

## Mobilizing Teachers

The political participation of public school teachers in new democracies has generated heated debates. In some countries, teacher strikes shutter schools for months each year; in others, teachers' unions have become powerful political machines and have even formed new political parties. To explain these contrasts, *Mobilizing Teachers* delves into changes in education politics and the labor movement. Christopher Chambers-Ju argues that union organizations fundamentally shape teacher mobilization, with far-reaching implications for politics and policy. With detailed case studies of Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico, this book is the first comparative analysis of teacher politics in Latin America. Drawing on extensive field research and multiple sources of data, it enriches theoretical perspectives in political science and sociology on the interplay between protests, electoral mobilization, and party alliances. This title is part of the Flip it Open Programme and may also be available in Open Access. Check our website Cambridge Core for details.

Christopher Chambers-Ju is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Texas at Arlington. He has worked on education politics for nearly twenty years, in academic and policy circles, and has conducted field research throughout Latin America. He holds a Ph.D. in political science from the University of California, Berkeley, and was the recipient of the Spencer Dissertation Fellowship.

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 Education Politics and the New Labor Movement in Latin America  
 Christopher Chambers-Ju  
 Frontmatter  
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*Education Politics and the New Labor  
Movement in Latin America*

CHRISTOPHER CHAMBERS-JU

*University of Texas at Arlington*



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*Para Ángela,  
el amor de mi vida.*

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## Preface and Acknowledgments

This book marks the end of a long journey. In literal terms, writing this book involved traveling overseas for field research. Metaphorically, the book required me to trek into faraway intellectual and spiritual planes. The project began in a city, Bogotá, where I became interested in the Federation of Colombian Educators in 2006 as a Fulbright Scholar. Later, this research took me to Mexico City and Buenos Aires to locate Colombian teachers in comparative perspective. I spent countless hours on buses, in union halls, and at schools, talking informally with teachers and sipping tiny Dixie cups of coffee as I waited for interviews. This book was also marked by my journey through the academic job market. My search for a tenure-track job was twisting and winding, with many stops along the way. I zigzagged eastward and then westward across the continental United States, taking a postdoctoral position in New Orleans and then a position as a visiting assistant professor in Worcester before finally settling in Dallas. The consolation prize was that in each place I connected – and later reconnected – with kind, thoughtful, and dynamic people. The journey has been filled with joyful and sad moments. It makes sense here to pay tribute to the good company I kept along the way: guides, fellow travelers who plodded along the same path for a time, and travel companions who were with me the whole way.

This book took an unexpected turn into the spiritual realm, raising questions about life, love, and mystery. It is a cruel twist of fate that Luz Ángela Campos Vargas, my late wife, who was my main travel companion on this journey, did not live to see the completion of this project. Ángela attended a large public high school in Bogotá, Colegio Camilo Torres, and later a large public university for teachers, National Pedagogical

University. We initially became friends because of our shared interest in education politics. She worked in the Secretariat of Education of Bogotá (SED) and witnessed firsthand the forces shaping education policy. Her boss, William René, a former leader of the teachers' union, was by all accounts a good man with strong political commitments. Ángela helped me to identify teachers to interview, connected me with people in the SED, transcribed interviews, and talked with me late into the night about her experience. She was the love of my life. While I spent countless hours writing and rewriting this book, she took care of Luca, our son. We deferred too many dreams imagining a better future together. What follows, then, is a labor of love, and not my labor alone. The first part of her name, "Luz," means light and her memory continues to light up my life and show me the way. Her love, dedication, and memory have motivated me to keep working, especially on the several occasions when I started to flag. This book is dedicated to her.

My intellectual journey took place mostly on the seventh floor of the Social Sciences Building (formerly Barrows Hall) at the University of California, Berkeley. I was lucky to find two dedicated advisers who took me under their wings. I spent scores of afternoons listening to Ruth Berins Collier as she showed me how to map out my core argument. Down the hall, Jonah Levy was a crucial interlocutor who tirelessly read hundreds of pages of drafts and helped me to turn them into something better. Ruth taught me how this project connected to a research tradition rooted in labor, political parties, and the representation of the popular sectors. Jonah taught me to pay attention to big issues of political economy, especially broader tensions between economic liberalization and democracy. The tutelage of both Jonah and Ruth toughened my thinking and helped me to write with rigor, precision, and clarity.

I am grateful to other advisers and mentors as well who provided vital support and insights. David Collier, whose exercises solving Sherlock Holmes mysteries helped me to crack these three cases. I had the good fortune to work with him editing articles and book chapters on the concept of "critical junctures," and this opportunity helped me to think about the comparative-historical elements in this project. Kent Eaton, who taught my first graduate seminar on Latin American politics, reminded me to avoid methodological nationalism and not lose sight of subnational politics. Laura Stoker has helped me to think about many aspects of this project, including research design and methods, and she encouraged me to pursue a project with a small number of cases. She also challenged me to find joy, both in work and in my daily life. Kim

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Voss pushed me to think about teachers as workers and to keep an eye on the labor movement in the United States. Leah Carroll gave incisive feedback on my framing of teachers and the left in Colombia. We shared a common bond of having married Colombians and having started intercultural families. I am also grateful to other faculty members – Leonardo Arriola, Alison Post, Steve Vogel, Chris Ansell, and Paul Pierson – for their advice and helpful comments. Finally, Dan Slater helped me to get this project off the ground when he supervised my master’s thesis at the University of Chicago.

Thinking back, the journey really started earlier. Javier Corrales, my undergraduate advisor, initially got me interested in Latin American politics – he has been a first-class mentor and inspired me to pursue an academic career. I am also thankful for colleagues at the Inter-American Dialogue’s Education Program, especially Jeff Puryear and Tamara Ortega-Goodspeed, for teaching me about education policy in Latin America. Before entering the Ph.D. program at the University of California, Berkeley, I had the opportunity to do field research in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Peru. I had the privilege of engaging in extensive conversations with union leaders, teachers, students, academics, policymakers, and journalists. These conversations furnished me with valuable raw material for this book.

The graduate student community at Berkeley was a vital source of intellectual energy. I am particularly grateful to Jessica Rich, Lindsay Mayka, Andres Schipani, Tomas Bril-Mascarenhas, Hernan Flom, Tara Buss, Lucas Novaes, Eugenia Giraudy, Brian Palmer-Rubin, Candelaria Garay, Mathias Poertner, and Ben Allen. Seminars played a crucial role in shaping me as a scholar, providing me with helpful (and often challenging) feedback. I was lucky to have other comrades in arms, including Chloe Thurston, Athmeya Jayaram, Dann Nasseemullah, Anne Meng, Fiona Shen-Bayh, and Suzanne Scoggins. Their support played a huge role in my success, especially in keeping me accountable. Finally, I had a foot in the sociology department, and I am grateful to Julia Chuang, Malgorzata Kurjanska, Freeden Oeur, Fidan Elcioglu, Abigail Andrews, Nick Wilson, and Maia Sieverding for shaping my thinking about deeper social structures and the common goals of the social sciences.

I am grateful to several individuals and institutions in Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico for helping me to get oriented in the field. In Bogotá, I am grateful to the Center for National Investigation and Popular Education, especially Mauricio Archila, Martha Cecilia García, María Clara Torres, and Álvaro Delgado for their steadfast support of

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A stop in New Orleans proved a lively place to revise this book. At Tulane University's Center for Inter-American Policy and Research (CIPR), I am grateful to Maria Akchurin, Hector Bahamonde, Katie Jensen, Jessica Price, and Xander Slaski for putting up with me as I wrestled with this project. Santiago Anria, a CIPR alumni, was a crucial mentor, friend, and guide. Ludovico Feoli, the director of CIPR, generously supported a book conference, and I am grateful to Wendy Hunter, Candelaria Garay, Jonah Levy, and Ruth Berins Collier – as well as faculty from the political science department and the Latin American group at Tulane, especially Mark Vail, Eduardo Silva, Martin Dimitrov, Virginia Oliveros, and David Smilde – for making this conference productive.

At the College of the Holy Cross, Maria Rodrigues and Danilo Contreras proved to be crucial travel companions. During my journey, I also had the good fortune of connecting with Alisha Holland, Sari Niedzwiecki, Ben Ross Schneider, Sebastián Etchemendy, Teri Caraway, Rebecca Tarlau, and Terry Moe, who have been mentors. Their incisive comments nudged this project along. At the University of Texas at Arlington, Rebecca Deen, Daniel Sledge, Christian Zolniski, Mark Hand, and Xavier Medina Vidal, along with the political science department, supported me through grief.

I should also credit another key source of information: theses written by M.A. and Ph.D. students in universities in Latin America. Much of the social sciences is siloed and there is a tendency to write to a primarily U.S.-based audience. This book required me to delve into the interdisciplinary research of talented scholars in Latin America – some of them trained in U.S. institutions, others not – who have done excellent work on teacher politics but are virtually unheard of in the United States. In other words, this book is my attempt to follow the lead of scholars in the

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Global South, reorient political science toward urgent policy questions, and foster a more inclusive research community.

These are some of the many people who have helped me to find my way to the end of this journey. I am grateful to the Spencer Foundation, which supported my dissertation research, and Amita Chugdar, for her mentorship and support. Aurelio Nuño's comments, based on his experience in government and his work as a scholar, have significantly improved sections of the book. Amanda Beatty, Shintia Revina, and Rezanti Putri Pramana helped me to understand the Indonesian case. The Chambers, Frame, Ju, Saavedra, Shoub, and Vargas clans all showed me love by feeding me. My editors, Rachel Blaifeder and Terry Moe, have offered support and incisive feedback. The two anonymous reviewers also provided helpful suggestions. Maya Corredor, an artist and one of Ángela's dear friends, illustrated the cover.

This book is my attempt to look at one key actor, teachers' unions, and to explain why teachers have participated in politics across countries in different ways. As the reader will discern, I have mixed feelings about teachers' unions. They lie at the heart of complex questions about education, social class, and power. I hope that this book serves to spark a broader debate among scholars and policymakers about the forces driving education and labor policy. By illuminating these forces, I hope this book contributes in some small way to help make public schools, such as Colegio Camilo Torres, better serve the needs of both the students who learn and the teachers who teach in them.

Abbreviations

|        |                                                                                                                           |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AGECH  | Chilean Educators’ Association (Asociación Gremial de Educadores de Chile)                                                |
| AMET   | Argentine Association of Technical Teaching (Asociación del Magisterio de Enseñanza Técnica)                              |
| ARI    | Affirmation for an Egalitarian Republic (Afirmación para una República Igualitaria), Argentina                            |
| ATE    | Association of State Workers (Asociación Trabajadores del Estado), Argentina                                              |
| CEA    | Confederation of Argentine Educators (Confederación de Educadores Argentinos)                                             |
| CEID   | Center of Study and Research on Teaching (Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Docente), Colombia                         |
| CGT    | General Confederation of Labor of the Republic of Argentina (Confederación General del Trabajo de la República Argentina) |
| CINEP  | Center for National Investigation and Popular Education (Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular), Colombia           |
| CNOP   | National Confederation of Popular Organizations (Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares), Mexico              |
| CNTE   | National Coordinator of Education Workers (Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación), Mexico                 |
| CODEMA | Cooperative of Teachers (Cooperativa del Magisterio), Colombia                                                            |
| CTA    | Argentine Workers’ Central (Central de Trabajadores de la Argentina)                                                      |

|         |                                                                                                                                           |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CTERA   | Confederation of Education Workers of the Republic of Argentina (Confederación de Trabajadores de la Educación de la República Argentina) |
| CTM     | Confederation of Mexican Workers (Confederación de Trabajadores de México)                                                                |
| CUT     | Unitary Workers' Central (La Central Unitaria de Trabajadores)                                                                            |
| ELN     | National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional), Colombia                                                                      |
| FARC    | Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia)                                                      |
| FECODE  | Federation of Colombian Educators (Federación Colombiana de Trabajadores de la Educación)                                                 |
| FER     | Regional Education Funds (Fondos Educativos Regionales), Colombia                                                                         |
| FONID   | National Fund for Teacher Incentive (Fondo Nacional de Incentivo Docente), Argentina                                                      |
| FREPASO | Front for a Country in Solidarity (Frente País Solidario), Argentina                                                                      |
| INEE    | National Institute of Education Evaluation (Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educativa), Mexico                                |
| LFTSE   | The Federal Law of Service Workers of the State (Ley Federal de los Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado), Mexico                          |
| M-19    | 19th of April Movement (Movimiento 19 de Abril), Colombia                                                                                 |
| MODAE   | Movement of Education Action (Movimiento de Acción Educativa), Colombia                                                                   |
| MOIR    | Revolutionary Independent Labor Movement (Movimiento Obrero Independiente y Revolucionario), Colombia                                     |
| MP      | Pedagogical Movement (Movimiento Pedagógico), Colombia                                                                                    |
| OSPLAD  | Teacher Social Welfare Fund (Obra Social de los Docentes), Argentina                                                                      |
| PAN     | National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional), Mexico                                                                                   |
| PANAL   | New Alliance Party (Partido Nueva Alianza), Mexico                                                                                        |
| PDA     | Democratic Alternative Pole (Polo Democrático Alternativo), Colombia                                                                      |
| PGRI    | Teachers Association of the Republic of Indonesia (Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia)                                                     |
| PISA    | Program for International Student Assessment                                                                                              |

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|        |                                                                                                                                       |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PJ     | Peronist Justicialist Party (Partido Justicialista), Argentina                                                                        |
| PND    | National Institution of Teacher Collective Bargaining (Paritaria Nacional Docente), Argentina                                         |
| PRD    | Revolutionary Democratic Party (Partido Revolucionario Democrático), Mexico                                                           |
| PRI    | Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional), Mexico                                                      |
| SADOP  | Argentine Union of Private School Teachers (Sindicato Argentino de Docentes Privados)                                                 |
| SEP    | Secretariat of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública), Mexico                                                             |
| SNTE   | National Union of Education Workers (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación), Mexico                                      |
| SUTE   | Unitary Union of Education Workers (Sindicato Único de Trabajadores de la Educación), Chile                                           |
| SUTEBA | Union of Education Workers, Province of Buenos Aires (Sindicato Unificado de Trabajadores de la Educación de Buenos Aires), Argentina |
| SUTEP  | Unitary Union of Education Workers of Peru (Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores en la Educación del Perú)                              |
| UCR    | Radical Civic Union (Unión Cívica Radical), Argentina                                                                                 |
| UDA    | United Teachers of Argentina (Unión Docentes Argentinos)                                                                              |
| VIMA   | Teacher Affordable Housing Fund (Fideicomiso de Vivienda Magisterial), Mexico                                                         |