

## HEQA - Lisa Jarvinen

[00:00:00] **Jack Schneider:** Welcome to *HEQ&A*, the podcast of the *History of Education Quarterly*. I'm your host, *HEQ* co-editor Jack Schneider. Every few weeks, we'll dive into recent work from the journal, asking authors how their projects challenge or extend what we know about a topic, exploring what's interesting and surprising about it, and then taking a step back to consider broader implications. In the second half of the show, we turn our sights to teaching. So, if you're an educator, make sure to stick around until the end. And now let's hear from one of our authors.

[00:00:50] **Lisa Jarvinen:** I am Lisa Jarvinen and I'm an Associate Professor of History and Associate Dean in the School of Arts and Sciences at LaSalle University in Philadelphia. I am the author of "The School Question in an Imperial Context: Education and Religion During and Following the Occupations of Cuba and Puerto Rico."

[00:01:10] The school question refers to a debate within the United States, particularly in the 19th century, over the relationship between schooling, religion, and the state. It's primarily between a Protestant majority, majority, and a Catholic minority over the legitimacy of religious instruction in public schools. Towards the end of the century there's, uh, fairly fragile consensus that publicly funded schools will be secular and religious schooling must be privately funded, but you can have parochial schools. I say it's a fragile consensus because, as we know, um, these are issues that continue to be debated to this day. In the article itself I argue that in the aftermath of 1898, when the United States receives as possessions transferred from Spain, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other insular territories, um, elsewhere, the occupiers seek to reform education on the islands. And my argument is that they're influenced by this, uh, the school question debate that had been going on in the United States, that it's going to shape how they attempt to reform and, and, and implement totally new systems of public education in both Cuba and Puerto Rico.

[00:02:25] But of course, these are majority Catholic countries. Um, and when there is an imposition of a secular system of public education and along with it an influx of many, many Protestant missionary groups, quite a few of whom found schools as well-- private schools-- this provokes a Catholic response in Cuba and Puerto Rico. And so the argument is that the school question reappears, in a context of US imperialism and for Cuban and Puerto Rican nationalists, questions of religious and education become quite divisive for this reason, or they become additionally divisive for this reason.

[00:03:06] In many ways, uh, the work that I do in this article compliments and extends what are already common themes in the historiography. It's well-known that the occupations of Cuba and Puerto Rico are seeking to Americanize, through education, as part of an Imperial project. Um, and historians have been interested in how these public education systems were explicitly modeled on those of the United States. And another topic of interest has been of course, the arrival of numerous Protestant missionary groups and the schools that they founded.

[00:03:38] But what I discovered was that considerably less attention has been paid to the development of Catholic schooling in the wake of these occupations. And what we see, particularly in Cuba, also in Puerto Rico, although not to the same extent is a significant expansion of, of Catholic school systems-- and this is not nearly as well reflected in the historiography. Um, in Puerto Rico, the

Catholic schools compete with the Protestant private schools. They don't quite surpass them; in Cuba they do, in fact, surpass the Protestant private schools that are founded in the wake of the occupation.

[00:04:17] I found this very surprising because the US occupations are so identified with Protestantism. It's fairly well understood that when the United States went to war in 1898, that, that quite a few Protestant Americans tended to frame that as providentialist, you know, seeing a kind of hand of God in, in the, in the fact that, um, they were going to save, uh, Cuba, um, from Catholic Spain. That's sort of how they framed it. And during the occupations themselves, in both the case, Cuba and Puerto Rico, there doesn't seem to be too much conflict with the Catholic Church itself, especially compared with what happens in the Philippines, where the Catholic Church was historically a very, very strong institution. And there's real conflict there.

[00:05:05] Especially for Cuba, the historiography tends to insist that the Catholic Church had always been, and that's accurate during the colonial period about the Cuban Catholic Church had been relatively weak compared to elsewhere in Latin America. But the historiography intends to insist that the Cuban Catholic Church remains weak in the, in the period of the first Republic.

[00:05:26] And one thing that I'm suggesting, and that I think is interesting and surprising is that with the growth of Catholic schooling in the post-independence period and an associated growth of Catholic social organizations, this challenges in certain ways, the notion of a weak Cuban church. And it certainly helps to explain what we see arising by the 1920s and becoming very intense by the forties and fifties, really, um, serious conflicts over religion and education in Cuba. And that those will persist into the early years of the Cuban revolution. So one thing I suggest is that Cuban Catholicism changes as a result of the development of this successful Catholic school system. And another piece of evidence that, you know, that supports that is that by the 1950s, you see the opening of two new Catholic universities in Cuba.

[00:06:16] The case of Puerto Rico is a little bit different, um, and the primary reason for that is because, you know, the occupiers never leave. It becomes a civil government rather than a military occupation, but Puerto Rico remains associated with the United States and doesn't gain its independence in the way that Cuba had. Um, and the Catholic hierarchy [unclear] from the occupation on will be led by US American bishops who are indeed Americanizers, and yet they frequently ally with groups in Puerto Rico that are seeking to defend Catholicism. Although those tend to be somewhat conservative alliances, but you find surprising cases like that of Pedro Albizu Campos who becomes the leader of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party and who could be described as, as a radical nationalist, and he's insisting on CA on Catholicism as being crucial to Puerto Rican identity and in opposition to what he sees as a, as an ongoing occupation of Puerto Rico, um, by the United States.

[00:07:16] More broadly, I see this as a conflict that's part of what was going on in the Americas. Also in, in Europe, in an era when liberalism, you know, classical liberalism is the dominant ideology and political liberals in Europe and in the Americas, generally speaking, um, were seeking to limit or eliminate the influence of religion and particularly so in, in Catholic countries where they're um, much more concerned about, you know, disestablishing the church and that leads to a lot of political conflicts, but certainly education is a particular area of contention because liberals deeply believed in the power of education to make people equal individual citizens.

[00:08:01] Um, and so one place, another place where we see this, you know, it's the example that I mentioned in the article in France that was home to the de LaSalle brothers, which was the country's largest teaching congregation, they end up going to Cuba in 1905 because France had outlawed uh, religious schools when it's going through its own version of the school question. Um, and of course, we're also going to see conflicts over the role of the church in education during the Mexican Revolution or the Spanish Civil War, when it's, when these conflicts can not be resolved within the government and they become resolved through other means, you know, through violence. So these are fairly intense church-state conflicts, and they're very much part and parcel of tensions of modernization. In Western countries. So that's where I would situate this work on, on what's happening during the occupations and afterwards in Cuba and Puerto Rico.

[00:08:56] **Jack Schneider:** The second half of the show is dedicated to thinking about teaching. We ask authors to put on their guest lecturer hats and take students into the weeds. What should they pay attention to, methodologically speaking? What else should they be reading if they want to take a deep dive into the historiography? And where are there opportunities for further research?

[00:09:18] **Lisa Jarvinen:** In my case, I think the first thing that you have to notice is that there's a question of sources and where it is that you're going to go to try to understand the period. Uh, most obviously you need to use sources in both Spanish and English. That's absolutely fundamental, but it's also true that you need to look askance at the sources themselves and where they come from and who was producing them. So for instance, um, the, the records of the United States government, the occupation records that are available at the National Archives, it's a wonderful resource. Um, they're most interested in the transformation of the public school systems, because that was their major goal. They aren't really looking at whether or not, you know, private Catholic schools are also being founded because that's not what they're interested in.

[00:10:00] And similarly, I think the American press mostly takes its cues from those kinds of developments. And it's also the case that Protestant missionary groups they're really, really vocal and public about the work that they're doing and Cuba and Puerto Rico, what they're trying to achieve, trying to raise funding for it. Uh, you know, to promote the successes that they've had in converting people and attracting people. Um, and it's really not in their interest to sort of focus on what's happening in terms of Catholic schooling, so they don't-- so those are not good places to find out about that. You need to go to Catholic publications to get a better sense of what is happening. Later in Cuba, for instance, and to some extent in Puerto Rico, in newspapers, um, you know, actually on the islands, you're going to see a little more coverage of this kind of religious debate about the role of religion in education, but for, uh, detailed information, you definitely need the Catholic publications. And I will say it's not easy.

[00:10:58] For the case of Cuban particular-- in the case of Puerto Rico, it's more documented by the government-- but for the case of Cuba, it's not easy to find counts of schools, numbers of students enrolled at them, graduation rates, it's-- they exist, but it's, you have to do a lot of looking and use a lot of disparate sources. So sources are key in terms of methodology, but also you need to step back and you need to consider one's understanding of United States imperialism. You know, we all know that Americanization was a major aim of the US Imperial project, um, and that this involves exporting dominant mainstream values. And so it's easy to sort of leap to those conclusions about the extent to which say the occupation governments were going to support Protestant and the

Protestant missionaries uh, what I saw is they really, really do and much more so in the case of Puerto Rico, whereas in Cuba, they're actually quite careful to be very even handed and not to, you know, antagonize the Catholic Church and Protestant-- US Protestant-- missionaries, actually, don't appreciate that about the American occupation in Cuba.

[00:12:02] And the other part of that though, is that the United States of course, is also a pluralistic society, and as we know that we constantly have struggles over social, cultural, and political values. Um, and the school question wasn't resolved here either. So of course, when the US goes abroad with Americanizing aims, uh, whether it's the military, the government, NGOs, you know whatever kind of group they're always going to bring some of that conflict with them. They're never going to be completely consistent in how they approach Americanization and domestic differences are going to play out transnationally, whether that's over religion, education, civil rights, women's issues, et cetera.

[00:12:44] There's a great deal of interesting historiography around these topics, but you do have to look at a few different fields. One that really sparked my interest and changed the way I was framing my research in, into the occupation governments and their education policy was Stephen Green's book on the school question. It just looks at, um, the United States it's called *The Bible: The School and The Constitution*, but it illuminates what that school question meant both socially, but also, um, in legal terms. Another book that, that made me think about this relationship between US Protestants and Catholics, and then again, how that would play out during the occupations, um, was the Elizabeth Fenton's book titled *Religious Liberties*. And it's about anti-Catholicism in the context of US liberalism.

[00:13:33] On the US occupations, of course, A.J. Angelo's book *Empire in Education* is a wonderful introduction. It's a broad overview really of how the United States has made remaking education systems in other countries, a central feature of its international relations.

[00:13:50] On Puerto Rico, Solsiree del Moral's book, *Negotiating Empire: The Cultural Politics of Schools in Puerto Rico* is wonderful. On the religious question in Puerto Rico, there are multiple authors, but I would say historian Samuel Silva Gotay multiple includes many, many references to key primary sources. On Protestantism in Cuba and Protestant schooling, there are several book-length works.[unclear].

[00:14:16] Writing from, from on the island and from the United States, James Bear and Jason Yuremenko. On the topic of Catholic schooling in early Republican Cuba, there's less published, um, but there's a really wonderful recent doctoral dissertation on Catholic schools in Havana by Georgia [unclear].

[00:14:38] I think there are several opportunities for further research on this topic. One would be something that I start on here, but it is not a comprehensive investigation by any means. And that is different visions of nationalism and how those are cultivated in public schools versus private, parochial schools, you know, in this context of US imperialism. Or Neo imperialism, that's certainly a topic that could be further explored. Um, and I think the most obvious thing to do would be to compare what happened in the Philippines with what happens in Cuba and Puerto Rico, as far as religion and education, uh, there's work on both of those topics, but, but not sort of directly

comparing it and bringing those cases together and thinking about the transnational circulation of ideas and individuals and how they were mutually influencing each other.

[00:15:32] Um, and finally something I alluded to a little bit earlier, specifically for Cuba, you know, the effect that the very successful establishment of a strong school, a strong network of Catholic schools, what this, what effect this had on the practice of Catholicism during the first Republic? Um, I think that's an important topic and certainly under explored.

[00:16:01] **Jack Schneider:** Check out *History of Education Quarterly* online. The journal is published by Cambridge University Press and it's carried by most academic libraries. You should also be sure to follow *HEQ* Twitter handle: @histedquarterly, which regularly sends out free read-only versions of articles, and the show's Twitter handle @HEQandA. And don't forget, subscribe to the show so you don't miss forthcoming episodes. We're available on iTunes, Stitcher, and wherever you get your podcasts. HEQ&A is produced at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Our producer is Jennifer Berkshire and our theme music is by Ryan Shaw. I'm Jack Schneider. Thanks for joining us.