

I



## *Teachers, Politics, and the State*

In August 1900, the first national meeting of locally organized primary schoolteachers' associations took place in Paris. Thirteen years earlier, the education minister Eugène Spuller had legally forbidden the teachers (*instituteurs*) from organizing their own trade union. Over the decade that followed, they made no concerted effort to form a national association, but throughout provincial France, small groups of teachers quietly formed their own associations of "pedagogical improvement."<sup>1</sup> Then, in 1898, half a dozen *instituteurs* from different parts of the country proposed, in their respective associations and provincial pedagogical pamphlets, to organize a meeting of teachers in the town of Laon, in the *département* of Aisne.<sup>2</sup> The occasion was to inaugurate a monument being erected in honor of three of their Aisnian comrades—Leroy, Debordeaux, and Poulette—who had been killed in the Franco-Prussian War. Some 120 teachers representing fifty-two locally organized associations attended that meeting. The charismatic and persuasive Achille Deum, a teacher from the town of Asnières, near Paris, chaired the meeting and called for a national meeting of teachers' associations to be held in Paris the following year. Between August 6 and 8, nearly 400 French schoolteachers congregated in the city, representing eighty local groups. The education minister, Georges Leygues, attended the meeting and gave his blessing to the corporate body, thus making him the first education minister to break with his post-1887 predecessors who had been hostile to the *instituteurs'* associations. The congregated teachers discussed pedagogical issues, but they also discussed the organization of the teachers' "friendly societies" (*amicales*) and the possibility of an even larger congress the following year. The teachers' 1901 congress was so large that the education minister forbade the teachers from meeting in 1902, fearing that teachers would, in imitation of their

public-sector comrades in the post offices, phone companies, and tax offices, take advantage of a loosening of the state's association laws.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the congress of August 1900 was part of a long, unsteady path toward the acceptance of teachers' collective political existence.

While French teachers were fighting for the very right to hold collective meetings in 1900, American teachers were, that same year, deeply and openly embroiled in city politics. On March 27, Robert Van Wyck, the first mayor of the newly consolidated New York City and a Tammany Hall stalwart,<sup>4</sup> held a hearing at City Hall to discuss the Davis Bill, which would provide increases in teachers' salaries, tax hikes to finance them, and a reform in the city's auditing system.<sup>5</sup> By the time the meeting opened at four o'clock, nearly two thousand teachers, most of them women, had already crowded into City Hall. They filled the corridor leading to the mayor's office, crammed themselves into the ante-room of the office, and even stood on radiators and windowsills to get a better view of the proceedings. For the next two hours, the mayor discussed the Davis Bill with representatives of the teachers' and principals' associations while the assembled teachers listened and made their feelings known; after someone spoke, the teachers applauded, cheered, laughed, booed, or hissed. The president of the New York City Teachers' Association, William Ettinger, was the teachers' hero that afternoon; one of the school commissioners, John Harrigan, was the villain of the piece. Ettinger complained that the teachers hardly benefited from the previous salary bill, while Harrigan charged that the new bill, if signed into law, would place an unfair tax burden on city residents. Several days later, the mayor officially handed down his veto of the Davis Bill, but even though he had the support of many city administrators, Tammany Hall was out of favor in state government. The state senate and assembly, both controlled by the Republican Party, overrode the mayor's veto.<sup>6</sup> When the Republican governor, Theodore Roosevelt, held a hearing to discuss the Davis Bill, a large contingent of city teachers made the trip to Albany to be heard.<sup>7</sup> Roosevelt spoke favorably of the bill, mentioning in passing a defect that would later be addressed: its discrimination between the salaries of men and women teachers. Early in May, the governor signed the bill into law.<sup>8</sup>

French and American teachers found themselves in very different situations with regard to their capacity to make collective public demands at the end of the nineteenth century. While the *instituteurs* were still fighting to make legitimate public claims on state authorities in 1900, teachers in New York City (even then, the country's largest school district) contended against the city administration with relative freedom. French teachers were legally barred from unionizing, and even their efforts at forming relatively quiescent associations attracted disciplinary attention; collective public claim making was nearly nonexistent. New York City teachers, although not formally unionized, suffered no administrative sanctions for their collective claim making.

But a quarter of a century later, teachers' political circumstances in both places had changed. By 1925, the vast majority of French teachers—both the

male *instituteurs* and the female *institutrices*—were affiliated with one of the two national teachers' unions: the socialist Syndicat National des Instituteurs (SNI) and the more radical, Communist Party-affiliated Fédération des Membres de l'Enseignement Laïque (FMEL). Both organizations maintained alliances with the labor unions of blue-collar workers, collectively and publicly supported the politicians they favored, and repeatedly made public statements and participated in public demonstrations in favor of the secular republic and against the resurgent Catholic Church. Although the unionization of state employees was still in a legal twilight zone, state authorities' willingness to suppress the radicalization of the teaching force had largely evaporated.

In the United States, meanwhile, city teachers were on the defensive. The National Education Association (NEA), then as now, was the country's largest association of educators. But the NEA of the 1920s discouraged teachers from political action. The more militant American Federation of Teachers (AFT), meanwhile, remained a loose-knit collection of locals, and it was losing the battle for membership with the NEA. In 1925, about one thousand New York City teachers were part of the city's AFT local, the Teachers' Union (TU), a small percentage of the city's teaching force. This organization attracted accusations of disloyalty to the country and official restriction from conducting meetings in public schools. The New York state legislature had, over the governor's veto, commissioned Senator Clayton Lusk to investigate Bolshevism in the schools and, from 1919 to 1924, his committee worked to eliminate radicalism from the state's political establishment. The Lusk Committee "called every teacher who had been accused of unpatriotic behavior during the war to Albany to testify before a widely publicized set of hearings."<sup>9</sup> Even members of the other teachers' associations in the city, collectively constituting (as of 1924) the Joint Committee of Teachers Organizations (JCTO), found themselves assailed by the Board of Education for their participation in city politics, on account of such activity being "unprofessional."

After twenty-five years, teachers' relationships with state authorities had changed in both places but in different ways. The *instituteurs* and *institutrices* had fought to gain recognition for their claim making and their very right to maintain a collective presence without official molestation. By 1925, that battle had very nearly been won. The American teachers, however, found an encroaching city government and an unwelcome state presence placing their political associations in jeopardy. By 1925, American teachers' public claim-making activities, while far from being eliminated, had become stigmatized.

What explains this shift in the political orthodoxy of teachers' involvement in collective claim making? And how does the answer to that question vary across cases? In the twenty-first century, these questions could scarcely be more relevant. Today, teachers constitute one of the largest bodies of workers in the advanced industrialized world, much greater than the industrial workers who are usually studied by scholars of labor activism and contentious politics. The size of teachers' corps and education budgets is displayed in Table 1.1. States

TABLE 1.1 PUBLIC SCHOOLTEACHERS AND EDUCATION IN THE ADVANCED INDUSTRIALIZED DEMOCRACIES

<i>Country</i>	<i>No. of school teachers (2005)</i>	<i>Teachers as percentage of labor force age 25–64 (1999)</i>	<i>Percentage of budget expenditure on education (2005)</i>
Belgium	100,346	NA	12.1
Canada	451,300*	3.5	NA
Denmark	NA	NA	15.5
Finland	91,288	4.3	12.5
France	828,334	4.5	10.6
Germany	1,120,493	3.9	9.7
Greece	183,782	NA	9.2
Iceland	7,128	7.8	18.0
Ireland	64,621	4.7	13.9
Italy	827,669	4.7	9.2
Japan	1,020,470	3.0	9.5
Luxembourg	NA	3.7	NA
Netherlands	NA	NA	11.5
Norway	107,517†	5.2	16.7
Portugal	179,964	NA	11.3
Spain	537,427	5.2	11.0
Sweden	195,346	4.2	12.6†
Switzerland	127,416	3.9	16.3†
United Kingdom	577,596	3.8	12.5
United States	4,020,988	4.2	13.7

Sources: Data gathered from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Teachers for Tomorrow's Schools* (Paris: OECD, 2001); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Table 19: Finance Indicators by ISCED Level," available at <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?Reportid=172>.

\* 2004 data.

† 2006 data.

spend an enormous amount of money on financing their education systems, and teachers' salaries and benefits constitute a sizable proportion of their education budgets. Teachers themselves constitute a huge proportion of these countries' workforces. One might imagine that the sheer size of this constituency would merit study, but there has been very little systemic analysis done comparing the political power of organized teachers across cases, and none at all examining this power over time.

The size of teachers' corps is matched by the influence of their unions in national politics. Across the United States, Western Europe, and Japan, teachers' unions have become important players in national education politics. Their associations have fought not only for the higher salaries and better working

conditions that are the “bread and butter” of trade unionism but also for education reform and funding, improved school safety and infrastructure, human and trade union rights, gender equality, and economic justice. At a time when organized labor has been reeling under the combined pressures of falling trade barriers, deregulated labor markets, changing workplace technologies, and neoliberal ideology, teachers’ organizations have retained influence and some cohesiveness in public politics. In addition to the voice of unions in national politics, Education International, a coalition of 402 teachers’ organizations spanning 173 countries, campaigns for better schools and social justice issues more generally, holds regional conferences around the world, and publishes a series of bulletins and magazines about its activities and educational issues worldwide.<sup>10</sup>

But, as I have suggested, it was not always so. How did teachers’ collective claim making acquire its political legitimacy? And how can we explain the differences in teachers’ experiences across countries?

In this book, I seek to answer these questions by examining the politics and effects of state elites’ efforts to consolidate central authority over schooling the masses. I demonstrate that, during critical periods in the history of public education, the expansion of state control changed teachers’ political opportunity structure and capacity for political action in unprecedented ways. *Centralization of education* challenged long-established relations between teachers, educational administrators, and political regimes. The variable, dynamic histories of centralization politics, teachers’ contention, and the political legitimacy of teachers’ associations shaped the interactions between teachers and the state during these crucial periods. The centralization of education precipitated a long-term struggle between previously docile teachers and state agents who needed teachers to do their work quietly, cheaply, and “professionally.” The struggle was fought in public through a combination of contained politics in state capitals and contentious politics in the streets, while smaller-scale, but no less consequential, conflicts were fought further from the public eye by those in charge of training prospective teachers. The outcome was unexpected: Teachers’ associations eventually became institutional actors, embedded in the state, bargaining with their bosses over a set of issues that teachers had not expected to find themselves dealing with. Teachers’ collective action was then and remains now a reflection of ongoing battles over teachers’ proper role as state actors.

The centralization of education systems required teachers to be mobilized and gave state authorities the tools to prescribe proper behavior among teachers, creating an apolitical identity for them. When teachers resisted these efforts to categorize them as passive tools of the state, state elites responded by reinforcing the social boundaries that distinguished teachers from others and exploiting the differences within teachers’ corps, pitting men against women, primary school teachers against secondary school teachers, and political radicals against moderates. These tactics generated conflict within teachers’ corps, but contrary to the intentions of state authorities, they also stoked the flames

of teachers' contentiousness, as associations of teachers now petitioned the state not only for better salaries and working conditions but also for recognition as teachers' legitimate political voice. Governments' efforts to mobilize teachers to enact centralized education and politick in its favor, in other words, bred a parallel process of mobilization by which teachers resisted these efforts.

The very efforts of state administrators to consolidate authority at key moments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced a politics of *selective engagement* between state authorities and associations of politically assertive, but internally divided, teachers. Selective engagement politics responds to collective claim making that seeks to exploit latent (or blatant) divisions within the teachers' corps, divisions often created or reinforced by the centralization process itself. However, I also argue that such a politics has the unintended consequence of recognizing the legitimacy of some teachers' collective claim making at the expense of others. Governments did not seek institutionalized engagement with teachers, but practices like collective bargaining emerged as a way to defuse potentially destabilizing teachers' politics while simultaneously granting teachers' associations institutionalized access to state decision makers. Against the intentions of nearly all the actors in both cases, these effects interacted with states' disciplinary and repressive techniques, the threat of such techniques, the legitimacy of prevailing jurisdictions over primary education, and teachers' own histories of contentious collective action to produce the process of professionalization, whereby multiple parties compete to provide a service for the same clientele, with at least one party bidding for the support of the state. Selective engagement thereby reconfigures the relationship between state authorities and regime challengers. Chapter 2 explains these dynamics in more detail.

## Teachers and State Centralization at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century

During the nineteenth century, across Western Europe and the United States, states were busy expanding their authority over schooling. This consolidation of power had already begun in the more exclusive realm of secondary education, but the expansion of state control over popular primary schooling was unprecedented. Governments expanded state authority over, and popular access to, primary education for a number of reasons. Domestic political emergencies, such as revolutions and civil wars, moved national leaders to deploy public education to reconstruct the social order to "reflect the principles for which the struggle was originally undertaken."<sup>11</sup> Nationalist responses to external threats also stimulated education reform. The Franco-Prussian War, for example, inspired the belief that poor education was responsible for the French military defeat, and the subsequent education reform movements sought to reestablish national unity and reinforce training in basic skills like reading and writing.

World War I transformed public education in America into a security issue, as the movement to “Americanize” immigrants and eliminate “Germanic” sentiments became a federal policy objective. Finally, some states revamped education systems in an effort to stimulate economic development. By the end of the nineteenth century, Western Europe and the United States were in the midst of the Second Industrial Revolution, featuring a vast influx of wage workers and accelerating technological innovation, urbanization, and concomitant social dislocations. Public education came to be seen not only as a “safety valve,” inculcating conservative values in a potentially disruptive social class, but also as a positive requirement for building a reproducible labor pool to meet the demands of the new economy.

Beginning approximately in the 1870s, as the stakes and expenses of primary schooling increased, teachers’ associations became part of the American and European political landscapes. Their status as autonomous collective actors, however, was highly contested and variable over time. Most of these organizations, often patterned after guild associations and organized not by classroom personnel but by administrative superiors, defined themselves apolitically, conscious as their members were of the sensitivity of their work to their communities and to the polity at large. In the United States, with its established freedom of association and decentralized system of governance, teachers did not face political barriers to forming associations. Although they were state employees, their identity as public servants did not, for the most part, impede their recognition as legitimate collective actors. Teachers in urban centers across the country organized, very often ward by ward, making collective claims on local administrators and, on occasion, the city government. In France, however, autonomous workers’ organizations had been illegal since the French Revolution. And they found themselves with an additional impediment: the almost total lack of social networks and associational ties that underpin all sustained collective action. Workers in cottage and craft industries could at least draw on a tradition of guild membership. But the *instituteurs* were isolated in the rural countryside, lacked a cohesive common identity, and were under the thumb of the ecclesiastical authorities in whose hands primary schooling had traditionally rested. In 1880, teachers had a recognized political presence in the United States, but they lacked even a rudimentary political autonomy in France.

These historical legacies dictated different roles for teachers in the politics of centralization.

### *France*

Because French teachers had no capacity for collective action before 1880, their direct role in centralization politics was limited. However, most secular schoolteachers in France supported the legislative overhaul of primary education that took place during the 1880s. These reforms, engineered by Jules Ferry,



rendered primary instruction free and obligatory and increased the authority of the school inspection corps and the central administration over local surveillance, teacher employment, and teacher training. Perhaps more important, the legislation of the 1880s transformed the primary education curriculum by extracting moral from religious education, relegating the latter to the Catholic Church, while the secular state secured authority over the former. As I show in greater detail in Chapter 3, the majority of French teachers perceived the Catholic Church to be an oppressor, and the church's influence in rural France had effectively negated the *instituteurs*' potential for collective political action prior to the Third Republic. To the teachers, Ferry and his allies were representatives of a secular order that could protect and empower them. In response to the political struggles over secular education and centralized schooling, the republican regime sought to reshape the teaching force and mobilize it to do the secular pedagogical work that it now valued more highly than ever before. The central administration signaled to the teachers that they had become valuable actors in the French state's arsenal of cultural standardization through a series of institutional reforms—reinvigorating teacher training schools, empowering secular school inspectors, and holding annual congresses for schooling personnel—that spurred teachers to seize some control over their professional destinies.<sup>12</sup>

### *The United States*

In the United States, however, teachers and their organizations generally opposed centralization. In New York City, as elsewhere in the urban United States, teachers' influence in city politics was the product of the decentralized ward system of governance. Teachers and their organizations fought against school reformers' drive to centralize the school system, since centralization meant muting the wards' voices in school politics. Until the late 1880s and 1890s, most city teachers were members of the ethnic groups that hired them, and the wards usually operated as political extensions of the various ethnicities that constituted the city population. Unlike French teachers, New York City teachers were active participants in the politics of centralization, and after their unsuccessful campaign against centralization, they responded with a stepped-up campaign to make their voices heard in city politics. In the years that followed, however, centralized school administrations and city councils began to identify teachers' politics as an inefficiency that needed to be eliminated. This was the era of the professionalization movement in public administration, and the "efficiency experts" of the era saw city schools as an inviting laboratory to implement their theories.<sup>13</sup> In New York City, the efficiency drive was made manifest in the Gary school program to transform the schools into vocational training grounds.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the loyalty of public servants, and teachers in particular, became critically important during World War I, especially given federal and state governments' mission to "Americanize" immigrants. At the heart of the "Garyization"



and Americanization programs was the desire to “take the schools out of politics” by putting their administration in the hands of ostensibly impersonal bureaucrats whose only political interest was absolute, unwavering loyalty. According to this vision, classroom teachers were not legitimate political actors, and their salary demands appeared unseemly and inappropriate.

Centralization triggered teachers’ resistance to state authority, but the tactics, magnitude, and outcomes of this resistance were shaped by two critical factors: teachers’ support or lack of support for centralization, and the degree of official tolerance of teachers’ politics when the centralization conflict transpired. French teachers’ support for centralization and their lack of associational presence resulted in their quick suppression in the 1880s, followed by quiet, localized mobilization. American teachers opposed centralization in municipalities throughout the country and fought against it, publicly but unsuccessfully. They proceeded to resist city-level efforts to exclude them from public politics. French teachers, meanwhile, had to fight for the very right to act collectively. But in both countries centralization exacerbated preexisting heterogeneities within the teachers’ corps. The struggles of teachers’ associations to influence state policy happened while they were fighting with each other over the legitimate right to represent teachers politically. The legacy of conflict over centralization, I argue, profoundly shaped the patterns by which teachers overcame these tensions.

## Why Teachers?

In spite of the size and political influence of teachers’ corps across the advanced industrialized world, political science does not have much to offer to explain their power. Their unions sometimes appeared as interest groups when interest group theory was still in vogue,<sup>15</sup> and several anthologies offer cross-national comparisons of teacher union politics.<sup>16</sup> However, while these studies make passing references to a past in which teachers were apolitical actors, none explore the genesis of teachers’ political movements. State-centered studies of the creation of public education systems pay scant attention to the role of teachers.<sup>17</sup> They also pay insufficient attention to the relationship between the state and competing education authorities. They neglect the fact that public school systems are products of not only the social demand for schooling but also political battles between central and local state authorities, ecclesiastical powers, and other organized stakeholders. The literature thus implies that teachers and their relationship to elites are sheltered from these conflicts.<sup>18</sup> But these battles affected teachers by changing the demands that their superiors made of them, and during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these demands were usually not passively accepted.

Efforts to centralize the school systems in New York City and Chicago around the turn of the twentieth century provide a small demonstration of how teachers are embedded in these larger struggles over public education. In both

cities, education reformers—particularly Nicholas Murray Butler in New York and William Rainey Harper in Chicago—campaigning in favor of reorganizing the chains of command in their respective cities to eliminate local governance of schools. In New York, Butler saw centralization of control as a stepping-stone to implementing a vision of education that included a professional, apolitical bureaucracy, but New York City teachers were hostile to the elimination of local representative institutions. So Butler's campaign for the new law during the 1890s included an active effort to win over the largely female teaching force by enlisting the Public Education Association (PEA), an organization of middle-class women, to convince the teachers that centralization would improve the functioning of city schools. Ultimately, teachers' opposition did not stop the reformers. Butler's reform bill became state law in 1896, but the Chicago city teachers, led by Margaret Haley, blocked Harper's bill and subsequent school reform bills for decades by launching organized campaigns against them. The Chicago Teachers' Federation (CTF) lobbied the state legislature during the 1900s and again in the 1910s to stop implementation of centralization. Education reform was not enacted until 1917, after the city outlawed the teachers' union. In both cases, efforts at changing the administrative structure of the school system provoked teachers to protest, but the teachers of Chicago had stronger support from the community, and organized labor in particular, than did their New York counterparts.<sup>19</sup> Administrators could hardly avoid dealing with teachers and their organizations in the administrators' efforts to change the education bureaucracy. Yet teachers' roles in such struggles are not examined in state-centered accounts of education reform.

Teachers are one of a series of actors whom Michael Lipsky refers to as "street-level bureaucrats."<sup>20</sup> Along with police officers, sanitation workers, and welfare and social workers, teachers are distinguished by direct interaction with citizens, "wide discretion over the dispensation of benefits or the allocation of public sanctions,"<sup>21</sup> and relative autonomy from organizational authority. Contrary to the Weberian "faceless" bureaucrat, street-level bureaucrats are profoundly visible in their communities and have unusual resonance because of the value of the services they carry out and because they represent governments. My own analysis treats these qualities as variables, not constants—most rural schoolteachers in mid-nineteenth-century France, for example, could hardly be described as independent of organizational authority—and suggests that by historicizing the occupational category, we can better understand how centralization transformed such street-level bureaucracies into legitimate public claim makers.

The political significance of teachers as street-level bureaucrats is twofold. First, to a great extent, their action is equivalent to policy. No matter what decision makers dictate from above, teachers' autonomy from organizational superiors allows them substantial discretion in the implementation of laws and administrative decrees. In order to confine teachers' discretionary authority, states sometimes go to great lengths to fashion and impose a corporate

identity on them. More broadly, whenever state elites seek to overhaul education systems, teachers become the objects of mobilization processes. Later, I pursue the theoretical implications of teachers' being both resource-mobilizing regime challengers and the subjects of elite actors' mobilization. Teachers, however, are not Marxian wage workers (another set of actors distinguished by being resource mobilizers and mobilized resources), which leads to the other political significance of teachers: They are embedded in the state apparatus. When combined with the cultural sensitivity of the work that teachers do, such embedding creates unusual pressure for teachers to adhere to political orthodoxy. They are, after all, the face of the state in their communities.

The reality of public school teachers as state actors indicates that conflicts over their right to collectively participate in public politics constitute conflicts over the contours of the state itself. Like the process of state building, political scientists' study of state building is an unfinished enterprise, and one of the loose ends pertains to a particular change in the state structure of advanced industrialized democracies during the twentieth century—the growth of “bureaucratic insurgency” in law enforcement, postal services, and all across the civil services, insurgencies that eventually yielded some form of bargaining between state authorities and those civil servants.<sup>22</sup> While scholars like Thomas Poggi and Thomas Ertman were concerned with the role of bureaucracy in the development of modern nation-states, they never considered the possibility that those very civil servants might shape the trajectory of state growth in strange, unexpected ways, as rulers were driven to make deals with disgruntled state employees in a way that institutionalizes the employees' role as collective actors in the state apparatus.<sup>23</sup>

Teachers also stand apart from other state workers in some important respects. If education is “the organized labor whose object is the capacity for social practice,” or “capacities for interaction,”<sup>24</sup> then teachers play an unusual role in a given society. Since different societies value different kinds of social practices, the workers who labor to inculcate the capacities for those practices are engaged in a particularly value-laden project. As Maria Lorena Cook writes with reference to Mexico, “Teachers play a unique role in transmitting a society's dominant cultural values and norms to its school-age children.”<sup>25</sup> They are the workers whose labor creates (and, to some extent, enforces) the standards of social interaction in particular societies. While other workers can create such standards through their labor, teachers are the only workers specific to the task. So, to the extent that there are stakeholders who value public education, how those stakeholders identify teachers, and how teachers define themselves, becomes politically salient when public education is the object of political conflict. Such questions are particularly consequential in the case of nationalism, as Ernest Gellner has theorized and Stephen Harp has demonstrated through his discussion of Alsace and Lorraine from 1850 to 1940.<sup>26</sup> In later chapters, I explore the significance of teachers' identities in the politics of centralization.

Another important point about the study of teachers' changing political significance during this time period is the particular relevance of gender. The social construction of teaching as women's work happened at different times, at different paces, and with different consequences in the two countries. Centralization preceded the feminization of the primary teachers' corps in France, while women already constituted a majority of American teachers by 1900 (and an overwhelming majority of New York City teachers). The different rationales for centralizing education, and the different status of working women in the two countries, generated different sets of tensions between governments and organized teachers and, just as important, between men and women teachers. Changes in popular perceptions of schooling interacted with other forms of concomitant social change, including demographic shifts in the case of France, to produce new ways of regulating teachers' corps.<sup>27</sup> As I demonstrate in later chapters, the gendered categories of political orthodoxy with regard to educators that states developed around the turn of the century elicited differentiated responses from men and women teachers and different ways of responding to women teachers' involvement in politics.

If my argument about centralization and selective engagement is correct for understanding the emergence and acceptance of teachers' public claim-making activities, there are two important implications for the study of social movements and states. First, it makes a counterintuitive point about the importance of solidarity for the creation of sustained worker mobilization and the official recognition of their organizations. When state service providers mobilize for collective action, occupational and political heterogeneities within the workers' corps become the basis for contestation over professional boundaries. Selective engagement reinforced preexisting tensions between teachers and teachers' associations of different political orientation. Different groups of teachers sought state recognition not only in their conflicts with governments but also in their conflicts with one another. Governments' responses to these conflicts unintentionally yielded legitimacy to teachers' claim-making activities. Through selective engagement, teachers' associations became acceptable collective actors in public politics. Social movement scholars generally assume that solidarity is a positive boon for labor movements, helping sustain them over time and increasing the likelihood that they will extract concessions from their targets.<sup>28</sup> In the cases explored in this book, however, the lack of solidarity within the teachers' corps, in conjunction with differentiated government responses to teachers' demands, generated the dynamic "power in movement" that led to the anchoring of teachers' unions in the state.

Second, it provides a different way of understanding the state-civil society boundary, a boundary called into question when state workers act collectively in politically unorthodox ways. Political scientists usually apprehend this boundary in one of two ways. Some imagine states and societies to be discrete, unitary entities of relative autonomy that regularly interact through such

institutions as political parties and law enforcement and whose socially constructed boundaries are clearest only in times of revolutionary confrontation.<sup>29</sup> Others deconstruct the state itself, rejecting the idea of state autonomy and conceiving of states as inescapably embedded in social relations whose power constitutes the state in different times and places.<sup>30</sup> My own project suggests that the state-society difference is mediated by the creation of, and resistance to, social boundaries. Following Charles Tilly and, to a lesser extent, James Scott, I suggest that when states centralize power over some set of activities, they always deploy some energy toward fashioning categorical identities to mediate relations between state and nonstate actors.<sup>31</sup> This way of understanding the state preserves the concept, along with the idea of, state autonomy without denying the reality of social embeddedness.

### **Case Selection: Marianne and Uncle Sam in Comparative Perspective**

The comparison between France and the United States is useful for a number of reasons. The two regimes represent very different degrees of centralization regarding public education. The difference of degree is clear when looking at their school systems today, although it is somewhat less evident when looking at the systems in the nineteenth century.<sup>32</sup> Specifying the prehistory of centralization is a prerequisite to examining centralization's effects, and for the purposes of this comparison, the very different constitutional traditions tell much of the story. The stability of the American federal structure, as dictated by the U.S. Constitution, is qualitatively different from the shifting constitutional regimes of nineteenth-century France, particularly when coupled with that country's rigid, Napoleonic administrative structure. The American Constitution bounds the centralization of historically localized social services in the United States in a way that the French Revolution prevented from ever developing in France. To conceptualize the difference between Marianne and Uncle Sam along this dimension, I draw on Stein Rokkan and Derek Urwin's distinction between monocephalous and polycephalous territorial structures. In monocephalous territories, only one area has authoritative primacy; in polycephalous ones, central features are diffuse across territory, and different types of resource holders are spatially segmented.<sup>33</sup> France was chosen for its comparative monocephality; the United States, for its polycephality. The implicit wager of this book is that the politics of teacher organization responds in meaningful ways to changes in center-periphery dynamics, and the two types of territorial structure should dictate qualitatively different empirical trajectories. For France, I examine national trends in teacher organizing, which I supplement by looking at local variations. For the United States, I use the opposite spatial strategy, looking at a particular locale, New York City, and examining its place in state and national politics. Taking care not to confuse "the geographic map

for the map of effective political influence,”<sup>34</sup> I also try to show how developments at different spatial levels affect each other.

Within the United States, the choice of New York City is advantageous in certain respects, problematic in others. One of the great advantages to studying New York City is the wealth of extant scholarly resources on city education policy and politics, dating back to the nineteenth century. Numerous secondary studies and primary sources on teachers' associations are available in various libraries and archives. In addition, the long history of New York City yields an appropriately long time period to study the effects of causal processes that, I assume, take place over long time periods. Furthermore, New York City administrators also pioneered the urban centralization of public education, which suggests that the experiences of other cities did not impact the planning, politicking, and implementation of the process, thereby controlling for any interaction effects with other cities' centralization efforts.<sup>35</sup>

While all American cities have their own quirks and idiosyncrasies, there can be no doubt that New York is uniquely unique. The enormity of the city, the magnitude of its diversity (cultural and otherwise), and its particular history as both intermediate point and destination for immigrants all suggest that it is not just any “center.” Given the role of common schooling in American history as an integrative mechanism, however imperfect, the ethnic diversity of New York City suggests a correspondingly crucial role for the primary school system. Although this problem cannot be completely sidestepped, I would remind readers that what I am after in this book is an explanation of teachers' politics that reasonably demonstrates their politicization as an outgrowth of struggles over centralization and the politics of selective engagement that followed. The peculiarities of New York City surely affect the timing of centralization and selective engagement but not, I argue, the sequence (which, as I suggest in Chapter 2, is crucial). Explaining political outcomes as sequences of causal mechanisms means getting the connections right, and the empirical differences between cities means that some of the specific political circumstances will vary.<sup>36</sup> I pursue the nature of these connections and specificities in subsequent chapters.

Beyond the narrow methodological rationale, the France–United States comparison was also the comparison of chief importance to Alexis de Tocqueville, some of whose major themes I revisit. Tocqueville wrote with concern about the effects of administrative centralization on civic spirit, as increasing government intervention severs people's relationships with each other, rendering them tools of administrative authority. Like Tocqueville, I am interested in the conditions that yield an associational life, especially among a group of people who, in France, lacked the durable social networks that fuel sustained collective action for at least the first half of the nineteenth century. Tocqueville, of course, was not so concerned with the possibility of organized groups gaining the right to make claims on the state—except, as his reflections on the 1848 Revolution suggest, for the sake of neutralizing them. And the thought of state

workers rebelling against their employer would surely have repulsed and terrified him. His normative concerns, in that respect, are distinct from my own. But his analytical concerns resonate. Finally, beyond the concern with civic spirit and associational life, Tocqueville was deeply concerned with public education itself in a way that has not been properly addressed in the Tocqueville scholarship.<sup>37</sup> Before reflecting on any of these themes, however, I first develop a theory to examine the relationship between state centralization and teachers' public claim making more closely.