part of educators to achieve educational success in the face of adversity (Gu & Day, 2007; Mintrop & Ordenes, 2017; Mintrop & Charles, 2017). Having committed teachers to serve the poorest children is a pervasive concern for policymakers who look to incentivize teachers to deliver the benefits of their policy to students. It is also relevant for principals who search for and encourage educators to go the "extra mile" to serve the most challenging students. Despite the acute necessity of teacher commitment for students facing the adversities of poverty, the research on this phenomenon is surprisingly underdeveloped.

Although there are a number of studies that focus on teacher commitment, they do not necessarily pay attention to teacher commitment to students. The primary reason for this scarcity is that empirical research on teacher commitment has referred mostly to organizational and professional commitment (Dannetta, 2002; Park, 2005; Tyree, 1996), with commitment to students sometimes folded into professional commitment (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). When studies focus on commitment to students on its own, they tend to narrow it to commitment to student academic achievement (Kushman, 1992; Nir, 2002; Park, 2005), but without specifically focusing on how socioeconomic adversity may shape this commitment (see Cheung, 2009 as an exception). The purpose of this dissertation is to fill this gap. My study contributes to research on how teacher commitment to students plays out under conditions of socioeconomic adversity in elementary and middle schools. The specific contribution of my research lies in understanding commitment as a phenomenon that involves attitudes and behaviors, putting the category of adversity front and center.

I examine the phenomenon across teachers and schools, taking an inductive approach to build up from the ground how educators express commitment towards poor students. By conducting an in-depth, multi-case study of five schools and forty-seven teachers, I analyze teachers' attitudes as well as their self-reported and observed practices

that express that commitment. I explore the strength of commitment across teachers and the determinants of varying strengths of commitment. The study takes place in Chilean schools that are part of a highly unequal and segregated education system along class lines (OECD, 2013).

The Urgency and Relevance of Teacher Commitment

On a day-to-day basis, teachers, by the nature of their work, are confronted with and exposed to the needs of students. In order to achieve academic success for all students, educators strive to attend to these needs (Anderson, Lubig, & Smith, 2012). However, this mission becomes extremely difficult when it serves the needs of the poorest students in society. For teachers who serve these students, the task of achieving success is quite formidable (Bryk et al., 2010; Levin, 2006). Multiple needs associated with socioeconomic and cultural deprivation may compound the challenges teachers face in interacting with students in high-poverty.

Teacher turnover has been found rampant in schools serving low-income, racially diverse, and low-achieving student populations (Allen, Burgess, & Mayo, 2012; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Evidence suggests that the racial and socioeconomic composition of a school's student population may be a central factor associated with teachers' decisions to change schools (Freeman, Scafidi, & Sjoquist, 2005), even stronger than salary (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004). Patterns of teacher turnover may be related to high-stress symptoms that teachers experience when they work with challenging students who exhibit disruptive behaviors (Abel & Sewell, 1999) or who struggle to engage in learning dynamics (Herman, Hickmon-Rosa, & Reinke, 2018). Teachers may also feel unprepared for working with student populations that experience life challenges and who are hard to reach with the means employed in schools and classrooms (Anderson et al., 2012). Lack of capacity can lead educators to experience a low sense of efficacy that could also contribute to stress and burnout patterns as well (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Siwatu, 2011). Some educators, under these circumstances, might distance themselves from students by stressing symbolic distinctions based on social stereotypes about poverty and exclusion (Gorski, 2017; Robinson, 2007). In the literature, these beliefs associated with students' low social status are held responsible for deficit-thinking (Valencia, 1997), low expectations for student success (Weinstein, 2002), and exclusionary practices with respect to the quality of service students receive (Anagnostopoulos, 2003, 2006).

We live in an era of policy making in which policy makers have trained their attention on teachers' willingness to exert effort on behalf of students (Fuhrman & O'Day, 1996). Policy designs, such as high-stakes accountability systems, have aimed at shoring up teacher motivation and commitment through extrinsic incentives, such as monetary rewards, performance pressures, and sanctions (Mintrop & Órdenes, 2017). A discourse of "failing schools" and "no excuses" (Carter & Meyerson, 2000) has tended to shift the blame from structural inequalities to putative deficiencies in teacher performance dispositions (Goldstein & Beutel, 2009; Ullucci & Howard, 2015). The spectacular failure of accountability designs, such as the No Child Left Behind policy in the United States (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009) that primarily targeted schools serving poor students, behooves us to thoroughly rethink our understanding of teacher motivation

and commitment under conditions of adversity and poverty.

Adversity in Teachers' Work

Poverty matters, and paradoxically, this evidence has been systematically neglected when policies aim to close the achievement gap (Berliner, 2013; Berliner, 2009; Ladd, 2012). We know that poverty generates an array of pernicious effects on children. Compared with children coming from higher social strata, poor children are overwhelmingly more exposed to adverse social and physical environments (Ullucci & Howard, 2015). Children living in poverty are more likely to have inadequate housing, limited access to public services, and exposure to polluted environments. They can experience poorer nutrition or have worse access to health care. They can encounter more chaotic or unstable family circumstances, fewer nurturing or supportive relationships, and more violence or abuse within their families or neighborhoods (Berliner, 2009; Evans, 2004; Jensen, 2009; Metzler, Merrick, Klevens, Ports, & Ford, 2017; Ullucci & Howard, 2015). Adverse childhood experiences can trigger a cascade of negative consequences, including social, emotional, and cognitive impairment (Felitti et al., 1998). These factors create disadvantages for children that make their academic readiness and success tentative (Engle & Black, 2008).

When at school, children convey these experiences to the classroom. Being outside of the control of teachers (Berliner, 2009), these experiences impact students' emotional and behavioral disposition to establish meaningful connections with teachers (Wilkinson, 2016). In a time of increasingly powerful standards of quality or performance, challenges due to poverty and adversity are often coded or classified in terms of emotional and behavioral disorders, learning difficulties, special needs, poor performance, low attendance, tardiness, or lack of parental support. Sub-standard conditions in students' lives play out daily in the classroom and create important challenges for teachers (Kern, 2015; Wehby & Kern, 2014).

Adverse circumstances have "the potential or actual ability to create adverse outcomes for the individual" (Taylor, 1991, p. 67). The experience of adversity can produce, on the part of teachers, feelings of being challenged in their core competencies and their own needs for personal safety and well-being (Hart, 1994; Mintrop & Charles, 2017). Core competencies include factors like ensuring order, keeping work flow, or maintaining respectful teacher-student interactions in the classroom, and challenges to these competencies have potential consequences for commitment to students. Extraordinary dedication and steady effort investment can be required to deal with such problematic circumstances, and a distinct commitment to serve students despite the odds seems necessary. Although traditionally teachers were portrayed as intrinsically motivated and committed (Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1981), scholars have acknowledged that that their commitment cannot be assumed (Dannetta, 2002; Leithwood, Menzies, & Jantzi, 1994; Reyes, 1990).

Adversity in the Chilean Context

In Chile, one out of four children below the age of 14 lives in the condition of poverty or extreme poverty (UNICEF, 2016). These circumstances often preclude them to meet their basic subsistence needs (Díaz et al., 2016). In urban areas, poor children are also segregated in "ghettos" of poverty where social problems such as crime and unemployment abound and access to social services are scarce (Díaz et al., 2016; Flores, 2008; Larrañaga & Sanhueza, 2007; Otero, Carranza, & Contreras, 2016). These children are also a great distance from their peers of high-middle class in the social hierarchy due to the rampant inequality that characterizes Chilean society (Núñez & Tartakowsky, 2011).

Evidence in Chile has shown that poverty and segregation of the poor negatively affect aspects such as preschool attendance, school dropout, and lagging behind grade-level in school (Larrañaga & Sanhueza, 2007). At the school level, socioeconomic status (SES) of students' families is the strongest predictor of academic performance (Elacqua, 2012; Mizala & Torche, 2012), and segregation strengthens the effect of poverty on student outcomes (Flores, 2008; Otero et al., 2016).

Segregation and inequality of Chilean schools have been proven to be high by international standards as well. For instance, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has shown that Chile has one of the most socioeconomically segregated educational systems among the countries that participated in the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) evaluation in terms of student composition and outcomes (OECD, 2013).

Schools with high concentrations of marginalized students do not just face the pernicious effect of poverty but also the enormous pressure from the Chilean government to fulfill expectations of academic performance (Falabella, 2014). Inspired by public management[1] (PM) principles, teachers in Chile are incentivized to reach specific goals measured by student achievement in the provision of educational service, otherwise they confront consequences. These demands force teachers to face the needs of all their students to make them perform. Under these circumstances, teachers must be able to adapt the curricular demands to the school context and to specific student needs, so they can engage students in meaningful learning processes.

Thus, the context of Chile brings into sharp relief two conditions that can shed light on the phenomenon of teacher commitment under adverse circumstances: the experience of pernicious adversity and inequality in the classroom as well as the insistence of policy makers on holding teachers accountable for their students' performance.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is structured in five chapters. In Chapter 1, I provide the relevant background of the problem of teacher commitment to students and I craft a theoretical framework drawing concepts from the literatures on organizational commitment in the

[1] In simple terms, this doctrine refers to a widespread and sustained effort to replace the old public administration with a logic centered in the idea of running-the-government-like-a-business (Aucoin, 1990; Hood, 1991; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000).

workplace, commitment to clients in human services, and especially commitment in the educational sector. In Chapter 2, I describe the methodology, sampling, data collection techniques, and data analysis. Chapter 3 begins the report of findings. I capture "commitment" in several steps (explained further below). I explore how teachers experience student adversity in their daily interaction with poor students, perceive student needs in the nexus of adversity, and describe self-reported behaviors responding to students needs or disregarding the needs perceived as too difficult. These steps enable me to classify different types and degrees of commitment to students. Finally, I complement teachers' classifications with observational and reputation data. Chapter 4 takes this categorization of teacher commitment as a point of departure going deeper into teachers' struggle to respond to students' difficulties in the classroom, characterizing each type of commitment, and describing teachers' justifications of their behaviors toward students. In Chapter 5, I examine factors that may explain these different types and strengths of commitment in the face of adversity. In the final chapter, I discuss findings, reconceptualize commitment, and locate the contributions of this study to the field. I draw practical conclusions for leaders who look for better ways to lead teachers in schools that serve poor and marginalized students, and for policy makers in search of policy designs that can strengthen teacher commitment within these contexts.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

In this chapter, I review the relevant literature to inform my study, drawing relevant concepts and evidence from three bodies of literature. First, from the literature on commitment in the workplace, I highlight the basic elements defining commitment in the workplace. I draw a definition of commitment that is functional to the purpose of this research, and I identify types of commitments that help study commitment to people. Second, I look to the literature on human services in order to understand the behavioral consequences of public servants expressing different types of commitment to clients. From this literature, I draw the distinction between responsiveness and boundary definition, making sense of how different types of commitment have implications for workers' behaviors. Third, I review literature on commitment in the education sector. From this literature, I sharpen the focus on teacher commitment to students, and I identify the main determinants of this commitment. Finally, in bringing these various strands together, I develop a framework for analyzing teacher commitment to students facing socioeconomic adversity in relationship to the beliefs that teachers hold about their students and the practices that they deploy.

Commitment in the Workplace

Since its origins in sociology and social psychology, commitment has been a central concept to explain consistency of human behavior (Becker, 1960; Brickman, 1987; Johnson, 1973; Kanter, 1968). Intuitively, the concept describes a quality of being dedicated to something, an ideal that inspires action, an engagement that directs behavior, or an obligation to persist in a course of action or hold a promise.

Commitment is a central category in research and theorizing on organizational behavior as an explanation for work related behaviors (Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004; Morrow, 1983; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Most of the effort to define and operationalize this concept has come from organizational research. Although not directly addressing commitment to people, I draw important conceptual insights from this line of inquiry for the theorizing of teacher commitment to students.

What is Commitment?

While the concept has been extensively used in organizational research, there has been considerable lack of clarity about the nature of commitment, what forms it can take, what are its targets, and how it shapes worker behavior (Brown, 1996; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Morrow, 1983; Scholl, 1981). Several attempts to capture the nature of commitment have been made in sociology, social psychology, and organizational behavior (e.g. Becker, 1960; Brickman, 1987; Brown, 1996; Johnson, 1973; Kanter, 1968; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Morrow, 1983; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). For instance, for Kiesler, (1971), commitment is "the pledging or binding of the individual to behavioral acts" (p. 30). For Mowday et al. (1982), commitment is the "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (p.27). For Brickman (1987), it is "a force that stabilizes individual

behaviors under circumstances where the individual would otherwise be tempted to change that behavior" (p. 2). What most of these definitions have in common was highlighted by Meyer & Herscovitch (2001) who, after looking for the common denominator of multiple definitions across disciplines, arrived at the conclusion that definitions make reference to the fact that commitment to the organization is "(a) a stabilizing or obliging force, that (b) gives direction to behavior" (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p. 301).

Commitment differs from other similar concepts, for instance, work motivation. While work motivation is associated with situation-specific arousal of energy expended to reach a goal or get a specific job done (Pinder, 1998), commitment is about sustaining broader patterns of behavior consistent with individual or collective beliefs and values (Kiesler, 1971). Thus, commitment may influence behavior independently of other motives and may lead the individual to persist in a course of action even in the face of conflicting motives (Brickman, 1987; Brown, 1996; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Scholl, 1981).

Also, it is widely accepted in the literature on organizational commitment that an individual can be committed to one or more targets (Brown, 1996; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). However, there is less clarity about the nature of the target to which the individual may be committed. Definitions of commitment in the workplace vary in terms of what is the object or target of commitment, for instance, commitment to the organization (Mowday et al., 1982), to goals (Locke & Latham, 2002), or to the profession (Blau, 1985). But commitment can also be associated to courses of action, for instance, commitment to change (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) explain that a target of commitment may be an entity or a course of action, and that being committed to an entity or a course of action are not substitute targets but may be complementary. In their own words:

> When commitment is considered to be directed at an entity, the behavioral consequences are often implied, if not stated explicitly. Similarly, when commitment is considered to be a course of action, the entity to which that behavior is relevant can often be inferred even when not stated explicitly (p. 309).

It is important to highlight that commitment to an entity or target (e.g., students, organization) and commitment to a course of action (e.g., proactive actions to support students' well-being) are two sides of the same coin. Therefore, understanding commitment to a specific target implies that attention be paid to the behavioral consequences of that commitment as well.

Commitment as a force gives direction to individual behavior in benefit of a particular target or entity of commitment. In the case of this research, the target of commitment is defined up front: students. However, I will need to specify the nature of the binding force and what constitutes a committed course of action when educators serve students facing adversity.

Johnson (1973) and Stebbins (1970) highlight the idea that commitment can be voluntary and self-expressive or it can be experienced as an obligation to continue a course of action even against an individual's own volition. Brickman (1987) explains that these expressions of commmitment are not contradictory but they are what makes

commitment a unique concept in that it may encompass both experiences simultaneously in one individual.

Brickman (1987) elaborates on this distinction and state that the "binding force" of commitment can be experienced simultaneously as a positive disposition toward the target – I want to – and the acceptance of negative consequences for being committed to this target – I have to. For instance, a teacher entering the profession does so because she or he likes working with children. However, by doing so, she or he also has to accept the low wage and precarious status of the profession. According to Brickman, having these two sides in mind simultaneously might create cognitive dissonance that keeps the individual in a constant tension between a positive disposition towards the object and a negative one that needs to be overcome with effort.

From this point of view, commitment can take different shapes depending on which side of commitment is emphasized over time, i.e. the positive side –voluntary or self-expressive – or the negative side – obligation. The side of the commitment that is emphasized will depend on the relationship between the committed individual with the target of commitment. This constant tension can be experienced as a struggle between internal desires or beliefs to keep the commitment and the call of duty to sustain a course of action (Brickman, 1987). Thus, commitment involves persistence or determination in the midst of a struggle to keep a course of action. For Brickman, in this struggle lies the nature of commitment.

Types of Commitment

The literature on organizational commitment has made clear that commitment can take different forms, although there is no consensus in the forms that commitment may take (Brown, 1996; Jaros, Jermier, Koehler, & Sincich, 1993; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). For instance, conceptualizations have identified different forms of attitudinal commitment such as moral commitment, affective commitment, identification commitment, calculative commitment, or continuance commitment (Jaros et al., 1993; Kanter, 1968; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday et al., 1982).

Research on commitment in education has focused on moral commitment and calculative commitment (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972; Leithwood et al., 1994; Nir, 2002). Moral commitment describes the internalization of the beliefs, values, and norms that helps the individual keep their course of action toward the object of commitment, beyond self-interest (Etzioni, 1975; Jaros et al., 1993). For instance, scholars in Public Service Motivation have found that public employees feel committed to work in favor of others' well-being and for the meaning associated to the work itself (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). In this context, Shamir (1991) has described this kind of commitment as an expression of a worker's beliefs and values oriented to fulfill moral obligations in work-related behavior.

Commitment can have also a calculative base. When a worker is tied to an object mediated by a calculative rationality that pursues strategic goals for maximizing their self-interest, then we can describe it as a calculative commitment (Becker, 1960; Etzioni, 1975; Johnson, 1973). When commitment is based on calculation, workers presumably decide whether or not to continue or invest effort in their work as a result of an implicit cost-benefit analysis. Concerns like workloads, monetary remuneration, or status are front and center in workers' considerations. The "new" public management (NPM) reforms that started influencing the governance of organizations of the public sector in

the late 1980's started from this assumption. Assuming public sector agents as self-interested workers, this movement used managerial techniques that appeal to agents' self-interest to incentive them to deliver good service to people (Christensen & Lægreid, 2011).

According to Meyer & Herscovitch (2001), commitment can take different shapes in a continuum between moral commitment or calculative commitment. A combination of different forms of commitment is referred to as a mindset, i.e. "a frame of mind or psychological state that compels an individual toward a course of action" (p. 303). Here, it is important to highlight that, depending on the type of commitment – either moral or calculative – emphasized in this mindset, there will be behavioral implications for the course of action that the worker will take on behalf of the object of commitment.

How this mindset is composed in the tension between forms of moral and calculative commitment may be critical for human service organizations, including schools, where clients are common targets of workers' commitment. In these institutions, workers are usually exposed to working conditions and client needs that challenge them in a way that may affect their commitment to clients. In the next section, I briefly introduce the literature on street-level bureaucrats. This literature shows how different emphases in commitments lead to different behaviors towards clients.

Commitment of Human Service Workers

In human service organizations, moral and calculative forms of commitment seem to co-exist in tension. On one hand, workers appeal to moral commitment to justify their service to clients' needs. On the other hand, they also must fulfill work obligations that are directly related with their self-interest as employees. This tension between self-interest and service is captured in Lipsky's (2010) model of "street-level bureaucrats." Street-level bureaucrats are public servants who normally interact with clients in the course of their work (e.g., social workers, nurses, and, teachers) and who have a high degree of discretion over how they execute their functions with clients. When this work is performed under challenging circumstances in which workers perennially battle a mismatch between clients' needs for care and the lack of time and energy to satisfy those needs, self-preservation may result in defensiveness, distancing, and alienation (Lipsky, 2010) which compromises commitment to clients. Under these circumstances, frontline workers engage in a set of behaviors to cope with client demands with the resources at hand. Particularly, public employees tend to ration services, insulate themselves from personal closeness to clients, and exclude from consideration those deemed undeserving of the workers' care due to lower social status or some presumed moral deficiency. Lipsky's formulation put the emphasis on the structural working conditions that push human service workers to behave in similar ways.

In the last decade, a series of studies have revisited Lipsky's notion of street-level bureaucrats and have claimed that street-level bureaucrats' responses to challenges show more variation when it comes to serving the mismatch between client needs and insufficient resources (Baviskar, 2013; Baviskar & Winter, 2017; Tummers, Bekkers, Vink, & Musheno, 2015; Tummers, Steijn, & Bekkers, 2012; Winter, 2002). According to these refinements and elaborations, public servants have room to exercise more agency in determining their behavioral responses towards challenging working conditions and

the overload of client needs. Frontline workers can develop coping mechanisms that define distance from clients, but they can also select coping mechanisms that maintain more responsiveness to client needs.

In a recent systematic review of the literature on street-level bureaucrats over the last thirty years, Tummers et al. (2015) identify three families of behavioral responses, communicating different levels of commitment: i) moving towards clients, ii) moving away from clients, and iii) moving against clients. Moving towards clients refers to workers' behaviors that adapt pragmatically to fulfill client needs, which is an expression of coping for the clients' benefit. Moving away from clients refers to behaviors in which workers avoid meaningful interactions with clients. Moving against clients refers to behaviors that reveal confrontations with clients. The latter two patterns illustrate coping mechanisms that favor the self-interest or self-preservation of frontline workers.

This literature suggests that moral commitment is related to courses of actions oriented to develop coping mechanisms that are more responsive to client needs, even in conditions of adversity. This moral commitment is based on the social constructions of the moral deservingness of the target population. On the other side, a calculative self-interested approach to work seems to be associated with coping mechanisms that remove the worker from client needs (Baviskar, 2013; Baviskar & Winter, 2017; Tummers et al., 2015; Winter, 2002). In these cases, the calculative approach takes over in detriment of their commitment to clients, leading workers to prioritize their own well-being as employees. This strategy to cope with client needs is characterized by setting boundaries in front of client needs, which may impoverish the service provided to clients (Lipsky, 2010).

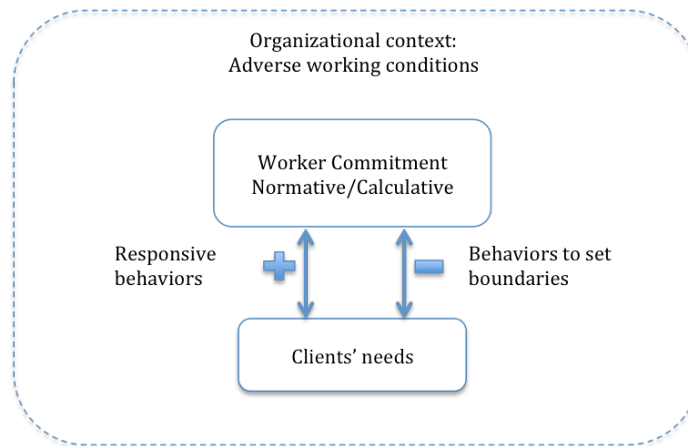

Figure 1.1 Conceptual summary street-level bureaucrats' commitment to clients

In the above figure, I summarize worker commitment as moral and calculative forms of commitment. The figure illustrates commitment in relationship to client needs. Depending on the type of commitment that is emphasized – either moral or calculative, frontline workers will cope with client needs either by being responsive or by setting boundaries. Responsiveness or boundary definition will depend on the relationship between the worker and the clients.

Commitment in the Education Field

In education, the concept of commitment has been extensively used both in the rhetoric of policymakers and among educational researchers to describe general positive attitudes or mindsets of educators toward their careers, work, and workplaces (Coladarci, 1992; Nias, 1981; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). Several decades ago, researchers started to turn their attention to teacher commitment as a potential determinant of educators' performance (Reyes, 1990). Researchers realized that many of the problems diagnosed in the educational system were related to the struggle of the teaching profession. High turnover, burnout, abandonment of the profession, and low service-quality were identified as pervasive problems in education (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1987). Thus, concerns about the antecedents, development, and outcomes associated with teacher commitment gained momentum.

Scholars have studied teacher commitment using different theoretical conceptualizations and in reference to multiple types of commitment. This literature has described commitment as a multidimensional and sometimes ambiguous concept (Kushman, 1992; Nir, 2002; Tyree, 1996). Echoing the earlier discussion, comprehensive reviews of the concept of teacher commitment as an integrative concept have found that the common denominator across definitions refers to a psychological identification or attachment of the individual with an object that takes special meaning and importance for the individual (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Leithwood et al., 1994). Many studies on teacher commitment as a whole or commitment in reference to specific objects of commitment have used this psychological approach to conceptualize commitment (e.g. Kushman, 1992; Park, 2005; Reyes, 1990; Somech & Bogler, 2002; Thien, Razak, & Ramayah, 2014; Tsui & Cheng, 1999). Common to this conceptualization is the focus on the virtuous side of commitment, which describes positive attitudes or an affective attachment with different aspects of teacher work.

Again, echoing the discussion in the previous section, research on teacher commitment suggests that objects of commitment can be multiple. The nature of teacher work involves complex relationships inside and outside of the school (Elliott & Crosswell, 2002; Park, 2005). Therefore, teachers may be exposed to multiple objects that compete for their attention. In their seminal work on teacher commitment, Firestone and Rosenblum (1988) identified three objects of commitment: commitment to the school, commitment to the profession, and commitment to students. Teacher commitment to the school and commitment to the profession have been the main foci of commitment studies in the educational arena (Dannetta, 2002; Park, 2005; Tyree, 1996). Sometimes commitment to students is folded into professional commitment (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). A few studies explicitly put commitment to students in the center (Cheung, 2009; Kushman, 1992), but they tend to study commitment in general terms, without specifically focusing on how adversity due to socioeconomic marginalization may shape this commitment.

Teacher Commitment to Students

In the few studies that center on commitment to students, commitment to students' academic learning is most frequently researched. Kushman (1992) perhaps crafted the clearest definition of teacher commitment to students that has been used by several studies in the field (Abd Razak, Darmawan, & Keeves, 2010; Cheung, 2009;

Dannetta, 2002; Lee, Zhang, & Yin, 2011; Nir, 2002; Park, 2005; Thien et al., 2014). Kushman defines commitment to students as the "dedication to helping students learn regardless of their academic difficulties or social background" (1992, p. 6). This commitment seeks to foster student engagement in learning and academic success, particularly for students who are academically at-risk (Kushman, 1992). He states that commitment to student learning includes the dimensions of teacher efficacy, high expectations, and the willingness to exert effort on behalf of low-achieving students. For Kushman, "what this facet of teacher commitment adds is a stronger focus on students, teaching, and the central student achievement mission of schools" (p. 10).

Some quantitative studies have paid attention to teacher commitment to student learning. For instance, Kushman (1992), studying the relationship between commitment to student learning and achievement, found that schools that serve disadvantaged students score high in commitment to students but low in commitment to the organization. According to this author, teachers in these disadvantaged schools can experience a moral conflict between the desire to help students at-risk and lack of dedication to work in a school with poor working conditions. Interestingly, Kushman did not find a correlation between teacher commitment to student learning and student achievement. Also, the author found that this commitment shows weak and less predictable relationships to organizational antecedents and outcomes, which suggests that this commitment depends on a teacher service ideal that transcends the school context.

Park (2005) explored the effects of a three-component model of teacher commitment (school, profession, and students) on student achievement. Park measured and compared the three components of his model. He found that commitment to students had the highest mean among all commitments measured. He also found that the lowest correlation among commitments was between commitment to the organization and commitment to students, which may imply that teachers are likely to be committed to students regardless of the organization.

Some authors have expanded the definition of commitment introducing the idea that commitment to students involves responsiveness to the needs of students as persons. For instance, Louis (1998) states that commitment to students implies a connection with students as unique whole individuals rather than as "empty vessels to be filled" (p.4). Educators holding this type of commitment may feel motivated to deal with students' personal crises or to be more sensitive to and aware of students' development. They may be more willing to spend time working with counselors or families, on extracurricular activities, or on other activities that help themselves understand how to better serve students. Nir (2002) asserts that teachers committed to students may also go beyond academic achievement and strive for promoting social integration within the classroom. They may also be more likely to consider individual needs in planning and delivering lessons and may be willing to switch roles from that of teacher to that of mentor, relative, or counselor, thus exhibiting a genuine empathy for student needs (Tyree, 1996). Strahan, Smith, McElrath, & Toole (2001) claim that the most powerful demonstration of teacher personal commitment to students occurs in the face-to-face interaction in the classroom through behaviors that communicate regard for students.

Studies with broader definitions of teacher commitment to students have shown that this commitment can take different shapes, and those shapes do not necessarily work hand in hand. For instance, Tyree (1996) measured commitment to teaching as a

multidimensional concept. First, this author measured commitment as identification and involvement to teaching a subject as well as identification and involvement with students as persons. The most robust finding showed that teachers may identify with subjects or students, but not both. In other words, teachers identified with teaching a subject showed a weak identification with students and vice versa. Nir (2002) studied the relationship between School-Based Management (SBM) and teacher commitment to student achievement. Nir (2002) also tested teacher commitment to students' social integration within the classroom. Interestingly, this author found that while the introduction of SBM enhanced commitment to student achievement, commitment to social integration of students within the classroom decreased.

Although some definitions of teacher commitment to students include an academic orientation, there are some teachers that feel committed to students without necessarily having a strong commitment to student learning. For instance, Firestone and Rosenblum (1988) noted that commitment as caring does not necessarily imply approaching teacher work with a high-achievement orientation. This point is shared by Nias (1997), who states that some teachers who care for students may unwittingly overlook student needs to be intellectually challenged.

Different educators might experience commitment to students differently. For instance, through a qualitative study, Mitchell, Ortiz, & Mitchell (1987) identified four types of educator commitment when teachers explained their work with students. Some educators were focused on student academic achievement aligned with school mission, other teachers were focused on producing achievement relying on delivering excellent lessons to students, a third group of teachers were focused on teaching as a way to nurture and connect emotionally with children, and the fourth group of teachers were more focused on helping children without having a strong academic orientation. As a whole, this study showed that each group of teachers exhibited its own way of commitment by responding to a different set of needs.

When it comes to teacher commitment to students in poverty, Milner & Hoy (2003) observed that in the midst of challenging and threatening circumstances, there are educators that persist in their commitment with marginalized students. Gordon, (1999) identified several attributes involved in commitment to students in poverty: dedication to invest effort in students and to get involved emotionally with them; individualizing and expressing regard for students' individuality; caring and building relationships as a way to stimulate students' growth; showing empathy for students and their feelings; speaking up and advocating for students; stimulating students in a meaningful way in the classroom; and focusing on fulfilling their own learning needs as professionals as a way to improve their work with students. Gordon's attributes are shared with several studies that have focused on studying outstanding teachers who work with students under conditions of poverty and marginalization, usually referred as "Star Teachers," "Exemplary Teachers," "Dreamkeepers," or "Social Justice Educators" (Cheung, 2009; Frelin & Fransson, 2017; Gorski, 2017; Haberman, Gillette, & Hill, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009; McDermott & Johnson, 1999; Orlando & Sawyer, 2013; Robinson, 2007; Rojas & Liou, 2017).

Haberman et al. (2018), through a variety of studies, explored the differences between "Star Teachers" and those he called "Quitters" and "Failures." Star teachers are educators who persist and are successful in working with students in high poverty.

Quitters and failures, on the other hand, are teachers who tend to leave schools in poverty or who burn out in dealing with challenging student populations. Haberman et al. (2018) found several behaviors that "star teachers" perform that quitters and failures do not. But perhaps the most important finding of this research showed that the differences between these two groups are caused by the degree to which educators are able to connect with students and their needs. While star teachers put student needs front and center and are fully responsive to them, quitters and failures tend to define boundaries against children's needs when they perceive they cannot teach the students effectively (Haberman et al., 2018). This pattern is similar to the one described in the literature of street-level bureaucrats, where frontline workers cope with clients' needs by responsive to their needs or by distancing from needs perceived as overwhelming (Tummers et al., 2015). In education, Rosenholtz & Simpson (1990) detected the problem of boundary definition in the phenomenon of teacher commitment as well. These authors theorize that educators working under conditions of poverty needed to establish boundaries against student needs before they could devote their focus on performing their instructional task effectively. However, these authors did not elaborate on the tension between responding or setting boundaries as different expressions of commitments.

The scarce evidence in the research literature about teacher commitment to students shows that this commitment does not imply commitment to the organization or commitment to teaching a subject. Also, this commitment is not correlated with student achievement, as was expected. Interestingly, studies have shown that different commitments in relationship with student needs do not covariate. Qualitative research suggests that different types of commitments to students may be present among teachers. Commitment to students may become even more nuanced when we analyze it through the lens of socioeconomic adversity.

Due to the variety of definitions of commitment to students, I need to develop a concept of teacher commitment to students that captures the complexity of the phenomenon in the context of adversity yet allows flexibility to capture teacher discretion in their work with students. To do this, I consider three properties to define commitment to students. First, this concept needs to consider the tension that teachers may experience when they work with students, since challenging circumstances associated with poverty tend to affect teacher commitment. In the midst of socioeconomic adversity, "the force" that binds a teacher to support students has to describe a strong determination in the face of obstacles. Evidence shows that on one extreme, teachers are willing to respond to student needs no matter what; however, educators can be also forced to define boundaries against potential needs that exceed their capabilities to handle. Second, commitment to students does not just involve commitment to student academic achievement, but it also includes broader dimensions of student development, which can open a rich spectrum of behaviors. Third, commitment to students ought to consider teacher attitudes and behaviors. Since in the work of teaching, educators have some discretion to serve students, it is necessary to make sure that the attitudes expressed by teachers actually crystalize in behaviors expressing those attitudes. Taking these properties together, *I define teacher commitment to students as the degree of determination to respond to student need*s. I use the category of student needs because children's needs are the most concrete aspect that teachers deal with in order to get their work done on a daily basis. In the context of high socioeconomic adversity, educators serve extraordinarily demanding

social-emotional and learning needs of students that can entail ongoing challenges requiring educators to have a strong determination to keep serving these needs appropriately and successfully. Also, I appeal to the *relative strength* because I do not assume that teachers are willing to satisfy all the needs of the students, instead, I believe that different commitments may emerge in the dialectic relationship between responding to student needs and defining boundaries when adversity is perceived as too overwhelming.

Having this conceptualization in mind, the question that remains open is what factors shape commitment to students. In the next section, I describe the most relevant factors that may explain teacher commitment to poor students.

Sources of Teacher Commitment to Students

Educational research has shown that the adversity that teachers face working under high-poverty conditions may compromise their commitment to work with marginalized students. Lack of commitment to educate the poor is expressed in high rates of turnover, stress, burnout, low expectations, and deficit-thinking patterns, all symptoms that impoverish the quality of the education service that students in poverty receive. But research has also shown that there are educators who are willing to persist in working in favor of students who face adversity. Attitudes and behaviors of these educators show a strong determination to respond to student needs even beyond the obstacles that adverse circumstances involve.

From the studies analyzed, it is clear that that teachers who commit to work with poor students perceive reality differently than other educators, holding constellations of beliefs and values about their work with students in connection with broader political discourses about poverty, equity, and social justice (Gorski, 2017; Haberman et al., 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009; McDermott & Johnson, 1999; Mintrop & Ordenes, 2017; Robinson, 2007). These beliefs and values may shape teacher behaviors in the context of a profession that allows a high level of discretion to serve clients (Shamir, 1991). Research on commitment to clients in human service fields reinforces these findings, indicating that variation in responses to client needs depends on frontline workers' beliefs and values about clients. From the literature review on commitment to students in high poverty, I identify four factors that repeatedly were found to influence teacher commitment to poor students: expectations, self-efficacy, ethic of service, and beliefs of deservingness. I add a fifth factor that appears when policy makers perceive that teacher commitment is weak and try to induce it externally by appealing to individual teachers' self-interest, for example through accountability systems, rewards and sanctions. In the following section, I illustrate these factors explaining teacher commitment to poor students, and I elaborate further to deepen the understanding of these factors.

Expectations

Perhaps one of the most solid beliefs held by strongly committed teachers is having *high expectations* for their students. These educators believe that all their students can be academically successful if they are taught in an appropriate manner. These educators embrace a resilient approach toward students and families, which may counterbalance deficit-thinking patterns and avoid blaming the victim or feelings of pity about the students (Gorski, 2017; Haberman et al., 2018; McDermott & Johnson, 1999; Orlando & Sawyer, 2013; Rojas & Liou, 2017). Believing in students' academic

potential involves being sensitive to diverse children's cultural needs, which could inspire educators to invest effort to create challenging learning experiences for students (McDermott and Johnson, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2009). For instance, exemplary teachers focused on challenging cognition tasks rather than shrinking the curriculum for testing purposes (Orlando & Sawyer, 2013). They also make learning exciting with varied activities, integrating cultural knowledge through literature, using humor, conducting field trips, and sometimes inviting children to their homes and communities (McDermott and Johnson, 1999).

The literature on effective schools systematically has identified teacher achievement expectations for students as a key determinant of student outcomes in schools in poverty (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). Expectations are conceptualized as educators' beliefs regarding student capabilities and potential levels of achievement. The literature has constantly shown that for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, high expectations tend to be in short supply (Valencia, 1997; Weinstein, 2002). Social stereotypes of poverty and marginalization may shape educators' beliefs about students' academic potential and behavior. These beliefs can affect educators' dispositions to teach students as well as student academic self-efficacy. On the contrary, having high expectations can influence positively students' dispositions to engage in learning.

Self-efficacy

Research has shown that strongly committed teachers hold a strong sense of *self-efficacy*. Perhaps believing in students' potential to be academically successful sparks educators' beliefs about their own self-efficacy to help students under conditions of socioeconomic adversity. For instance, Robinson (2007) found that teachers who persist in working with students in poverty can develop a sense of "occupational competence," which may help them to attribute classroom problems as rooted in the structure of society rather than in students. Educators persist in searching for what works best for individuals and do not give up on trying to engage students (Haberman et al., 2018). These educators also have a reflective approach to their practice and feel motivated to grow technically. For instance, Orlando and Sawyer (2013) show that exemplary educators take a systematic reflective approach to their own practice, which allows them to generate opportunities of professional development.

Teacher efficacy has been described as the educator's conviction that they can influence student learning, even those who may be more difficult to teach (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). This involves their beliefs in their capabilities to engage in courses of action to accomplish teaching tasks in a particular context (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Individual teacher efficacy also involves the expectancy of obtaining worthwhile goals through the investment of personal effort (Fuller et al., 1982). According to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), self-efficacy beliefs trigger a greater teacher effort that may lead to better performance. According to Louis (1998), sense of efficacy is situation-specific rather than a personal feature; therefore, the same individual can experience different feelings about their efficacy in different contexts. According to Rosenholtz & Simpson (1990), efficacy includes the belief that student learning is not only dictated by the student's level of intelligence or family environment, but also by teacher effort. This brings the acceptance of an educator's own skills as an influence on student learning in a particular context.

Ethic of service

Educators that justify their work with students through an ethic of service usually believe that the teaching profession involves investing personal effort either to achieve goals of social equity or to show care about children (Nias, 1981). For Haberman et al. (2018), outstanding teachers who are successful with poor students hold specific ideologies that explain their practices and have an awareness of "why they do what they do," referring to humanistic values. This understanding of teaching poor students is shared by most of the researchers that have paid attention to the work of teachers in the context of poverty (e.g. Cheung, 2009; Gorski, 2017; McDermott & Johnson, 1999).

Authors have described teaching as service work that entails degrees of care and altruism (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Fullan, 1993; Lortie, 1975; Mitchell et al., 1987; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). Noddings (1995) claims that these caring attitudes in human interaction are central to teaching. Hansen (1998) explains that care for students is part of the terms of teacher work, which obligates educators to put the intellectual and moral well-being of children front and center. Elbaz (1992) contends that the moral nature of teachers' work is related with their concern about children, deduced from the sense of connectedness in the teacher-student relationship. In this sense, care is a fundamental factor to pursue any educational goal (Nias, 1997). Lortie (1975), in his classic work on teachers' work, found that one of the most important motivators making educators feel attracted to teaching is serving others. Mitchell, Ortiz, and Mitchell (1987) arrived at a similar conclusion, stating that teachers see their work as a meaningful contribution to students' lives through an ethic of care (Mitchell et al., 1987). Similarly, Johnson (1986) found that teachers feel rewarded by the work itself and for the rewards they get from interacting and helping students learn. Research in the tradition of the sociology of teacher work has shown that forces emanating from work experiences and structures of the workplace shape teachers' beliefs and actions. Taking internal organizational dynamics as a basis for inquiry, this research highlights how educators' norms, beliefs, values, and practices shape their response to students and communities as well as to system demands, and how, in turn, these orientations are shaped by the concrete experiences of relating to students (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). In this tradition, authors have acknowledged the central role of the ethic of care and altruism as important elements in teacher communities. For example, (Bryk & Schneider, 2002) state that relational trust is a moral resource of action since it includes an interplay between respect, integrity, and personal regard for others.

Beliefs of deservingness

The literature highlights teachers' beliefs about poverty as an essential factor that informs how educators teach and relate to people in poverty (Gorski, 2017). For instance, Robinson (2007) found that educators who persist in working with poor students believe that poverty is a social structural problem rather than an individual problem. Teachers' dedication to work with students may be shaped by the educators' firsthand experience of injustices or their capacity to empathize with the challenges of living in poverty (Haberman et al., 2018; Park, 2005; Rojas & Liou, 2017). These educators usually appeal to ideologies of justice and fairness, as well as beliefs of the moral deservingness of poor students, to explain their commitment (Cheung, 2009; Mintrop & Ordenes, 2017; Rojas & Liou, 2017).

Teaching, as other activities in human service organizations, not only represents a technical activity but also involves moral judgments about students and their families. According to Hasenfeld (2000), judgments of deservingness have important implications for work behavior. Workers' judgments entail a moral assessment of *deservingness* of the people that receive the service. These judgments can condition the allocation of work effort serving their clients. Deservingness describes the highly institutionalized nature of organizational decision-making and teachers' behaviors in schools. It is a culturally embedded judgment, shaped by societal values, norms, and status assumptions that are not amenable to direct policy intervention. Teachers unfold a judgment of deservingness when they have to allocate their effort to serve their students, especially in situations where the resources are scarce or circumstances are challenging (Hasenfeld, 2000; Lipsky, 2010). This judgment involves their perception of i) the student's social value and status, ii) attribution of responsibility of the student's social situation, and iii) moral worth. This dynamic becomes especially critical in schools that serve students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. Studies have shown that in this environment, teachers have rationed services and excluded from their care those labeled with negative attributes associated with poverty (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Lipsky, 2010). Teachers in schools that serve low SES students can commit to students by developing a conscious appreciation of students' realities and needs (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Also, they might embrace broader discourses around social justice and fairness as a means to strengthen their own commitments (Westheimer, 1998).

Self-interested calculations

In contradistinction to the idea of educators as social justice leaders, some authors have shown that attitudes of deficit-thinking and blaming the victim have led to reinforce social inequality at the school level (Anagnostopoulos, 2006; Valencia, 1997). As a response, policymakers have introduced policy technologies based on incentives to boost commitment by motivating a goal and client orientation (Ingersoll, 2003; Mintrop, 2004; Mintrop & Sunderman, 2013). This perspective contends that teachers largely act strategically, implying that policies and management systems need to regulate teachers' self-interest in order to advance organizational and system goals. Thus, teacher commitment is seen as a matter of strategic behavior in accommodating extrinsic incentives and managerial directives into teachers' beliefs, values, and actions. Some scholars have stated that public management has incorporated into schools new ethical systems based on calculation and self-interest (Ball, 2003). Public management governance also compels educators to calculate with potential sanctions or rewards that are connected to discrete performance indicators and goals. Educational research on accountability in the US has shown that teachers do calculate with rewards and sanctions and orient themselves towards specific organizational goals (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Kelley & Protsik, 1997; Mintrop, 2004; Mintrop & Órdenes, 2017), which can compromise service commitments (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Au, 2007; Diamond, 2012; Mintrop & Sunderman, 2013). An institutional environment that incentivizes calculative self-interest as legitimate rationale for action might create beliefs and values that condition the way workers interpret students' needs and those practices serving them.

Conceptual Model

As mentioned earlier, teacher commitment to students facing adversity will be defined as *the degree of teachers' determination to respond to student need*s. This relative strength develops in the tension between being responsive to human needs and erecting boundaries against them, between the positive inclination toward the target and the ensuing negative consequences. Therefore, the determination of the teacher in the midst of this struggle may reveal commitment, and the specific shape this commitment can take will range in a continuum between moral commitment and calculative commitment.

According to my definition, teacher commitment to students could have different strengths depending on the degree of teacher determination to satisfy student needs or to set boundaries when the consequences of serving those needs are perceived as too negative or unbearable. In the literature review on teacher commitment to poor students, four factors are found to explain teacher commitment to students in poverty: expectations, self-efficacy, ethic of service, and deservingness beliefs. A fifth factor, self-interested calculations, also might play a role for teachers struggling to perform in the context of poverty (e.g., quitters or failures), especially within societies that regulate the education system through managerial techniques as is the case in Chile.

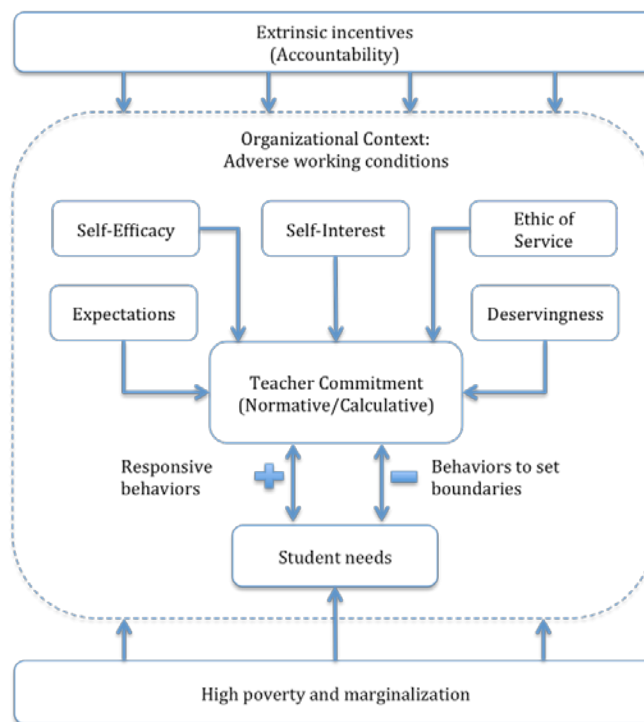

Figure 1.2: Conceptual model

The organizational context of the educator is also important. The school may be exposed to the external pressure coming from an accountability system that demands that teachers improve student outcomes. Also, educators need to serve student needs that express the pernicious effect of poverty in children. The interplay of these conditions

may create adversity for teachers in their daily work. These working conditions can challenge teachers in multiple ways, having important consequences to the shape of their commitment.

In Figure 1.2, I expand the conceptual model previously introduced, summarizing the potential factors that explain teacher commitment in the service of student needs, according to the relevant literature, and the working conditions in which educators are embedded. This conceptual model will be the basis for structuring the empirical exploration.

Research Questions

Taking in consideration the conceptual model, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do teachers experience their work with children who face conditions of socioeconomic adversity? What needs do teachers identify in this student population?
2. How do teachers respond or erect boundaries in front of those needs? Are there differences in commitment among teachers that serve students in these circumstances?
3. How do teachers experience the struggle between responding and setting boundaries in front of student needs? How do teachers justify their determination to respond to student needs?
4. What constellations of beliefs and attitudes shape teacher commitment to students?

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODS

Overview

For answering the research questions, I employed a multiple case study of qualitative character. The sample includes five schools located in highly poor neighborhoods in the city of Santiago, Chile. Within these schools I selected between eight to ten teachers and two administrators per school. Data collection took place over an eight-month period. I conducted three rounds of data collection: i) qualitative interviews with teachers and administrators across the five schools; ii) classroom observations of the teachers already interviewed; and iii) qualitative follow-up interviews with the teachers observed. Analysis of all the data collected allowed me to identify how commitment plays out in teachers who work with students facing adversity, including teachers' attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, it helped me understand variability in different expressions of teacher commitment to students.

Research Method

The research design consists of an in-depth case study of qualitative character. A case study is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 19). Case studies are useful to study real people in real situations, allowing the gathering of rich and detailed data in order to learn about human behavior in their social context (Willis, 2007). In particular, I use a design of *multiple case study.* This consists of an inquiry of several cases simultaneously, which enables the comparison across cases, paying attention to similarities and differences (Yin, 2009). A case study approach is usually suggested when the researcher aims to answer questions about "how" or "why," when the behaviors of the participants are not controlled, and when the contextual conditions are relevant to understand the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2009).

This research method is useful for two reasons. First, educational literature has widely documented the deep influence and specificity that the context has in educational phenomena. The strategy of controlling all the variables associated to the context, in order to study teacher commitment, hides the important fact that commitment is shaped in the relationship between the teachers and their working environment. Therefore, context is an essential part of understanding the phenomena of teachers working with students facing adversity. Second, a case study is a flexible method that permits the emergence of categories from the ground up, without necessarily imposing fixed preconceptions on the participants. For this study, it was necessary to leave room for emergent categories in order to see distinct behavioral expressions of commitment across educators.

Using the multiple case study design, this dissertation draws data from a sample of teachers selected across five schools. In defining the "case," (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) suggest to pay attention to the definition and the context. Thus, since the locus of attention is teacher commitment as experienced by singular educators in a particular context, the case in this study will be the "teacher." Teachers will be selected

from five different schools, each of them selected from contexts characterized by challenging socioeconomic circumstances.

A Theory-Driven Approach

In the context of this multiple case study, this study takes a theoretically-driven approach (Miles et al., 2014) with an explanatory purpose. Prior to collecting data, I developed a particular theoretical framework and from this theory, I chose the key dimensions that may be involved in the phenomenon of interest, i.e. constellations of beliefs about teacher expectations, self-efficacy, ethic of service, deservingness, and self-interest. These dimensions are, theoretically, the main sources that can explain different expressions of teacher commitment to students.

This approach helps focus the researcher's attention to specific information in a pre-defined "map" of the territory within the phenomenon studied. Despite this conceptual pre-definition, this study also explores different combinations, emphases, and conceptualizations that emerged from the participants' narratives in a bottom-up dynamic. In this sense, this theoretically-driven approach lies in the middle of the exploratory-confirmatory continuum (Miles et al., 2014) with the final purpose to describe different patterns of commitment.

Sampling

Schools

The sites selection and teacher sampling occurred in several steps. First, I defined a set of criteria to identify schools where educators may serve students under the condition of adversity. These criteria were: elementary and middle schools[2], classified as low SES by the ministry of education, high concentration of vulnerable students (over 85%) measured by the index of vulnerability (IVE) of the Chilean ministry of education[3], anssd located in urban areas. Also, I considered schools that have experienced a trajectory of low-performance, according to the school classification system of the Chilean ministry of education.

Second, considering the previous criteria, I developed a database of all publicly funded schools in Santiago, Chile[4]. In selecting schools, I also considered different organizational contexts where educators work. In the Chilean education system, there are two groups of schools that serve the poor: public and private-subsidized schools (Mizala & Torche, 2012). Teachers in private-subsidized schools are exposed to different incentive structures than public school teachers. For instance, in private-subsidized schools, educators are not unionized, making work security weaker than in public schools where teachers are unionized and have tenure. From the list of schools, I selected two public schools and three private-subsidized schools. For the private-subsidized schools, I purposely selected three different types of schools: Catholic, non-religious with social mission, and for-profit.

[2] Elementary and middle schools in Chile function in one unified organization called: "Escuela básica."

[3] IVE is an index that considers the proportion of students exposed to risks associated to low socioeconomic status.

[4] Due to the long period of time of data collection, it was only feasible to focus on schools in Santiago.

After selecting the schools, I approached the schools and asked the principals for their approval. First, I called the schools and scheduled a meeting with the principal. Second, I visited the schools to explain to the principal the terms of the research and ask for formal authorization. In this step, I was successful in immediately obtaining authorization from the two public schools selected and the non-religious with social mission school. However, I twice had to find replacements for the catholic school and three times for the for-profit school. In the case of the Catholic school, I ran out of alternatives, so I had to find a school in a different SES group, although I was able to keep the other selection criteria. The final sample of the schools selected and their characteristics are presented in the table below:

Table 2.1: Characteristics of school sites

Schools	Type	IVE	SES Group	Performance*	Total enrollment
School A	Public	91%	Low	Emergent	419
School B	Social mission	92%	Low	In recovery	193
School C	Public	91%	Low	Emergent	250
School D	Catholic	87%	Middle-low	Emergent	301
School E	For-profit	96%	Low	Emergent	291

Source: original elaboration based on SINAE indicator 2015, MINEDUC.
*In 2013, Chilean Education System classified schools in three categories: Autonomous (systematic good performance); Emergent (not showing stable good performance); In recovery (systematic insufficient performance).

Teacher and Administrator Participants

After gaining authorization from the principal in each school, I visited the faculty in a staff meeting to introduce the purpose of the research and to build rapport. Teachers had the chance to ask questions about my work and share their concerns. After the presentation, I requested a list of the faculty in the school, I emailed ten teachers per school, inviting them to participate in the study. I aimed to recruit fifty teachers who teach from 1st to 8th grades. The criterion for selecting teachers in each school was based on their willingness to participate through the three stages of data collection, which implied a high degree of commitment with the study. In total, out of fifty teachers invited, forty-seven agreed to participate in this research. In Table 2.2, I introduce some demographics of the teachers included in the sample.

Table 2.2: Demographics of teachers included in the sample

Characteristics	Teachers %
Type of school	
Public	43%
Private-subsidized	57%
Gender	
Female	72%
Male	28%
Age range	
< 30	19%
30-40	36%
41-50	13%
50>	15%

Also, I recruited the principal and an instructional leader of each school as key informants. All administrators agreed to participate. The unit of analysis of this study is teachers, and the unit of observation is teachers and administrators.

Data Collection

Data collection took place over an eight-month period in Santiago, Chile (May-December 2016). This process involved three rounds. In the first round, I conducted in-depth interviews with teachers and school administrators. In the second round, I conducted classroom observations with the teachers interviewed. And in the third round, I conducted follow-up interviews with the teachers observed.

The purpose of this fieldwork was threefold: i) to characterize teacher commitment to students; ii) to identify behaviors oriented to respond to student needs; and iii) and to identify different constellations of beliefs associated with teacher commitment. With these purposes in mind, I used open-ended interviews and observations as data collection techniques as a way to gain understanding of different aspects of the phenomenon under study. Through the words of participants, it is possible to develop a holistic description of a phenomenon. Also, researchers can learn about how events are interpreted by the participants. And the interview permits researchers to grasp a situation by building a bridge to the points of view of the insiders (Weiss, 1994).

The observation method, on the other hand, provides a direct and robust approach to learn about people's behavior and the context in which these behaviors take place (Maxwell, 2013). Particularly, I used a systematic classroom observation approach, which is a quantitative method of assessing behaviors from direct observations through a predefined protocol (Medley, 1992). Among the purposes of this method is the observation of specific teacher behaviors previously defined as well as the investigation of instructional inequities for students with different needs (Hilberg, Waxman, & Tharp, 2004).

Table 2.3: Dimensions covered in data collection for teachers

	Interviews	**Classroom observation**	**Follow-up interview**
Dimension	- Student needs - Work difficulties - Self-efficacy and expectations beliefs - Deservingness beliefs - Ethic of service - Practices to deal with student learning, discipline, and absenteeism. - Setting boundaries in front of students - Work incentives and self-interest	- Inclusive practices - Learning environment - Attitudes - Persistence to support students	- General challenges observed - Teacher beliefs about the challenging students identified - Willingness to satisfy challenging student needs - Setting boundaries in front of students
Prompts Example	- What are the needs that students bring to the school on a daily basis? - Which of those needs do you feel prepared to satisfy?	- Teacher uses proximity with all students equitably - Teacher uses random response strategies - Teacher uses cooperative learning structures	- Are there students with a "shell" that is difficult to crack for you as a teacher? - Is there any moment in which you have to "let go" of a student because of the challenges involved to educate him/her?

By combining the two techniques of data collection, I aimed to complement the strengths of both interviews and observations. The principle of complementary strengths means that data should be collected to provide multiple sources of evidence that are relevant to illuminate the phenomenon under study (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

Before going into the field, I operationalized the main concepts of the theoretical framework in three different instruments: two interview protocols and one observation protocol (see appendix). In the table 2.3, I summarize the main dimensions/topics that were used to build the instruments.

The procedure for collecting data was conducted as follows. First, I interviewed administrators and teachers. Interviews with administrators were oriented to characterize the organizational environment in which teachers work. Also, I asked the administrators to provide information about which teachers they considered to be willing to go the "extra mile" with students and which were not willing to do so. Eight out of ten administrators offered rich descriptions of teachers in each category. The administrators of School E, the private-subsidized for-profit school, declined to provide this information.

Interviews with teachers were oriented to cover topics such as students' social situations and needs, teachers' strategies to respond to student needs, self-efficacy, expectations, ethic of service, deservingness judgments, and perception of managerial incentives. Each interview took between 50 to 70 minutes. Capturing teacher commitment through interviews helped to go deeper into teachers' beliefs (Weiss, 1994). However, taken on its own, interviews are insufficient because teachers tend to present themselves and their beliefs in the best way possible.

To deal with this limitation, I compared their stated beliefs and self-reported behaviors with the observation of their classroom behaviors. After the first interview, I asked every teacher if it was possible to observe a typical lesson in which they demonstrate their normal routine. Every teacher agreed to participate in this procedure. In every observation, I took general notes of what happened in the interaction between a teacher and students, and also, I took "snapshots" every 10 minutes for checking indicators of the following dimensions: i) inclusive practices, ii) learning environment, iii) attitudes toward students, and iv) persistence to support students who struggle (see the Appendix for further details). Originally, I aimed to conducted observations with all teachers interviewed in the first round. However, one of the teachers at school E resigned, so he did not continue participating in the study. Also, in another observation, the lesson was interrupted to conduct an administrative activity, which completely disrupted the flow of the lesson. Therefore, I dropped this lesson from the analysis. In total, I conducted 45 classroom observations that satisfied the minimal standard of observing a regular lesson time. Each observation lasted for about 90 minutes, corresponding to a full teaching block schedule.

Finally, I conducted an open-ended follow-up interview where the teacher was able to reflect about the lesson observed. The experience of observing teachers allowed me to deepen the follow-up conversations related to aspects of the classroom observation. The follow-up interview covered topics related with general challenges observed, beliefs about challenging students identified during the lesson, determination to satisfy challenging student needs, and setting boundaries in front of these students. Follow-up interviews took between 30 to 40 minutes.

Table 2.4: Summary of data collected

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	Total
Interview administrators	2	2	2	2	2	10
Interview teachers (round 1)	10	8	10	10	9	47
Interview Follow-up (round 3)	10	8	10	9	8	45
Total Interviews	22	18	22	21	19	**102**
Observations (round 2)	10	8	10	9	8	**45**

A total of 57 interviews were collected in the first round (47 teachers and 10 administrators), augmented by 75 hours of classroom observations in the second round. Finally, in the third round of follow-up interviews, I collected 45 interviews. Conducting three rounds of data collection with different techniques on the same phenomenon may increase the internal validity of this study.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was structured in several stages. First, in the data preparation stage, a transcription service transcribed the 102 interviews collected in round 1 and round 3. I uploaded the translated transcriptions into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. Also, classroom observation ratings (round 2) were introduced into a Stata database and prepared for further analysis.

In order to identify behaviors aimed to respond to or set boundaries in front of student needs, I first identified the children's needs that teachers perceived as central challenges in their work. After reading about half of the interviews of round 1 (23 interviews, about 5 per school) and writing reflective notes, four categories of needs emerged: emotional needs, needs for behavioral management, learning needs, and needs for family support. Then, I coded all the interviews following these four codes. Afterwards, I searched for low-inference descriptions of teachers' behaviors oriented to respond to each of these student needs identified. I conducted the same procedure to identify low-inference descriptions of educators' behaviors to set boundaries in front of each set of student needs. I synthesized the evidence in several meta-matrixes that describe the strategies and show empirical examples (see Chapter 3). To identify different patterns of teacher determination to respond, I characterized each individual teacher according to self-reported practices that respond to each dimension of student needs as well as self-reported practices used to define boundaries when they feel overwhelmed. I clustered these educators according to their responsiveness/boundaries definition. As a result, I found four clusters of teachers that described four different patterns of commitment.

To complement the clustering of self-reported behaviors, two bodies of data were used. First, I analyzed evidence collected from the direct observations of teachers' behaviors in the classroom. This analysis was focused on identifying differences among the four clusters of teachers previously identified in the following dimensions: inclusive practices, learning environment, attitudes, and persistence. Of the four clusters identified, just two of them had enough cases to run statistical analysis. For comparing these two groups, I tested for mean differences by using independent t-test for two samples. For the other two groups, I described their modal pattern analyzing individual cases.

Additionally, I used reputation data about teachers as described by administrators in terms of their willingness to go the "extra-mile" with students. These two sources of data allow a "test" of the plausibility of the clusters that emerged in the previous analysis.

Finally, in order to identify teachers' beliefs, codes for analyzing interviews were developed along the dimensions of the conceptual framework (Miles et al., 2014). These codes encompassed the five main complexes identified: expectations, self-efficacy, service ethic, deservingness beliefs, and calculative self-interest. Codes related to expectations captured statements about students' future attainment and students' intellectual capacity. Codes related to beliefs of self-efficacy aligned with teachers' beliefs of their own capacity to serve students' behavior and learning needs. Codes related to service ethic captured statements of concerns about equity and students' well-being. Codes related to beliefs of deservingness captured statements that explicitly stressed the moral worthiness of students in contradistinction to a society that seemed to value them less. Finally, codes related to calculative self-interest captured references that communicated concern about work security, prestige, and monetary and managerial incentives.

Table 2.5: Analytical codes for analyzing beliefs

Belief	Description
Expectations	Beliefs about students' future academic achievement or beliefs about students' academic capacity.
Self-efficacy	Beliefs or conviction that educators can influence how well students behave or learn, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated.
Ethic of service	Values, ideals, or principles that inspire working in favor of students' welfare, building a better society, or working at a challenging school.
Beliefs of deservingness	Moral judgment that teachers apply over students that may determine who is socially worthy and therefore deserving of teacher effort in the service they provide.
Moral worthiness	Judgment about moral worth of students
In-group/out-group distinctions	Perception of students' identities, i.e. their proximity to teachers' own social class; the closer to 'us', the more deserving;
Attribution of responsibility	Teachers' perceptions of the degree of control/responsibility that students and families have regarding their situation of social and cultural vulnerability
Calculative self-interest	Self-interested concerns about work and monetary or managerial incentives
Prestige	Sense of status or self-worth based on the perceptions of others. Prestige can be derived from material goods, symbols, or moral esteem.
Work security	Any concern regarding fulfilling work duties to keep their position of employment.
Managerial incentives	Any concern derived from external incentives, either goals or sanctions, that may condition teacher behavior.

Identifying and analyzing beliefs across different groups was not an easy task. During the interviews, often beliefs were clearly stated as an answer to a specific question. Other times, those beliefs were implicitly present in a justification of why people do what they do. In the analysis, I capture both, explicit beliefs and justifications that communicate implicit beliefs.

While the previous discussion is organized sequentially, it is necessary to keep in mind that qualitative data analysis is a reflective process that implies iterations, reformulations, and ongoing interpretations. This allows researchers to grasp the processes and underlying categories behind the phenomenon under study. This study benefitted from this reflective process.

Validity

How do we know that the data represent reality in a credible way? And what is the scope of the conclusion explaining this particular social phenomenon? These two questions are essential to test the quality of the evidence presented and the conclusion drawn from it. These two questions motivate the discussion of both internal and external validity.

Internal Validity

Generally, the purpose of this inquiry is a comparative analysis across individual cases in order to describe similarities and differences. These purposes may be exposed to internal validity threats related with the researcher bias and the influence of the researcher on the participants under study, also called reactivity bias (Maxwell, 2013).

How do we know that people are truthful? This question does not have a straightforward answer. Depending on the topic, people might be motivated to build a socially-acceptable testimony, which can affect the validity of the evidence collected. In the case of educational research, teachers tend to emphasize the noble feelings that inspire their work and undermine the feelings that do not seem socially legitimate for their specific context. Maxwell (2013) calls this problem reactivity. To soften this potential validity threat, Maxwell (2013) recommends trying to miminize the influence of the researcher in the field or trying to take advantage of the reseacher's presence in productives ways. In the case of this study, I tried to diminish this problem by building trust with the subject studied and also by pairing both in-depth and ongoing observations. The data collection process involved systematic presence at each school site, allowing for several casual conversations with teachers who were part of this study.The presence in the field created a sense of familiarity between me and the participants of the research, which I believe helped develop connetions based on mutual understanding sympathy and trust. Cultivating this rapport was a good platform to get more genuine evidence from the field.

Another issue, referred to as internal validity threat, is related with the researcher bias. The phenomenon of commitment is located in workers' minds and in educators' interactions with students. In order to generate credible evidence about this phenomenon, I directly explore peoples' subjectivities and look for their beliefs, values, feelings, and explanations regarding their work with students. But these testimonies were exposed to my own interpretative horizon, exposing the data to my own bias. In order to diminish this threat, I followed two procedures. First, I collected data over a period of eight months, involving at least three interactions with each participant –two interviews and one observation. The second interview was focused on analyzing concrete actions observed during the classroom observations, putting the participant's experience front and center. Also, the interviews were focused on capturing teachers' low-inference descriptions of their own concrete behaviors done on behalf of students. Second, in order to craft a better description of individual commitment and behavioral expressions of that commitment, I complemented teachers' testimonies with other sources of data that allow internal consistency between what people say and what they do. As was mentioned earlier, the complementary principle strengthens the understanding of the phenomenon (Johnson et al., 2007). In this case, besides teachers' narratives, I used direct observation of teachers' behaviors in the classroom and administrator testimonies. These two

additional sources of data are aimed to offer a complementary perspective of the same phenomenon, which directly contributes to improving the internal validity of this inquiry. These steps potentially help to diminish arbitrary researcher biases in how participants express their commitment to students.

External Validity (or Generalizability)

The problem of external validity is the concern of knowing whether the conclusion extracted from a particular qualitative sample is applicable or generalizable to a bigger universe. However, as Yin (2009) explains, the analogy of sample and universe is incorrect in a qualitative inquiry. Sample and universe are concepts that rely on statistical (or probabilistic) inference (generalization), which is not the case of qualitative research (Small, 2009; Yin, 2009).

This research has the purpose to analyze teacher commitment to students from a sample of 47 teachers without any expectation of probabilistic inference. Rather, the objective is what Yin (2009) calls analytic generalization, i.e. an inquiry that seeks to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory. In this context, this dissertation seeks to make claims oriented to understanding, theoretically and empirically, the phenomenon of teacher commitment to students under socioeconomic adversity.

CHAPTER 3: TEACHER COMMITMENT TO STUDENT NEEDS IN THE MIDST OF ADVERSITY AT WORK

Overview

This chapter examines teachers' commitment to serve student needs in their daily work as expressed in teachers' behaviors. In doing so, first, I describe how teachers experience students' adversity in the classroom and identify the main needs teachers must serve. Then I identify self-reported behaviors oriented to respond to student needs or to set boundaries against those needs. To identify different expressions of commitment as courses of actions responding to student needs, I categorize teachers along the continuum of responsiveness and boundary setting. Four different patterns of commitment emerge. To confirm the plausibility of this categorization, I use statistical analysis that compares observed teachers' behaviors in the classroom across the four identified behavioral patterns and check the categorization with reputation data. The questions that guide the analysis in this chapter are:

1. How do teachers experience their work with children who experience conditions of socioeconomic adversity? What needs do teachers identify in this student population?
2. How do teachers respond or set boundaries in the face of those needs? Are there differences in commitment among teachers that serve students in these circumstances?

Teachers' Experience of Adversity

Teachers included in this study serve a student population that is characterized as extremely vulnerable according to the conceptualization of the Chilean Ministry of Education[5]. Descriptive statistics show that teachers serve a student population that faces extremely adverse socioeconomic circumstances. In fact, in all the schools, an overwhelming majority of students live in conditions of extreme poverty, which means that these students come from families that struggle to cover basic needs of food, housing, healthcare, or employment (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Proportion of students living in extreme poverty or poverty

Schools	Extreme poverty		Poverty		Not poor		Total enrollment
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
School A	286	77.5	44	11.9	33	11.9	369
School B	162	83.1	24	12.3	8	12.3	195
School C	247	83.4	38	12.8	11	12.8	296
School D	203	66.1	55	17.9	43	17.9	307
School E	242	85.5	30	10.6	11	10.6	283

Source: original elaboration based on SINAE indicator, MINEDUC.

[5] Integrate the conceptualization of vulnerability by SINAE

These statistics turn into individual biographies and experiences of children suffering the hardship of poverty and exclusion. In schools that serve the poor, teachers face this reality, which unfolds with many difficulties and problems. In a simple word count within the code 'student characteristics', "problems" and "difficulties" were two of the most used terms describing students. Dramatic descriptions and examples about the hardship of students' lives abound. For instance, when teachers were asked to characterize their students, some of the teachers responded:

> I have a very heterogeneous group, I have children who have needs, for example, for food, which are basic needs, and I have children who are deprived of affection…mommy's or daddy's affection it's missing. I have children of drug traffickers, I have parents imprisoned. (428, School E)

> Children who are totally vulnerable, children who come from foster homes ... uh, many children of traffickers, alcoholic parents, parents who are thieves. (202, School B)

> They are students who have a lot of social problems, delinquent parents, drug addicts, eh ... prostitutes, alcoholics, single mothers, and especially a lot ... a lot of young parents who don't…don't fulfill their role or never took responsibility for their children. And many children also come from foster homes. (104, School A)

When educators describe their students, they do not just refer to outliers or dramatic cases but refer to what is an "average condition" of the student population they serve. Thus, identifying not just the presence of problems but also the concentration of a multiplicity of problems as a defining feature of this student population. For instance, one teacher identified an "average" student of her school as a child who "…has behavioral problems, learning problems, and problems of social deprivation" (Teacher 201, School B). This also is seen in the broad spectrum of challenges that students bring to the school, as another teacher illustrates: "I have a very wide range of children with different characteristics, all with their own complexities" (Teacher 113, School A). Several teachers across schools identified a minority group of "normal students," who perform well. But they also make clear that the vast majority faces overwhelming life circumstances that make their academic engagement tentative.

The teachers who participated in the study do not experience students' difficult living circumstances directly but through the stories, attitudes, and behaviors that children bring into the classroom daily. Students' adversity comes often in form of "fights," "slurs," "lack of respect," "lack of limits," "children out of control," or through "experiences of abuse," "abandonment," "neglect," and in multiple other ways that creates difficult working conditions for teachers. This adversity challenges educators in the schools in which this study took place, making the work very difficult to handle. As some educators express:

> At the beginning of the year, I had a really bad time, super bad, I swear that almost every day I cried, and I felt overwhelmed, I didn't know what to do, I was running out of tools, I was very hurt, I am super sensitive, but I also consider myself to be a

> strong person, because I cry it doesn't mean that I am not strong, but the level of violence is so high that I was not used to it. (202, School B)
>
> The first years, I used to get home and cry a lot, then my mom told me "pucha, you know that I see you so sad. If you're like this, better move to a different school." And I realized that no! hell no! …what is the contribution that I would do? [if I leave] (109, School A)
>
> It's sad, sometimes I cry in my house, many times...I spend the night thinking, when she doesn't come [one of her students], I say ... she must be getting drugs. She must have gotten involved with some "narco." I will not see her ever again. (506, School D)
>
> The first time I taught here, I wanted to run away because I just saw kicks, spits, and slurs, really! Within the classroom…punches and spits. (310, School C)

Coping with Student Behavior and Learning

Dealing with students' behavior is one of the first and most pressing challenges teachers face. Interview data show that around two-thirds of the teachers feel that they can't keep order in their classroom regularly. A similar proportion of teachers arrive to a point in which they do not know "what to do" or feel that their strategies "do not work" with their students when it comes to keeping order in the classroom:

> You can be doing an exercise on the whiteboard and you turn around and the children aren't doing anything and they run around the classroom ... you have to sit them down over and over again, there are children who don't pay attention, they escape from the classroom […] they fall out of all norms, it's very complicated to work with them. (502, School E)
>
> I look for a thousand ways to calm them down... and if this one does not work for me, I look for another and then another, and I see that none works. (423, School D)
>
> I swear, it's mental fatigue, because every day... to see it did not work out, because there are times that stuff doesn't work. I had planned a very good class, but all these small problems, it's incredible. (101, School A)
>
> It frustrates me, I don't know how...I think that I lack tools to motivate this type of student. (311, School C)
>
> It's a classroom where it is hell all day. I end up hoarse. Sometimes I stay two or three days voiceless, and in the afternoon, I don't return [to the school] because it is a nervous matter, says the doctor, because I can't take it anymore. (504, School E)

Facing this work experience, many teachers express that they are "not getting the outcomes they want," "not able to help to everybody," "feeling powerless," "running out of tools," or "don't have the tools." Some teachers report that they keep innovating, developing new ideas, trying out different strategies to get appropriate learning environments. But despite their effort, success is elusive and when achieved, fragile. In extreme cases, some teachers feel threatened in their physical well-being. Two to four teachers per school report being threatened or attacked, either verbally or physically by students or parents. In a handful of cases, teachers report feeling unsafe within their classrooms for serving students with criminal records or with serious behavioral problems.

Engaging students in meaningful learning interactions also represents important challenges for teachers. Interview data reveals that almost two-thirds of teachers acknowledge that they cannot fulfill the goals of the lesson regularly. There are different forms in which teachers experience difficulties fulfilling their goals. For instance, some teachers recognize that there are specific grades where they struggle to fulfill their lesson plan. Other teachers say that there are days in which the goals are accomplished and other days in which they are not. Some teachers state that they systematically struggle to fulfill instructional goals with some of their students. Some of those teachers feel that their teaching does not work for all their students. Teachers also face enormous obstacles to motivate students to engage in learning dynamics. Some struggle to show the value of the content of the lesson to their students. As a result, teachers find themselves in front a group of students that they cannot reach despite their best efforts:

> There is so much diversity here… a lot of learning needs and many things. So, I know that there are children that I don't reach, that I always feel I remain in debt to them. Like this child, for example, not reading well, and of course I make efforts. In fact, we stay extra days. We do extra reinforcement for that child to catch up, but, for all his history, I will not have the result that I would like. And I always say damn! But what else can I do? I can't stretch any further to keep going, unfortunately, but many times, I am frustrated. (101, School A)

Many teachers in the sample implicitly or explicitly show concern about their own psychological well-being. Most of the teachers of the sample report that their work is highly "difficult," "hard," "challenging," or "complicated," making them feel "stressed," "exhausted," or "overwhelmed." Also, it is common that teachers experienced conflicting feelings about their students such as sadness, sorrow, powerlessness, anger, and fear: "Sometimes you feel extremely powerless" (504, School E), "I was going to cry out of sheer rage and impotence" (508, School E), "It makes me angry. I'm angry because sometimes that also makes children drop out" (313, School C), "He makes me feel powerless that that I can't help him" (311, School C). This happens especially when teachers experience problematic behaviors in a systematic fashion, when they can't help students learn, or when they witness students' harsh life struggle. For instance, when one teacher was asked if he wanted to work in a different school:

> The truth is yes, I think I need it because of my mental health. I need to see more normal children, in the sense that ... where I don't have to be separating fights so

> often, or not knowing that a girl was raped by her dad, or things so terrible that really hurts me a lot, then... yes, I think I need to work with children more ... more, more normal. (210, School B)

Challenges brought by students made some educators question whether or not they should continue working with these students. Several testimonies from principals and teachers across schools mention that some colleagues have left the schools due to the difficulties of working with this student population. In fact, in the course of this study, one teacher abandoned his school without notice; one day he simply stopped attending work. His colleagues and the principal explain to me that he had serious difficulties handling the students within his classroom.

Considering leaving their workplaces does not seem to be an isolated phenomenon. One to three teachers per school think that they will not work at the same school for a long period. Some of them feel symptoms of burnout, while others are afraid that the suffering of their students will start to feel normal. As one teacher explains:

> It's a long time to be in a place, and I also think that I'm getting desensitized with some things that happen that also make you ill because it's already very usual to see this kind of reality. Like at the beginning, I was more affected by things, and then you get used to hearing these things that happen to children and everything. Like you're getting thick skin and that scares me, like that, considering things to be natural that are not natural. (201, School B)

Students' adverse living circumstances translate into problematic attitudes and behaviors that teachers face on a daily basis. Most of the teachers in these challenging schools are faced with situations in which they feel professionally insufficient to serve students appropriately. They also are faced with circumstances that make them feel emotionally or physically threatened. They experience adversity first hand. Adversity, in the way the term is used here, describes a work situation in which teachers experience difficulties and challenges that push them to the limits of their competencies in serving students and that make them feel that their personal well-being is at stake. Adversity is an *experience* because it is difficult to define objectively what specific events or circumstances constitute adversity for each individual (Caza & Milton, 2012). For understanding this, it is necessary to pay attention to how teachers make sense of students' attitudes and behaviors in the classroom. When teachers teach, they usually translate students' difficulties and challenges into "needs" that must be addressed. When teachers serve students, first, they gauge what a student may need from them, and then they organize their work accordingly.

Teachers' Perceptions of Student Needs

For the interviewed teachers, being confronted with severely troubling attitudes and behaviors from so many of their students creates the question how these attitudes and behaviors could be addressed. They are asking what these behaviors might reveal about the underlying causes of unfulfilled human needs. In the process of working with

students and exploring with students, parents, and colleagues, educators infer potential human needs that explain students' attitudes and behaviors in the classroom.

During the first round of interviews with teachers, I explored this dimension. Teachers responses reveal that student needs are multiple and vary according to the ages of students, but the responses themselves vary according to the teachers' years of experience and knowledge of the social context. Also, they describe students and their individual circumstances to illustrate the students' needs. To make sense of participants' answers, I read half of the interviews per school, paying attention to teachers' perceptions of student needs that were shared across the five schools. Four groups of needs emerged from this inductive exploration: needs for support in learning, needs for discipline, needs for emotional support, and needs for parenting. Afterwards, I used these four categories as heuristics to help code the rest of the interviews. Finally, I analyzed each of the categories and defined them. In Table 3.2, I present the definitions developed with illustrative examples.

Table 3.2: Definition of dimensions of student needs

Dimension	Definition	Examples
Needs for discipline	Refers to student needs for minimal norms and habits of behaviors to maintain respectful interactions inside and outside of the classroom.	You have to give them rules…things that they do not have in their home usually (305, School C) They are children without rules. They are children without values ... very little values, or if they have them, they are distorted (112, School A)
Needs for support in learning	Refers to children's needs for teacher support to engage cognitively in learning. For instance, needs for curriculum adaptation to learning styles, needs for cultural adaptation, needs for differentiated attention, and special learning needs.	Learning problems more than anything or hyperactivity and, obviously, many of them also because they have a fairly [low] level of education ...with a lot of delay with respect to their school age…chronological age (207, School B) The other thing is that there are also many children with ... with special educational needs (411, School D)
Needs for emotional support	Refers to student needs to receive emotional comforting, regard, and attention as well as needs for safe and trusting relationships within the classroom.	They are children who generally do not trust adults very much, because of different types of traumatic experiences (104, School A) Attention, that you listen to them […] it is something emotional that they need, that someone listens to them. (314, School D)
Needs for parenting	Refers to student needs to receive parental support, care, safety, and love from caretakers beyond the school site and to have their physical or psychological well-being guarded.	These children are more unprotected, they are more abandoned, even if they have a father and a mother. But in a certain way, very few have the support one-hundred percent of a father or a mother (112, School A) Abused girls, beaten children, who come here beaten, that for me is the most difficult. They are the most difficult ones because all [of that] escapes from my control (204, School B)

Needs for Behavioral Management

In general, teachers explain that students' disruptive, restless, or often aggressive behaviors are related to the lack of minimal norms, habits, or rules of behavior within the classroom. The majority of students are seen as rooted in family cultures that cultivate norms and values that differ from school rules. Also, many students express a set of behaviors that make attempts to engage in a meaningful pedagogical interaction very

difficult, if not impossible. Interviewed teachers claim that students need a sustained effort to be disciplined under their school's minimal norms as a pre-condition to learn. Teachers refer to these needs as needs for "normalization[6]," needs for learning boundaries of respect, and needs for developing morals.

> You don't do the class that you say "ah, I will go to that class and children will learn, or they will be open, or they are waiting for me to do the class." No, you have to be bringing order for thirty minutes, trying to shut them up, you shut up one and another speaks, one stands up and hits to whom is next to him, moves to another desk and takes something away [from a classmate]... Or simply I have a group of children who are at the back of the room and listen to music the whole class, lying on the desk. (112, School A)

Most of the teachers use the concept of "normalization" to describe that students need to learn minimal norms, rules, and routines "for carrying out a lesson in which everybody learns" (101, School A). Teachers also explain that students need constant reminders of those norms because they tend to forget them. The need of "normalization," or keeping discipline in the classroom, seems to be the most common need that teachers identify.

At least half of the teachers across schools mention that students also need to learn the limits of respect in their interactions with teachers and especially with classmates. They are aware that students experience rough interpersonal interactions at home where slurs and physical punishment are common. They believe that students need to recognize that interactions at the school have different boundaries of respect, appropriateness, or acceptability.

Finally, some teachers state that students need to be taught values that they do not have at home. They describe that students have a hierarchy of values that conflict with school values. Teachers narrate that the problematic behaviors exhibited by some students can be explained by a referent alternative and distorted "morality":

> It's because they see too much violence. So, it's not difficult for them to throw a punch in your face. They do not see it as [bad]…they do not have a hierarchy of...morality. That's the way it is…"I feel attacked, I respond." (405, School D)

Taken together, teachers interpret students' attitudes and behaviors as a lack of knowledge of basic rules of comportment. Learning how to behave within the classroom, knowing boundaries of respect, and learning moral values are three of the most common needs that the interviewed teachers perceive as having to be addressed in order to establish a meaningful pedagogical interaction.

Needs for Support in Learning Process

The interviewed teachers experience classrooms where it is difficult to fulfill learning goals. They say that a significant number of their students present difficulties

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[6] In Spanish, the concept "normalizar" means adjusting students to the norms of the classroom. I translated this concept as normalization.

engaging in the learning process. Students with special needs, different learning styles low cultural capital, or a lack of motivation to study are the most common challenges.

Educators explain they serve a student population that has a large concentration of students with special needs. According to different educators, “30 to 40 percent”, “20 percent”, “half of the class,” “20 out of 30” students present a disorder related with learning. Other teachers augment that estimation by arguing that they suspect there are even more students with special needs not diagnosed. A couple of teachers considered that their organizations should be “special schools” due the number of students with special needs. When teachers describe special needs, they refer to cognitive problems such as attention deficit, hyperactivity, intellectual deficits of different degrees, language disorder, and so on. The following quote illustrate this pattern:

> Children with DI [intellectual disability], children with TDA [attention disorder], children with specific language disorder […] We have everything here in the school. There is everything. There is Asperger’s. There is DM [motor disability]. There is everything. (201, School B)

Teachers also describe that students need support to connect the content of the curriculum with their own local cultures. Some of the students, they say, bring restricted vocabulary, rudimentary reading or problem-solving skills, significant delays in schooling, or lack of contact with the mainstream culture. The lack of experience with the school culture does not allow students to make sense of the content, and they struggle to engage in pedagogical interactions. Also, several teachers describe that students and families have difficulty connecting with the purpose of education, which could affect student engagement in learning dynamics. As one educator illustrates:

> They are students who have gaps, have a floor in terms of knowledge and skills that indicates that there is a problem. [...] they don’t have the minimum basis to be willing to learn. They do not have the motivation. Their families aren’t behind them, they do not care. (319, School C)

Most of the teachers also infer that students do not seem interested or motivated to learn. Students who do not pay attention to the lesson, who do not want to work, who have a lack of interest in the content, and who have disruptive behaviors are seen as children without motivation to learn. Educators associate this phenomenon to students who do not get support from home, who experience emotional disturbance, who have a low prospect in education, or who simply lack interest in education as a life project:

> It's because they simply do not have any motivation... motivation to be able to, to move forward or ... because they come because they are sent [by their families], because they have to come to classes. It's not because they want to study or want to learn, even though they are very intelligent. (106, School A)

In summary, educators infer that students express a set of needs that preclude them from engaging in productive learning dynamics. Special needs, lack of cultural

background, and lack of motivation to learn are seen as the main sources of student needs for learning support.

Needs for Emotional Support

When teachers are asked about student needs, the most common answer refers to emotions and affection. Students' stressful living circumstances leave an evident footprint on students' emotional well-being. Often, these circumstances are demonstrated as adults neglecting children's emotional care, family situations exposing children to critical social problems, or simply abandonment. Often, students' disruptive behaviors are associated with these experiences at home, especially when students reveal themselves as disengaged from learning dynamics, aggressive, or simply needy. As a result, interviewed teachers see students needing the attention of adults that see them and care for them, filling in the emotional gap that they bring from home. Particularly, the teachers describe students with needs of regard and attention, needs for comforting in critical circumstances, needs for feeling safe and capable, and needs for establishing emotional bonds.

One of these needs is the need for regard and attention. Interviewed teachers make sense of students' disruptive behaviors by arguing that "students need attention," "need love," "need recognition," need "to be heard," or need "to be valued." According to them, many students lack adult attention at home, or they lack adults in their life who treat them with regard. Therefore, students express this absence through behaviors oriented to call adults' attention.

Interviewed teachers also describe that they often teach students who arrive with emotional breakdowns, either from home or caused by their lack of tolerance to frustration. Usually these emotional breakdowns are expressed in unpredictable ways, from being quiet or disengaged to explosions of anger. Usually, this is verbalized as need for emotional comforting. As one teacher explains: "There are kids that act furious, furious, furious, and when you hug them, they calm down" (208, School B).

Teachers state that many students show "lack of self-confidence," "low self-esteem," or are "insecure." Several teachers explain that children are not supported at home in their academic trajectories, or, in some cases, they are undermined in their intellectual capacities. Therefore, students need a safe space where they can take risks to learn, and they need to be reinforced in their own intellectual potential.

Finally, some teachers state that students need to establish an emotional bond with adults. Students usually come from a biography of "broken bonds" with adults, which make them act defensively with adults. These educators explain that students need reliable personal connections that allow a feeling that someone is truly interested in them.

Needs for Parenting

In this study, the vast majority of teachers identified needs for parenting as one of the most pervasive needs that students bring to school every day. In their perception, a significant group of students have minimal or no support from home; are alone and are surrounded at home by adults who do not seem concerned about their children's education or who do not provide the minimal resources to support students' general wellbeing. Children therefore rely on teachers to take the main responsibility for educating and caring for students:

> There is an important group of children that are alone, therefore practically we have to take care of them as a school, you know that you can't count on the adult...well…you know the adult is there, but it is as if they were not there. So somehow you work with them alone. (413, School D)

Among these needs, teachers identify students lacking food or appropriate clothing, lacking safe environments that protect them from being abused, or lacking support for their development, including education. Many teachers feel that some students arrive to school needing a "mom" or an adult that provides the support and protection not received at home. Especially this is seen in cases of students that suffer the consequences of family instability, lack of cohesiveness, patterns of neglect, abandonment, or in severe cases, violence and abuse.

As a synthesis, students arrive to the classroom expressing particular attitudes and behaviors that create adversity in teacher work. Educators, for their part, interpret these attitudes and behaviors as symptoms of unfulfilled human needs. Teachers describe their students as a specific population that is different to other social strata, concentrating multiple needs that require attention. Particularly, they highlight students who come to school lacking family support, emotionally needy or disturbed, without the minimal habits to behave appropriately at school, and with a wide variety of learning needs.

Students' Multiple Needs

For analytical purposes, I disentangled specific needs, but in the reality of classrooms, students come with a variety of overlapping needs. Students do not all face the same circumstances, nor do they all express the same needs. While some students exhibit behaviors that teachers see as indicative of the need for more self-discipline, other students express behaviors that teachers interpret as students facing dire personal circumstances and needing emotional support. Need for discipline and need for emotional support may overlap in some students. Figure 3.1 shows that some students may be very needy, needing teachers' attention in all need dimensions, for example a student who misbehaves, cannot follow the curriculum, is emotionally under great strain, and lacks some basic parenting functions at home (the case of DLEP). At the same time, another student may indicate needs in just one dimension, for example, a student who behaves well but is challenged with learning the curriculum, or another who learns fast but has poor behavior self-management (the cases of D or L, respectively).

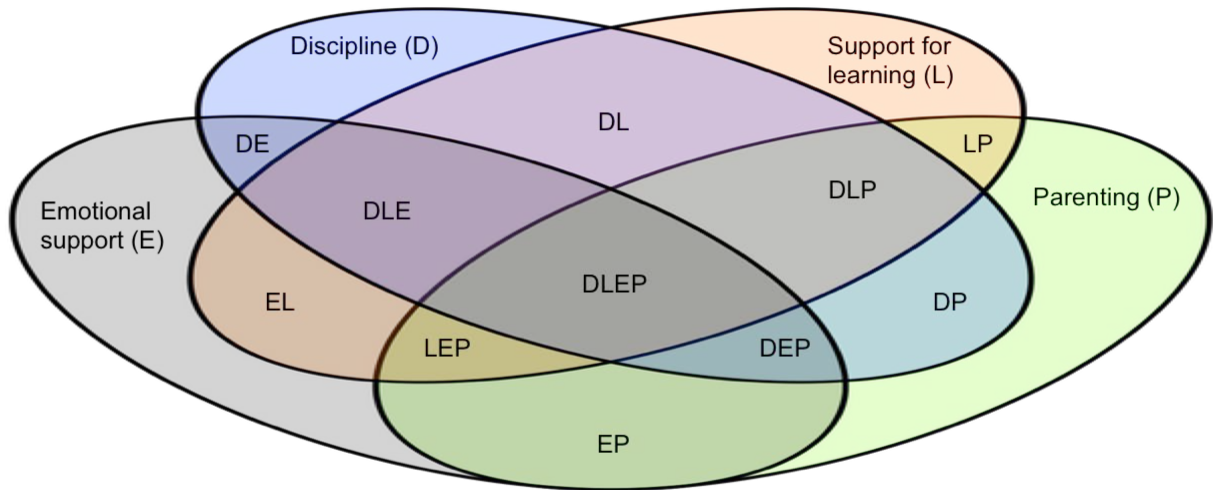

Figure 3.1: Students with different overlaps of needs

Teachers' narratives usually describe students in ways that align with different intersections of the illustration above (see Figure 3.1). Normally, we can expect that the most difficult group of children will be the DLEP group, which represents the overlap of all the dimensions of needs. The less challenging students will be the ones that just have needs in one or two dimensions. For instance, a description of a DLEP student may be Pedro:

> Pedro…I spoke with his mother, Pedro has a family history that's very heavy…his dad even came out today from prison [...] His dad wants to kill Pedro's mother. He threatened to kill the mother. And in Pedro's home everything is violence, and Pedro is beaten. So, at first I didn't understand. I said "[pucha], why?"…He smashed his head on the wall. Obviously, if you see all that violence in your home, here it will show up [...] He acts with violence, he responds with violence. And this is because there is no support in his home […] Pedro has rarely worked well [in the classroom], thoughtfully, calmly...He gets frustrated very quickly (308, School C).

But there are also children with fewer overlapping needs. Another teacher described her two students, Janis and Amada, this way: "Amada is a brilliant girl, Janis too, she is super intelligent. They just have a problem with behavior, nothing else" (102, School A).

Pedro, Janis, and Amanda pose different challenges to teachers. In Pedro's case, where needs for discipline, learning support, emotional support, and basic parenting culminate, teachers are likely to be more strained than in Amada's or Janis' case. How do teachers cope with it? How much do they invest when faced with the varied needs of their students? How much of their energy and time are they willing to commit, and from what resources of their pedagogical capacities do they draw? I turn to these questions in the following sections.

Responsiveness and Boundaries in the Face of Student Needs

When teachers talk about students' unsatisfied needs, in the same breath they often also talk about their own capacities to respond to these needs. The narratives are replete with testimonies of enormous efforts to support students across a wide range of needs. But often they also, sometimes sharply, acknowledge limits in their ability to respond to "too many and diverse" needs and admit having scarce resources to address these needs: "Sometimes you simply have to accept that things escape from your hands" (109, School A), "Sometimes we can't. Some cases surpass us" (207, School B), "In the end you don't get anything, because you want to cover so much, but you can't" (312, School C), "I can't…I can't because it's not in my hands [helping them]" (417, School D).

Interviewees describe a variety of strategies that they use to respond to perceived needs. Given the enormous burden from these needs, they talk about a variety of ways to create boundaries around this burden, keeping it manageable.

In the first round of interviews, teachers described their typical response to cases of absenteeism, tardiness, misbehaviors, or academic difficulties. In the second round of interviews, conducted after the classroom observation, they described what actions they would take to support specific students who had, in the course of the observed lesson, exhibited disengaged or disruptive behaviors, struggled with learning, or presented as a challenge to the teacher. This interview material yielded low-inference descriptions of two types of strategies: strategies with which teachers express their responsiveness to student needs and strategies that define boundaries.

Responding to Student Needs

As described earlier from the interview data, student needs can be divided into four distinct categories: difficulties with keeping discipline, fostering learning, maintaining an emotional balance, and filling in for lack of basic parenting functions. The teachers self-reported a broad variety of responses to these student needs. Often, they described how they would pragmatically adjust their practices to accommodate children with the ultimate goal of helping them.

Practices related to discipline

The teachers try to meet student needs for discipline through strategies that channel good behavior in the classroom and that create an environment of mutual respect. These practices communicate to students what are appropriate norms and habits in the classroom and how conflicts might be solved when they arise. Table 3.3 illustrates the main practices reported:

Table 3.3: Strategies to respond to needs for discipline

Area	Action	Example
Norms	Defining norms in participatory ways and with mutual understanding	The rules of coexistence are made together with the children ... and always see the positive side (202, School B)
	Clear rules	The rules have to be clear, for these kids the rules have to be clear, right? Because they do not have rules at home (413, School D)
	Accommodating rules according to students' circumstances	We are in an ebb and flow of situations...we have to modify [norms] sometimes, or we have to accept them other times. Sometimes we modify or sometimes we impose, but there is a game (319, School C)
	Refreshing appropriate norms of behavior in the classroom	On Monday, you have to re-establish the rules, say again that you have to respect, that you have to do this, that you have to take care […] Because they come from a weekend where they did what they wanted, where norms do not exist (202, School B)
Encouragement internalization	Incentivizing good student behavior	They have a guarantee: if they work as I ask them, I have balls for them, I have games for them, everything on the shelf [...] in exchange for their good behavior (504, School E)
	Highlighting positive behaviors in model students	Positive stimuli, instead of saying "hey shut up" all the time […] it is not the idea. I say "wow how good he is doing. Look at him, how he is listening," things like that. Highlight the children who are behaving well, so that others join them (101, School A)
	Framing norms as an expression of affection	Teaching them that someone who loves you, regulates you. It is like loving is not allowing [you to do whatever you want] I am always in that struggle (202, School B)
	Setting limits of respect	I set limits. They don't know the limits, but if you teach them, they learn them. They are children, and they learn fast. That is not [saying] "you shut up!" [Voice of scream], "let's see, remember your place, I'm the teacher, I'm not your friend, nor your sister, nor your mother, I'm your teacher and you respect me, change the tone, repeat it again" (405, School D)
Management of disruptive behaviors	Preventing conflicts	I know all the kids. I have an hour and a half with them, but I know those who behave badly. I know those who behave well. Then I foresee what will happen. I try to put myself before the negative situation (310, School C)
	Addressing problems collectively	I always try to talk with them [the entire class] in order to see if there are possibilities to change [the behavior] without confronting them (107, School A)
	Addressing problems in a one-on-one interaction	I talk personally with the child first, to know why he does not want to work in the class, and we come to an agreement like between "you and me" (102, School A)

In addressing needs for discipline, teachers strive to develop and apply classroom norms, considering the particularities of their students. They also encourage the internalization of those rules being explicit and clear of what is expected from students in terms of behavior. Some practices are oriented to anticipate disruptive behaviors and when conflicts emerge, educators address them in a dialogue either collectively or individually. In general, these strategies show an overall *flexible* yet firm approach to deal with behavioral issues, by adjusting educators' strategies to address students' specific needs for discipline.

Practices related to learning needs

Teachers self-report a broad repertoire of strategies to respond to student learning needs. The reported strategies represent attempts to serve the particular needs of a disadvantaged student population, with special attention paid to students in need of differentiated support. Main strategies are listed in Table 3.4:

Table 3.4: Strategies to respond to learning needs

Area	**Action**	**Examples**
Expectations	Modeling students' academic expectations	The biggest responsibility that we have is to show them the future, tell them that the school is a tool, it is a tool to improve yourself. To show them that anyone can make it, that they can study more, that they can be better (206, School B)
Student engagement	Learning as the main goal	My responsibility is that they learn, give meaningful learning, and achieve some goals that I set. Although they are vulnerable children, I believe that vulnerable is not being a person who can't think. That is, they also have the resources of the brain to think and can achieve goals…You can propose the objectives, and they can achieve them, and that goes with effort, a lot of effort. (503, School E)
	Challenging students to learn Contextualizing content to make it culturally relevant Learning routines	Demanding, I am demanding with my students. I know that they can give more (417, School D). I put it more than anything in the context of solving problems in Math […] in solving problems is where I try to take them to their own reality (417, School D). Language [the subject] has routines […] within the routine there are three days that we work with the Star methodology, which has to do exclusively with teaching them strategies so that they can understand a text (413, School D).
	Creating experiences to make students feel competent	[After teacher's intervention on organizing notebooks] I realized that the children knew how to add, but because they didn't have any order [in their notebooks], they didn't know where they had to add. So, there they felt capable, they said "ah, that's how it was" [voice of enthusiasm], and they get excited. When a child sees that he knows, he gets excited about what he's doing (431, School E)
Differentiation	Providing differentiated support to students	I am trying always to find strategies for those children who are difficult, to support them. For example, in the room we support everybody, or we do a reinforcement group. I have a group on Thursdays where I give them additional support (101, School A)
	Coordinating actions to support students with special needs	If they [students] have special needs (PIE), we get together. For example, yesterday with the Naty [Special educator], we were seeing that PIE students are not performing well (201, School B)
Self-reflection	Taking responsibility on the lack of effectiveness of teaching practices	So, when I see that many children don't learn, that is constantly…you have to reformulate. You have to say, "in what way do I make them learn?" And in fact, in the planning, I always tell you that when I sit down to plan, I always think about the kid that costs more. How I can make that child learn with this plan. And many times, I feel that the classes are perfect. For those who did not learn, we have to reformulate again (431, School D)
	Constant searching for better ways to teach	I am super thoughtful in that aspect, looking for new strategies of how I can teach them, how they can learn better, maybe with this exercise, maybe with this video, maybe with this activity (311, School C)

Engaging students in meaningful pedagogical interactions is a very difficult task. Children's learning needs often demand a deliberate effort from teachers to adapt their teaching to overcome learning challenges. In doing so, educators strive for raising students' own academic expectations, strive to engage students in their learning process,

differentiate their efforts to reach out to students who struggle to learn, and constantly reflect on how to overcome students' academic failure. As a whole, these educators show a strong determination to promote meaningful *learning* in their students with the final goal of helping their academic development.

Practices related to needs for emotional support

In many interviews, teachers describe how they try to answer students' needs for affection. They aim at making their students feel seen, cared for, and supported personally. As we saw earlier, interviewees know that a personal bond between teacher and students is absolutely essential for the population they are faced with. Table 3.5 shows the summary of the main strategies educators implement:

Table 3.5: Strategies to respond to needs for emotional support

Area	Practice	Example
Closeness	Expressing regard	In the morning when they arrive, I ask everyone, each one, "How are you? How are you? How are you?" by their names, "How are you Sofia? How are you Dylan?" And if there is one, because it happens to me, they say, "No, I'm not fine" [I say] "Now, let's talk" (429, School D)
	Showing affection to students	I always pass by their side and [I give them] a touch on their head, a little caress on the shoulder. I give a little kiss (106, School A)
Support Connectedness	Comforting students with emotional disturbance	The first is a matter of emotional comforting. I feel that it is the basis for the children to want to learn, so they come... discontent many times to classes. Then if I don't supply that, then they will keep thinking of other things (206, School B)
	Reminding students of their capacities and self-worth	Many say, "no, it's just that I'm a fool," they tell you... and there's just the encouragement from the teacher "no, you can do it," and be there giving encouragement (308, School C)
	Paying attention to family conflicts	Sometimes, I'm outside [of the classroom] and I take them to the side "How are you? How is everything at home?" So many have problems at home…violence, that's what they tell me, a lot of violence in the family (113, School A)
	Knowing personal information about students	Knowing each child, I think that's where everything starts (101, School A)
	Cultivating a personal relationship	But despite that, we two as people get along, we greet each other with kisses […] she tells me the problems she has at home [...] Independent of me being her teacher, we are people (102, School A)
	Building or keeping trust	[My role] can be like "emotional teacher." Why? Because I have to be in contact with them, always in contact with them, and maintaining trust, not breaking codes with them, between us (208, School B)
	Getting emotionally connected	One can follow the regulations and everything, but one can't avoid being emotionally bounded, because one is a human being (313, School C)
Empathy	Feeling compassion and empathy for student circumstances	For me, it's like a drug. That feeling is like...like, I do not know, like, I do not know if it's empathy, but that love it overflows (428, School D)

Many students do not have nurturing relationships at home, which often sets an unstable emotional ground for children. Emotional instability comes as subtle demands for attention and regard, generalized defensiveness or distrust, difficulty expressing feelings, or an inability to have healthy relationships with adults or classmates. These needs affect student readiness to learn, demanding action from teachers. Educators, on their part, strive to satisfy some of those needs by implementing strategies oriented to promote

children's emotional well-being in the classroom. These practices demonstrate closeness to students and provide support when children express emotional distress. Also, educators strive to connect with students, know who they are and cultivate trusting bonds. Teachers report that many of these practices are inspired by empathetic feelings that move them to serve their students on a deeper level. Thus, practices in this category revolve around the striving for *personalizing* their relationships with students, often as a necessary basis for the pedagogical interaction.

Practices related to needs for parenting

Interviewees report a set of support strategies to make up for the care that families fail to provide. Although the reported strategies are few in this category of needs, they require enormous effort, can be intense, and most of the time require the teacher to act outside the school, going beyond the traditional boundaries of teachers' work.

Table 3.6: Strategies to respond to needs for parenting

Practice	Definition	Example
Care	Providing personal care	I bring clothes to them, if I have clothes. I get clothes from everywhere to bring to them (510, School E)
Parents	Getting parents involved in educating students	The times that I have had my best meetings with parents is when I teach the parents, because I present concrete tools with which they can help their children (431, School D)
	Holding parents accountable for students' education	I have a case of repetition for non-attendance, that is the [student's] third year that he is repeating for non-attendance. He would be repeating now, and I went to look for him at his home, and I talked with his mother that Mario has to come to classes, because I wasn't going to let him repeat [again] (204, School B)
Advocacy	Taking risk for individual students in extreme cases	I told Eric [Principal]: "You know what? I offer to take care of him [a student whom the administration wanted to expel]. I'll take him as his tutor. We can't expel him because, you kick him out, and that kid goes to the street. That kid has no other possibility." And I said: "Do you know what's wrong? Do you know why he does all of this? Because nobody sees him. This kid doesn't exist for anyone. He is invisible. Nobody sees him. He never has existed for anyone" (413, School D)
	Providing care beyond the school site	I have a child that I care for [at teacher's home] during the week […] This child that I take care of, it's not because his mother doesn't want to worry, it's because she comes very tired, arrives busted. She studies and works, then she doesn't give him time (303, School C)

When families fail in providing care to their children, some teachers feel that they need to provide care beyond the formal teacher role. Practices in this dimension take the shape of personal care through provision of clothes, food when students have not eaten, or care for health problems. On a deeper level, some teachers try to reach out to families to get them involved in students' learning processes or to hold them accountable when they are not supporting students' education. In extreme cases, there are educators who take personal risks for children, "taking a bullet" for them to keep them included in the school or taking caring actions to care for them beyond the school site. As a whole, educators who act in this dimension tend to move *beyond their formal role* as educators by providing different degrees of supplementary protection.

In sum, the interviews show a repertoire of practices with which the teachers address their students' needs. For each category of needs, there are a number of practices that repeatedly appear in the interviewee accounts. With these practices, teachers strive to

be sensitive to their students and ultimately help them to be successful despite the obstacles and hurdles that stand in the way of needs satisfaction. In addressing needs for behavior management and discipline, the practices convey the teachers' striving to be firm but also flexible, to be insistent on rules but also to encourage the internalization of these rules. In addressing needs for learning, the practices convey a quest to teach at a cognitive level appropriate to students and to differentiate so that students can successfully grasp the material. In addressing needs for emotional support, the practices convey a great effort to reach out to students personally and create personal bonds. In addressing needs for parenting, the practices speak to the teachers' realization that they need to care for students inside and outside of school. But adversity experienced by students is also adversity experienced by teachers. And as was mentioned earlier, the narrative of strenuous and effortful orientation towards students and their dire needs has its counterpart in a narrative of boundaries and limits.

Setting Boundaries Against Student Needs

The great majority of teachers relate, during their interviews, that the needs students communicate feel overwhelming. Setting boundaries in the face of overwhelming circumstances is something that human service providers have been found to do (Lipsky, 2010). But they may differ in what kinds of boundaries they erect and to what degree they limit their responses to student needs satisfaction. The boundaries become apparent through explicit language (e.g., remarks, comments, stories) or through the implicit ways of communicating through actions or interactions in the classroom. Boundary practice signals the point at which educators recede from students and dissociate themselves from the students' plight. I defined the experience of teacher adversity as one in which actors feel challenged in their core competencies and well-being. For teachers working under adverse circumstances, these core competencies, I supposed, are fourfold: being able to control one's classroom, being able to teach students the curriculum, being able to establish an emotional and personal connection to students, and being able to compensate where parenting needs are present. For each of these challenges, teachers can experience overload causing them to create boundaries to insulate them from undue stress and self-doubt and to help them shore up a sense of personal integrity (Mintrop, 2012).

Boundaries against needs for behavior management and discipline

Student behavior is one of the most pressing challenges for teachers. Educators usually come to a classroom where a large number of children "do not bring material," "do not want to work," "do not want to understand," "are undisciplined," "do not listen," "come to have fun," or "are disrespectful." When teachers describe how they *connect* to needs for behavioral management, they mention how they incorporate children in the definition of classroom norms, foster internalization of those norms on the part of students, and take a dialogical approach in solving disciplinary problems, and all of these actions are practiced with a flexible attitude to channel good behavior. However, when their efforts do not succeed, and students' behavior escapes from their hands, then they also describe strategies that help them *disconnect* from students and prioritize their own needs as workers to have a minimal sense of control in the classroom. Table 3.7 summarizes these strategies:

Table 3.7: Boundaries against discipline needs

Practice	Definition	Example
Loss of control	Asking for help	When it doesn't work anymore [managing behaviors], I feel like, "What do I do now?" When that happens to me, I have to ask somebody to come [to the classroom] and help me (423, School D)
	Expressing anger	The truth is that I am super strict with the kids. That is, if I have to scream, I scream at them. Maybe it's not the best way, but suddenly they also need order, they need discipline (411, School D)
Exclusion	Excluding disruptive students	I expel them [from the classroom]: "Come on, let me do my class. Please, go away, don't bother me" (105, School A)
Norms enforcement	Insisting firmly on compliance of norms	I have a system, and a system is like order. I mean, the children, when I arrive, I say "Stand up, say hello," something, like, authoritarian [...] I think with that aspect they respect me (503, School E)
	Impersonal application of formal disciplinary procedures	[When they behave too bad] I have to report to the disciplinary inspector, formal [disciplinary] protocol, because I tell you, the kids do not reason. No, they don't reason. They don't reason. (308, School C)

Constant disruptive behaviors on the part of an individual or a group of students could bring educators to a breaking point in which they experience helplessness and resource depletion from managing students' behaviors. With their competencies questioned, teachers implement a set of practices that distances themselves from the stressful situation or that disconnects them from their students. These strategies are desperate efforts to encourage the compliance of norms either from those students who constantly challenge them or from the entire class with the ultimate purpose of recovering the control of the situation. As Table 3.7 shows, these strategies show teachers becoming more *rigid* in the implementation of discipline norms and disconnecting from what students need to behave according to the teachers' expectations.

Boundaries against needs for support in learning

Providing learning opportunities to this student population demands teachers provide a deliberate effort to respond to a broad spectrum of learning needs. As we saw in the previous section, the interviewed teachers mention practices addressing these needs, such as modeling students' expectations to grow academically, engaging children in meaningful pedagogical interactions, differentiating effort to reach students struggling to learn, and taking a reflective approach to improve their teaching. However, when teachers feel incapable of helping students learn, they focus on keeping students working on prepared activities without connecting with student learning needs. Table 3.8 summarizes the main strategies reported:

Table 3.8: Boundaries against needs for support in learning

Area	Practice	Example
Procedural	Learning as promotion	Antony, I wouldn't say he has such bad grades, but he is not working now. Imagine, now if he gets just red grades [insufficient] he will repeat (505, School E)
Exclusion	Excluding students with special needs	[Students with] special needs and who have some degree of difficulty in learning, and often we can't serve [...] sometimes I would, like, want to help them, but we don't satisfy all the needs of the children, because you can't (106, School A)
	Excluding students without motivation to learn	You have to come to a conclusion, a very very cold conclusion, that they are students who do not want to be educated. Then they come obligated, so what can I do there? I cannot get stuck for those kids (508, School E)
	Giving up on students who do not learn	When they don't learn and don't learn, uh.. well, there I really think... I don't know if I say I give up, but I don't know what else to do there. I think...the truth is that I do not know, it's very difficult, I do not know (108, School A)

When teachers perceive that students do not want to learn, do not value education, or are deficient in handling the formal curriculum, educators tend to ration their effort to be able to "give the lesson." Some teachers focus on formal compliance of curriculum coverage and teach to a subset of students who are more receptive of their efforts. Other teachers try harder to reach students but in the tension between fulfilling work duties and persistence with students who struggle to learn, often teachers prioritize work duties. In the end, educators strive to keep students "working" on the activities they planned instead of adjusting their teaching to student needs for support.

Boundaries against emotional needs

In context of adversity, students' difficult lives are obvious realities. Often those experiences come to the school in the shape of overwhelming feelings that emerge intensely in personal interactions demanding educators' attention. As we saw in the previous section, teachers approach those needs in multiple ways, e.g. comforting students or creating strong personal bonds with them. However, when teachers feel personally vulnerable in front of these realities, they limit themselves by becoming more neutral in dealing with student needs for emotional support. In Table 3.9, I present some of the practices teachers use to set boundaries in front of emotional needs.

Table 3.9: Boundaries against emotional needs

Area	Practice	Example
Distance	Distance from disrespectful students	When you make all the effort for a child, and this child continues to treat you badly, I am no longer there (School A, 107)
	Being cautious about developing emotional attachment	You have to bond with the kids, and yes there are lives and realities of them that affect you and everything, but I have been taught that you have to start to separate it. (School C, 313)
	Considering students as unsalvageable	I can't fix their lives because everything they are here is the result of their home: the hatred, the violence, the rudeness, the arrogance, they are the reflection of what the house is. I can do many good things here, but at the end of the day, they go back to the same thing where they come from (506, School E)

When teachers feel exposed personally in front of their students, they hold back their openness to connect with students emotionally. This may happen in reference to particular students who are challenging in their personal interactions or who are unavailable to connect emotionally with adults due to deep trauma. In those cases, teachers hold back in their openness to connect with students, making it impossible to generate a meaningful personal bond with these students.

Boundaries against parenting needs

Many needs students bring to school are related with the short supply of love and care that they experience at home. Most of the teachers are aware of this abandonment and try to compensate for it through different strategies such as providing personal care, involving parents in the education process of their children, or even advocating for students when there is extreme abandonment. However, many times, needs for parenting are far beyond what teachers can handle within their formal role, making them feel powerless. As a result, teachers restrict their support to what they can accomplish at the school without going beyond their formal duties.

Table 3.10: Boundaries against parenting needs

Practice	Definition	Example
Remain in the school	Observing the boundary of schools	I don't feel like a superhero […] I won't save anyone here either, no! I know how the reality is here…I have a personal life, so I can't say "I give everything for them," because also psychologically I get affected. I can't say "I give everything for them, I go to their homes, I do everything ...", no, no, I have a limit. I put a limit at a certain point. I said "no" because of my mental health, because I can't. (101, School A)
	Resigning in the face of students who lack family support	It's hard to assume that there are cases that you can't...uh...I don't know how to help more […] Let's say, Francisco, who you didn't meet that day [classroom observation], he's one more case, more than Olaf, abandoned. Then I do everything possible, but I can't go beyond the school site (313, School C)

Some students experience abandonment of family obligations, which show up in different ways in the classroom. However, being exposed to raw adversity on a regular basis has also taught teachers that their duties must remain within the school's walls. In these cases, teachers experience their limits as service providers for clients who bring problems that make it impossible to sustain a sound education process.

Students' attitudes and behaviors in the classroom create circumstances that often go beyond what teachers can handle. When educators experience these situations, they tend to become less responsive to student needs and restrict the service they provide to children. Teachers do so through a repertoire of strategies through which they move away from student needs and focus on their own needs as workers. Teachers become more rigid in fulfilling student needs for discipline enforcing the compliance of disciplinary norms and habits in the classroom. Educators also tend to focus on keeping students working and becoming more focused on a subset of students who are more receptive of their lesson. In difficult cases, educators can "close off" from personal connections with some students, becoming more formal in their interaction with them. Finally, for students with overwhelming parenting needs, educators focus on what they can accomplish at the school site and omit needs that go beyond the school's boundaries.

Across different forms of responsiveness and boundary setting, we see that teachers oscillate on a continuum depending on the needs they are serving. For instance, in serving needs for discipline, teachers can be more flexible in the application of rules by accommodating classroom norms to student needs for discipline, or teachers can be more rigid in enforcing classroom norms to feel more in control. In the case of learning needs, educators may be more willing to differentiate their teaching to reach the most challenging students, or they may be less oriented to differentiate their work and just focus on students who want to learn. Regarding emotional support, there may be educators more willing to create personal bonds with students or others who remove themselves from personal attachment. Finally, teachers' willingness to fulfill student needs for parenting may vary between opposite poles where, on one hand, teachers may be willing to support students beyond their formal duties at the school, while others may limit themselves to satisfying needs only at the school site. In the illustration on the next page (Figure 3.2), I summarize these potential trade-offs between teachers' responsiveness to student needs and boundary definitions.

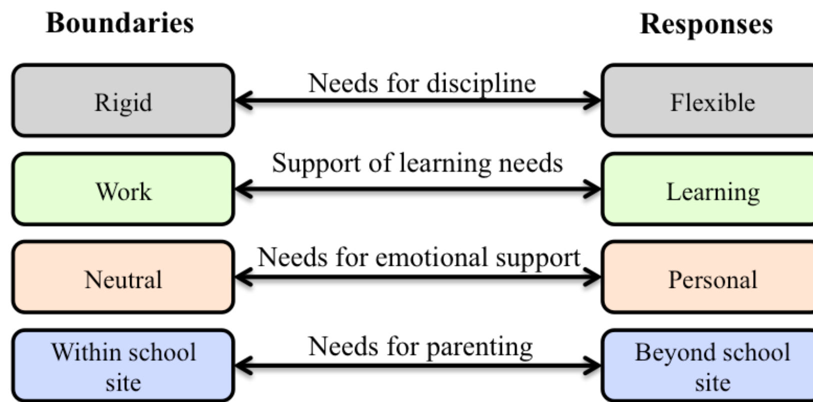

Figure 3.2: Teachers' trade-off between boundaries and responses to student needs

Studying the intersection between responsiveness and boundary setting for individual teachers appears a powerful way to identify variation in teacher commitment to students in contexts of adversity. Figure 3.2 illuminates that a committed teacher can be described as somebody who communicates high determination to respond to student needs and who is less prone to define boundaries across dimensions of needs. The committed teacher will be more flexible to adapt strategies to students' needs for behavioral management, strategize their teaching to help students learn, establish meaningful personal bonds with children, and go beyond the school site to support their students. The same may happen on the opposite end, i.e. a less committed teacher will be more prone to set boundaries against student needs and be less responsive to them. He or she will be more rigid in managing student behaviors. Their teaching will be focused on keeping students busy. Their relationships with children will tend to be emotionally neutral or distant, and they will not go beyond the school to make up for a lack of parental support. In the next section, I address this discussion in detail.

Classifying Teachers by Strength of Commitment to Students

In the theoretical framework, I defined teacher commitment to students as the relative strength of the determination that binds a teacher with a course of action oriented to respond to student needs. In order to understand this relative strength, I distinguished how individual teachers respond to student challenges across the four dimensions of needs as well as how they set boundaries against these needs. Although teachers' responses to student needs varied, I was able to cluster cases according to self-reported responsiveness and boundary setting practices in each dimension of needs. Four clusters emerged from the data that I named boundless, conditional, restricted, and alienated commitment.

Table 3.11: Meta-Matrix of types of commitment according to self-reported behaviors

<table>
<tr><th></th><th></th><th>Alienated</th><th>Restricted</th><th>Conditional</th><th>Boundless</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Responses to student needs</td><td>Discipline</td><td>Trying to control discipline but feeling overwhelmed by disruptive behaviors.</td><td>Flexible approach to needs for discipline. Applying a repertoire of strategies to channel good behaviors.</td><td colspan="2">Flexible approach to needs for discipline. Educators apply a rich repertoire of strategies to solve disciplinary problems.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Support in learning</td><td>Behavioral disruptions crowd out efforts to pay attention to learning needs. Focus on students who want to learn.</td><td>Weak attention to learning needs. Paying attention to students “working” rather than “learning.” Lack of attention to differentiated needs.</td><td colspan="2">Strong attention to learning needs. Teachers strive to offer a broad set of learning opportunities to all students. Especially salient is the attention to students who need differentiation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Emotional support</td><td>Weak attention to needs for emotional support. Few practices that express regard and attention are mentioned.</td><td>Strong attention to emotional needs, but little effort to establish intense levels of personalization.</td><td colspan="2">Strong attention to emotional needs. Teachers strive to create a personal bond with students and make themselves vulnerable to students as well.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Parenting</td><td>None</td><td>None</td><td>Strong attention to needs for parenting. These teachers apply some practices that go beyond their duties at the school site.</td><td>Strong attention to needs for parenting. These teachers apply practices that complement some unfulfilled family duties. Also, they apply practices that advocate for students’ well-being when family is absent or neglecting students.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Boundaries in front of students needs</td><td>Discipline</td><td>Setting boundaries in front of students who misbehave. Application of formal protocols; calling in the dean of discipline; ignoring students within the classroom or sending students out.</td><td>Rigid application of norms in front of students that persist in misbehaviors. Use of formal protocols calling in the dean of discipline, and excluding students</td><td colspan="2">Rigid in application of norms in front of severe disciplinary violation or when student behaviors jeopardize other students or adults. They appeal to formal disciplinary protocols of behavior.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Support in learning</td><td>Narrow focus on students motivated to learn. Other students are neglected or excluded from teachers’ attention.</td><td>Narrow offer of student learning opportunities. Lowering academic standards when content is perceived as challenging. Setting boundaries in front of students who need extra support to learn. Focus on students who are motivated to learn and who show effort.</td><td colspan="2">Narrow provision of learning needs in front of students considered critical cases, usually those who present multiple needs going beyond teachers’ control. Students are referred to other professionals.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Emotional support</td><td>General neutral approach to interacting with students.</td><td>Neutral approach to disrespectful students or treated procedurally. Withholding emotional warmth. Considering some students as unsalvageable.</td><td>Removing themselves emotionally from students with problems that are beyond their capacity to address.</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>Parenting</td><td>None</td><td>Keep responsibilities within school site. Resigning in the face of students who lack basic or essential family support.</td><td>Observing the boundary of school. Drawing a line against intervening in children’s need for a safe and supportive family.</td><td>None</td></tr>
</table>

The classification of teachers according to the four clusters is illustrated in Figure 3.3 below. In the illustration, each code corresponds to a specific teacher. Teachers in the range of 100 belong to school A, teachers in the range of 200 belong to school B, in the range of 300 belong to school C, 400 belong to school D, and, finally, the ones in the range of 500 belong to school E. Especially salient is the category of conditional commitment, which concentrates twenty-one teachers, followed by restricted commitment with thirteen teachers. The cluster of alienated teachers is small (5) and so is the cluster of boundless ones (3).

Alienated	Restricted	Conditional	Boundless
104 210 312	105 106 107	101 102 109	204 303 413
314 504	108 113 206	112 201 202	
	319 423 503	205 207 305	
	505 506 508	306 308 310	
	509 510	311 313 401	
		411 428 417	
		429 431 501	

Figure 3.3: Teachers classifications according to type of commitment

It is interesting to highlight, that schools B, C, and D (200, 300, and 400) concentrate most of their teachers in the boundless/conditional side of the spectrum while schools A and E concentrate most of their teachers in the restricted/alienated side, with no educators present in the boundless category. However, there are also educators of schools B, C, and D in the restricted/alienated categories, suggesting some internal variability within the schools.

Analysis of Teachers Classification Through Reputation and Observational Data

Following the complementarity principle introduced in the methodology, I turn to analyze the four clusters of teacher commitment according to two sources of data: reputation and observational data. If the four clusters developed from interview data above are valid, then the differences across categories should be reflected in other sources of evidence that describe the same phenomenon. Thus, this analytical step has the purpose of testing the plausibility of my four clusters, alienated, restricted, conditional, and boundless.

Reputation Data

Reputation data were collected by asking each administrator to identify teachers who were willing to go “the extra mile” with students and who were not willing to do so. As was mentioned in the methodology, school E was not willing to disclose this

evidence. In Figure 3.4, the participant codes in a rectangle were identified by at least one of the administrators as willing to go "the extra mile." Codes in a triangle were identified by at least one of the administrators as not willing to go "the extra mile." Teachers without a marker were not mentioned by any of the administrators interviewed.

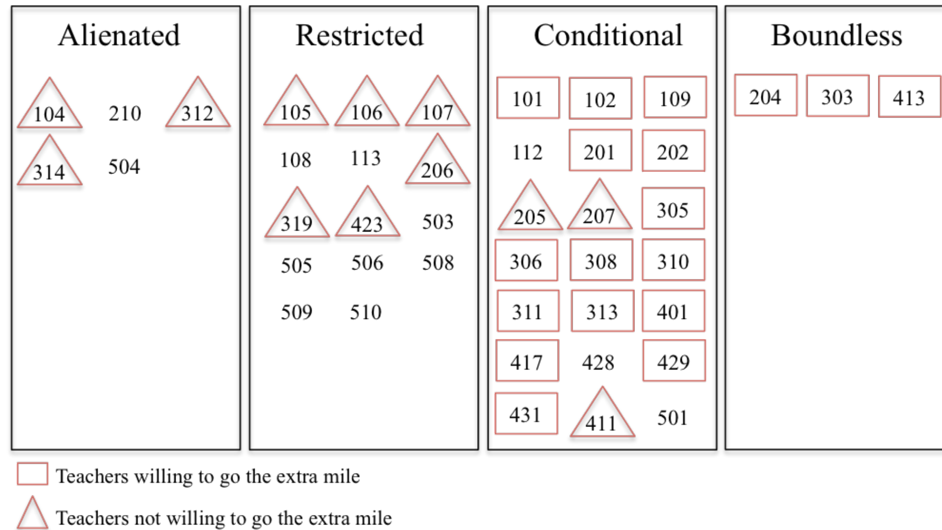

Figure 3.4: Classifications according to type of commitment and reputation

It is important to note that, with only a few exceptions, administrator classifications follow a similar distribution as the types of commitment described. Thus, boundless and conditional commitment include more teachers willing to go the "extra mile," while alienated and restricted commitment does not include any teachers classified as such. Two educators classified as not willing to go "the extra mile" but in the conditional type (207 and 206), correspond to educators who have been in the school over ten years, who had been historically recognized as outstanding teachers for their commitment to students, but who are in preparation for leaving the school. There is only one true discrepancy (Teacher 411) between my classifications based on interview data and the principals' classification based on their experiences with their colleagues.

Observational Data

In addition to the alignment with administrator classifications, it is also important to confirm whether categorizing teachers according to my classifications are reflected in their actual actions with students. Capturing teacher commitment through self-reports helps to understand educators' intentions in serving students; however, this may be insufficient as educators tend to present their intentions in the best way possible. In order to deal with this limitation, I move beyond teachers' self-reported behaviors and explore educators' commitment in light of observable actions within the classroom. To capture behaviors, I applied an observation protocol designed to identify concrete actions that exhibit commitment to students. First, I pay attention to the use of inclusive practices. Second, I pay attention to the learning environment of students by looking at indicators of student time on-task and discipline. Third, I pay attention to attitudes toward students by focusing on actions that communicate regard, closeness, and attention, as well as actions

used by teachers to motivate students. Finally, I pay attention to teachers' persistence with challenging students by focusing on assistance to disengaged students.

The main goal of this analysis is to explore if the types of commitments derived from teachers' narratives are reflected in observable behaviors in the classroom. However, the number of cases in the extreme types are too few to run statistical analysis (alienated = 5 cases[7]; boundless = 3 cases). Thus, to analyze alienated commitment and boundless commitment types, I pay attention to individual cases to identify modal patterns in each group and only compare directly teachers classified as having restricted versus conditional commitment to students.

I ask the following questions: i) Are teachers with restricted and conditional commitment different in the use of inclusive practices? ii) Are classroom environments different? iii) Are attitudes toward students different? iv) Does persistence with especially challenging students differ? In order to explore these questions, I test for mean differences for restricted and conditional categories by using independent t-tests for two samples. In Table 3.12 and Table 3.13, I summarize the comparison between these two groups.

Table 3.12: Mean differences in inclusive practices across snapshots

	Restricted		**Conditional**			
Practices observed	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	T	P
Uses inclusive response strategies	0.43	0.51	1.29	0.56	-4.58	0.00*
Uses Wait Time	0.29	0.47	0.86	0.57	-3.10	0.00*
Uses cooperative learning structures	0.64	0.84	1.19	0.81	-1.92	0.06
Uses multiple approaches to consistently monitor students' understanding	0.79	0.80	1.67	0.66	-3.55	0.00*
Use of student names	1.86	0.36	1.95	0.22	-0.97	0.34
Uses eye contact with all students	1.00	0.68	1.67	0.58	-3.12	0.00*
Uses proximity with all students equitably	0.71	0.47	1.52	0.51	-4.74	0.00*
Uses body language to show that all students' interventions are important	1.00	0.68	1.86	0.36	-4.87	0.00*

$p<0.05$ Student's t test; *significant

Table 3.12 shows that restricted and conditional teachers show statistically significant differences in six out of eight inclusive practices. Thus, on average, conditionally committed teachers use more practices oriented to include students in the classroom than their colleagues in the restricted category. The only practices that are not significantly different, using collaborative learning strategies and using the names of students, are both practices where restricted teachers also scored fairly high.

[7]One of the five classroom observations conducted could not be used because the lesson did not follow a normal flow.

Table 3.13 reports mean differences in teachers' behaviors according to the overall assessment.

Table 3.13: Mean differences in teachers' behaviors in the classroom overall assessment

	Restricted		**Conditional**			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	**T**	**p**
Learning environment						
On Task	1.00	0.39	1.76	0.44	-5.26	0.00*
Discipline	0.86	0.86	1.67	0.58	-3.33	0.00*
Tone	1.21	0.43	1.81	0.40	-4.19	0.00*
Attitudes						
Regard	0.71	0.61	1.71	0.46	-5.51	0.00*
Closeness	0.71	0.83	1.76	0.44	-4.90	0.00*
Motivation	0.64	0.63	1.76	0.44	-6.20	0.00*
Persistence with…						
Disengaged students	0.29	0.47	1.57	0.60	-6.77	0.00*
Disruptive students	0.57	0.76	1.62	0.59	-4.60	0.00*
Assisting students	0.64	0.74	1.81	0.40	-6.01	0.00*

$p<0.05$ Student's t test; *significant

Classroom observation data suggests that teachers who exhibit a conditional commitment show statistically significant differences with teachers who express a restricted commitment across all the indicators measured. The biggest difference between these two groups can be seen in educators' persistence to deal with disengaged students, with disruptive students, and assisting students. Also, teachers' attitudes toward students appear to show important differences as well.

The "alienated" pattern is an extreme form of the "restricted" pattern. Compared to teachers in the "restricted" category, I found that teachers use very few inclusive practices (between 1 and 7). Attitudes to students following indicators that describe regard, motivation, and closeness are almost unobservable. Also, there is a pervasive lack of persistence with students who are misbehaving, disengaged, or needing attention to work.

Compared to teachers in the "conditional" category, the modal pattern of teachers identified as having boundless commitment similar behaviors. High use of inclusive practices, positive attitudes toward students, and an outstanding inclination to persist with students that seem disengaged, misbehaving, or needing assistance. But I named these teachers having "boundless" commitment because they disregard the boundaries of their role and are willing to step in where they perceive parents to be absent.

As a synthesis, my categorization of teachers according to the interview material matches well with their reputation and also matches well with observed behaviors. These two findings may suggest that there are observable behaviors that allow distinguishing between these two groups of teachers. All in all, analysis of complementary data supports the classification of teachers at least in the broad distinction between alienated/restricted and conditional/boundless.

Conclusion

Students who face adversity express their difficult life experiences in a constellation of attitudes and behaviors every day in the classroom. Students' attitudes and behaviors create overwhelming working conditions for teachers, which I referred to as a direct experience of adversity. In the face of the challenges students bring to the classroom, educators identify a set of human needs that students may have unfulfilled and that are the basis of their attitudes and behaviors. Four constellations of needs are described: needs for behavioral management, support in learning, emotional support, and parenting. Teachers handle these needs in different ways. While some teachers are more prone to be responsive to students needs other teachers are more prone to define boundaries in front of those students. Contrasting responsive behaviors and the tendency to define boundaries, four different types of commitment emerge: alienated, restricted, conditional, and boundless. These four types of teachers express distinct levels of commitment as determination to respond to student needs. Observational data of behaviors in the classroom show significant statistical differences between teachers who exhibit a restricted commitment from the ones that exhibit a conditional one. Reputational data show to be consistent with the types of commitment developed. Triangulation with three sets of independent data leads me to believe that my classifications are solid constructs.

CHAPTER 4: THE STRUGGLE OF TEACHER COMMITMENT TO STUDENTS

Overview

As was shown in Chapter 3, teachers express different behavioral patterns to serve student needs either responding or setting boundaries. Different behavioral responses towards student needs reveal different levels of determination on the part of teachers to stay the course. Drawing the "line" of what is possible to accomplish with students flows from the daily struggle of serving this student population. In the process of defining the approach to students, teachers make sense of the challenges brought by students and develop emotional or cognitive resources that shore up their determination to be responsive in their practices or deploy cognitive or emotional shields that set boundaries. To gain depth in how this process happens, this chapter will capture teachers' personal struggle and their justifications for taking a given course of action. Taking the four types of teacher commitment as a basis, I turn to the testimonies of each of these groups of teachers. For each group, I advance a more nuanced description of experiences with students, courses of action, justifications for courses of action.

Alienated Commitment

Educators who are overwhelmed by student attitudes and behaviors and who tend to define strong boundaries across all dimensions of needs make up this category. Self-reported behavioral responses show that teachers tend to be rigid in serving needs for behavioral management and most of their effort is invested in controlling students. Achieving learning is seen as very difficult so the teachers in this category tend to deliver their lesson to those students who show interest and want to learn, excluding the rest of the students from their attention. Although teachers show some regard for students, in general they exhibit affective neutrality. Providing emotional support is hard, and as a result, they end up feeling disconnected from their students. Educators with alienated commitment are keenly aware of the enormous neglect that they believe students experience in their families. In fact, they may sometimes overestimate this neglect, but they report few teaching behaviors prone to respond to those needs. I defined this category as "alienated." Alienation may be a description of a psychological state, but here I use the term as a description of the relationship teachers have with their students.

Working with this student population puts alienated educators in a situation in which they can barely handle disciplinary needs, and instruction is experienced as a constant struggle. For instance, in a classroom observation of a history class in 6th grade, I observed one lesson on the topic of human rights. The teacher, Javier, brought a video that he showed in short segments and then asked questions. Across snapshots, I observed a classroom with students talking in small groups, with some students yelling at each other, some laughing and making jokes every now and then, a few children walking around the classroom, and even a few fights emerging during the lesson. Javier's attempts to bring order to the classroom were weak and unsuccessful, and he continued his lesson in the midst of interruptions and noise. Just a few students paid attention and had their notebooks open on their desks. A few students also tried to ask their classmates for silence. Even a teacher from a different classroom came to provide help to quiet

down the class (the noise was interrupting her lesson next door). All these attempts were ineffective. Javier did not approach students and kept his position in front of the classroom almost the entire lesson. At one point, he decided to stop the activity of the video and started dictating content for students to write as he read. This change brought a little bit of order, but it did not last. One student made a joke aloud, and disruptive behaviors emerged again. Javier decided to stop the class and wrote an annotation[8] against the most disruptive students. The head teacher of that grade came to bring order to the class, and Javier just sat down at his desk in silence. After the chief teacher left, Javier did not continue the lesson. He waited 15 minutes until the lesson was over, sitting at his desk and leaving students to talk. When the lesson was over, I approached him, and he said: "You have to control yourself to not raise your voice, to not offend them, to not yell at them…but sometimes I want to do it really badly […] this is what people from above don't see" (312, School C).

Javier's situation echoes the voices of other educators in this category in describing experiences of working with students: "it's permanent chaos, there are moments of order, but it's usually very difficult to control the kids" (210, School B). Teachers barely feel in control over what happens in their classrooms, which is populated with "complicated," "undisciplined," or "unmotivated" students, who come to school out of obligation and without interest: "this is what we have [referring to her students]. It's very difficult to work in this context with children without interest" (314, School C). For these educators, getting the most basic order becomes "a fight with children" that often makes them feel that they are "collapsing."

Intertwined with the disciplinary struggle, teachers also face the challenge of supporting students in their learning processes. Engaging students in meaningful learning interactions is perceived as very difficult and achieving learning goals as elusive. One educator illustrated this point referencing the lesson observed:

> It is very difficult to teach students who do not want to study. You saw that day that there are students who do not do anything, who do not want to study, who are unmotivated. It is very difficult. You can't work with them. (314, School C)

Students "generally don't want to do anything" and it is difficult "to make them study." Educators feel that children neither see the meaning to learn nor have the willingness to invest effort on it. Content matters are seen too far from students' reality and capacities and demands from the administration to cover the curriculum feel overwhelming. Also, efforts to teach students usually get crowded out by disciplinary issues. In the midst of this situation, alienated teachers reach a point in which they "throw in the towel" or "give up" with students that struggle to learn and just focus on who makes them feel competent:

> I try to focus on students who try hard and want to study. I leave the rest because it is very difficult to motivate them. They simply don't want to... I try [to work] who those want to learn. (314, School C)

[8] In the Chilean context, every grade has a "libro de clases" (Book of the class) where teachers must register what was covered during the lesson, attendance, and disciplinary incidents. An annotation means a complaint by the teacher against one (or more) student(s) who was misbehaving in the classroom.

> I am very hated by all those who do not want to write, do not want to read, do not want to learn. Those are the ones who always...wage a permanent war against me, but I also count on the classroom, on the support of those who do want to learn, and they stop these others. (104, School A)

Taken together, students' attitudes and behaviors create unbearable adversity for teachers in their workplace: "You don't know what to do in terms of discipline […] don't know what to do in academic terms" (312, School B). This adversity generates feelings of frustration, tiredness, stress, disappointment, and powerlessness. In some educators, these feelings reach a point in which they feel antagonistic toward some students who constantly challenge them. As the following quotes express:

> This is [...] a social war between a [social] class with diplomas and other children who are completely abandoned. And it really becomes like a war, because you see that… people who are not interested in learning and who do not care that others learn, come only with a single goal which is having fun, to do other things that do not correspond to what is done in the school, and boycotting the classes. (104, School A)

> [When students misbehave] I wouldn't want to be a teacher and I would just slap them, frankly, and ... you get angry, you get angry...because you say, "and this child that...with audacity disrespects you", and you say "not even my children disrespect me like that." And you have to eat all that rage, and in the end, you leave the class really stressed out, eh, maybe not so much for being angry but for holding it in, for holding you back so much. (312, School C)

Alienated teachers make sense of their work experiences in a defensive fashion and directly blame students' deficits for the difficulties they have at work. "There are many children with problems," "they have many shortcomings," "they don't want to learn," "they are reluctant to do anything," "they are aggressive," "they are lazy" are common sentences justifying teachers' own lack of effectiveness. Even, educators impute intentions in students' attitudes in the classrooms. As these educators share:

> Everyone "teachers, teachers", but in reality, children, no matter whether they are vulnerable, they take advantage of everything, filthy[9] kids. They don't want to study, they don't want to do [anything], they don't have the attitude to work, there are Vietnam wars to do an activity. Today just missed pouring paraffin and a match [to make a fire], horrible, horrible, fights, punches, kicks, chairs, everything. (504, School E)

> I've never been in a place where I had such a need for discipline to be able to work. And I understand, little children are disruptive and everything, but they

[9] "Cabros de porqueria" in Spanish

> also abuse this a lot. Because it's a school focused on students, so they feel like kings of this place. (210, School B)

Although most of these educators feel sorry about students living circumstances, they believe that many of their students have a ceiling of learning that is difficult to break. They are convinced that children do not have a "remedy" and that investing any effort in these students is done in "vain." Despite some expressions of empathy, in general, teachers feel helpless, detached, or cynical toward students, which suggests a burnout pattern. For instance:

> Terrible…sometimes I say to myself, when I'm so tired and there are so many problems, I say, "what the hell am I doing here, Lord?", with forty kids and fights all day […] I say "Lord, give me strength," nothing more. I ask God to help me, and it gives me strength. And I keep fighting forward, but in the end, I am hoarse, but it is a terrible exhaustion. I get home. I arrive. I take off my clothes. I get in the shower. I start crying. It is every day. (504, School E)

> The truth is that I am already so used to all the social problems that these children have, that, uh, I lost my capacity for amazement a long time ago […] I know that there are social problems behind [the kids] and they are well-documented here in the school, for me to be worried about them. Besides, it is not good either, because many times, it happens that I am the punching bag of these children who have so many problems. They will retaliate even with you. (104, School A)

> The only thing...alluding to the metaphor of navigating, I just keep sailing in the storm. I try to look at a point, to the port, to get there and finish as soon as possible. I don't even want to look so much as to the side, the big waves, whatever comes, but to the end and then fly away from the educational system. I don't want to change the world anymore…through education...no, it has become just a job. Now, if you tell me at this time, "Look, we offer you another job earning exactly the same [salary]", I will leave, frankly I will leave...it's that simple. (312, School C)

As a synthesis, alienated commitment comes about when adversity brought by students creates unbearable adversity for teachers in their workplace. Individual teachers barely can satisfy the most basic student needs for discipline, which makes almost impossible to support them in their learning process. These attitudes may condition teachers' determination to respond to student needs, moving teachers to set strong boundaries in front of their needs, especially the ones related with discipline and learning. The exposure to these constant difficulties seems to translate into symptoms of burnout. At the center of this alienation is the suffering teachers experience when they acutely feel their failure in creating order and exerting control, a failure in one of their presumed core competencies. Yet as we saw, this lack of control may also be related to something deeper, a difficulty in establishing emotional connections to students with needs that are compounded by adversity.

Restricted Commitment

As shown in Chapter 3, educators with restricted commitment have a more flexible approach to deal with student needs for behavioral management and report the use of some strategies to serve children's emotional needs. They usually communicate their concerns about their students' living circumstances and are explicit in defining their work to serve students well. However, what sticks out is their tendency to set boundaries against students who persistently misbehave and their tendency to become rigid in the enforcement of norms. Another set of boundaries are placed in front of learning needs that educators perceive as too difficult or for which they do not feel prepared. I defined this category as "restricted" to describe teachers who limit their responsiveness to student needs when faced with students who are perceived as too challenging.

Within this category, work usually is described as a constant tension between students' challenging attitudes and behaviors and the educators effort "to keep order" in the classroom to "help students." The following quote illustrates this struggle:

> It's a fight against everything because they aren't willing to do what you want to do with them. Well I gave the language lesson to the kids, of course, because you don't want them to get delayed. But they don't see those things, you try to make them understand that what you do is for their own sake […] to form them as people, but that's what costs the most. It's a wearing down that you feel because often you don't see a result. There are some children that respect us because of the years that we have been around and, well, maybe just for affection they follow you, and join the wavelength and, in the end, they do the activities. But it costs a lot […] It costs so much to motivate these children and it truly does. It costs to motivate them. It's difficult for them to understand the only purpose is not to go fight, not to go punish them, not go put annotations [sanctions] on them. They usually challenge you, and they always want to win because they are always in that constant struggle here in society. Here the strongest always wins. Then they are always against [you], they confront you to show that they are stronger. (107, School A)

The struggle in working with students usually is seen as students needing emotional attention: "needs for affection play a fundamental role within the kid. If you have a sad student inside the classroom, that kid will never understand you" (508, School A). Concerns about students' emotional well-being is central, in that educators often see their roles as "caregiver," "counselor," "guide," or "social worker." These roles are even perceived as more important than the role of educator. As a teacher shares:

> I feel more like a counselor than like a teacher, because finally, yes, I try to teach them what I can about the things that I know they need to learn, so that later they can perform well in life. But they need something now, and they need an adult to guide them. (423, School D)

These educators put special emphasis on educating students for their life skills, to develop "social skills," to pay attention to the "human side," to teach them "respect," and

to focus on the emotional side. Self-reported behaviors of affection with students abound, such as having physical contact during the lesson and during breaks, greeting students in the morning and calling them by their names, treating them with respect, having open conversations about their lives and interests, comforting children when they struggle with emotions, reinforcing their self-esteem and self-worth, and providing advice when students request it. This quote expresses this pattern:

> I always pass by their side and [I give them] a touch on their head, a little caress on the shoulder. I give a little kiss. [I tell them] "Oh! you look great today." I always try to reinforce that attitude of the child so that they feel valued, because in these times there are many children [who are treated as] "get out" or "get out of here" and slurs and stuff like that, stuff that we don't do. Instead we give reinforcement to these children, because they lack enough love, so that in a way, a touch for them is fundamental. (106, School A)

Students' emotional distress often translates into disruptive and challenging behaviors that need to be addressed as well. Thus, tied to the needs for emotional support, teachers are also aware that the struggle in serving students implies managing their challenging behaviors. To some degree, managing behaviors goes hand-in-hand with emotional support: "I give them discipline, but at the same time I give them affection" (108, School A). But also, managing behaviors is seen as an unavoidable task in working with students who lack habits and respect for others, which are the minimal conditions for adjusting to the school culture. Thus, teachers also invest a lot of effort in disciplining students as a way to connect them to the school standards of behavior and to counterbalance the influence of their homes:

> But there is that constant struggle and therefore it is super exhausting to be working in 6th [grade]; [it's difficult] that they pay attention, that they work, that they participate in classes. Because the important thing is what I am talking about in the front [of the classroom] and not what they want to talk about in the back […] There are micro-groups of conversation, let's say, where each one is in his world, in his life, in his daily life. And they still don't understand that the entrance to the classroom is a connection with learning. For them, entering the room is another moment of the day where they can continue talking, where they can continue doing their daily life, and it's hard to make them work. (School B, 206)

Teachers with restricted commitment use a broad repertoire of strategies to manage student behaviors in the classroom. For instance, these strategies can include the use of incentives for encouraging a good behavior (candies, small toys, or free time), having or reminding of classroom norms (e.g. reminding what is the accepted vocabulary in the classroom), negotiating rules with students (e.g. letting them to listen music while they work), being tolerant with student culture (e.g. overlooking some minor violations), or addressing problems collectively in case of constant disruptions. Usually, these strategies have the broad purpose of accommodating norms and rules to what students need. For instance:

> There are also other courses [classes] whose behavior shows that...no, they don’t agree with the rules, and they don’t like the teacher's way of presenting the content or how skills are developed. And that is where the teacher gets in conflict with students: follow the rule or consider what they want? So, we are in an ebb and flow of situations...we have to modify [norms] sometimes, or we have to accept them other times. Sometimes we modify or sometimes we impose, but there is a game. (319, School C)

Alternatively, they can take the shape of constant reinforcement of what rules of behavior are acceptable in the classroom:

> If you go to a course [class] that I do...they all will be writing, and I'm keeping an eye on them "why are not you working? Work! Why do not you write? Why are you standing? Sit down!" I mean, I'm continually stressing habits. I'm like that in all classes, so I think at least they got used to that, to my system. (503, School E)

When efforts to maintain discipline do not work and teachers feel exposed to systematic misbehaviors that preclude them from delivering their lesson, they become more rigid in enforcing norms. Teachers distance themselves from students and rely on mechanisms that allow them to deal with student behavior through formal protocols enforcing discipline, by asking help from the disciplinary supervisor, or through the exclusion of students from the pedagogical interaction. For instance:

> I don’t know if it is a personal defense mechanism, but I don’t try to find many explanations. Sometimes I respond to self-pressure or pressure from the environment. I don’t know, when I need to close a unit and there are four unbearable [students]: "Look, this is what I have to do, we have to do it, please, you have to do it…do you want to or not?" [The student says] "No, I don’t want, to"[The teacher replies] "Go outside!" I am also authoritarian sometimes. (105, School A)

Unbearable disciplinary challenges also can bring teachers to distance themselves from students, becoming less personal in their relationships and restricting their emotional support. This is especially clear when educators are faced with students who become disrespectful. As these educators express:

> When you make all the effort for a child, and this child continues to treat you badly, I am no longer there. (107, School A)

> A child that you treated well, that you were friendly with, you gave him a chance, “I support you,” “I help you,” [then] he goes and snaps his fingers and tells you "ahhh, fucking old lady!" [...] Out of nowhere like that. You didn’t even attack him. I wasn’t arrogant. I didn’t discriminate against him. I didn’t make him feel worthless. Nothing, no attitude that he could have reacted to...in that way. That's when I say "OK, what else do I do with this little boy?” Nothing! (108, School A)

A similar pattern emerges when educators deal with students who bring emotional issues that are perceived out of reach. As this educator expresses:

> Students who […] have difficulties in relationships with their parents or with their families, and that is clearly seen in their behavior. They require support or perhaps an interaction in that sense, but we do not have the conditions to serve them or to worry about these situations. (319, School D)

When it comes to learning needs, these educators also tend to restrict their responses to what they can accomplish in their work with students, especially when faced with students who struggle to learn. As we saw earlier, teachers prioritize roles such as caregivers or counselors over the role of educator. Educators' efforts to serve students' emotional struggles and behaviors take a huge amount of their working energy, which may condition their approach to teaching their students. "Giving the lesson" is usually narrated as a way to keep students "working" instead of pursuing challenging learning goals. When teaching is perceived as ineffective, teachers blame students and their problems or their limited disposition to learn. For instance, "I think they are lazy" (505, School A), and "they're not motivated to study" (423, School D). Thus, learning often is reduced to developing minimal or rudimentary skills:

> What I can do is give them a lot of affection with firmness and get them to have the minimum learning skills so that they can develop a little bit. (506, School A)

Although some minimal concerns to adapt their teaching is reported, these teachers usually feel strained by external demands for curriculum coverage or achieving organizational goals: "I need to do my job." Students who struggle to learn usually are seen as "difficult," and teachers are incapable of providing help to these students: "There are always difficult children. Yes, there are children with whom I declare myself incompetent" (105, School A). Taking a pragmatic attitude, e.g. "What else can I do?" they put in place practices such as excluding students with special needs, excluding students without motivation to learn, or leaving students behind when demands for curriculum coverage are emphasized. When student difficulties to learn are more general, then teachers tend to reduce the difficulty of the lesson.

When we zoom out to teachers' attitudes toward students who struggle and the decisions that teachers make, we usually find justifications that take a reserved tone, which do not seem to be emotionally overloaded. Educators justify their approach blaming the inherent deficits to students' origins and putting responsibility on students or their families for their failure. In the end, most of these teachers agree that challenging students do not have hope, but have their futures already set. For instance:

> What do you want me to tell you, if we all think in the same way, there are children for whom there is no way. Whatever you do, the child will be always the same, because the...the circle where they live is that, that way they relate to each other, in that way they speak. You summon a parent to come here [to the school]: "You know, Ma'am, the child had this behavior", [the parent responds] "and why? when?" [Mimes shouting and anger] and then swears [to the child]. Then I say,

"what else can I do?" At least the kid comes. Thank God he comes [to school]. (106, School A)

As a synthesis, although teachers show an openness to serve student needs, especially for behavioral emotional support and behavioral management, they tend to shrink their determination in front of students who are perceived as unmanageable or disrespectful. Teaching is perceived as a secondary goal for teachers, and it is performed as an activity that looks for compliance more than achieving substantive learning goals. Students who struggle to learn for different reasons are usually left behind. Students are often blamed for their unwillingness to productively engage in pedagogical interactions. These educators seem to shield themselves from the gap between what is expected of them from society and what they can actually accomplish with students. Finally, in the center of this category is the emotional distance that teachers create when they are faced with complex needs that question their competencies. Accepting their limits in serving this student population often implies a redefinition of their role that allows them to hold a sense of competence in the limited service they provide to children.

Conditional Commitment

A stronger determination to respond to student needs can be found in this group. This pattern describes teachers as being responsive across all the dimensions of needs. They tend to be flexible in responding to disciplinary challenges, offer a broad set of learning opportunities with a focus on challenging students, go deeper in emotional support cultivating personal bonds with children, and show some practices that project their care for students beyond the school site. Although students who struggle with discipline or learning often make them feel challenged, this group persists in their support. Educators strive to "see" kids beyond their status of students but as "good children," "humans," or "persons" in the midst of adversity and in need of help. Perhaps this makes teachers see students as deserving of good education and care, even in highly challenging cases. Although teachers' determination is strong, they feel also forced to define boundaries when working with children affects their own personal well-being. Pressing circumstances that affect teachers' physical or mental health or personal life usually push them to draw this line, often against their intuition to keep helping students. I call this group "conditional" to describe educators who express strong determination to serve their students across different constellations of needs but who condition their commitment so as not to endanger their own personal self-care.

Working with this student population is not any easier for this group of educators. Similar to the previous types, narratives about difficulties at work abound as well as the feelings of exhaustion from elusive success. But different from the previous groups, these conditionally committed educators approach situations with an openness to understand what needs students bring to the classroom everyday: "Here one can and has to ask questions as a teacher, why this type of kids is different? In what sense is he different?" (207, School B). This approach may allow them to connect with and be aware of the adversity their students face in the midst of the own difficult everyday work. Thus, teachers' interpretations of students' attitudes and behaviors in the classroom are empathetically connected with students' challenging life experiences. For instance:

> I have a crazy theory about that [students' attitudes and behaviors] ...I believe that here children live a life that when they are little, they don't question [things]. And that is why learning is more regular in courses such as second or third grade. However, when they grow up, they realize that what they live isn't so normal. There are things that shouldn't happen and they start like...to rebel against that...I mean "why do I have to go through this? why has this happened to me? why is my dad on drugs? why do people do this in my house? why does my dad hit my mom?"...they start to question themselves and suffer. Some cry, others don't want to do anything. Like they get revenge on their parents and don't want to study…for them it's like "no...my mom doesn't see me, I don't study" […] Understand? then like they get all mixed up and have a lot of things in their heads, and, as I told you, sometimes one here gets into children's histories and you tell yourself "Damn! And on top of that, they have to learn math" […] They have a life of hell, and on top of that, I have to teach them an equation...an equation that maybe it doesn't ... it's not as important to them as what they live. (School A, 102)

Although the teachers express empathy and a deep understanding of students' living circumstances and the obstacles that adversity may create for students' academic engagement, they do not shy away from accepting the main responsibility of promoting student learning.

> We are the main actors. If we don't put ourselves out there, we don't empower ourselves so that children learn. Obviously, these children won't arise, but not because they're from a stratum or low socioeconomic class, because you will lower the level, that is, "No, don't teach them this, because they won't learn it" [Voice of pity] No! You just have to lift them up, you have to lift them up. (305, School C)

In fact, exposure to the hardship of student adversity makes the desire to help unavoidable and teachers feel personally and emotionally involved with student learning. Both are integral parts of what is seen as the role of the teacher.

> It is unavoidable that you think how you can help. There are so many kids that go through so bad, so, so, so bad [experiences], that I feel that here at school, they can come to have a good time, and that I'm an important part of that, too. Right? So, the fact that they learn will serve me both professionally and personally, as well as emotionally, because I feel that I will be fulfilling my role as a teacher, which is not only teaching content, but also how to form them [as people]. (310, School C)

"Educating students," "student learning," and "provide learning opportunities" are seen as the main goals for these educators. But the only chance to succeed in pursuing learning goals relies on connecting emotionally with children. As one teacher illustrates, "We start with the emotions and from there we go for the content [matter] because I can't teach the content if they have a mess with their emotions" (201, School B).

Understanding that learning readiness depends on students' emotional well-being may encourage these educators to cultivate personal relationships with students as a central priority: "My first priority is to have a good relationship with children" (102, School A). Teachers with conditional commitment usually see their students as a whole person that needs integral support, which starts from the basic action of knowing each child: "Knowing each child, I think that's where everything starts" (101, School A). Establishing relationships is seen as a way to build a personal bond of mutual respect and trust. Some teachers see that striving to build trusting relationships responds to children's needs for safety at school:

> Everything is oriented in that children are happy and that we can get them to learn in a safe, pleasant, hopefully, friendly environment. (205, School B)
>
> I love when I'm giving lessons and I pass by the side [of a child] and I do like [gesture of a caress] ...and [the child reacts] like a kitten. I say "well, that child created a bond of affection with me. Here he feels safe." For me, that's already great. (429, School D)

Effort to connect with students personally is especially aimed toward students who struggle the most, who are perceived as more needy of adult support and who need more reinforcement of their personal self-worth and self-esteem. Usually, this is seen as a way to counterbalance the emotional distress that students frequently bring from home.

Cultivating personal relationships with students does not eliminate disciplinary challenges or conflicts. Actually, descriptions of misbehaviors are ubiquitous in narratives in the 'conditional' pattern as well as the efforts to address them on a regular basis. Yet, striving proactively to manage behavioral needs and finding ways for students to internalize basic limits, norms, and rules of behaviors are present as well:

> I am teaching them limits. Teaching, I don't know, common sense, values, eh, the things that the family should teach them, basic and principle things that many times are in charge of us. (201, School B)

Efforts to model appropriate norms of behaviors are expressed through strategies such as defining norms collectively, reinforcing positive behaviors, or incentivizing good behaviors by using rewards. When educators need to enforce rules, they pay attention to students' particular needs and often they accommodate their approach case by case, "With some, I have to be harder. Others are more [gesture of softer] ...I always play with that, with psychology...obviously I see case by case" (101, School A). When specific cases of conflict are discussed, these educators usually are well informed about why students behave in such manner., Teachers in the conditional commitment category tend to address problems collectively or individually, depending on the problem. They avoid punishing procedures. Only in extreme cases, when the students systematically misbehave and the teachers have run out of tools, the educators appeal to the formal procedures and protocols of the organization. Overall, channeling good behaviors in the classroom is seen as a condition to encourage students' academic engagement:

> What happens is that you have... it is a whole, you can't separate it, because to be able to teach them the content between quotation marks, what the Ministry sends you […] You have to have an order in the classroom. That is, you can't expect children to learn if they are throwing things to each other. Then you have to put rules, which are rules that they don't bring from home, things that they don't have in their home usually. So, you have to fight with what you have here, if you have a good home that supports you, even better, but if you don't have it, that isn't [a reason] why you're going to say "oh, no, I don't do anything with this child" [Voice of crying], no, you just have to fight with the tools you have. You have to fight. (306, School C)

Conversations around instruction describe educators' expectations to achieve learning goals with students. These educators strive to offer challenging and meaningful learning opportunities to all their students and are explicit in not lowering standards: "I am exigent with my students. I know they can give me more" (417, School D). Conversations around instruction are based on detailed descriptions of challenges in teaching specific curriculum or on developing skills and strategies to tackle these challenges. The teachers adapt, contextualize, and tailor teaching approaches based on students' learning styles and, even, individual characteristics:

> I think about children, in the stage [of development] of the kids that I have, between seven and nine [years old]. They are in that kinesthetic stage, when a child values things when she/he can see them […] If we are going to work, I do not know, about insects, [I try so students] can see them. (205, School B)

When students struggle to learn, teachers often adopt a self-reflective attitude regarding their own teaching practices and avoid blaming students for their struggle, "I am always questioning myself, the fact that maybe I'm not doing well, or maybe what I'm doing is boring" (109, School A). Teachers use strategies to provide differentiated support to students who struggle to learn either within the classroom or in groups after the lesson. Often, teachers create small experiences of success so students can feel competent, and also, they encourage participation of everyone, "covering that need of knowing that he/she is capable of doing anything" (306, School C). These educators also narrate how they look for help for students with special learning needs and how they work hand-in-hand with special educators. In the tension of covering the curriculum with students who are struggling to stay on track, most of these educators persist. As this educator illustrates:

> I always believe that one can do more, that's why I...I want to believe in expectations, in having expectations for the kids. Because if you face it like that, thinking that you can't do more, you failed. You failed for that child. Maybe not for the rest, but for that child you stopped giving importance. Imagine that your life is unimportant, that you were abandoned ...that it is like a ball over here and there, and that they are left alone, leaving them to bounce in the process of learning, and here already "scratch yourself alone"... eh, where will [that child] get to go? Where else are they going to feel capable, important? If finally the

> school, the school is… a generator of a certain ego, of feeling capable, of knowing that..."I have already explored different areas and I recognize myself as good for something." (431, School D)

Differentiated attention is not uniquely addressed to students who struggle with learning. Some of these teachers pay attention to advanced students so they can explore their potential as well.

Striving to support students beyond school also sticks out. Several narratives share descriptions of educators providing clothing, food, or attention to health care when students are neglected. Also, educators constantly try to connect with families to make sure students will have the basic support to go to school. For instance, most of these teachers have WhatsApp messenger groups with parents and are in constant touch with them to encourage attendance, punctuality, and homework. For instance:

> When somebody doesn't come, I'm good at calling their home. I call them like during the day. [For instance] right now there are two girls who have not arrived yet and I have already sent a WhatsApp to their moms. Now we have a test, that's why they didn't come. In the mornings, I call a lot. When I arrive, if I realize that they aren't here, [then] I start calling [to their parents so they] bring them […] "but teacher we are just waking up," "It doesn't matter, bring them, and I will notify [the school] that they will arrive at 10am [late]." That sometimes generates a little bit of conflict, but I really prefer that they come [to school]. (201, School B)

Also, teachers try to bring families on board when students are struggling with discipline or learning. When possible, they also give advice to parents about how to assist students at home academically.

All in all, teachers try to help students as much as they can across different dimensions of needs. In contrast to the previous two groups, conditionally committed teachers reject making negative judgments and generalization about students. Instead, they have a strong openness to give students the benefit of the doubt in terms of their potential. This attitude toward students is perhaps one of the most defining traits that inspires this group of teachers:

> I would not be able to say for sure "this child no, you know no" or "this child yes, yes" How? Why don't I help her/him as much as I can? And time will tell. I hope it goes well, but I can't start from that premise. Because if not, it doesn't make sense. I believe that that is the meaning of being a teacher. (101, School A)

However, striving to help students who face such critical circumstances is often experienced as an inner struggle that requires a lot of mental effort to keep their commitment every day:

> I tell you, it's mental work, it's a mental work, saying "no, you can't get depressed, you can't throw in the towel, you can't be like that [sigh of

> exhaustion]. You have to go out day by day. You have to go forward." (109, School A).

Being wide open to support students exposes teachers in this category to extenuating work demands and overwhelming emotional experiences. This sometimes makes them feel forced to draw the line. When they experience that their personal life, psychological well-being, or physical integrity is at stake, then these educators establish boundaries to the service they provide students, such as not taking work home, decreasing contractual hours, disconnecting from school matters after school, or letting cases go when they have no more personal resources to support individual students. Some teachers explain that they had to learn over time how to disconnect from school matters, how not to take personally dramatic students' circumstances, or how to create space for their own self-care. For instance:

> What happens is that I've matured also as a teacher, and I've realized that I'm not a super hero. I'm not a super hero, and I don't believe I'm going to change the world. I do feel that I do a lot, and I think what I do is valuable, but I feel that I must also say "I will go until here, not beyond. This is what is my responsibility." Now it's up to me either to refer them to a psychologist or a social worker or do a report to that party, and that's what I have to do. (205, School B)

However, they also experience guilt, frustration, and anger when facing limitations in helping their students, especially the most vulnerable ones. For instance, "I feel really sad…I do not know, maybe guilty, but on the other hand I also feel that I don't have, I can't do more than that" (411, School D), "I felt sad, it made me mad, I felt powerless but I couldn't do more, because I did everything possible" (313, School C). As a synthesis, conditional commitment describes teachers that are willing to respond to students across all dimensions of needs. These educators connect personally and feel identified with students' adversity, making them persist in responding to students' needs with an ample repertoire of strategies. This is especially true for serving the most challenging cases. Having a personal connection sometimes is useful to encourage students to commit to their own learning process even when they do not receive support from home. Students' academics difficulties are seen as technical challenges instead of personal "deficits" of the child. In extreme cases, teachers explain that students' difficulties are related with contextual factors. Several educators narrate that openness to respond to student needs makes them personally vulnerable. When they see their well-being is at stake in serving their students, they protect themselves by distancing and placing limits on their commitments. However, experiencing these limits makes them feel guilty, frustrated, and angry. At the core of this conditional stance is the emotional struggle that teachers experience when they have to accept their limits of helping some students who are being absorbed by relentless adversity.

Boundless Commitment

Teachers with boundless commitment are similar to teachers who express conditional commitment, but they differ in one respect. In the previous chapter, we saw

that these two groups share many ways in which they respond to student needs. Teachers persist to connect with students personally, pursue managing discipline with tolerance, and strive to provide meaningful learning opportunities. These educators also share their approach to serve students as whole beings in need of integral support. Feelings of compassion and empathy inspire their desire to help students as well. Although the similarities are evident, what is unique about boundless commitment is persistence in supporting students beyond the formal responsibilities of the teacher role. Personal connection with students becomes so deep that boundaries between the institution and their personal lives become blurry. This deeper level of personalization seems to move these educators to advocate for students' well-being by projecting care beyond the school walls and taking risks to support individual students. I call this group "boundless" to describe this pattern. This does not mean that they are immune to defining boundaries in severe cases, but they are less prone to remove themselves, even if this implies taking a personal risk.

I briefly focus on one particular attribute that differentiates boundless from conditional commitment: the tendency to appreciate and connect personally with students in such a manner that their disposition to support students goes beyond the school. When I interviewed the few 'boundless' teachers, the would begin by talking about the personal qualities of children instead of the difficulties that children bring to the classroom.

> Something very simple happens to me, I believe that children are children. Everyone, I don't think there is a greater difference between them. There may be economic differences, cultural differences, but...but they are children. That is, you scratch a little [on the surface] and they are the same […] They are children. They are restless...They have an imagination to test everything. They are creative, very creative. They are […] they are super good to organize, eh, they are hardworking. (413, School D)

> My children are very... they are very affectionate, uh, I don't know, they have many qualities. They're very responsible. They, they're very responsible, very cooperative, everything. In the pedagogical task, I have nothing to say about them…The children who don't know so much, it costs more. Finally, they are very hardworking. So, I have many positive things in that grade. As for the negative, no, no ... they arrive late, that's the negative. (303, School C)

This approach does not neglect the adversities that children face but it highlights students' capacities to overcome the hardship of their lives. As this educator shares:

> If I say it metaphorically, I would say that they are warriors all the time, because they have very complex lives, very difficult. Maybe sometimes I hear their problems, and really, they are very complicated, very complicated. And they overcome that. (204, School A)

Perhaps, educators' perception of students' personal qualities and their life challenges make these teachers approach students with an exceptional supportive attitude: "I believe that the role [as a teacher] is support, support for learning and support for life"

(204, School B). This support expresses itself as teachers strive to connect with students, to create a bond with the goal of understanding how to help:

> I usually try to know the story of the kids. It's a strange job. It's a difficult job, but I feel it's my obligation […] For me it's to know them and that they know me, too. I need us to know each other, right? I start from the basis that I don't have to love anyone, because it's a relationship of people, and affection is going to be given as we get to know each other, we accept each other, we know the other one as well. And that's what I try to do with them too, right? So that's why I say, I, of course, I can have certain ideas and certain hypotheses, but I feel that the first thing I have to do is to know them. I can't do anything if I don't know them. (413, School D)

Sometimes, this bond feels natural and effortless. Especially for educators that come from a similar background as their students. In this case, this knowledge is seen as a characteristic that makes them feel closer to their students than to their colleagues at the school. For instance:

> I live here, I am a "Pintanina" woman, born here. I see their reality. Unlike my colleagues, I believe that I am more a part of this world. So, I was born here. I lived through this process. I was one of them. (303, School C)

Knowing students translates into trusting relationships within the classroom where educators feel that they create their own world with students, generating a sense of familiarity, "It's that my course is like, I don't know, my home. I close my door, and it's my world. That is, those are my children" (303, School A).

Many teachers of the sample describe their role with students in reference to the metaphor of being a "mom" or a close relative who watches after them, listens to them, or takes care of them. These educators share the same approach, but they push it further by playing key roles in the life of some of their students, going beyond their duties. Three examples help illustrate this pattern.

One of the teachers, Francisca, is the head teacher of second grade at school C. Francisca shares that she stays in the school after working hours to take care of students who do not have an adult at home, when needed. She does this work as a volunteer. Also, on a regular basis, Francisca brings home one of her students whose mom arrives very late during the weekdays. She does this work to complement the role of the student's mother, who cannot be present due to her daily activities, "It's not because his mother doesn't want to worry, it's because she comes very tired, arrives busted. She studies and works, then she doesn't give him time." (303, School A). Francisca is also very enthusiastic in supporting her students and encouraging them to attend school and to get good grades. Her enthusiasm for supporting them has inspired her to create awards outside of school, each involving her personally. For instance, she brings students to the movie theater, to eat pizza, ice cream, or to share a meal with her own family at her home.

Another case was shared by Esteban, a language teacher and head of fifth grade. There was a child who was about to be expelled from the school for systematic aggressive behavior. This student was enrolled for several years at the school and was a

good student until he went through a major family crisis. He left the school for over a year after being involved in a legal dispute over his guardianship. When he returned to the school the year after, his behavior was too difficult to handle, and many teachers gave up on him. After school authorities tried all formal steps at their disposal to help him, they were ready to expel this student. Esteban could not believe the school decision, especially considering the student's family drama. Esteban saw the school as the only chance for this student and decided to step in and pleaded to the principal to become the personal tutor of this student:

> I told Eric [Principal]: "You know what? I offer to take care of him [a student whom the administration wanted to expel]. I'll take him as his tutor. We can't expel him because, you kick him out, and that kid goes to the street. That kid has no other possibility." And I said: "Do you know what's wrong? Do you know why he does all of this? Because nobody sees him. This kid doesn't exist for anyone. He is invisible. Nobody sees him. He never has existed for anyone. His classmates hate him and prefer not to see him either." I told him "then how do we not expect him to be aggressive with the rest, if the fact that they don't want to talk to him is also aggressive? […] Do you understand? Then you will have a mess somewhere else. You have to hit, you have to...but then, […] And in the end we made a deal, right? I took him as a tutor, I'm working with him. We're working together. Whatever happens, I'm told right away. (413, School C)

The last example comes from Paula, head teacher of first grade. Paula shares with me the case of one of her students, Cristina, who showed evidence of experiencing sexual abuse. Paula knew that Cristina had a difficult life, with a violent mother who was not a trustworthy adult. Suspicious of the mother's behavior, Paula ensured to narrate Cristina's behavior to her mother as very positive to prevent physical punishment, "I always protect her" (204, School B). Curious about Cristina's change of personality, Paula asked the social worker to investigate. The social worker realized that Cristina had a history of sexual abuse in the past that was not prosecuted because of the decision of her mom. Paula was afraid of Cristina's present situation and the potential of her experiencing abuse again. Paula noted that Cristina created drawings illustrating explicit expressions of sexual abuse, which moved Paula to open a conversation with Cristina: "She told me that her brother did that [what she drew] and I asked her to whom he does that, and she said, 'to me'" (204, School A). Paula asked the social worker to press criminal charges against Cristina's mother, and Paula offered herself to become the guardian of the child during the trial.

> I asked to Santi [the social worker], now that he opened [the case], because, you know, that when the issue is public, it takes time. Then I asked him, while this is happening, to offer me as Cristina's guardian because there is no other responsible adult. So, I will take her, then I know that it will involve an evaluation of the place where I live, of my salary, of health, of everything. Fortunately, and thanks to the school, I have economic stability well enough to sustain her, to take her [with me]. (204, School B)

These three examples show expressions of educators' determination to support students beyond the school walls and to take personal risk beyond the institution. Teachers' deep personal connections with students makes them step out of the school site and become the responsible adult who advocates for students. Boundary setting between school and personal lives becomes blurry, especially when educators face students who suffer tremendous neglect from their families. Determination to support students becomes so strong that often the institution has to help educators to define the boundary, "I don't draw the line, the school draws the line for me" (204, School C).

Boundless commitment does not mean lack of boundaries at all. Actually, these educators face the same work dilemmas as other types of educators. They as well sometimes cannot help students anymore. They share similar emotional reactions to conditional teachers when they face circumstances in which they have to let students go. What makes these teachers stand out is their tendency to connect personally with their students and become students' advocates, not just in word, but with practices that go beyond the boundaries of their role as teachers.

Conclusion

The four clusters of teachers interpret student needs and locus of responsibility in different ways. Teachers exhibiting alienated commitment perceive student needs as unmanageable, which creates an unbearable working experience. Students' lack of responsiveness to teachers' effort sparks defensiveness and judgments about student deficits. As a result, strong boundaries are erected against most student needs, which impedes emotional connections with students.

Educators exhibiting a restricted commitment show some responsiveness toward emotional and behavioral needs, but boundaries are thrown up when they perceive students as disrespectful, behaviorally too challenging, or as unsalvageable. Difficulties in learning soon exhaust these teachers' patience and determination. When boundaries are set, similar to alienated teachers, restricted teachers usually blame students for their unwillingness to behave or learn. One coping mechanism, interestingly, is to redefine one's role as educator, emphasizing care over learning, yet emotional distance towards students who out in question their competencies prevails.

Finally, educators who show conditional or boundless commitment tend to respond to students across all dimensions of needs in similar ways. An empathetic personal connection with students is strong, making educators emotionally vulnerable to students' life circumstances. Teachers avoid blaming students for their failure and do not engage in deficit-thinking patterns. Instead, students' academic difficulties are seen as technical challenges. The difference between the 'conditional' and 'boundless' groups is the intensity of serving the needs for parenting and the tendency to define boundaries when educators' well-being is at stake. When teachers with conditional commitment perceive they are risking their well-being, they protect themselves by placing limits on their commitments. In the case of the boundless group, facing similar circumstances, they persist and risk.

CHAPTER 5: FACTORS INFLUENCING TEACHER COMMITMENT TO STUDENTS

Overview

In Chapter 3, I analyzed teachers' experience of adversity in their workplace associated with their students' marginalization as well as their own interpretation of student needs. I documented teachers' behavioral responses to those perceived needs and teachers' attitudes and beliefs behind their actions. Four different patterns of teacher commitment to students emerged from this analysis: alienated, restricted, conditional, and boundless commitment. In Chapter 4, I clustered teachers around these four patterns. These clusters typified the struggle between being responsive to student needs while also setting boundaries when teachers feel overwhelmed. The clusters were distinguished according to strength of commitment. In this chapter, I shift the analysis from describing to explaining. I ask: what factors, beliefs, attitudes, and organizational conditions, might be associated with strength of commitment.

In the conceptual framework for this study, I inferred from the literature that a number of explanatory factors might be relevant: sense of self-efficacy, expectations, service ethic, deservingness beliefs, and calculative self-interest. I explored these factors through prompts in the interviews with teachers. I also left room for emergent factors that are less clear in the literature.

The analytical procedure for this chapter is as follows. Rather than comparing all four clusters, I will focus on comparing the two largest clusters: conditional and restricted commitment, because these clusters are the most numerous. Finding clear differences between these two clusters in terms of extant explanatory factors, I can be rather certain that I have found valid explanations.

Additionally, in this chapter I will conduct an exploration on the organizational effect on teacher commitment. In Chapter 3, when I classified educators according to types of commitment, I found that some schools have most of their teachers concentrated on the conditional/boundless side, while other schools had more of their teachers on the restricted/alienated side. This pattern may suggest some influence coming from the organizational level. In order to discern organizational factors that might explain strength of commitment to students, I compare two schools, one school in the study sample with a large number of highly committed teachers (conditional and boundless), and one school with exceptionally high numbers of low commitment, relative to the rest of the study sample (alienated and restricted).

Restricted versus Conditional Teachers: Comparison among Explanatory Factors

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy was one of the main factors inferred from the literature for explaining commitment. In the theoretical framework, I defined self-efficacy as the educator's conviction that they can influence student learning, even those students who may be more difficult to teach (Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). In the previous chapters, issues of self-efficacy appeared interwoven in educators' descriptions of their struggle to serve students. When the interviewed teachers justified

their boundaries, they sometimes described, spontaneously without prompting, how difficult it was to get through to their students, to control their classes, and so on.

When prompted to gauge their self-efficacy, teachers in both the restricted and conditional clusters, to a similar extent, doubt their efficacy. Teachers in both groups describe the ebb and flow of difficulties managing discipline in the classroom, in motivating students to learn, and reaching them with content that students consider meaningful. Both conditional and restricted types communicated that they often feel their teaching does not work with the students in their classrooms. Both restricted and conditional types are clear that they were not prepared for the specific social context of teaching they are facing:

> In the academic part, totally, because I am a well-prepared teacher, but as for the affective, emotional part, I don't have the tools to work with extremely vulnerable children. (506-R[10], School E)

> Before I worked in a school that was more normal, and I felt like I was more capable... I was even able to teach the children who struggle the most...they didn't need something as personalized. (102-C[11], School A).

> Look, I honestly feel that the university doesn't prepare you to work in a context like this. (310-C, School C)

In the interviews, many factors were mentioned that impact efficacy. Each teacher seemed to have his or her own set of unique challenges: the number of responsibilities they have, whether they are head teachers of their classes or not, if they have resources, the size of the classes, and how they are supported. This great variability across both restricted and conditional types clouds the picture. Each interviewee, irrespective of their cluster, narrated their own drama. Thus, the interview material related to self-efficacy does not generate clear distinctions between the clusters. Teachers' self-efficacy is always challenged in these settings because there are consistently difficult situations or a group of students who are unreachable due to the overwhelm of adverse conditions. Thus, the interviews do not indicate self-efficacy as a straightforward marker of distinction between restricted and conditional commitment.

But, in the context of discussing self-efficacy, a more nuanced distinction between conditional and restricted types emerges that I had not previously theorized. As mentioned earlier, practically all restricted and conditional teachers acknowledge that their teaching does not work for all of their students. No one hesitated to affirm these difficulties. But when they explain why this is the case, clear differences emerge. Most teachers in the restricted cluster explain the lack of success with students as problems associated with the student, for instance, lack of motivation, intellectual deficiencies, emotional impairment, or lack of family support:

[10] -R: restricted commitment

[11] -C: conditional commitment

> Yes, there are some who don't care, some are thinking about other things, they don't want to be here, they come to school because they are forced to come. (107-R, School A)

> Of course, there are students that don't function, and we realize that, despite of the time, they haven't improved, changed, or modified their behavior. (319-R, School C)

> If something doesn't work out for me, I think it's just laziness [on the part of students] (505-R, School E)

Externalizing the causes of the problem releases restricted teachers from taking a critical look at their own teaching.

Here, teachers in the conditional cluster differ quite a bit. When they explain their teaching "failures" or their lack of efficacy, so to speak, they look at their own work.

> I always question myself, the fact that maybe I'm not doing well, or really what I'm doing is boring, because one also has to recognize what is boring. (109-C, School A)

> When I realize that the children aren't understanding something or not, they aren't... then I intervene in another way, through another channel...with a more visual channel, more auditory, more kinesthetic, relating to children. (205-C, School B)

Conditionally committed teachers question the quality of their work. They interrogate their methods in relationship to the learning styles of students, and they talk about attempts to adapt the lesson to the needs of students. They also express that they were constantly searching for better ways to reach students.

Thus, while teachers in the conditional and restricted clusters do not distinctly differ on efficacy beliefs, they take a different approach when it comes to dealing with efficacy challenges. Teachers in the conditional cluster have a distinctly more internal perspective compared to the restricted type, which externalizes efficacy difficulties. Instead of straightforward self-efficacy, which describes educators' beliefs about their abilities to influence students even under difficult circumstances, this distinction between a more internal and a more external locus of control seems to better explain differences between higher and lower commitment. Locus of control refers to the belief that a person is in control of his or her own behavior or fate, which involves the belief that they have confidence or directive to influence their environment (Ng, Sorensen, & Eby, 2006). Despite of efficacy challenges, higher commitment in the interview data is associated with a stronger orientation towards an internal locus of control that may help teachers to keep searching for solutions in the face of adversity.

Expectations

In the literature on effective schools, one of the most frequently cited factor associated with commitment to poor students is having *high expectations* for them. I conceptualized expectations as educators' beliefs regarding student capabilities and

potential levels of future attainment (Valencia, 1997; Weinstein, 2002). In the interviews, expectations about students were captured through inquiries about beliefs of how far students might go in life, and about students' stamina and resources to be successful. Analysis shows that teachers with stronger or weaker commitment (conditional versus restricted) differ on expectations, but not as clear cut as the literature would suggest.

Among the more weakly committed teachers (i.e. restricted type) the belief holds that children "won't go far." When asked about attainment, some say that graduating from middle school is all that is possible. Others think that students may barely graduate from high school. The great majority of teachers believes that college is out of the question, with only a couple of teachers mentioning higher education as a possibility for exceptional students with family support.

> I think they...they will finish eighth grade…some of them, that's why I try to teach them a lot of crafts, and they leave, that is, they reach eighth grade, and for them the school is over. (505-R, School E)

> I am convinced that maybe they aren't going to have a profession. I am more than clear about that, and I already experienced it. But they will be good people. (106-R, School A)

Speculation abounds that students do not have the resources, the necessary family conditions, nor the abilities to qualify for a technical or college career. Hence, teachers in the restricted cluster diminish the importance of academic learning: "One prepares them for life, one prepares them as people, but not so much about acquiring knowledge" (107-R, School).

Teachers in the restricted cluster are pervasively pessimistic. Those who are more optimistic, focus on exceptional students, but they do not think that even exceptional students have much of a chance without family support. And here, their expectations of the support that most families can provide are quite low. Most of the families, it is widely believed, do not value education enough so that the most certain future for students is reproducing family patterns and joining the unqualified workforce. For instance:

> A common and ordinary work, construction[12]... something like that. But I don't see for them a…a university degree […] it's not that I stigmatize them either. It is based on my observation. (503-R, School E)

> In reality, they aspire to be a laborer or [in case of girls] have three children and find a man who will maintain them, that is more or less, by gender, separating them by gender […] Then they aspire to have the work of a laborer, technician, have food, clothes, and basic needs. (506-R, School E)

[12] In Chile, an unqualified construction worker is a very low- status position in society.

In more dramatic cases, students are believed to head toward emulating their families and engaging in criminal activity, such as robbery or substance abuse: “They will continue in the niche of theft, drugs, [and] alcoholism” (506-R, School E).

Teachers in the conditional cluster predict educational attainment for their students somewhat higher than the restricted type, but there is no strong contrast between the two clusters in this regard. For teachers in the conditional cluster, imagining the future of their students is not an easy task. To the interview prompts, they responded: “That is a difficult question” (310-C, School C), “Being realistic, the expectations are very low, very low” (202-C, School B), “It’s not that I am pessimistic, but [the reality] is hard” (101-C, School A). Most of the conditional types define graduating from high school as the bottom line for most of the students. Some mention the possibility of higher education for students:

> I see the majority capable of finishing high school, of getting a [technical] diploma, I see a few able to go to college, because that means more years and it means more effort, to stay, right? I see the majority of them able to graduate and enter a shorter [time wise] technical diploma. (306-C, School C)

> I feel that they could even finish their high school, and some maybe they can get into an institute. I also feel that very few can achieve the goal of getting into the university. (431-C, School E)

> I think...look, I don’t know if [they will go] to the university, but yes to an [professional] institute. (411-C, School E)

Yet there are skeptics as well:

> Few can reach twelfth grade, or maybe a career, I don’t know, technical, university, depending on the resources, because there are parents and mothers who care, but those are few…But many are going to get lost. They will go up to eighth grade, until 9th grade, and that is it. (113-C, School A)

Thus, compared to more weakly committed teachers (i.e. restricted types), teachers who have higher commitment (i.e. conditional types) also believe that students can attain a higher school and career level, but it is not guaranteed.

Several educators in the conditional cluster recognize students as having the skills, intelligence, or potential:

> You see the potential they have […] I always try to think to myself, and think that they can move forward, finally even if it’s not the university, but that they will get ahead in their work because there are intelligent children here. There is good potential. (101-C, School A)

But similar to the restricted types, they doubt that the families will be there to support this potential: “They are very intelligent children, very, very intelligent, but do you know what grabs me and knocks me down? Their parents” (428-C, School D). Thus, for

several teachers, beliefs about students' chances depend on family support, and that family support is lacking:

> I would obviously like everyone to go to college, but I have some [students] that, because of issues, I don't know. Their moms don't have much faith in them. (417-C, School D)

> I have expectations for some, but I also think that there are many that I don't because of their support in their homes. I think family expectations are very low. (201-C, School B)

> There is an important group in the class that at least, that could reach... the university level or have a technical career in a Technical Training Center...But there are others that I see that if the parents don't see them now, those children will end up as drug addicts or delinquents. (112-C, School A)

> The truth is that I usually visualize a group of children, not a very big group, about six or seven children, that I think will finish high school, and maybe one can continue on. The rest, for their...family situation and the little importance that their parents give to them [will not go far]. (205-C, School B)

So, skepticism in expectations is not reserved for the restricted cluster; it abounds within the conditional types as well. But a clear distinction between more strongly and more weakly committed teachers is visible in the data. It is not quite expectations, as I had theorized. It is something more vague: hope.

Where restricted teachers' descriptions of student potential stop with their stunted expectations, conditional educators state their pessimism but counter with a sense of hope for the fate of their students. Most teachers in the conditional cluster express optimism, faith, and good wishes for student future: "I always wish the best for them" (401-C, School D), "I have always had the conviction that they will go far in life" (109-C, School A), "I have faith in them, I am truly optimistic for them" (411-C, School D). Holding hope for students' future is an essential fuel that supports the teachers' determination:

> One of the fundamental pillars to keep working here is that I really have faith in them [the students] because if not, it doesn't make sense...I better go to another side [school]. (102-C, School A).

> There is always hope, if not, as I told you, I wouldn't be here. There is always like that hope, that little "bug" [that tells you] they can. (401-C, School D)

> There are days when I think about it [leaving], but later I arrive, and I love it again, I don't know why, but that's why, because I still believe in them, so, if I didn't believe, I wouldn't do what I do. (101-C, School A)

> I believe that in each child there is a potential, but I have to help them discover it. (112-C, School A)

> Obviously, I have high expectations for all my students, if not, why am I giving lessons. Why should I be a doctor if all my patients are going to die? Like that analogy, it makes no sense to face ...it's like confronting …defeat. (501-C, School E)

Holding high expectations for students' future is not easy for teachers in either cluster. Both groups are skeptical about student attainment and careers. More committed teachers (conditional types) have somewhat higher expectations perhaps in evaluating students' potential academic attainment. Some educators in this cluster try to differentiate students' personal potential from family support, which operates as either an important driver or impediment for success. However, the most important difference between more strongly and more weakly committed teachers in the study sample is the hope that teachers feel about students' potential and future success. Hope is less certain than expectations. In hope, lack of certainty is offset by the desire for certain things to happen. When educators face highly adverse circumstances, which can reasonably challenge expectations, perhaps what holds up their determination to support students may be the desire and faith, more than the expectation, for students to succeed in the future.

Ethic of Service

In various studies conducted by McLaughlin and Talbert, service ethic is associated with teachers' commitment to their work and the profession. I tested its explanatory power for commitment to students in poverty. Service ethic can vary significantly according to organizational and social contexts (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). In this study, I asked if it also varies according to clusters of teachers with stronger or weaker commitment to students in poverty. A set of interview prompts captured service ethic. I asked about the force that moves educators to come to school on a daily basis, their role in students' lives, and their role in society. Comparison between the two teachers' clusters with restricted and conditional commitment shows that teachers in both clusters similarly profess to be in their jobs because they want to serve. Thus, at the level of testimony about their ethics, commitment types do not differ. But teachers with higher commitment (i.e. conditional types) have a stronger sense of playing a larger role for students and society than teachers with weaker commitment.

Despite having lower commitment, teachers in the restricted cluster show a clear inclination to work with a diverse student population: "Always with children, but with children of this type, children with lack of affection, with abandonment" (113-R, School A). Working in these environments makes some teachers feel that they are making beneficial contributions to students: "I think I am doing something positive for all these children with problems" (503-R, School E). They profess that they enjoy helping students, providing them with affection, and making a meaningful contribution to their lives:

> What makes me feel fulfilled is that I feel that I am a contribution for them […] If they don't have love, love at home, or if they aren't heard, I will give them advice. I will orient them in life, and I can do it. I am willing to do that. (423-R, School D)

> I am trying to help students as much as I can, so they can be happy. (508-R, School E)

> I want them to be useful children to society, that they do not go to the way of crime. (113-R, School A)

Interviewees were explicitly prompted to talk about their role in society, though, the majority of teachers in the restricted cluster did not express any ideas about this. If anything, helplessness about their role for society prevails:

> [talking about contribution to society] I feel that there is nothing at all, well, I am doing, planting sees in the ocean...I am doing something so isolated. We are here, colleagues, doing something so isolated, with the resources we have. (506-R, School E)

More strongly committed teachers describe a similar inclination to serve poor students as their more restricted counterparts:

> Contributing in the sense of [building] trust in themselves [the students], care, they feel that there is someone who is concerned about them. (308-C, School C)

> I want to guide them on a good path, I want to take care of them, because one does not always love with affection, but one also loves by being strict and leading, that is, leading the way with goodness. (202-C, School B)

While the restricted cluster uses metaphors such as "grain of sand" or "planting seeds in the ocean," the teachers in the conditional cluster describe their service in more forceful metaphors: "I am the cornerstone at the base, or the iron, a thing like that […] the foundational brick for their education" (428-C, School D), "It's demonstrating that you can go ahead despite all the problems and difficulties that one can have" (207-C, School B), "Giving them the most powerful weapons...to the children so that they can achieve something different" (429-C, School D).

While restricted and conditional types do not markedly differ in the way they profess an ethic of service, they differ strongly in the way they conceptualize their social role. Teachers in the conditional cluster tend to see their work in relationship to their role in society, an area where restricted types are largely silent:

> I have the conviction that apart from teaching we also fulfill a social role, a big one, the fact that you can also make a [social] transformation. (109-C, School A)

Conditional teachers describe themselves as "agents of social change," "having a social approach," "building a better society," "change generator," "social actor," "being the base of society," or "having a vocation." Several teachers share that they chose to work in their schools because they wanted to serve this student population in particular:

> I have always said that when you are involved in education, you will not work for money, I will not work for anything material. I work because I have a social idea that I am forming beings for the future. I always tell them "you are the future of Chile," and they laugh, especially when they don't bring their pens. (102, School A)

Achieving social change is not just an abstract ideal for these teachers, but they also narrate that this is achieved by doing the hard work every day. The following quote, perhaps, captures the richness and the sophistication of what most of the teachers in this category express with more or less emphasis:

> My role...look when you talk about changing society and changing everything, those are such beautiful words and great words. I have always thought that [behind] great words is the work of an ant. I always say, my work is the work of an ant, and I believe in that work and I have stayed here [in the school] for that too, it has to do with [helping] others, because I feel that one's work is small, invisible, but it's useful and it's real. And that's what we really need...I think that's how things can be changed. If we all do our ant work, we don't need just leaders and people who are going to say do this or do that. I feel that we need active people who are willing to work in this work that is not very pleasant at times, that isn't very well paid, that isn't highly valued and that…But that is the real work in the end. (101-C, School A)

In summary, more strongly and more weakly committed teachers in the study similarly profess to base their work on the idea of service. As far as testimonials are concerned, they do not differ on the discourse of service. However, there is a more distinct difference in conceptualizing one's social role. While teachers in the restricted cluster barely connect their work to a broader societal contribution, teachers in the conditional cluster have a more articulated discourse about how their work with students promotes social change.

Deservingness

Educators, as other service workers, may engage in judgments that evaluate the deservingness of their students and the potential allocation of effort. I defined deservingness as a culturally-embedded judgment, shaped by societal values, norms, and status assumptions that are not amenable to direct policy intervention. This judgment involves teachers' beliefs about students' moral worth, the culpability or attribution of responsibility for the students' situations, as well as the social distance or closeness between teachers and students, i.e. the degree to which students are perceived as an 'other' or as a member of social group distinct from the teacher's own. In order to capture social distance and culpability attribution, I explore how teachers differentiate themselves from students' families and how educators see families as responsible for their difficult social situations. In order to capture students' deservingness, I faced teachers with an explicit assumption about the moral worth of students as a strategy to search for deservingness judgments. Particularly, I opened the conversation about deservingness in the second round of interviews with the following prompt:

Some teachers have told me: "With my hand on my heart and with a sense of reality, there are students who are beyond remedy and for whom any effort is worthless." What do you think about that?

Some teachers are open and explicit about their moral judgments and who is deserving or not of their effort, but a number are cautious in passing judgments. I also asked interviewees how similar or different they feel from students' families.

Analysis of deservingness data shows some overlap between the two clusters of teachers and some clear differences suggesting that teachers in the conditional cluster differ in important ways from those in the restricted cluster. In looking at the 'restricted' cluster, I begin with the one characteristic about which teachers in that cluster are unambiguous: social distance. All of them, with one exception, see themselves as "totally different" from their students in terms of social conditions or social class. The one exception shares that she lives in the same neighborhood as her students and sees herself as "very poor" economically. But, in general, all educators see strong cultural distinctions between their values, norms of behavior, affection, care, and support within families. As one educator illuminates:

> Respect for instance. My family or the families that I know or my neighbors are families where parents are respected, where no one is shouting at home…[where] children are protected […]. Here…I am very shocked how families of the children treat each other and how they treat them [children] and how they [children] treat their parents. There is no respect…they don't have it. I think that is one of the main things. Beyond talking about the socioeconomic or cultural level, I think it has to do with that [respect]. (423-R, School D)

In a couple of cases educators explicitly establish distance based on social class. For instance:

> Social class, obviously, you can't compare a student of a friend of mine who is a lawyer, can you, with a student from here whose father works in construction and who is laborer. (508-R, School E)

Thus, sense of social distance prevails among teachers in the restricted cluster.

When teachers talk about who is responsible for the students' predicament, they point to the students' families. Not all families are the same, some are seen as "striving," "hard workers," concerned about children education, and supportive of students, but most are seen as "dysfunctional." Some interviewees argue that dysfunction is due to families being victimized by an unfair social structure that has not provided them enough opportunities. But more frequently, families are blamed for taking the "easy path" to making money or getting by with minimal effort: "There is self-abandonment, laziness. It is a vicious cycle" (113-R, School A).

But social distance and blaming families does not extend to the individual students. Teachers in the restricted cluster recoil from judgments of the moral worth of their students. They agree that there is a sizable group of students for whom their fate is set. Commenting on if there are students beyond remedy and undeserving of effort, some

teachers state: "Yes, I agree because I have experienced it" (108-R, School A), "Some cases don't have a remedy" (503-R, School E), "Yes, it's the reality" (508-R, School E). But they do not go beyond assessments of outcomes, which are more closely related to efficacy and expectations than to deservingness judgments. The choice to expend effort on students is not due to their moral unworthiness, but due to overpowering negative influences of their families. And here, those in the restricted cluster see dysfunction, deficit, and moral failings:

> There are children that there is no case, you do what you do, the child will always follow… the child always will be [the same], because the...the circle where they live is that, in the way they relate to each other, in the way they speak. (106-R, School A)

> When the child is complex and the family is complex, it's super unlikely that we can do anything about it. (206-R, School B)

> Yes! There is no point, the environment is stronger for them. They come with those customs, that upbringing. They see many things in their homes. (113-R, School A)

> I can't fix their lives, because all of what they are, here, is product of their homes: the hate, the violence, the slurs, their confrontational attitude. They are the reflection of what happens at home. I can do many excellent things here, but at the end of the day, they go back home. (506-R, School D)

For teachers with higher, i.e. conditional commitment, the pattern is similar to that of restricted commitment in some respects. Teachers within the conditionally committed cluster hold families responsible for the students' challenges. They believe that there are some families that are striving, but that there are more who are not: "Families are very irresponsible, I am always wondering why they have kids" (202-C, School B). And yet, they see some families as being victims. For instance:

> I think they live wrapped in this dynamic because they were born, uh ... they were born in this socially-named environment, or ... they were born there and ... they don't have the same vision, as they live in the present. They don't project themselves to the future. They don't have goals, they don't have projections to the future. They are people who are like...who feel that they are destined to that. And maybe their self-esteem or their way of looking at life is very mediocre. They don't have a point of view of high expectations, they don't have it. (205-C, School B)

A strong contrast to teachers with restricted commitment is that many teachers with conditional commitment grew up in poor families or in challenging circumstances that are described as similar to those of their students. They specify the connection is not in present circumstances, but in the past:

> Everything is different. I don't think there is a point of comparison. I think my life maybe when I was a child was more like theirs [families], with several [negative] stimuli, absent parents […] but my current life is not. (102-C, School A)

A sizable number of teachers (nine) with higher commitment personally experienced a childhood in poverty, had family problems, and were in need of adult support in school. These common experiences generate a strong sense of identification between educators and their students and may help educators to recognize student potential in the midst of their adversity. For instance:

> Because I feel that inside that classroom there is a Jasmin [teacher's pseudonym] when I was a girl stuck there, with the same dramas of these children, understand? I am the reflection of these children when I was a girl. (501-C, School E)

> I think the fact that I had such a childhood [poverty and abandonment] marked me in the sense of saying "They are capable. I was capable, and they are too, and I don't have to feel pity for them, not pity, compassion yes." (205-C, School A)

For other educators, this acknowledgement is related with strong feelings of empathy about student circumstances and the desire to offer them opportunities to move forward in life: "For me it's like a drug, that feeling like…like, I don't know if it's empathy, but it's an overflow of love" (428-C, School D), "I feel that I have empathy for achieving, for not judging them" (101-C, School A). Taken together, both groups of teachers generate a sense of connection with the raw adversity that students experience in their life. In general, these educators see their students as having academic potential, but being trapped in a difficult social situation.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why teachers with conditional commitment are vociferously opposed to any negative judgments about students' moral worth. While the parents may not be spared moral reproach, the students are seen as different. Most of the teachers in this cluster explicitly reject the assumption that students are "undeserving of effort": "I don't believe that all effort [for a child] is worthless" (305-C, School C), "No, I don't think that any effort is in vain, nothing is in vain. One always gets something, a light or something small" (429-C, School D). Although educators understand that adversity can generate feelings of helplessness, they embrace a conviction that there are no "lost cases" and distance themselves from educators who think otherwise: "I don't think there are children who are lost cases. There are lost teachers" (205-C, School B). Instead one hears assertions such as this one:

> I would not be able to say with certainty "this child, you know, not" or "this child yes, yes", how? Why I don't better help them as much as I can, and time will tell. I hope it goes well, but I can't start from that premise, because if it doesn't, it doesn't make sense. I believe that is the essence of being a teacher. (101-C, School A)

Making negative judgments about students' deservingness is seen as "unfair," "nonsense," and a "prediction" that can be detrimental to students' lives: "How unfair to

crucify them, to judge them" (306-C, School C), "I think that is like predicting something that…that one can't predict. I couldn't work based on that" (102-C, School A). Instead, teachers believe in students' potential and value, even in the most complicated cases: "Every child has something, but we have to know how to tap into it" (501-C, School E), "Just because they are in a school in La Barra, we are not going to consider that they are undeserving" (305-C, School C).

Together with the rejection of making judgments about students' deservingness, these educators in the conditional cluster provide the benefit of the doubt to students and show openness to see them as deserving of effort and opportunities, despite their circumstances:

> These kids like all the others, like all of them, are normal children, with more or less needs, but all deserve the same opportunity. Do you understand me? The same opportunity to learn, the same opportunity that they can also, to have a broader vision. (109-C, School A)

> Every child deserves an opportunity…every person deserves a chance to move forward. (401-C, School D)

> I believe that for all children, you have to make the effort to rescue them, every single one. Predicting something [about their future], predestines a child to something. No, you don't have to do that. Everyone must help them. (102-C, School A)

Yet, these positive attitudes do not make conditional teachers immune to circumstances where they have experienced the limits of their commitment. Although the teachers with conditional commitment reject deservingness judgments of students, they do not feel protected from challenges beyond their control which, all too often, renders their effort futile.

In sum, the two clusters of teachers with relatively higher or lower commitment to students in poverty are similar in their deservingness judgments in some respects, such as seeing themselves distant from the culture of families in poverty and attributing blame on many families for their difficult social circumstances. However, the clusters differ in two key aspects. First, teachers in the conditional cluster do not see themselves as distant from their students (although their do so from families). Perhaps that is the reason why they can identify and empathize with students' adverse situations. Second, they explicitly reject moral judgments of students explicitly maintaining that all students deserve to be seen as worthy of effort despite their skepticism that their effort can produce results.

Self-interest

As part of their job, teachers are exposed to a constellation of organizational demands that are directly related to their self-interest as employees. In the Chilean education system, teachers' work is regulated through extrinsic incentives oriented to meet organizational goals. There are two demands that are fundamental for the schools, good performance on standardized tests (called SIMCE[13]) and keeping enrollment and

[13] Sistema Nacional de Evaluación de Aprendizajes (Educational Quality Assessment System).

attendance at levels that allow the school to be financially feasible[14]. These organizational demands appeal to teachers' self-interest in a fundamental way: without sufficient enrollment they may lose their jobs or at least their assignment in the school, and without sufficient test performance they may be exposed to accountability sanctions. Street level bureaucrats, as I have discussed in the conceptual framework, encounter, especially under conditions of adversity, a mismatch between multiple and overwhelming student needs and the scarce resources to satisfy those needs. Ambitious organizational performance demands increase this mismatch and heighten the tension.

For street level bureaucrats, meeting managerial demands can be either detrimental or conducive for their commitment to clients. On one hand, when educators feel overwhelmed by work demands and feel threatened as workers, managerial demands and pressures may spark a self-interest mechanism that leads them to care more about themselves as workers than their clients. Self-preservation prevails over client service. For teachers, self-preservation may result in diminishing commitment to student needs. On the other hand, when teachers see managerial demands as connected with their own values and desires to respond to student needs, then self-interest may have a virtuous effect reinforcing commitment to students. In order to capture this dynamic, I asked open-ended questions about the pressure teachers perceive as they perform their work, their own goals and the goals of the school administration, and the importance they attribute to these goals. The main idea of exploring this dimension is to identify whether perception of external pressure is conducive to reinforcing or diminishing commitment to students.

Analysis of self-interest data, in general, shows that teachers across schools perceive different levels of pressure according to their school. It is highly likely that the intensity of managerial demands is mediated by school site factors. I will take a closer look at this in the following section.

Teachers in the two clusters show some similarities in their perception of work demands, however they differ in how they connect managerial incentives with fulfilling student needs. Teachers in both clusters feel high pressure from organizational goals such as keeping or increasing performance test scores, improving enrollment, and keeping student attendance:

> Yes, there is pressure, there are many pressures. Yes, there is the pressure that the children have to give a good SIMCE. There is the pressure that you can't lose enrollment, because otherwise, the money of the school goes down. And notice that a third pressure is the policy taken when a grade is combined [for lack of enrollment] and a teacher is fired. (105-R, School A)

> Look, if we don't have enrollment, we don't have a salary, in this country it's like that. If we don't have results [standardized test], they [government] closes the school, and … if we don't do the things that correspond, we get fired. Then, you will always have pressure as a teacher. (508-R, School E)

[14] The Chilean education system is organized through a voucher system, which assigns financial resources proportionally to the number of students enrolled in the school and according to indicators of everyday attendance.

> It's my work, and although sometimes you don't want to recognize it, if I don't keep the enrollment, I don't keep the attendance...eh... the kids start to go away [and money goes down]. (106-R, School A)

Test performance is also related to coverage of curriculum that is tested: "When you are obligated to follow a [curricular] plan, a program, then the pressure is very high" (319-R, School C). Teachers with restricted commitment, especially in SIMCE-tested grades, report a variety of motives aligned to managerial goals:

> More than for a result, you do it because obviously your career is also at stake, your profession is at stake, what is at stake here is what you are evaluated on at school...that is at stake. This school is at stake. (106-R, School A)

> Increase the SIMCE [scores], yes, and that is a very important thing, because this school is about to move to... to be intervened [by the government]. (506-R, School E)

Teachers in the conditional commitment cluster also see the importance of fulfilling managerial requirements for the sake of the organization, the community, or simply because they have to: "We know that SIMCE is a goal; therefore, we need to fulfill it in the end" (112-C, School A). They may not like the demands, but they see value in paying attention to the demands. As one educator expresses:

> It's just that, I don't know, it's that one works for that, one...has the pressure a little, because unfortunately, even though I am against the SIMCE, because I feel that a test on one day can't evaluate what you have taught in a year, eh, is what really categorizes you. That is, if your school is doing badly in SIMCE, it's not good. Everyone else sees it as the worst school in the community, so that's not good for us either. And when you work and see results, even if they are tiny, even if they are tiny, it is still a ... a relief and a reward. (411-C, School D)

Some interviewees describe the pressure as internalized pressure:

> [Talking about SIMCE] It can be a self-imposed pressure, because one has to comply with the results. And if you did badly, then the school did badly, then you feel bad. (305-C, School C)

> [Pressure to perform on SIMCE] It's like mine, personal, that I want them to really demonstrate that they're good, because they're really good. There are really many good ones [students], so I want that to be reflected in [the test]. (201-C, School B)

> They are going to go to fourth-grade and they have to take the SIMCE, and that's where my reflected work will also be seen. So, there is still a theme of trying to

> do things better so that it looks different, the theme of something improved, and reflecting my work. (306-C, School C)

And not unlike interviewees in the cluster of restricted commitment, those in the conditional cluster also express concern for their jobs, reputation, or simple compliance, as the following quotes express:

> Of course, it is important [goal of enrollment], because it keeps my job. If not, if there are no children, there is no school, and if there is no school, there is no job. (112-C, School A)
>
> It is obviously. This is like a ranking, that is, those who have good SIMCE are good schools. And if you were a teacher of a fourth-grade class and it went well, you are a good teacher. And if you were a fourth-grade teacher and it went poorly, you're a bad teacher, do you understand? If it is like that, and if it went well, it's a story about the school. But if it went poorly, the teacher is the bad guy. (305-C, School C)
>
> Yes, because it's your reputation, because it's your fault [if a kid is performing poorly], because that is where your work is reflected. (308-C, School C)

So, with regard to the demands of the organization, teachers in the lower commitment cluster are similar to the ones in the higher commitment cluster. Both categories are stressed by managerial and accountability demands, with the knowledge that ignoring these demands can potentially have negative consequences for their personal benefit.

For teachers in the restricted cluster, managerial goals do not seem to encourage having a higher commitment to respond to student needs. These educators are rather silent when it comes to connect managerial goals to student needs. Motives to respond to organizational demands vary across this group of educators. But these motives seem to instill mainly behavioral alignment to keep the organization sound and to keep their reputation up. Self-preservation on the part of restricted educators seems to align with an organizational angle.

But there is something present among teachers with higher commitment that is absent in the narratives of the ones with lower commitment. Teachers in the cluster of conditional commitment embed the managerial or accountability demands into their care for children, and care for students supersedes accountability demands in value:

> Keeping attendance [as a goal], Yes! I am convinced that a missing child doesn't learn, then it affects me, not the voucher, the voucher doesn't matter, but it affects me if that child doesn't learn. [Getting] results in SIMCE makes me happy because they [the school administration] stop bothering me, they stop generating noise, but it's not something I work for. I don't work to obtain a [good] SIMCE [obtain a good score] ...I work for children to learn, and when they learn, it has to reflect in the result of SIMCE. If it's one for another, it's not the other way around. I don't work for the SIMCE in order for the children to

> learn, it's the other way around. If the children learn, they will give a good SIMCE, but I don't work for the SIMCE. (431-C, School D)
>
> We have practices to improve attendance with awards [to children] and everything. It's totally necessary because the only safe space for these children is the school, in this place, in this environment, the only safe place for children is school. Therefore, I have to make children come to school, because I know that they will be fine here. So, I find meaning [in the goal], because it's not to give me more money. I see it like that, but I see it because we believe that for children, this is the safe space where they should be the greatest number of hours, not on the street. (205-C, School B)
>
> [about curriculum coverage] No…but it's just that I kind of push myself, but not for a thing like "oh, no, it's just that if not, they're going to challenge me," it's because I want them to learn. (429-C, School D)
>
> [about SIMCE] No, I lock myself in the room, and it's me and my children. For me the main thing is that the kids learn...now if that brings good results [in SIMCE] and congratulations that everyone likes to receive...well...but for me the main thing is that kids learn. (102-C, School B)
>
> The attendance, and not so much because of the voucher thing. I think it's more because the kids get lost. That is, if you do not come to school, it's because they are in the street. (308-C, School C)

Thus, teachers with the higher commitment temper their self-interest motives. While they are mindful of accountability demands and the negative repercussions of not meeting them, they fold these demands into concern for students and prioritize student needs over organizational needs. Accountability goals are deemed useful to the extent that they reinforce the teachers' personal values held for their students. In this way, as second-order values, accountability goals reinforce commitment to students.

With the exception of a few teachers who demonstrate boundless commitment, teachers in the higher commitment cluster have "conditional" commitment for their students. At some point, self-interest sets in, but it is self-preservation related to personally overtaxing situations. When teachers with conditional commitment encounter personally overwhelming student needs, they set boundaries: "I have a limit, I put a limit at a certain moment, I said "no", because of my mental health, because I can't" (101, School A), "I realized that of course, one gives, but sometimes one tends not to realize that one can't give anymore" (313-C, School C).

Teachers set the boundaries for personal reasons and set on a case-by-case basis in contrast to less committed teachers who often see taking care of self-interested managerial demands and serving students as unrelated demands.

The Role of the Organization: Exploration of School Level Differences

It is conspicuous that there are schools in the sample with most of their teachers concentrated on the boundless/conditional side of the spectrum, while other schools have most of their teachers concentrated on the restricted/alienated side without any educators present in the boundless category (see Chapter 3). It is therefore likely that organizational factors are explanatory for teacher commitment. In order to shed light on these matters, I analyze organizational differences between schools. To do this, I select two schools similar in size, performance, close in geographical distance, and contrasting in the number of teachers classified as boundless/conditional and restricted/alienated. Following these criteria, I compare School B (4 conditional and 1 boundless) and School E (5 restricted and 1 alienated). School B has an explicit mission of care while School E is a for-profit school. I focus on teachers' interviews complemented by administrators' interviews.

Before delving into the comparison, it is important to add some contextual information about the Chilean education system. In Chile, two incentives systems play out hand-in-hand to regulate schools and educators: accountability within the market-based organization (voucher system). At the core, the market incentivizes client orientation by stimulating free choice and competition. Families have the right to choose any school of their preference, and schools have to compete to attract students. Schools' finances depend on this competition because their budget is directly related with student enrollment and daily attendance. Atop of this, in order to tackle the low quality of schools that especially serve the poorest students, the accountability system mandates that low-performing schools define performance goals measured by SIMCE and incentivize the schools to achieve those goals through the threat of imposing sanctions.

Chilean schools also have a different administrative status. Most notably, there are two types of schools that compete in the market: public and private-subsidized schools. Public schools are managed by municipalities, Chile's smallest political unit, and private-subsidized schools are owned by private owners. Within the private-subsidized sector, there are schools that are non-profit and others that are for-profit. In this comparison, I selected one non-profit school (School B) and one school that is for-profit (School E).

School B: Student-Centered Mission

When I asked educators at School B about the goals that the school administration asks them to accomplish, most of the educators share a strong focus on providing a good service to students, maintaining an integral approach to develop a student as a whole person. Teachers explain that school administrators ask them to consider care, affection, emotions, respect, and happiness as important attributes in their work with students: "She [the principal] asks me to commit to students, to believe in them, to care for them" (204, School B), "to make children happy, happy" (205, School B), "to be affectionate [with students]" (201, School B). One of the common elements that appears across teachers, and is also consistent with administrators' interviews, is the objective to build a bond with students as a necessary precursor to teaching them. As one educator expresses when asked about the objective of the administration:

> The bond...that is super remarkable in this school, to generate a bond with the children. Through the bond you can get many things, that is like the main objective. And we like it, we have it super [clear]. (202, School B)

Teachers' narratives coincide with the purpose that the school leaders aim to fulfill with students: to form whole people, taking into consideration multiple dimensions of the human being. Paying attention to both teachers' and leaders' narratives, we can see that staff at School B work under a shared purpose to serve students.

Another attribute that stands out in School B is the work environment where teachers are embedded in the school and have good relationships with the leadership team. In general, teachers feel that working conditions and human relationships are "very good," without having to work under great pressure. Teachers feel that they can communicate openly with leaders, and feel heard and supported by them:

> The working conditions here are very good. We don't work under pressure, there is always [support from] Sandra [principal] or Josefa [instructional leader]. They are always with us, the social educators too, when one feels bad. (208, School B)

> I like the owner that we have because I can communicate with her "person to person." I can tell her that something occurred to me, and she supports me. (201, School B)

> The relationship I have with Sandra [principal] is wonderful. She represents a very warm human being, with very good emotions, very good feelings. For me that is very important. (204, School B)

Also, teachers share that they feel happy in belonging to the school, with the working approach, and with the educators' team:

> Those of us who have been around for a long time, we have been here for a long time because we're happy with the place. Because otherwise, we would have left. So, I know that I already completed a cycle, but I like the team, I like the boss, I like the team, I like children, I like the way of working. (201, School B)

Teachers also enjoy supportive relationships with their colleagues, with whom they collaborate in professional matters as well as provide support to each other when adversity at work becomes rough.

Teachers at School B are also exposed to set of managerial demands to make them fulfill specific routines that school administrators value, like arriving on time every day, starting lessons on time, keeping records updated about the class, and so forth. Also, administrators reveal that they implement some incentives for teachers associated with their student outcomes on internal evaluations of performance. But, interestingly, teachers did not mention this schema of incentives. Educators at School B just made positive references to the external motivators that they receive to fulfill their normal working routines.

What it is also interesting to highlight is how this school frames managerial goals. Administrators perceive the external pressure from government to increase standardized tests and to keep attendance stable; however, the school administrators buffer this pressure from teachers. They communicate to teachers the importance for students to attend school every day, so they do not lose learning opportunities. Also, they encourage teachers to improve their teaching by providing constant support and opportunities for professional development to teachers.

Finally, it is interesting to highlight that administrators at School B have a well-defined profile of a teacher who would be a good fit for this school. The two administrators interviewed used the metaphor of an "all-terrain teacher," which describes an emotionally stable person, who has experienced poverty or who is compassionate about poor students, who is willing to establish meaningful relationships with students, and who is professionally capable. Administrators share that, although hard to find, they actively try to attract this type of teacher profile to work at this school.

School E: Managerial School

Looking at School E, there is a strong contrast in all the dimensions described above for School B. When I asked educators about the objectives that School E pursues, most of them shared that the school was focused on improving student learning, as measured by standardized tests, keeping students in the school (enrollment), and making sure students attend school. However, none of the teachers articulated a purpose centered in student development. Interviews with administrators showed discrepancies between the instructional leader and the principal, with the instructional leader focused on showing students "other alternatives for their future," while the principal was focused on student learning as measured through standardized tests.

What is alarming about the managerial approach of School E is that the administration strategizes the management of student attendance and enrollment: reporting absent children as attending school so that the government provides more "vouchers" (money). Teachers seem to be divided about this practice. While most educators are silent about this strategy, two teachers feel powerless and ethically compromised to be involved in this fraud. However, they were not able to do anything about it:

> Look, I'm not the one who puts the dot [mark attendance], the administration and the disciplinary supervisor see it, but I realize it, because every day I check the book of the class. I have to be absolutely silent. I can't comment [on that], no, I can't say anything...and I can't talk openly about this because it would cost me my job... But it's the reality, that is, I live this daily, daily, with many more things that you see, but sometimes I turn a blind eye. I can't make an opinion about it. I can get in trouble and lose my job. (501, School E)

> That issue is enormously difficult for me, because there is an ethical problem behind the story, very big, and it's, because deep down when you supposedly take attendance you sign off, right? and it brings me a tremendous conflict, the fact of knowing that the State is paying a subsidy for a student who is not here. (510, School E)

The biggest problem with this practice to achieve managerial goals lies in the fact that the students who have more issues with attendance are the one who struggle the most and who are under the most difficult circumstances. Some of these students are under government protection and attending school is one of the most important requirements to ensure their well-being. Strategizing on matters of attendance and enrollments directly affects the most vulnerable students.

A similar mechanism was found regarding the enrollment goal. Some teachers revealed that they feel pressure to attract students to the school in order to increase the monetary earning for the school. As one educator expresses:

> Obviously, because they [school owner] get paid more. It's an issue of money. Here children are numbers. I think they see children in that way. It's a number which gives us more...the more that come, the better for us, because the pockets get more filled. (501, School E)

For School E, managerial incentives and purpose seem to be the same. The consensus about what needs to be done for students was fairly instrumental and showed important distortions promoted by the administration of the school.

Teachers at School E also reported having a poor environment, with several signs of inner conflict and division between teachers, and more importantly, between the instructional leader and the educators: "I have a very bad relationship with her [the instructional leader], very very bad" (503, School E). Teachers feel under pressure to perform according to managerial indicators –especially standardized tests – but they receive scarce technical support. Neither teachers nor administrators reported opportunities of professional development for teachers. Moreover, teachers felt underappreciated due to the poor working conditions of the school.

Finally, interviews with administrators revealed neither a particular strategy to recruit teachers nor a well-defined profile of what type of teacher fits the purpose of the school.

As a synthesis, analysis of the influence of the organizational as a potential explanatory factor for teacher commitment to students proves to be plausible. Findings show strong differences between School B and School E, especially in aspects related with student-centeredness, incentives structure, professional support, organizational climate, and organization-person fit. While School B focuses its work centered on serving students, School E seems to have a more instrumental approach to students, which may even go against students' well-being. School B actively fosters the kinds of beliefs and attitudes that we encountered among the cluster of more highly committed teachers, while School E seems to foster the cynicism and disconnect between the managerial and educational or personal goals of the teachers.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored further what beliefs and attitudes might be associated with strength of commitment. Particularly, I tested if the theorized factors – self-efficacy, expectations, service ethic, deservingness, and calculative self-interest – explain differences between restricted committed and conditional committed teachers. Findings showed that teachers' self-efficacy was not a strong variable to distinguish between restricted and conditional clusters. Instead, locus of control seems to be a stronger factor to differentiate between these two types. Second, teachers' expectations between restricted and conditional clusters did not show strong differences. But the element of hope – as the desire for students to do well in the future – showed itself to be a stronger factor to differentiate between the two types. Third, restricted and conditional committed clusters showed a similar ethic of service for serving students. However, they differ in their conception of their social role as educators. In this regard, educators in the conditional cluster were able to see themselves as a "change agent" at the societal level, a pattern that was practically absent from those in the restricted cluster. Fourth, deservingness beliefs seemed to be one of the stronger factors differentiating between the two groups. While teachers with lower commitment tended to see the students' families as undeserving though still withholding judgment from students, educators with higher commitment were more prone to explicitly and vociferously insist on the personal moral-worthiness of each child, regardless of their family background. Fifth, self-interest motives for teachers in the more highly committed cluster are important, but second-order concerns. As such, they reinforce commitment. While for teachers in the lower-commitment cluster, accountability demands activate self-preservation against overload. Self-preservation plays a role for those in the more highly committed cluster as well. Their commitment is "conditional" because when they feel personally overwhelmed on a case-by-case basis, they will set boundaries as well.

Finally, organizational factors can be both conducive or detrimental for commitment. Teachers in the highly committed cluster were more present in the school with an explicit mission of student care than they were in the school where organizational goals were pursued with unethical behavior and disregard for students.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

I started this dissertation with the acknowledgment that educating poor students is a difficult and thorny endeavor. At the level of measured performance, we have accumulated evidence showing that poor students systematically perform below their peers from the middle class. Underneath these numbers, low performance is overwhelmingly related to the adverse circumstances students face in their families and communities. Adversity related to poverty generates an array of pernicious effects on children. When it comes to teachers' work, poverty matters in a raw and straightforward fashion. Students bring their experiences of adversity to school, which creates work adversity for teachers that challenge them in their core on a daily basis. In the face of these challenges, a distinct *commitment* is needed on the part of educators to achieve educational success (Gu & Day, 2007; Mintrop & Órdenes, 2017; Mintrop & Charles, 2017).

Education research has widely recognized that commitment to students in poverty is an essential ingredient of successful schooling; however, the literature on this phenomenon is surprisingly underdeveloped. As was shown in Chapter 1, studies on teacher commitment have referred mostly to organizational and professional commitment (Dannetta, 2002; Park, 2005; Tyree, 1996), with commitment to students sometimes folded into professional commitment (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). When studies incorporate commitment to students on its own, they tend to study commitment in general terms, without specifically focusing on how socio-economic adversity may shape this commitment. Also, many of the studies are based on self-reported attitudes.

Theoretically, I found a variety of definitions of commitment to students. Given my premise that the adversity of poverty would create extremely challenging work conditions, I needed a definition of commitment that captured struggle. I used Brickman (1987) as inspiration. They contend that commitment is "a force that stabilizes individual behaviors under circumstances where the individual would otherwise be tempted to change that behavior" (p. 2). Brickman states that commitment is a struggle between "a force" to keep the course of action toward the target of commitment and the circumstances that push the individual to give up. Thus, the "force" to keep commitment may take the shape of determination to keep a course of action in the midst of a struggle.

The literature on teacher commitment to students also shows that this goes beyond serving needs for learning by involving also other potential constellations of needs that students bring to the classroom every day. So, I deduced that the target of commitment is not necessarily students but their constellations of needs. Also, I theorized that, in the context of poverty, teachers' struggles may be related with serving a myriad of student needs that surpasses their resources and capacities to handle them. Finally, relying on the literature on commitment of human service workers, I theorized that commitment is related to courses of actions to develop coping mechanisms which are oriented to either respond to client needs or set boundaries against those needs. This literature also shows that, for understanding commitment, is critical to pay attention to both service workers' beliefs and practices in the service they provide to clients.

Taking this conceptual scaffold as point of departure, I left room to explore inductively how teacher commitment to students unfolds. By conducting an in-depth, multi-case study of five schools and forty-seven teachers, I analyzed over 102 interviews

and 45 classroom observations. I analyzed teachers' self-reported and observed practices that express commitment. I was especially careful to triangulate word and deed in how educators express their commitment to students. Thus, my study aimed to contribute to research on how teacher commitment to students plays out under conditions of socioeconomic adversity in elementary and middle schools.

The Core of the Struggle for Commitment: Responsiveness and Setting Boundaries

My understanding of teacher commitment to poor students unfolded in the following steps. First, I explored teachers' experiences of adversity in the workplace and the main constellations of needs that they perceive when they work with students. Needs is a category that is frequently invoked in the practical world of educators when they describe or illuminate what they believe is expected of them from students (Anderson et al., 2012; Kern, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Lane, Wehby, & Barton-Arwood, 2005; Mintrop, 2012). I identified four types of needs that teachers frequently referred to in the interviews: needs for support in learning, needs for discipline, needs for emotional support, and needs for parenting. These four types of needs occur in various constellations, with students who have multiple overlapping needs being the greatest challenge for teachers. Teachers reported a high frequency of this particular difficulty of overlapping needs. In order to understand strength of commitment, I distinguished how individual teachers responded to student challenges across the four dimensions of needs as well as how they set boundaries against these needs. I clustered cases according to self-reported responsiveness and boundary-setting practices in each dimension of needs. Four clusters emerged from the data that I named boundless, conditional, restricted, and alienated commitment. Table 6.1 summarizes the categories of teachers found.

In order to prove the internal validity of the four clusters that were developed from interview material, I used triangulation. The four clusters were cross-referenced with two additional sources of data: reputation and observational data. Observational data of behaviors in the classroom showed significant statistical differences between teachers who exhibited a restricted commitment in comparison with those who exhibited conditional commitment. Similarly, reputational data showed to be consistent with the clusters of commitment developed. Thus, triangulation with three sets of independent data assured me that my classifications were valid constructs.

Zooming in on each cluster, I explored teachers' personal struggles and their justifications for their actions when faced with students and their needs. The different behavioral responses toward students revealed distinct levels of teachers' determination to respond to student needs. In the process of defining their approach to students, teachers make sense of the challenges and either develop emotional or cognitive resources that support their determination to be responsive or cognitively shield themselves by setting boundaries when overwhelmed. This analysis allowed me to have a more vivid representation of the actual struggle that teachers face and the "rationale" of how the boundary line gets drawn.

Table 6.1: Summary of cluster of teachers according to their level of commitment

Needs		Alienated	Restricted	Conditional	Boundless
Discipline	R [(*)]	Overwhelmed by behaviors	Flexible approach to deal with discipline & apply limited set of strategies	Flexible approach to deal with discipline & apply rich repertoire of strategies	
	B [(**)]	Rigid norms application to students who misbehave	Rigid norms application for students who persist in misbehaviors	Rigidity in the face of severe discipline violations or when behaviors jeopardize other students or teachers	
Learning	R	Behaviors crowd out efforts to serve learning needs.	Weak attention to learning needs. Mainly focus on work over learning.	Strong attention to learning needs, broad set of learning opportunities to all & special attention to those needing differentiated attention.	
	B	Neglecting students perceived as unmotivated	Narrow offer of learning opportunities & neglecting who needs extra support or is seen as unmotivated	Narrow focus on learning needs for students with multiple needs beyond teachers' control.	
Emotional	R	Weak attention to needs for emotional support	Strong attention to emotional needs, but affective neutrality in personalization	Strong attention to emotional needs & high personalization	
	B	General neutral approach	Neutral with disrespectful students or procedural treatment, also withholding emotional warmth	Distancing emotionally from students with problems seen as unmanageable.	None
Parenting	R	None	None	Strong attention to needs for parenting & some support beyond school	Strong attention to parenting needs & advocacy beyond school
	B	None	Keep responsibilities within school site.	Observing boundary of school when needs are too overwhelming.	None

[(*)] Responsiveness, [(**)] Boundary-setting

These findings show an important contrast with the existing literature on teacher commitment to students. As was shown in the literature review, Kushman crafted the clearest definition of teacher commitment to students, which has been used by several studies in the field. This author defines teacher commitment to students as the "dedication to helping students learn regardless of their academic difficulties or social background" (1992, p. 6). Other authors expanded the definition of commitment introducing the idea that commitment to students involves responsiveness to the needs of students as persons (e.g. Louis, 1998; Nir, 2002; Strahan et al., 2001; Tyree, 1996). However, none of these conceptualizations have introduced the idea of a trade-off between responsiveness and boundaries-setting, nor have they shown different types of teacher commitment to students. But more importantly, none of these conceptualizations have considered the phenomenon of commitment to students as a tension between teachers' determination to serve students and an adverse workplace that may push them to give up. By introducing a new conceptualization tied to how this concept is reflected empirically, this study opens a threshold into a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of teacher commitment in the context of poverty.

Explanatory Factors

In order to understand differences between the clusters of commitment, I chose factors drawn from the literature on commitment, research of outstanding teachers who work with poor students, and effective schools under poverty conditions. These factors were: expectations, self-efficacy, ethic of service, deservingness beliefs, and self-interest. Relying on these extractions from the literature, my hope was that these factors would establish clear differences between teachers exhibiting diverse levels of commitment to students. However, with the exception of the emergent role of organizational factors, the data suggest that efficacy, expectations, service ethic, moral judgment, and finally self-interest do not distinguish teachers with stronger commitment from those with lower commitment in a straightforward manner. Rather, they play out in nuances that together create a different picture from the ones currently advanced by extant literature (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Weinstein, 2002)

As Chapter 5 shows, teachers in this study exhibiting higher commitment to students are not idealists who function as "dreamkeepers" for every student or who perform outstanding work with every single child. They are not infallible professionals who hold high expectations for everybody, who are certain about their efficacy, with an overflowing ethic of service, who are judgment-free about students' families, and uniquely altruistic. Or, on the flip side, educators in the less committed cluster are not indolent bureaucrats who simply do not care about students, who do not believe in them, who are ineffective, lack an ethic of service, look down on students' families, and are selfishly pursuing their own interests as employees. Under conditions of adversity, establishing the dividing line between these two different types of commitment is much more complex and nuanced.

To understand these nuances, we must put the experience of adversity front and center, which then also centers the daily struggle that teachers face serving their students. Under conditions of severe socioeconomic adversity, it seems that all teachers, regardless of degree of commitment, are exposed to uncertainty and challenge. What distinguishes the more strongly committed from the weakly committed are attitudes and beliefs that have less to do with the certainty of self-efficacy, expectations, or moral worth, and more to do with doubt, hope, and faith. Teachers' expectations about students' futures are covered in a cloak of uncertainty, nurtured by the challenges in the present. Likewise, regarding their own efficacy, the teachers in the study endlessly doubt whether their capacities of serving students are sufficient. While practically all teachers in the study profess an ethic of service, they also pervasively doubt poor families' moral deservingness. They point fingers at students' families and see families as letting the students down. Organizational demands spark self-interested motives regardless of degree of commitment; therefore, teachers in the restricted and conditional cluster exhibited similar motivational responses to fulfill managerial goals.

Taking a careful look at the findings, we can see that educators with higher commitment approach their own practice with an internal locus of control that may keep them actively working to improve their teaching. They may not hold high expectations about students, but they do keep hope about students' future success. Hope can be a much more vague or uncertain orientation than expectation, which can support their determination to help students succeed. Teachers in the higher commitment cluster also

see themselves playing a bigger role in society, expressing a desire to promote "social change" from the trenches and doing the "invisible work" in their classrooms. Meaningfulness of the work, thus, supersedes the daily struggles or personal disappointments with individual students. Search for internal solutions, hope, and a broader mission are combined with an explicit resistance to judgments of deservingness about students, even though families are often seen as failing and morally deficient. It is perhaps this focus on students as morally deserving persons that compels teachers to hold onto a firm rank order of values in the face of accountability demands and economic pressures (i.e. test scores and enrollment). Compared to less committed teachers in the study, more committed teachers insist on serving the managerial demands of the organization as a secondary value that cannot supplant their care for students.

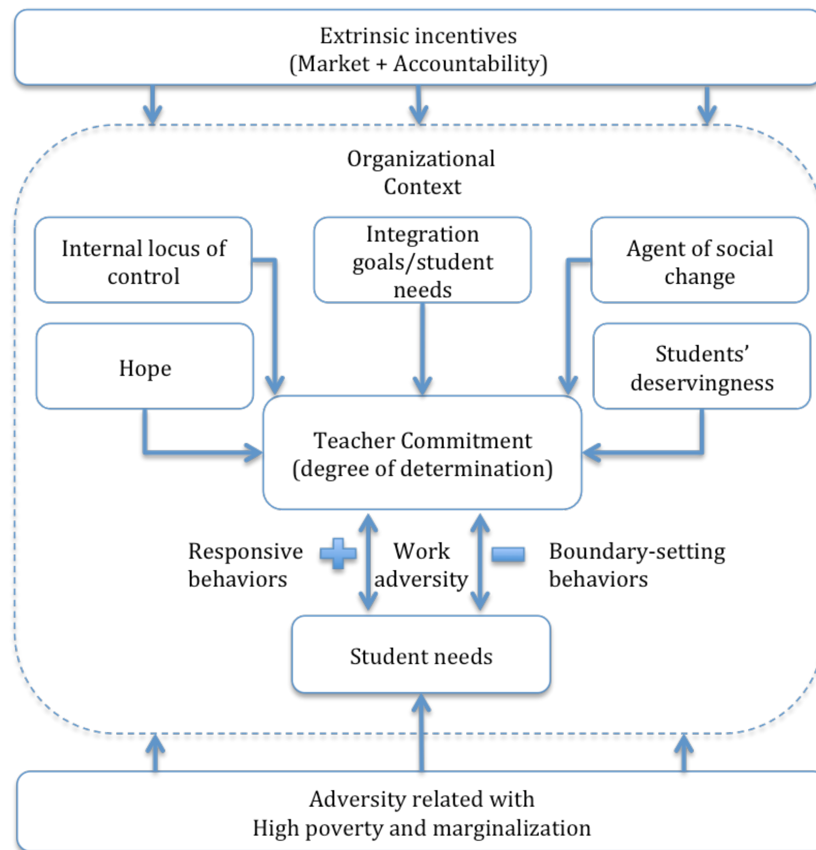

Figure 6.1: Conceptual model revisited

A New Understanding of Commitment to Students in the Face of Adversity

A new picture emerges with a different understanding of what it takes to be committed under adverse circumstances. As was shown, teachers experience adversity when they try to teach students with a broad and complex set of needs, and this challenges teachers' core competencies and well-being. Student needs are not something that teachers can control. They are an objective reality in some sense, but in another sense, perceptions of student needs are subjectively constructed (Coburn, 2006; Mintrop,

2012). Individual teachers experience the challenges and difficulties brought by student needs differently, with consequences for their work behavior. In this context, commitment to students emerges in a more tenuous manner in the tension between self-preservation and responsiveness. In the face of overwhelming student needs teachers are forced to draw a line. Where the line appears, the level of commitment to students is revealed. As a result, I have revised the theoretical model considering the findings of this study (see Figure 6.1).

The acknowledgement of a "line" drawn in the face student needs questions the existence of the 'knight in shining armor' as the one committed to students and the 'knave' who presumably abdicates agency with the justification of moral deficiencies of students (Le Grand, 2003). It recognizes the fragility of all the educators who work in conditions of adversity, and it validates the precarious circumstances in which they are embedded. Even the more committed teachers in this study have conditional commitment, that is, they set boundaries, a few exceptional 'boundless' cases notwithstanding. Considering this reality, teacher commitment emerges as finite determination to act in favor of students in tension with challenging circumstances that constantly push them to give up. This conceptualization of commitment avoids facile dichotomies between high and low commitment. Instead it pays attention to the uncertain grey area where teachers struggle to support students on a daily basis.

In this grey area, rather than seeing high commitment associated with teachers who believe that they are efficacious, have high expectations, serve with fervor, and refrain from moral judgment, higher commitment seems to be more associated with hope and faith in the midst of tremendous uncertainty, a strong internal locus of control that helps them to fuel their determination in the midst of potential failure, a sense of meaning to transform social disparities and to value students as morally deserving. On the flip side, lacking hope and having a low internal locus of control may generate a sense of helplessness in the face of pernicious challenges of poverty.

Practical Implications

There are several practical implications that can be derived from the study. These implications may be relevant for school leaders as well as for policy makers who look for formulas to better serve the poorest students in society.

First and foremost, there is an urgency to pay attention to the mismatch between student needs and the resources that teachers have at hand to respond to those needs. As was shown, facing this mismatch creates experiences of adversity for teachers, forcing them to establish a boundary in front of some student needs. Although in some cases, drawing this line may be necessary to avoid the erosion of teacher commitment to students, it may also mean that some students' needs will not addressed, especially the ones that struggle the most.

Under conditions of adversity, educators unavoidably will face a myriad of student needs that will challenge them in their core competencies. However, processing all those needs is not necessarily an individual responsibility of the teacher. Thus, school leaders must pay careful attention to how to support teachers that experience adversity. Understanding the nature of the mismatch, school leaders should put in place support services for students that softens the mismatch between needs/resources as well as lead

educators to find a sound balance between responsiveness to students and their own self-care. The main goal is to make sure that students will be well and fairly served according to their needs as well as to prevent teachers from getting burnt out from consistent exposure to stress.

Another important implication is the need to move away from strong dichotomies between high and low committed teachers and from the politics of shaming associated with these distinctions. When we approach the literature on successful teachers working with poor students, the recommendations are typically a call to be an exceptional teacher, a "dreamkeeper" or a "star teacher" (Haberman et al., 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009). For instance, literature has described exceptional teachers as being judgment-free about people in poverty and having unbreakably high expectations for all students. Whoever does not match those criteria can be labeled with deficit thinking, blaming the victim, or engaging in negative judgments about people (Payne, 2008; Valencia, 1997; Weinstein, 2002). In short, holding judgments is used as a marker of low commitment and as a source of excuses to justify their own failure at teaching.

In contrast, in my study, all teachers made judgments about the moral worth of poor families and doubted the support parents provide to students. Also, low expectations are shared beliefs among almost all the teachers in my sample. Looking at the sample through the lens of this exceptional criteria, it is highly likely that most would be labeled as poorly committed. This assessment would be technically wrong and, potentially, could lead to policies ineffective at influencing teacher's work. Therefore, the aspiration for being a "dreamkeeper" cannot be the goal. It's neither the knights nor the knaves (Le Grand, 2003); everyone is somewhere in between.

With this orientation, we need to also give up on the politics of moral shaming. Teachers are not either "dreamkeepers" or morally deficient. Instead all teachers are professionals that struggle, with differing perceptions of the challenges that get compromised through consistent exposure to adversity. Accepting the complexity of commitment distinctions may lead us to generate better assessments of teacher commitment and thus develop more thoughtful programs and policies to support them.

Another important implication is for teachers who express a lesser commitment. Educators in the restricted cluster are not completely alienated workers who gave up on their moral convictions to serve others. Their commitment may have been compromised, but they hold a clear ethic of service that can be utilized. Again, the fact that some teachers express less commitment in comparison to others does not mean necessarily that this segment of the teacher workforce must be discarded or mistreated. This is especially true in times when turnover and attrition are particularly high for the poor. However, this represents a management challenge, especially for school leaders. As was shown in Chapter 5, the organizational level plays an important role that can be conducive to influence teacher commitment. Perhaps, the right type of leadership can reinforce the still-existing service ethic of teachers in the restricted cluster and boost their commitment to students as a result. Here, the role of moral leadership may be a very important factor to stimulate teachers whose commitment to students has decayed (Sergiovanni, 1992).

Another implication that can be derived from the findings is related to the pervasive sense of low self-efficacy across educators in the low and high spectrum of commitment. In an uncertain environment, high committed educators are able to rely on their high internal locus of control over their professional practice, which helps to

compensate for their low sense of self-efficacy. The question, therefore, is how we can support teachers in the restricted cluster develop a higher internal locus of control to offset their pervasive feeling of helplessness in an uncertain environment. One potential answer is to develop skills in how to reduce the uncertainty of an environment that is perceived as chaotic. Particularly, we can do that through a design-based problem-solving approach to their practice (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015; Mintrop, 2016). This perspective promotes looking at reality with a mindset to break down the complexity of working challenges into specific, small problems that are actionable. Solutions occur in an iterative process of trial and error. Perhaps, an approach focused on the aspects of reality that can be influenced and solved may help to reduce the uncertainty of the work environment and reinforce the internal locus of control of educators.

Last but not least, one of main findings of this study is that neither low nor highly committed educators hold high expectations for all their students. Instead, what differentiates them is that educators in the conditional cluster keep their hope and faith in the face of the tribulation of their students. Hope is different to expectations. Expectations speak about educators' beliefs that all their students can be academically successful if they are taught in an appropriate manner. Policy makers have created an accountability system that pursues ambitious goals with the purpose of instilling high expectations in teachers. But, as was shown, strong accountability pressures encourage less committed teachers to lose focus on student care and instead aim to fulfill organizational goals to the detriment of responding to student needs. For more committed educators, data showed that committing to their students is more about hope and faith than high expectations, and hope and faith are not created by high stakes accountability systems with high-pressure performance goals.

Limitations of the Study

Conducting a multiple case study was very helpful to answer my research questions. Also, this study design allowed for deep and interesting insights about teacher commitment to students. However, there is a set of limitations that must be considered to temper the scope of the conclusions.

One of the most important limitations of this study was the lack of attention to personal attributes as potential determinants of commitment. The literature on organizational commitment in general pays important attention to personal attributes as a way to understand commitment to remain in the organization and to organizational goals (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Mowday et al., 1982). The literature on teacher turnover and attrition has carefully looked at demographic variables that may be associated with this phenomenon. However, teacher commitment to students has not commonly included personal attributes as its determinants. This omission clearly defines an important limitation of this study.

Secondly, the study is an attempt to explain potential associations between the phenomenon of commitment to students and potential determinants of this kind of commitment. What I have called "explanatory factors" throughout this study is more aptly seen as associations that together may foster a constellation of dispositions. To the degree that the explanations offered in this study implies causality, then there is an important limitation that should be considered to temper the scope of the explanations as

well as the conclusions.

Finally, this study is based on a multiple case study composed of five different schools carefully selected according to a stratified strategy and with 10 teachers invited per school. Despite this procedure, this study is exposed to potential selection effects that may have influenced the findings at least in two dimensions. First, public and private-subsidized schools are exposed to different regulations. For instance, while public school educators enjoy job security provided by the union, educators working in the private sector do not have such protection. This regulatory difference might imply potential differences in how teachers experience their commitment to students. Second, although I used a stratified strategy for selecting schools, the number of schools is quite small. One risk is that my findings are reflecting idiosyncratic patterns present in the group of teachers within those specific organizations, which is not necessarily the case in other schools.

Future Research

As for the future, there is a horizon of questions that can spark several investigations to deepen our understanding of the phenomenon of teacher commitment to poor students. Directly from this dissertation, at least three potential foci can structure a future agenda of research.

Having an inductively-generated definition of commitment to students facing adversity as well as a typology of different types of commitment, it will be helpful to develop a quantitative tool to measure teacher commitment. Measuring teacher commitment to poor students as a dependent variable will allow generating and testing the hypothesis, study correlations between quantitative variables, control variability of different degrees of commitment, and to make probabilistic inferences to a broader population. Studying teacher commitment to students in a broader sample may help to confirm the validity of the construct as well the reliability of the findings.

Although this study did not have a goal to explore the organizational level, the data about the influence of the organization robustly emerged in the course of the analysis. The phenomenon of teacher commitment to students is an organizationally nested phenomenon by nature. Educators work within a workplace that involves a "lifeworld" with an enormous potential to shape individual teachers and, as a consequence, their commitment to students. Therefore, conducting a series of studies having the organizational level as the main focus of attention will deepen our understanding of the phenomenon of commitment to students in poverty.

Finally, one of the most interesting findings of this study is how educators in the conditional cluster disentangle students from their families when it comes to deservingness judgments. However, I did not gather enough evidence to understand why this is the case. Considering that research on successful educators working in poverty usually claims that outstanding teachers look at both students and families with a resilient perspective and with high expectations (e.g. Gorski, 2017), then we have contradictory evidence that calls for clarification. In order to shed light on this apparent contradiction, perhaps an ethnographic study will allow us to understand how teachers relate to and judge students and families in the midst of their work.

Future research on the topic of teacher commitment to students facing adversity is urgent and promising. Teachers are the frontline workers who will shape to the service that we, as society, want to provide to children. It is in their hands to make sure that every student will receive what they need to be successful. However, for decades, policy solutions have neglected the pervasive effects of poverty within schools and classrooms, leaving educators fighting the universal war against poverty practically alone. In the face of the sustained failure to provide good education to the poor, we have the duty to thoroughly rethink our understanding of teacher work under conditions of adversity. Just by deepening this understanding, we will have the chance to support educators in the enormous endeavor of educating the poorest students in society.

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APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS (ROUND 1)

Interview Protocol Number 1: Teacher Interview Protocol

School name :

Interviewee Name :

Subject matter :

Introductory protocol

First, I want to thank you for your time and willingness to participate in this study. *To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to record our conversations today. Later, we will transcribe the audio files in order to facilitate the process of analysis. For your information, I will be the only one that will have access to the audio files. In addition, you must sign a form developed to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you again for agreeing to participate.*

We have planned this interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, we have several questions that we would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete the questions.

Introduction

You have been selected to speak with us today because you have been identified as someone playing a key role in the services that this school provides to students. My research project as a whole focuses on how teachers perceive and respond to poor students' needs in the context of schools exposed to high external pressure coming from accountability policies and the challenge of providing educational services in economically vulnerable neighborhoods. My study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences.

Personal

1. Can you briefly describe your role in the school and your main responsibilities?

Student needs

2. I wonder if you could describe the type of student that you are teaching here.
    a. Positive negative things; social challenges, adversity, in the classroom.
3. What needs do they express? (Can you describe the needs that your students bring to the classroom and you have to deal with?)
4. Which if these needs do you feel equipped to fulfill in your work? Which are hard to satisfy?

5. I am wondering if you could talk about groups of students that need you the most and that make it especially hard to meet their needs. Can you talk about those more needy students?

Efficacy, Expectations, Support Behaviors

Efficacy

1. When you look at your daily work, do you feel you have things are under control and you manage it well, or do you sometimes feel you are over your head and you just can't get through?
    a. How often are you in the situation in which you say to yourself: "I do not know what to do with these kids?" What do you do to overcome those moments?
2. How difficult is for you to make your students to value the content that you deliver to them? Can you talk a little bit about it?
3. Do you sometimes get to the point that you find that your teaching somehow is not working for some students?
    a. How do you get past this block?
    b. What are the reasons for this block?
4. Do you have any hypothesis why that happens?

Expectations

5. When you look across your students, how far will they go? What do you expect them to accomplish, realistically?
    a. Do you have hopeless cases?
    b. How many in a given class?

Support behaviors

6. What do you do with students who receive very little support from home?
7. What do you do when your students are not coming to the school or are not doing their homework?
8. What do you do when some students show systematically low performance?
9. What do you do when some students show systematically misbehaviors?

Commitment, deservingness, service

Commitment

10. When you look in the mirror in the morning and you think about your work, what is it that makes you to come to his school every day?
11. Do you sometimes wish you'd work at a different school with different students?
12. What makes you persist and come here?
13. How long do you think you will be a classroom teacher in this school, serving these kids?
14. How do you see your role in teaching students who come from the kind of families that you have described to me?

Deservingness

15. When you look at your own family or friends of yours, are you familiar with the challenges your students have? How does your social environment differ?
    b. In-group out-group; social distance
16. How do you explain these behaviors or challenges to yourself?
    a. Victim culprit/ structural-moral
17. Do you think families have the capacity to support students in their learning process if they wanted?

Service

18. Do you play a special role that is unique in society?
19. How much are you willing to give of yourself to this work? Especially teaching the most struggling students? Where do you draw the line?
20. What is the best you think you can do for your students, especially the ones that struggle the most.
21. Do you think that society values your service to the students in your school?
22. Do you think that parents/ owners value…..

Self-interest and Accountability

23. We talked a lot about your students. Are there other important forces that you take into consideration when you carry out your work? (e.g. test scores, enrollment, i.e. governments, management, and families)
24. How important are these other considerations for you in your work?
25. Do you receive satisfaction or a sense of reward when your test scores go up (or in the school in general) or when your enrollment is stable (or goes up)?
26. Do you receive monetary bonuses for certain things?
27. From the point of view of an outsider, this school looks like it may be under a lot of pressure from the government, municipality or owner. How do you see this?
28. What are the main goals of the municipality or owner that are communicated to you? What expectations do they have of you in terms of your teaching?
29. Do you feel pressure from the principal or the owner to rise test scores or increase enrollment?
30. How important is it for you to meet those expectations and pressures? Why?
31. There are two sides to the being a teacher: on one hand you are here to teach students, on the other hand, you are here to make a living and to work under decent conditions. How do you think about these two sides and how do you make sure that both sides are taken care of?

Service commitments, self-interest and the behavior that shows it

32. You said that […] statements re: service, how would I see this in your classroom if I were to visit? Are there specific ways that I could see it?
33. You said that […] organizational goals are important to you and you derive feelings of satisfaction and reward from them, how would I see this in your classroom if I were to visit?

Protocol Number 2: Administrator Interview Protocol

School name :

Interviewee Name :

Introductory protocol

First, I want to thank you for your time and willingness to participate in this study. *To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to record our conversations today. Later, we will transcribe the audio files in order to facilitate the process of analysis. For your information, I will be the only one that will have access to the audio files. In addition, you must sign a form developed to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you again for agreeing to participate.*

We have planned this interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, we have several questions that we would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete the questions.

Introduction

You have been selected to speak with us today because you have been identified as someone playing a key role in the services that this school provides to students. My research project as a whole focuses on how teachers perceive and respond to poor students' needs in the context of schools exposed to high external pressure coming from accountability policies and the challenge of providing educational services in economically vulnerable neighborhoods. My study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences.

Personal

1. Can you briefly describe your role in the school and your main responsibilities?

Perception of the service provided

2. Given the populations that you serve and given the resources that you have at your disposal, how would you say your school is?
3. What are you proud about, and what would you wish to change?
4. Where have you been successful?
5. Are there goals that you see out of your reach and make you feel frustrated?

Emphasis on effort

6. As the principal/UTP of this school, what is your main purpose in this school and with this student population? Can you describe
7. When you look at your typical workweek, on what aspects or in what areas of your work do you expend most of your energy?

Improvement goals

8. For this school year, what goals have you emphasized or pursued to make the school better?
9. Where are those goals coming from? Why are they important for you?
10. How important is the Improvement Plan (IP) for your school to guide the improvement efforts? Please, explain.

Pressure

11. What are the highest pressures your school is facing? (e.g.: state, local context, families, students)
12. How do you make sure that teachers in your school understand what these pressures are?
13. What needs to be done for the school to answer to these pressures successfully?
14. What do you do to bring your teachers on board so that they'll do what needs to be done?

Strategies

15. Describe to me what main steps you have taken or strategies you have chosen to accomplish your goals for the school?
16. What obstacles have you faced?

Management orientation

17. Do you use specific incentives so that you incentivize your faculty to work toward the goals that you described to me? Does the system, the owners provide any incentives?
18. Do you think that you and your teachers are on the same page when it comes to the main goals that you try to achieve here at this school? What do you do to get people together on the goals that matter the most?
19. How aware do you think teachers are of the formal goals that the school ought to fulfill? Formal goals? Not sure what you mean
20. How important is for you that your teachers follow the goals that would make the school looks better from outside?
21. Is there any mechanism/practice that helps you to generate information about how your teachers are doing?
22. What do you do with teachers who need your support in order to be successful in their classrooms?
23. What CAN you do given all the things you have to take care of?
24. In terms of teaching, what specific tools do you put in place to support them in specific areas that they need to improve?
25. When a teacher is facing a problem that she perceives as impossible to solve by herself. What do you do?

Service orientation

26. Is there any particular profile that a teacher should have to work at this school? What is that profile?

27. What is the mission of a teacher at this school What do tell your teachers to work in favor of the students that this school serves?

Teachers Commitment

28. What motivates your faculty and staff to work here at this school and work hard?
29. Do you feel your teachers feel confident to teach this student population and deal with their families? How can you tell?
30. When you look at your faculty and staff, what percentage would you say works exceptionally hard?
31. What percentage needs a little nudge so that they work harder?
32. In real life, some educators are more committed to students than other teachers; others are less committed but still they fulfill their obligations. Looking across the teachers in your faculty, do these types exist here at school? What is the distribution?
33. Can you give me an example of a more committed teacher? Less committed teacher?

APPENDIX II: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL (ROUND 2)

Observation Protocol

This protocol was designed with the purpose to give some general guidance about the key dimensions that should be observed during the lessons taught by teachers that agreed to participate in the study. The main purpose is to capture attitudes and practices that indicate effort investment in serving poor students inside of the classroom.

Observation Plan

1. For every teacher selected, I will observe two sections during a working day. Every section takes about 90 minutes so I will follow one teacher for 90 minutes during one day.
2. I am planning to observe teaching practices in which teachers (do not) engage to support students both in a cognitive and socio-emotional fashion, especially the ones that show difficulties to understand the lesson. I will pay attention:
    a. General classroom climate variables and support behaviors/attitudes.
    b. Equitable classroom practices.
    c. Differentiation practices.
3. During the course of the lesson, I will sit in the back of the classroom with the objective of diminishing the potential disturbances that my presence may generate.
4. This observation will contrast the initial testimony of teacher commitment with the actual actions so that I can observe consistencies or discrepancies between attitudes and behaviors.
5. During the observation I will take descriptive notes and reflective notes when possible.

Identification

Teacher	:	
Date	:	
Time	:	
Grade	:	
Subject matter	:	
Number of students	:	

Section I. Climate and instructional activities: during the observation period, I will indicate for each 5–10-minute segment which of the following equitable practices listed in Table A1 and differentiated practices listed in table A2. In addition to the equitable practices, I will also rate general climate variables and support behaviors for each 5–10-minute segment.

	1: 5-10 min.	2: 17-22 min.	3: 29-34 min.	4: 41-46	5: 53-58min.	6: 65-70 min.
Equitable practices	☐AV ☐PA ☐AC ☐TC ☐ME ☐UE ☐TE ☐NE ☐EC ☐PE ☐LC ☐RC ☐MP ☐PF	☐AV ☐PA ☐AC ☐TC ☐ME ☐UE ☐TE ☐NE ☐EC ☐PE ☐LC ☐RC ☐MP ☐PF	☐AV ☐PA ☐AC ☐TC ☐ME ☐UE ☐TE ☐NE ☐EC ☐PE ☐LC ☐RC ☐MP ☐PF	☐AV ☐PA ☐AC ☐TC ☐ME ☐UE ☐TE ☐NE ☐EC ☐PE ☐LC ☐RC ☐MP ☐PF	☐AV ☐PA ☐AC ☐TC ☐ME ☐UE ☐TE ☐NE ☐EC ☐PE ☐LC ☐RC ☐MP ☐PF	☐AV ☐PA ☐AC ☐TC ☐ME ☐UE ☐TE ☐NE ☐EC ☐PE ☐LC ☐RC ☐MP ☐PF
Differentiated practices	☐AU ☐AG ☐AD ☐MN ☐AN ☐MA	☐AU ☐AG ☐AD ☐MN ☐AN ☐MA	☐AU ☐AG ☐AD ☐MN ☐AN ☐MA	☐AU ☐AG ☐AD ☐MN ☐AN ☐MA	☐AU ☐AG ☐AD ☐MN ☐AN ☐MA	☐AU ☐AG ☐AD ☐MN ☐AN ☐MA
Comments						
Student engagement	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L
Pace of instruction	☒R ☐M ☐L	☒R ☐M ☐L	☒R ☐M ☐L	☒R ☐M ☐L	☒R ☐M ☐L	☒R ☐M ☐L
Teacher centeredness	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L
On task	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L	☒H ☐M ☐L
Tone	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N
Discipline	☒L ☐R ☐B	☒L ☐R ☐B	☒L ☐R ☐B	☒L ☐R ☐B	☒L ☐R ☐B	☒L ☐R ☐B
Regard	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N
Support self-worth	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N
Effort to discipline	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N
Motivation	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N
Attention	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N	☒P ☐I ☐N

Descriptive notes

Appendix **observation protocol**

A.1 Equitable practices: this section serves as a list of 14 observable practices in the classroom, reflecting the presence / absence of equitable teaching practices

Practice	Code	Description
1. Uses a variety of visual aids and props to support student learning	AV	Uses multiethnic photos, pictures, and props to illustrate concepts and content; Uses appropriate technology to illustrate concepts and content
2. Uses random response strategies	PA	Uses random response strategies (i.e., numbered heads, color-coded cards, equity sticks, calling sticks)
3. Uses cooperative learning structures	AC	Structures opportunities for students to learn with and from their peers (i.e., Think-Pair-Share, Teammates consult, Jigsaw, Pairs Check, Partner A and B, Boggle, Last Word)
4. Uses probing and clarifying techniques to assist students to answer	TC	Rephrases the question; Asks a related question; Gives student a hint, clue, or prompt
5. Uses multiple approaches to consistently monitor students' understanding of instruction, directions, procedures, processes, questions, and content	ME	Uses a variety of approaches to monitor students' understanding throughout instruction (Thumbs Up, Unison response, One Question Quiz, Envelope Please)
6. Uses students' real life experiences to connect school learning to students' lives	UE	Asks students to reflect upon and discuss the following: "What events/situations occur in your family or neighborhood that require some knowledge of ?" How does knowing about benefit your interactions in your family, neighborhood, or school?";Uses examples that are reflective of students' lives to support learning
7. Uses Wait Time	TE	Pauses at least 3-5 seconds to consider the student's response before affirming, correcting, or probing; Pauses following a student's response to allow other students to consider their reactions, responses and extensions
8. Welcomes students by name as they enter the classroom	NE	Asks students for correct pronunciation of their names; correctly pronounces students' names
9. Uses eye contact with all students	EC	Makes culturally appropriate eye contact with all students
10. Uses proximity with all students equitably	PE	Circulates around student work areas to be close to all students
11. Uses body language, gestures, and expressions to convey a message that all students' questions and opinions are important.	LC	Smiles, Nods head in affirmation; Leans toward students; Turns toward students who are speaking to show interest
12. Acknowledges all students' comments, responses, questions, and contributions	RC	Uses affirming, correcting, or probing to acknowledge all students' responses
13. Seeks multiple perspectives	MP	Validates all perspectives with responses such as: "That's one idea. Does anyone else have another?"; "That was one way to solve the problem. Who did it another way?"; "Who has an alternative view?"
14. Asks students for feedback on the effectiveness of instruction	PF	Asks students to indicate the learning activities that are effective in helping them to learn; Uses interviews, surveys, and questionnaires to gather feedback from students; Uses exit cards to gather feedback about instruction.

A2. Differentiated practices

Dimensions	Code	Description
One-on-one support	AU	Anytime the teacher reaches out to an individual and helps
Small group support	AG	Anytime the teacher reaches out to an small groups and helps
Activities differentiated by readiness	AD	Student(s) working with planned activities differentiated according to level of readiness.
Cognitive tasks on multiple levels	MN	Any occurrence in which the teacher alters a task for an individual student.
Scaffold	AN	Any time the teacher goes out of her way to help a student, or students, understand the material by reaching for simpler explanations.
Learning goals within reach	MA	(any time a teacher gives a student a learning goal that is different from the rest of the group)

A3. Global Ratings for Each Snapshot

Student Engagement	Teacher centeredness	On task	Tone	Discipline	Pace
Students' involvement in the lesson by paying attention or participating. H – High engagement = 30% or more students engaged in learning M – Moderate engagement = 30%–70% of students engaged in learning L – Low engagement = 30% or fewer of students engaged in learning	Level of teacher centeredness in terms of who directs the learning or makes the decisions about the learning activities. H: High – Teacher directs all learning. M: Medium - Teacher and students share learning decisions L: Low - Students direct all learning	Proportion of students being on task and productive. H – High = over 70% of students on task M – Medium =between 30%-70% of students On task L – Low = 30 % or fewer on task.	Teachers' speech tone: P - Positive – friendly, warm. N - Neutral – Indifferent. S – Negative.	Frequency of Infractions or violations of the norm of the classroom of respect during the lesson. L: Low - 1 or none infractions. M: Moderate - two or three infractions B: Bad – more than three infractions.	Pace that teacher communicates the content or activities to students. S - Slow R – Regular F - Fast

APPENDIX III: FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW (ROUND 3)

We have met a couple of times so far and we talked about your students and work in general at this school. In the observation, I had the chance to see your students and the challenges that you face.

I saw in your classroom a challenging group of students when you teach them. Some students were responsive to the tasks you assigned to them, others were difficult to teacher because they did not seem motivated or enthusiastic in your lesson. Just to refresh, I observed to in the class of [XX] in the [XX] level.

1. When I observed you in your classroom, I realized that is really difficult to keep your students focused on the lesson. Do you usually feel that you fulfill your objectives of the lesson?
2. When you realized that the lesson objective is out of reach, what do you try to prioritize?
3. How do you feel your academic standard get affected?
4. Which students do you feel lost more?
5. How do you feel about the students that are responsive to your lessons and strive for completing the task?
6. How do you feel about the others students that do not seem motivated [name the most challenging cases]?
7. Do you have more kids like them in other grades?
8. In the case of those students [name the most challenging cases], when they do something else, are distracted, listening music or not pay attention. How do you interpret that behavior?
9. What do you think you can do about them [name the most challenging cases]?
10. How do you feel about them?
11. How do you feel taking time off from responsive students to give them time to these others one?
12. ¿What do you feel when those students are disrespectful when you try to help them?
13. Is there any moment in which you have to "let them go" [challenging students] because they simple do not respond? How do you explain to yourself this situation?
14. ¿Do you feel that some students have a "ceiling" [cognitive/emotional] that is hard to break?
15. Some teachers have told me: "With my hand on my heart and with a sense of reality, there are students who are beyond remedy and for whom any effort is worthless." What do you think about that?
16. In general, how difficult is for you to fulfilling your duties as a worker in this school and respond to the needs of the most difficult students? [explore tension between organizational demands and responses to student needs]
17. Finally, how do you manage to keep your vocation as a teacher in serving all your students under these circumstances? Where do you see you can't do much?