

**A School for Citizens, Not Just Civil Servants:
The U.S. Colonial State and the Early Years of the University of Puerto Rico, 1903-1917**

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The *Zion's Herald* struggled at first to determine what exactly Samuel McCune Lindsay, the commissioner of education of Puerto Rico since February 1902, hoped to accomplish through his latest proposal in the territory's Executive Council. "It seems to be a little incongruous," intoned the editors of the 80-year-old Methodist journal, "for anybody to propose the starting of a university for the Porto Ricans in view of the fact that so many of the 300,000 children of that island are without even common school privileges, and yet such a project has actually been launched." Noting the presence of "several hundred Porto Rican boys and girls" in universities across the United States, the editors concluded that "[t]here is a real demand for such an institution" and offered its blessing to the proposed school.¹ Within fifteen years of the editorial in the *Zion's Herald*, the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) boasted a student body of 1,257 men and women, who were distributed among the Practice School, the University High School, the Normal Department, and the Colleges of Law, Liberal Arts, Pharmacy, and Agriculture and Mechanical Arts.² The budget for FY 1917-18 amounted to just under \$147,000, which was not enough to cover needed improvements in the university's faculty and physical plant but was

¹ "University for Porto Rico," *Zion's Herald* 81 no. 12 (25 Mar. 1903), 355. A quick word or two about orthography and terminology. First, because of a mistake in the translation of the Treaty of Paris, most Americans, including the U.S. government, spelled Puerto Rico "Porto Rico" until 1932. I retain this (mis)spelling wherever it appears in my primary sources. Second, through the years, historians have used words such as "white," "upper-class," or "criollo" to describe the native-born elite of Puerto Rico. Although I use all of these terms to avoid repetition, I will try to use the word "puertorriqueño" as much as possible in deference to the fact that it was the term that Puerto Rico's professionals, merchants, and planters used in reference to themselves.

² A total of 1,257 students were enrolled in some fashion in the University of Puerto Rico in 1917. However, 70.4 per cent of the total student body were enrolled in the university's summer school, practice school, or high school, none of which awarded a bachelor's degree. See U.S. Congress, House, *War Department, Annual Reports, 1918 (in Three Volumes): Volume III, Reports of the Chief, Bureau of Insular Affairs, 1918, Governor of Porto Rico, 1918, [and] Philippine Commission, 1917*, 65th Cong., 3rd sess., 1918, H. Doc. 1432, 551, 561, and 563.

comparable to the annual budgets of contemporary U.S. institutions such as Fordham University, Boston College, and the University of South Carolina.³

Although education has constituted a major theme in the scholarship on U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico since Columbia's Teachers College published Juan José Osuna's *Education in Porto Rico* (1923), only a handful of writers have displayed any interest in the development of the University of Puerto Rico.⁴ Those historians interested in the university's early years have concentrated on either U.S. imperialism's "impact" on the UPR's institutional development or the "response" of ordinary students to the assimilationist policies of the United States. For instance, Carlos Rodríguez-Fraticelli and Pablo Navarro-Rivera both attribute the meagre condition of the university's resources and the limited size of its student body before 1917 to its strong institutional ties to the U.S. colonial state in Puerto Rico. Rodríguez-Fraticelli observes in *Education and Imperialism* (1986) that the University Board of Trustees (JSU), whose members were appointed by the governor and reported directly to the commissioner of education, refused for nearly a decade to establish a college of liberal arts. This decision reflected in large part the belief among the JSU's members that "one of the most effective means of remaking the political culture of the future Puerto Rican leadership... was by transplanting them to the United States." Meanwhile, as Navarro-Rivera explains in his 2002 history of the UPR, the perception that the

³ U.S. Congress, House, *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year Ended June 30, 1917, Volume II*, 65th Cong., 2nd sess., 1917, H. Doc. 582, 342-357.

⁴ John Joseph Osuna, *Education in Porto Rico* (New York: Published by Teachers College, Columbia University, 1923); Aida Negrón de Montilla, *La americanización de Puerto Rico y el sistema de instrucción pública, 1900-1930*, 2nd ed. (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1990); Pedro A. Cabán, *Constructing a Colonial People: Puerto Rico and the United States, 1898-1932* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997); José-Manuel Navarro, *Creating Tropical Yankees: Social Science Textbooks and U.S. Ideological Control in Puerto Rico, 1898-1908* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Solsiree del Moral, *Negotiating Empire: The Cultural Politics of Schools in Puerto Rico, 1898-1952* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013).

school was but a tool of the U.S. colonial state undermined the school's credibility as an institution of higher education and sabotaged its efforts to secure accreditation as early as 1915.⁵

Other historians, like Isabel Picó, have also explored how ordinary students responded to institutional policies, such as the introduction of English as the official language of instruction, that were designed to recast Puerto Ricans in the image of their colonial masters. Picó frames her contribution to Adalberto López and James Petras's *Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans* (1974) as an inquiry into the institutional, social, and political forces that helped shape the university student movement that took shape at the UPR in the early 1970s. She determines ultimately that, even as just a handful of students joined groups such as the Nationalist Youth to protest their homeland's colonial status, most people at the University of Puerto Rico developed a national consciousness that rejected U.S. claims of racial or cultural superiority to the people of Puerto Rico. In so doing, Picó engages with the question: how could a branch of the U.S. colonial state designed, in Lindsay's words, to train agricultural scientists, teachers, and engineers "whose culture shall not be alien and incidental as that too often is which comes from abroad, but which shall be indis severably bound up with the progress of the island, and united with our national ideals" develop into a nursery of both cultural and political forms of nationalism?⁶

This tendency to focus on either the "impact" of U.S. colonialism or the "response" of ordinary students creates at least two problems as one attempts to understand the early development of the University of Puerto Rico. First, by distinguishing sharply between the

⁵ Carlos Rodríguez-Fraticelli, *Education and Imperialism: The Puerto Rican Experience in Higher Education, 1898-1986* (New York: Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College of the City University of New York, 1986), 7. Pablo Navarro Rivera, *Universidad de Puerto Rico: De control político a crisis permanente, 1903-1952* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 2000), 154-156.

⁶ Isabel Picó, "Origins of the Puerto Rican University Student Movement Under U.S. Domination (1903-1930)," in *Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans: Studies in History and Society*, eds. Adalberto López and James Petras (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1974), 175-194; Porto Rico, Office of the Secretary, *Register of Porto Rico for 1903: Prepared and Compiled under the Direction of the Hon. Charles Hartzell, Secretary of Porto Rico, October, 1903* (San Juan: Press of Louis E. Tuzo and Company, 1903), 78.

interests of U.S. policymakers and the elite puertorriqueños who composed the university student body, it conceals the fact that both groups shared similar attitudes regarding Puerto Rico's social and economic woes at the turn of the twentieth century. As Gervasio Luis García explained fourteen years ago in his prize-winning essay in the *Journal of American History*, the 1898 invasion of Puerto Rico represented “a perfect moment of complicity between conquerors and conquered” as a shared “lack of faith in the capacity of island politicians for self-government in the near future” prompted the *criollos* to throw its arms open to the United States. High-born puertorriqueños such as sociologist Salvador Brau hoped that the island's new masters would instruct the *campesinos* in the differences between “the practices of liberty” and “unbridled licentiousness.” Although this spirit of cooperation eventually “[gave] way to shifting alliances and antagonisms based on political expediency,” one must appreciate their “shared goal” before one can understand the native-born elite's conflict with the U.S. colonial state in Puerto Rico.⁷

⁷ Gervasio Luis García, “I am the Other: Puerto Rico in the Eyes of North Americans, 1898,” *Journal of American History* 87 no. 1 (Jun. 2000): 39 and 41. U.S.-educated historians such as Eileen J. Suárez Findlay and Ileana M. Rodríguez-Silva have since considered how U.S. policymakers and elite puertorriqueños proposed complementary developmental programs for Puerto Rico. In the process, they have discussed the ways that the vision of *la gran familia puertorriqueña* or “the Great Puerto Rican Family” continues to inform nationalism in present-day Puerto Rico. See Eileen J. Suárez Findlay, *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); and Ileana M. Rodríguez-Silva, *Silencing Race: Disentangling Blackness, Colonialism, and National Identities in Puerto Rico* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Despite Findlay's and Rodríguez-Silva's substantial contributions to the historiography regarding U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico, sociologist Angel Quintero Rivera was the first to explore how the native-born elite began to imagine the island as *un gran familia* after Spain abolished slavery in the colony in 1873. Quintero Rivera attributed the metaphor's growing popularity within the local elite in the late nineteenth century to their unusual position in Puerto Rico's agrarian economy, in which native-born hacendados, despite their control over the means of production, did not benefit from the export of coffee, sugar, and other cash crops because of the interference of Spanish moneylenders who enjoyed the backing of the colonial administration. See A. G. Quintero Rivera, *Conflictos de clase y política en Puerto Rico*, 5th ed. (Río Piedras, PR: Ediciones Huracán, 1986), 23-25.

It is important to remember that, although many scholars (including myself) agree with the conclusions of Quintero Rivera, Findlay, and Rodríguez-Silva, others have wondered whether their work minimizes the baleful impact of U.S. colonialism on the history of Puerto Rico in the twentieth century. For an excellent study that focuses on the writings of four of the earliest supporters of independence for Puerto Rico—Mariano Abril, Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón, José de Diego, and Eugenio María de Hostos—to illuminate how anti-colonialism influenced the development of Puerto Rican nationalism, see Rafael Bernabe, *Respuestas al colonialismo en la política puertorriqueña, 1899-1929* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1997). Bernabe has also cooperated with César J. Ayala to produce an admirable synthesis that foregrounds the impact of global capitalism on Puerto Rico's

Second, this tendency discourages historians from engaging with the ideas and attitudes that both led Lindsay to establish the University of Puerto Rico and informed the actions of his successors over the next fifteen years. Picó and Rodríguez-Fraticelli each argue that the school's purpose was to train agricultural scientists, teachers, and other technicians who could help with the island's cultural and economic transformation—in other words, to enlist the native-born elite as the U.S.'s intermediaries in Puerto Rico.⁸ However, since 31 per cent of the Americans who worked with the UPR between 1903 and 1917 were themselves products of U.S. colleges and universities, one should also consider how their experiences in their experiences at Columbia, Wisconsin, and other mainland schools informed their thoughts and behavior.⁹ As historian Christopher P. Loss explains in *Between Citizens and the State* (2012), the early twentieth-century university emerged as one in a series of “parastates” in the United States that helped expand the federal government's administrative capacities by equipping ordinary Americans for work in different types of large bureaucratic organizations. In so doing, Loss argues, the university transformed how people understood their relationship to the federal government and their responsibilities as American citizens.¹⁰

experience as a U.S. colony. See César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

⁸ Picó, “Puerto Rican University Student Movement,” 175-176; Rodríguez-Fraticelli, 8.

⁹ In their annual reports to Congress, the commissioners of education name forty-seven Americans who contributed to the University's as trustees, deans, professors, or critic teachers in the Normal Department's practice school between 1903 and 1917. Of the 47 people mentioned by name in the reports, I could find no additional information about 23 men and women (48.9%). 7 of the people in the sample received their education at a normal school (14.9%). The remaining 17 people in the sample received degrees from Chicago College (1 person), the University of Chicago (1), Columbia University (3), Cornell University (1), Grand River College (1), the University of Halle (2), Johns Hopkins University (1), the University of Michigan (1), the University of Nebraska (1), Smith College (1), Wellesley College (1), Wesleyan University (1), the University of Wisconsin (1), and Yale University (1).

¹⁰ Christopher P. Loss, *Between Citizens and the State: The Politics of American Education in the 20th Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 2-3 and 8. For more information about the ways that Harry Pratt Judson, Charles William Eliot, and other “institutional entrepreneurs” worked to exploit their universities' “unique” position in society to bolster the administrative capacities of the American state, see Mark R. Nemecek, *Ivory Towers and Nationalist Minds: Universities, Leadership, and the Development of the American State* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006).

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Although Congress had refused to grant U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans three years before, Lindsay and his associates envisioned the University of Puerto Rico a school for “citizens,” not just “civil servants.” They expected the university to promote a rationalized vision of citizenship that maintained that, although everyone was a citizen with an obligation to contribute to his community’s well-being, he should do so in a fashion consistent with his intellectual or physical abilities. Lindsay’s successors as the commissioner of education for Puerto Rico—especially, Roland Post Falkner (1904-1907), Edwin Grant Dexter (1907-1912), and Edward M. Bainter (1912-1915)—translated this vision into policies that clashed ultimately with the ideas of elite puertorriqueños, such as José de Diego and Luis Muñoz Rivera, who maintained that the university should instead be acquainting young men with the island’s rich Spanish heritage and preparing them for careers as lawyers, doctors, and pharmacists. As a small but influential portion of the student population coalesced into a protest movement in the 1910s and ‘20s, its leaders repudiated the cultural assumptions that had influenced the commissioners of education and their lieutenants at the University of Puerto Rico. In so doing, they laid the foundations for an alternative vision of citizenship that vindicated the rights of allegedly less developed or “civilized” groups.

As U.S. policymakers discussed creating a “University of Porto Rico” in the spring of 1903, they agreed for the most part that the institution should help them address Puerto Rico’s two major problems. The first was that the bulk of the colony’s population appeared to be utterly incapable of responsible self-government. The 1899 census indicated that eighty-three per cent of Puerto Ricans scratched a living from the land and made their home in villages scattered across the island’s rugged interior. Almost eighty per cent of homes on the island lacked any

waste disposal facilities, nearly one-third of marital unions lacked the sanction of the law or the church, and, perhaps most alarmingly, less than seventeen per cent of islanders could read and write.¹¹ In a time when people in both the North and South attempted to use literacy tests to exclude or disenfranchise undesirable groups such as African Americans and immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, the high rate of illiteracy among Puerto Ricans triggered all manner of alarms.¹² Numerous observers maintained for a long time that meaningful self-government was an impossibility until the colony's inhabitants acquired the tools for formulating and expressing thoughts of their own.¹³

Samuel McCune Lindsay, Puerto Rico's commissioner of education from 1902 to 1904, expected the UPR to focus in the short term on training young men and women to become teachers in the territory's public school system. The 1899 census determined that there were only 525 public schools across the island and that 92.5 per cent of children of school age lacked access to school facilities. As historian Solsiree Del Moral explains in *Negotiating Empire* (2013), U.S. policymakers focused for the next two decades on expanding the territorial school system as rapidly as possible. Total enrollment in the island's public schools had almost quintupled from 21,873 to 95,342 students by 1910. Meanwhile, the total number of teachers force had risen from 623 to 1,623—nearly a three-fold increase in a comparatively short span of

¹¹ U.S. War Department, Office Director Census Porto Rico, *Census of Porto Rico, 1899* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1900), 43, 68, 73, and 111.

¹² Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), xxii-xxiii, 106-115, and 119-124. In the North, organizations such as the Immigration Restriction League (IRL) lobbied Congress to subject all immigrants to a literacy test to determine whether they possessed the traits that the group's patrician membership associated with citizenship. For more information on the IRL and its prolonged campaign to use a literacy test to stop the immigration of people from eastern and southern Europe, see Barbara Miller Solomon, *Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956). The disenfranchisement of African Americans in the U.S. South around the turn of the twentieth century has attracted the attention of numerous political scientists and historians through the years. For an account that has greatly influenced my thinking, see Michael Perman, *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888-1908* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

¹³ See, e.g., Roland P. Falkner, "Citizenship for the Porto Ricans," *American Political Science Review* 4 no. 2 (May 1910): 189-190.

eleven years. Recognizing that Puerto Rico could never attract enough teachers from the United States, Lindsay decided that the colony's "most immediate need" was "well trained native teachers." The Insular Normal School (INS) had been established in the fall of 1900 to satisfy the needs of the public school system. However, if the INS became the first department of a new "University of Porto Rico," the 36-year-old sociologist concluded that the school's "course and scope" could be "much enlarged" because it could then apply for federal funding under the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890.¹⁴

Puerto Rico's other major problem was that its native-born elite, although intelligent and well intentioned, lacked several of the traits that, according to U.S. policymakers such as Secretary of War Elihu Root, were essential to responsible self-government. Even as Root celebrated the elite puertorriqueños publicly as "highly educated and able men" who "show what their people are capable of becoming," he worried that they understood little about "the art of self-government" after centuries of Spanish domination. Root had received a stream of reports from his chief lieutenant on the island, Governor George W. Davis, that described how local politicians could not resist the temptation to excite "the illiterate and the irresponsible" to carry the day with stones, clubs, or other weapons when ballots or courtroom arguments argument. Puerto Rico's high rate of illiteracy and poverty represented a particularly damning indictment of the native-born elite's stewardship of the island in the minds of observers such as federal commissioner of education William Torrey Harris. As Harris proclaimed in an 1899 address to the National Education Association (NEA), any society that "allow[ed] one-half of its citizens to

¹⁴ Office Director Census Porto Rico, 72 and 281; Del Moral, 8 and 72; Office of the Secretary, *Register of Porto Rico for 1903*, 78; U.S. Congress, Senate, *Third Annual Report of the Governor of Porto Rico, Covering the Period From July 1, 1902, to June 30, 1903. Respectfully Submitted to Hon. Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States, Through John Hay, Secretary of State, By William H. Hunt, Governor of Porto Rico*. 58th Cong., 1st sess., 1903, S. Doc. 26, 278.

grow illiterate” or paid workers “only twenty cents per day” was objectively less civilized than a community in which “three-fourths of its people” were literate and earned “thirty, or forty, or fifty cents a day.”¹⁵

Lindsay imagined that the University of Puerto Rico could not only introduce the native-born elite to the best practices of American pedagogy, but also instruct them in the principles of good citizenship. Education’s “social end,” argued the former sociology professor in his 1903 report to Congress, was to equip men “to provide well for himself and family, to bring out the best that is in him in order that he may be a useful citizen.” For Lindsay, “citizenship” encompassed “a useful and honorable occupation, a cultured mind, and an attractive home life.” The commissioner of education underscored subsequently in his contribution to the *Register of Porto Rico for 1903* that the path to citizenship was not identical for everyone. Whereas the public schools worked “as rapidly as the funds allow” to teach the campesinos “to read and write,” “to know something of the elementary branches of study,” and “to understand the simpler institutions of American rule,” the University of Puerto Rico was to furnish elite puertorriqueños with “[q]uite a different sort of education.” The school was, according to Lindsay, to concentrate on “the training of leaders, of men and women, . . . whose culture shall not be alien and incidental as that too often is which comes from abroad, but which shall be indis severably bound up with the progress of the island, and united with our national ideals.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Elihu Root, *The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States: Addresses and Reports by Elihu Root*, eds. Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 164; Letter, George W. Davis to Elihu Root, 14 October 1899, Box 3, Elihu Root Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; William Torrey Harris, “An Educational Policy for Our New Possessions,” in *Journal of the Proceedings and Addresses of the Thirty-eighth Annual Meeting Held at Los Angeles, California, July 11-14, 1899*, ed. National Education Association (Chicago: Published for the Association by the University of Chicago Press, 1899), 73-75.

¹⁶ Senate, *Third Annual Report*, 266; Office of the Secretary, *Register of Porto Rico for 1903*, 78.

Lindsay's attitude toward the education of the native-born puertorriqueño elite was broadly consistent with how people in the United States imagined—and experienced—citizenship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In *Uncle Sam Wants You*, Christopher Capozzola explains that, before World War I, commentators had defined citizenship primarily in terms of a person's duties or "obligations" to his family and friends, his local community, and, more broadly, his country. As David J. Brewer explained in a 1902 series of lectures at Yale University, "We are not only born into families but also into citizenship in a nation, and so long as the relationship springing out of that birth continues there are obligations resting upon us as citizens which cannot be ignored." The 65-year-old associate justice noted that a person's obligations of citizenship might include voting responsibly in every election, obeying the law, and "striving for the betterment of the life of the nation."¹⁷ People recognized at the time that citizenship also conferred specific privileges upon the individual, but many agreed with Lindsay's friend and colleague, William F. Willoughby, that a citizen's rights consisted only of those "liberties which the State, as a matter purely of policy or expediency, determines shall be left to individual determination."¹⁸

The problem for the elite puertorriqueños was "race" shaped how many Americans conceived of the boundaries of citizenship. As political scientist Rogers M. Smith explains in his

¹⁷ Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6; David J. Brewer, *American Citizenship* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), 5, 66-67, 87, 92-93, and 109-110.

¹⁸ W. F. Willoughby, *An Introduction to the Government of Modern States* (New York: The Century Company, 1919), 16. For evidence of Willoughby's friendship with Lindsay during their time together in Puerto Rico, see Letter, William F. Willoughby to Bess Talbot Willoughby, 12 August 1902, Box 3, Folder 25, William F. Willoughby Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA (hereafter Willoughby Papers); Letter, William F. Willoughby to Bess Talbot Willoughby, 24 January 1904, Box 4, Folder 27, Willoughby Papers; Letter, William F. Willoughby to Bess Talbot Willoughby, Box 4, Folder 27, Willoughby Papers; and Letter, William F. Willoughby to Bess Talbot Willoughby, 24 August 1907, Box 4, Folder 28, Willoughby Papers.

classic 1997 analysis, *Civic Ideals*, a combination of “evolutionary theory and scientific evidence of racial capacities” led individuals as different as journalist Herbert Croly, economist John R. Commons, and educator Booker T. Washington to accept the existence of “racial hierarchies at home and abroad.” This belief inspired the emergence of “a four-part hierarchical structure of citizenship laws” that awarded different privileges to—and expected different duties from—the members of various groups based on their intellectual and physical abilities. As Justice Brewer proposed in his 1902 lectures on citizenship, the greater standing, wealth, and intelligence of “the President of Yale University” meant that his duties were necessarily more extensive and complex than “[a] member of the most savage tribe in the centre of Africa.” From this comparison the justice extrapolated the axiom: “[T]he higher the status of the two parties to any relationship the more far-reaching are the obligations which spring therefrom, and the more significant and important is the discharge of those obligations.” Unfortunately, all the evidence appeared to suggest that the people of Puerto Rico should be slotted for a lower rung on the ladder.¹⁹

As Lindsay and his associates made their plans for the University of Puerto Rico, they almost certainly did not forget that neither the island nor its population were a blank slate. A majority of the university’s students between 1903 and 1917 belonged to the island’s native-born elite whose members had long envisioned Puerto Rico as an enormous family in which the wealthy and well educated guided, cared for, and protected their less-fortunate countrymen.²⁰

¹⁹ Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 418 and 429; Brewer, 12-13.

²⁰ For instance, Del Moral explains in *Negotiating Empire* that the 1920 census discovered that most teachers belonged to households whose head was a farmer (18.9 per cent), a merchant (14.1 per cent), or a civil servant (13 per cent). See Del Moral, 75-76. It is possible for one to say that Del Moral’s statistics are broadly reflective of the student body at the University of Puerto Rico considering that students in the Normal Department composed 62.4 per cent of the school’s collegiate population as recently as 1917. See House, *Annual Reports, 1918*, 563.

The hacendado Juan de Salto, one of the protagonists in Manuel Zeno-Gandía's novel *La Charca*, embodied many of the native-born puertorriqueño elite's aspirations at the turn of the twentieth century. The child of a failed sugar grower who believes in "the need to equalize before the law all sons of the nation, all groups, all people," de Salto recognizes that Puerto Rico's peasants composed "a helpless people, powerless to lift its head and inhale the fresh air of culture, forced to submerge itself in a swamp, weighted down by the infinite burden of ignorance and disease." Resolving to tend to his workers' physical needs "with the pure affection of a father caressing the tiny heads of his offspring," the hacendado works for the day when the peasants achieve "citizenship" and become "men who could defend themselves from the whip." Historians Eileen Findlay and Ileana Rodríguez-Silva have since illuminated how this worldview conditioned the writings of respected criollos, including sociologist Salvador Brau, physician Francisco Del Valle Atilas, and politician Luis Muñoz Rivera, after Spain's 1873 decision to end African slavery in Puerto Rico. As Findlay explains in her 1999 history of sexuality and race in Ponce, Puerto Rico, the native-born elite began to use the phrase *la gran familia puertorriqueña* ("The Great Puerto Rican Family") to describe their vision of healthier, more stable, and more prosperous Puerto Rico.²¹

Not unlike Root, Lindsay, and other Progressives in the United States, the native-born elite agreed that education needed to play a critical part in any campaign to redeem or uplift Puerto Rico's workers and peasants. Zeno-Gandía, Salvador Brau, and other elite puertorriqueños shared the enthusiasm of their counterparts elsewhere in Latin America for the theories of the French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, who had first proposed in the eighteenth century that a parent could genetically transmit acquired characteristics to its offspring. Del

²¹ Manuel Zeno-Gandía, *The Pond (La Charca)*, trans. Kal Wagenheim. Introduction by Juan Flores (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999), 46-47, 49-50, and 190-191; Findlay, 54-59.

Moral explains in Lamarck's theories led the native-born elite to conclude that they could uplift their less-fortunate countrymen through the construction of a school system that instructed children in their duties as workers, parents, and spouses. This project assumed only greater importance after the end of the Spanish-American War as elite puertorriqueños realized that "the illiteracy of the Puerto Rican masses" became, in the words of Luis Muñoz Rivera, one of the more potent weapons in the arsenal of "[t]he enemies of the controlling participation of the people."²²

Not surprisingly, then, the aspirations of the native-born elite helped fuel a passion for education that encompassed large numbers of Puerto Ricans of every race and class. "The enthusiasm for education was universal," reported a former U.S. administrator at a conference near Poughkeepsie, New York, in the fall of 1904. "Children crowded the schools. Waiting lists grew to rival the number enrolled. Parents made sacrifices to purchase clothing for their children, and local authorities generally supported by intelligent co-operation the work of the central authority." Puerto Rico's largest political party, the Partido Federal (PF), prioritized education in its inaugural platform in the autumn of 1899, noting in an accompanying statement that "democratic governance depends on the aptitude of all groups" because of "the importance of reason, of mature principles, and of the abundance of knowledge." The native-born elite's faith in education's capacity to transform society impressed economist Victor Selden Clark, a member of Puerto Rico's Board of Education from 1899 to 1900. Clark informed Congress upon his return to the United States that, as early as October 1898, an assembly of prominent criollos in San Juan had called for the creation of a "modern" system complete with kindergartens,

²² Del Moral, 31-32; "Manifiesto dirigido a los unionistas por Luis Muñoz Rivera, desde Washington [Doc. Núm. 87]," *La Democracia*, 19 de julio de 1912, 3-12, in in *Puerto Rico: Cien años de lucha política*, vol. 1, t. 2, comp. Reece B. Bothwell González (Río Piedras: Editorial Universitaria, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1979), 261-262.

elementary and high schools, arts and trade schools, normal schools, professional schools, and a university “to diffuse general knowledge of science and for purposes of high culture.”²³

The reference to the university in Clark’s report to Congress appears inconsistent with the native-born elite’s educational agenda but for the fact that high-born puertorriqueños and puertorriqueñas needed to prepare for their future at the head of the Great Puerto Rican Family. Men should, as the Federales explained in an October 1899 “invitation” to “liberal leaders” across the island, “acquire knowledge of philosophy and the law, prepare tools that will promote agriculture and commerce, and provide our island with the large economic organisms that precede great scientific speculation.” Recognizing the possible contributions of upper-class women to the broader campaign of regeneration, Gabriel Ferrer, Alejandro Tapia, and other influential writers had first endorsed women’s education in the 1880s and ‘90s. A well-educated woman would, Ferrer declared in a widely-circulated 1881 essay entitled *La mujer en Puerto Rico*, be better equipped to offer their husbands support and their children guidance. The Federales continued to subscribe to this position twenty years later, promising upper-class women in the fall of 1899 a chance to “exercise the vividness of their intellect in the arts and sciences accessible to their sex that will help them to complete their august mission to act as a man’s companion...[as] he works for the redemption and happiness of the people.”²⁴

²³ M. G. Brumbaugh, “Problems in the Beginning of American Government,” in *Proceedings of the Twenty-second Annual Meeting of the Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian and Other Peoples*, ed. W. J. Rose (n.p.: Published by the Lake Mohonk Conference, 1904), 88; “Programa del Partido Federal [Doc. Núm. 45],” *Boletín Histórico del Puerto Rico*, vol. 6, 170-171, in Bothwell González, vol. 1, t. 2, 272; “Manifiesto de los dirigentes liberales invitado a la fundación del Partido Federal, 1 octubre de 1899,” in Bothwell González, vol. 1, t. 1, 268; U.S. Congress, Senate, *Education in Porto Rico*, 56th Cong., 1st sess., 1900, S. Doc. 363, 20.

²⁴ “Manifiesto de los dirigentes liberales invitado a la fundación del Partido Federal, 1 octubre de 1899,” in Bothwell González, vol. 1, t. 1, 268; Findlay, 61-63; “Manifiesto de los dirigentes liberales invitado a la fundación del Partido Federal, 1 octubre de 1899,” in Bothwell González, vol. 1, t. 1, 268-269.

The native-born elite did not expect its sons and daughters to learn about their responsibilities as the future parents of the Great Puerto Rican Family alongside the offspring of ordinary workers and peasants. As historian Fernando Picó observes in a 1983 report for the Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Puertorriqueña (CEREP), Puerto Rico's school system had historically distinguished “those who could gain access to employment in commerce, municipal bureaucracies, printing presses, and more skilled occupations” from “those who were condemned to swing an ax and a hoe, to bend under the sun of the sugar plantations, or to serve a life sentence in a humid coffee plantation.” Most people at the time assumed that the university was the elite's rightful domain—a place where the children of “the nobility and mercantile elite” might, as Rodríguez-Fraticelli explains in *Education and Imperialism*, be “trained in philosophy, theology, law, and medicine to become the civil and religious bureaucracy needed to administer the empire.” These attitudes survived the transition from Spanish to U.S. rule, as seen in the declarations of the successor of the Partido Federal, the Unión de Puerto Rico, in favor of the creation of “[a] university, for all the liberal professions,” in its 1912, 1913, and 1915 manifestos.²⁵

Considering the university's significance as a source of teachers for the territorial school system and a school of citizenship for the native-born puertorriqueño elite, Lindsay insisted that the U.S. colonial state retain control of the reins of the University of Puerto Rico. Pablo Navarro-Rivera notes that the legislation creating the university in 1903 had declared that the

²⁵ Fernando Picó, *Educación y sociedad en el Puerto Rico del siglo 19: Consideraciones en torno a la escolarización primaria y sus limitaciones* (San Juan: Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Puertorriqueña, 1983), 9, quoted in Del Moral, 33; Rodríguez-Fraticelli, 2; “Programa de la Unión de Puerto Rico: Aprobado en Mayagüez, 8 de septiembre de 1912 [Doc. Núm. 56],” in Bothwell González vol. 1, t. 1, 335; “Programa de la Unión de Puerto Rico: Presentado por el señor José de Diego y aprobado sin enmiendas, en asamblea general extraordinaria de la Unión de Puerto Rico, el 22 de noviembre de 1913 [Doc. Núm. 59],” in Bothwell-González, vol. 1, t. 1, 341-342; “Programa de la Unión de Puerto Rico [Doc. Núm. 68],” in Bothwell-González, vol. 1, t. 1, 386.

territorial commissioner of education was also the school's chancellor and head of the Board of Trustees. However, after Meyer Bloomfield, the director of the Vocation Bureau of Boston, visited Puerto Rico on the U.S. government's behalf in 1911, he suggested "[the] university be wholly separated from the school system" and its direction entrusted to "a big man who will see a life-work in creating and developing a Porto Rican university." In response, Lindsay denied that the commissioner of education was "overburdened by his duties as Chancellor of the University." Reminding his audience that the UPR would remain for a long time "a training school for teachers for the public schools," he observed that Puerto Rico could always ease the burdens of the commissioner of education "by making some administrative readjustment without destroying the unity of the public system."²⁶

Defining the UPR's program of study in greater detail became the responsibility of Lindsay's successors as commissioner of education after he returned to his post at the University of Pennsylvania in the summer of 1904. In so doing, they folded their ideas and attitudes into the institutional fabric of the University of Puerto Rico. For instance, Roland Post Falkner and Edwin Grant Dexter laid greater emphasis than their predecessor on the use of English throughout the territory's school system, including the University of Puerto Rico. The Normal Department's *Bulletin* for AY 1909-10 illuminates the extent of English instruction at the UPR during Dexter's time as commissioner of education. The university required students in "the Normal" to take four years of courses in composition and rhetoric, conversation, literary

²⁶ *Leyes y Resoluciones*, Primera Sesión de Segunda Asamblea Legislativa de Puerto Rico, 1903, 97, quoted in Navarro-Rivera, 20; Meyer Bloomfield, "Report of Visit to Porto Rico," 1912, file 451/85, Entry 5A, Record Group 350, Bureau of Insular Affairs Papers, National Archives, College Park, MD (hereafter Bureau of Insular Affairs Papers); Meyer Bloomfield, *A Study of Certain Social, Educational, and Industrial Problems in Porto Rico: Prepared at the request of Hon. Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, and Hon. George R. Colton, Governor of Porto Rico, By Meyer Bloomfield, Director of the Vocation Bureau of Boston, With an Introduction by Dr. Samuel McCune Lindsay of Columbia University, Former Commissioner of Education for Porto Rico* (n.p., 1912), file 451/85½, Entry 5A, Bureau of Insular Affairs Papers.

criticism, and English and American literature. These courses' reading lists had a distinctly northeastern flavor as students received healthy doses of Hawthorne, Longfellow, and Webster in addition to the obligatory selections of Chaucer, Dickens, and Shakespeare.²⁷

It seems unusual that the coursework at the University of Puerto Rico should attach great importance to the classic texts of American and English literature. Even as the *Bulletin* claimed that the department's "sole purpose" was to prepare students for their future as teachers in Puerto Rico's public schools, Falkner suggested in a contemporary essay in *The Forum* that this curriculum served another, equally valuable purpose. Since relations between Puerto Rico and the U.S. were "destined to grow more and more intimate," it was "highly desirable that the educated classes should use both languages with equal facility." Falkner rejected the notion that the United States might assimilate the people of Puerto Rico, but he expected the UPR through its emphasis on English to help promote a spirit of "mutual respect" and "forbearance" between "the two races."²⁸

As policymakers contemplated the future of Puerto Rico as a U.S. territory, they expected the island to remain a predominantly agrarian society. This assumption informed how Lindsay and his successors organized the curriculum of public schools across the island. As Arthur D. Dean, an expert with Puerto Rico's Department of Education, remarked in an early report for Lindsay, "If the majority of children in Porto Rico are to earn their living by their hands, is it not the duty of the educational system to give to them such training as will fit them to become skilled in whatever department of manual labor they may engage [in] and make them more productive

²⁷ U.S. Congress, House, *War Department, Annual Reports, 1911 (in Four Volumes): Volume IV, Reports of the Chief, Bureau of Insular Affairs, Philippine Commission, Governor of Porto Rico, [and] Acts of the Philippine Legislature*, 62nd Cong., 2nd sess., 1912, H. Doc. 116, 176.

²⁸ University of Porto Rico, *Bulletin of the Normal Department. Rio Piedras, Porto Rico, June 1909* (San Juan, PR: Bureau of Printing and Supplies, 1909), 25-30, file 20429, Entry 5A, Bureau of Insular Affairs Papers; Roland P. Falkner, "The English Language in Porto Rico," *The Forum*, March 1909, 206-207.

members of society?” Consequently, as “the Normal” indicated in its *Bulletin* in 1909, the university made a concerted effort to integrate subjects such as manual training and domestic science into its program of study to equip its students “to teach something of this nature in the public schools.” Edwin Grant Dexter attached particular importance to the integration of manual training and domestic science into the curriculum for the entire school system, including the University of Puerto Rico, listing it among his five objectives as commissioner of education in his 1911 report to Congress.²⁹

Although elite puertorriqueños maintained that the University of Puerto Rico should focus its resources on furnishing their children a liberal education, they were not necessarily opposed to the incorporation of more practical subjects like Loreta Boies’s course in domestic science that might advance their broader developmental program. The theorists of the Great Puerto Rican Family promised high-born women the chance to hone their minds and engage with the broader world, but they should, as the essayist Gabriel Ferrer urged in his early defense of women’s rights, pursue a “complete unity of will, thoughts, and aspirations” with their husbands. Pollster F. R. Morse discovered that, into the late 1920s, nearly one-third of female university students (compared to 67 per cent of male students) in his sample believed that women should stop working after marriage. It should be no surprise, then, that domestic science quickly developed from a class of forty students into “one of the most popular, as well as one of the most helpful, given in the [University of Puerto Rico’s] course of study.” By 1911, domestic science had become so popular that the JSU decided, first, to close the class to freshmen and,

²⁹ Arthur D. Dean, “Industrial School Work. Special Report on Plans for the Organization of Industrial Schools in Porto Rico,” in Senate, *Third Annual Report*, 266; University of Porto Rico, *Normal Department*, 43; House, *Annual Reports, 1911*, 176.

second, to hire a second instructor to divide the (still considerable) workload with Boies. If elite puertorriqueños such as Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón, the future founder of the Partido de la Independencia, were suspicious about domestic science's popularity or prominence in the University, it did not stop them from enrolling their daughters there.³⁰

In contrast, the native-born elite proved much more resistant to the introduction of courses in manual training during the commissionerships of Edwin Grant Dexter and Edward M. Bainter. After manual training became part of the university curriculum, male students avoided as much as they could taking classes in basketry, metalwork, and other handicrafts that, in Dexter's words, "emphasize[d] the use of native materials for the economic needs of the people." Bainter recognized the relationship between the unpopularity of manual-training courses and the native-born elite's assumptions about the purpose of a university education. In his 1912 report to Congress, he noted that male students dodged manual-training courses because most Puerto Ricans expected their sons to go to university to become doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, or teachers. Lindsay had encountered similar difficulties when he tried to introduce manual training into Puerto Rico's elementary schools. "Because in the manual training school the child learns to use carpenters' tools it does not necessarily follow that he is to be a carpenter," he observed at the time gesturing at the anxieties that fueled the elite puertorriqueños' resistance. "[O]r because a girl learns the value of foods and their preparation that she must therefore be a cook."³¹

³⁰ Gabriel Ferrer, *La mujer en Puerto Rico: Sus necesidades presentes y los medios más fáciles y adecuados para mejorar su porvenir* (Puerto Rico: Imprente de "El Agente," 1881), 53, quoted in Findlay, 62; Picó, "Puerto Rican University Student Movement," 189-192; U.S. Congress, House, *War Department, Annual Reports, 1909 (in Nine Volumes): Volume X, Report of the Governor of Porto Rico*, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., 1909, H. Doc. 103, 274; U.S. Congress, House, *War Department, Annual Reports, 1910 (in Four Volumes): Volume IV, Reports of the Chief, Bureau of Insular Affairs, Philippine Commission, Acts of the Philippine Legislature [and] Report of the Governor of Porto Rico*, 61st Cong., 3rd sess., 1911, H. Doc. 1002, 187; University of Porto Rico, *Normal Department*, 47.

³¹ House, *Annual Reports, 1911*, 247; House, *Annual Reports, 1912*, 224; Senate, *Third Annual Report*, 265.

Local politicians such as Luis Muñoz Rivera and José de Diego, the Speaker of the House of Delegates from 1904 to 1917, expressed their dissatisfaction with Dexter's and Bainter's leadership of the university and, more broadly, the territorial school system. Muñoz, for instance, lambasted the direction of educational policy in Puerto Rico in a 1912 open letter from Washington to his supporters on the island. Pledging that the Unión de Puerto Rico "[would] take whatever steps necessary in their efforts to have enough schools" for the island's residents, he called for the creation of "a University in more than name, which is funded by the country and offers the youth, at the moment, complete faculties of medicine, law, pharmacy, and engineering in its various applications." Bainter and Diego almost got into a fistfight during one meeting of the JSU after the Commissioner of Education thwarted the Speaker's efforts to secure the appointment of a political ally as a dean at the UPR.³²

However, the students of the University of Puerto Rico proved very reluctant for several reasons to mount any organized resistance to the actions of officials such as Dexter and Bainter. First, and probably most immediately, they understood that, in an export-oriented agrarian economy defined by low wages and high unemployment, a university education represented a rare pathway to social independence and economic security. Joining in a protest or writing a subversive poem could significantly hurt their prospects for finding a job with the territorial school system after graduation. Second, the students were not voiceless even before the appearance of groups such as the Nationalist Youth in the 1910s and '20s. Muñoz, Diego, and other interested Unionistas were shielded from direct retaliation by university administrators, and they were often willing for any number of reasons to air student grievances in *La Democracia* or

³² "Manifiesto dirigido a los unionistas por Luis Muñoz Rivera, desde Washington," in Bothwell González, vol. 1, t. 2, 261-262; "Carta de Luis Muñoz Rivera a José de Diego sobre la política del Partido Unión de Puerto Rico, 25 de julio de 1913 [Doc. Núm. 90]," in Bothwell González, vol. 1, t. 2, 272n1.

even on the floor of the House of Delegates.³³ Lastly, as Picó discusses in her essay on the early twentieth-century student movement in Puerto Rico, only “a small sector of the university student body” appeared to develop “a critical conscience,” let alone embrace “a dissident political position,” in response to U.S. activities on the island. The anemic quality of student activism at the UPR likely reflected the continued similarities in the developmental programs of elite puertorriqueños and U.S. policymakers, which probably convinced many students through the years that they could serve both “Pancho Ibero” and “Uncle Sam.”³⁴

³³ Luis Muñoz Rivera and José de Diego criticized the University of Puerto Rico on the floor of the House of Delegates particularly after the appointment of Edward M. Bainter, the Missouri-born former principal of Kansas City’s Central High School, as commissioner of education in July 1912. See “President Nominates Two,” *The Washington Post*, 9 April 1912, 4; Negrón de Montilla, 148-149; “Carta de Luis Muñoz Rivera a José de Diego sobre la política del Partido Unión de Puerto Rico, 25 de julio de 1913,” in Bothwell González, vol. 1, t. 2, 272.

³⁴ Picó, “Puerto Rican University Student Movement,” 177-178; Solsiree Del Moral, “Negotiating Colonialism: ‘Race,’ Class, and Education in Early Twentieth-Century Puerto Rico,” in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, eds. Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco Scarano (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 135-144.