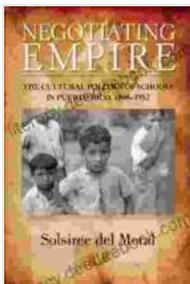


# The Cultural Politics of Schools in Puerto Rico 1898-1952: A Historical Examination of Educational Policy and the Shaping of Puerto Rican Identity

The United States' acquisition of Puerto Rico in 1898 marked a watershed moment in the island's history. The new colonial administration brought with it a host of changes, including a new educational system that was designed to transform Puerto Rican society. Schools became a key site of cultural politics, as the United States sought to use education to reshape Puerto Rican identity and inculcate American values. This article examines the cultural politics of schools in Puerto Rico from 1898 to 1952, exploring how educational policy was used to shape Puerto Rican identity and the role of schools in the island's political and social development.



## Negotiating Empire: The Cultural Politics of Schools in Puerto Rico, 1898–1952 by Solsiree del Moral

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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## **Early Education Policy in Puerto Rico**

The first American schools in Puerto Rico were established in 1899. These schools were modeled on the American public school system, and they offered a curriculum that was heavily influenced by American values and culture. The goal of these schools was to educate Puerto Ricans to become loyal American citizens. However, the early American education system in Puerto Rico was met with resistance from many Puerto Ricans, who saw it as an attempt to destroy their own culture.

## **The Language Question**

One of the most contentious issues in the cultural politics of Puerto Rican education was the question of language. The United States initially tried to impose English as the sole language of instruction in schools. However, this policy was met with widespread opposition from Puerto Ricans, who argued that Spanish was their native language and that it should be the primary language of instruction in schools. In 1913, the United States Congress passed the Jones Act, which granted Puerto Ricans American citizenship and allowed Spanish to be used as the language of instruction in schools. However, the language question continued to be a source of tension throughout the period of American rule.

## **The Curriculum**

The curriculum of the American schools in Puerto Rico was also a source of controversy. The curriculum was heavily influenced by American values and culture, and it did not adequately reflect the history and culture of Puerto Rico. This led to accusations that the American education system was indoctrinating Puerto Rican students into American culture. In response to these criticisms, the Puerto Rican Department of Education

began to develop a more culturally relevant curriculum in the 1930s and 1940s. However, this curriculum was still not universally accepted, and the issue of the curriculum continued to be a source of debate throughout the period of American rule.

## **The Role of Schools in Puerto Rican Society**

Schools played a central role in the political and social development of Puerto Rico during the first half of the 20th century. They were a key site of cultural politics, as the United States sought to use education to reshape Puerto Rican identity. However, schools also played a positive role in Puerto Rican society. They provided educational opportunities for Puerto Ricans who had been denied access to education under Spanish rule. They also helped to create a sense of national identity among Puerto Ricans, who were struggling to define their place in the world after the loss of their independence.

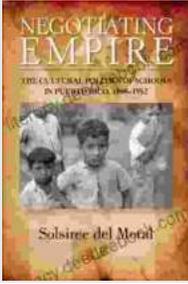
The cultural politics of schools in Puerto Rico from 1898 to 1952 were complex and contested. The United States sought to use education to transform Puerto Rican society, but its efforts were met with resistance from many Puerto Ricans. The language question, the curriculum, and the role of schools in Puerto Rican society were all sources of controversy. However, schools also played a positive role in Puerto Rican society, providing educational opportunities for Puerto Ricans and helping to create a sense of national identity.

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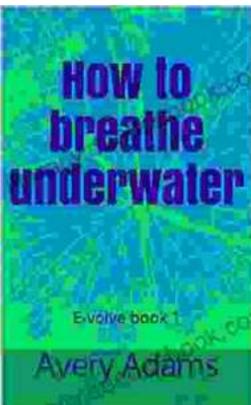


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