

Exposing a “Picture of Neglect and Antagonism:” Manuel’s de facto Texas Center on Mexican American Education

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Late in 1929, two days of celebrations dedicated a new social science research building on the University of Chicago campus. These events, as described by one scholar, were a “love feast of university administrators, national and international social scientists and foundation officials.” The erection of this building, with room after room for measuring devices but no space for books, represented the height of self-homage for “service intellectuals.” These objectivists, who formed the core of the American social science enterprise, saw Truth and Beauty in accumulated facts, filled tome after tome with non-normative notions of “what is.” Many saw themselves as supreme Progressives: in truth lay salvation.¹

Around the time of the building dedication in Chicago and one and a half days railroad journey south-southwest of the Windy City, a thorough “service intellectual” in Austin, Texas, was experiencing a professional crisis of faith. Herschel Thurman Manuel, a relative newcomer to the Lone Star state and an experienced social science objectivist earlier trained at the University of Chicago, recently had undertaken the research of Mexican American education in Texas. His state-wide travel in the collection of evidence strained to the breaking point his long-held belief in the American ideal of the autonomous individual, “The Master of (Their) Fate.” He fumed with moral indignation at the lengths to which many other Anglo Texans went to deny Mexican-American children and youth “proper” education; the situation constituted a “picture of neglect and antagonism.” This large-scale research endeavor profoundly altered him as a scholar and a professional. In his report, *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas*, Manuel made a turn toward “purposivism;” he wound up “transcending the ‘what is’ to reach toward ‘what could or should be.’”² This heightened sense of purpose guided and sustained Manuel’s personal passion toward improved schooling for Mexican American children and youth for more than forty-five years. Similarly, it propelled Manuel to launch a de facto center on Mexican American education at the University of Texas at Austin.

Herschel T. Manuel: Psychologist as Purposivist Social Scientist

Three institutions shared the education of Manuel (1887-1976).³ He spent two years at the University of Chicago studying with Charles Judd, Frank Freeman, and three celebrated professors in the Chicago School of Sociology. He earned an M.A. degree (educational psychology) in 1914 and garnered credits toward his doctoral degree during a second year. At Judd’s suggestion, he spent the next year at Clark University taking coursework from G. Stanley Hall, Edmund Sanford, and Samuel W. Fernberger. He turned from Hall, and his Clark colleagues, to Guy Whipple and William C. Bagley at the University of Illinois from which he earned his Ph.D. degree with an educational psychology major in 1917. Whipple, however, could not attend Manuel’s dissertation defense; he was off to Vineland, NJ, to help confer on the new

Alpha and Beta Tests for the U.S. Army’s use.⁴

Like Whipple, Manuel soon was called to the service of his country. Dissimilar from his mentor, however, Manuel served in uniform; he was among the first dozen officers commissioned in the U.S. Army’s Sanitation Corp to test army recruits. At the conclusion of his two years spent as a testing officer, the last few months under the command of Benjamin Pittenger, his future dean of Education at the University of Texas, he turned to Gunnison, CO., and a position at Western State College. At that small but rapidly growing institution, he became Colorado’s “Western Slope” testing expert. By 1925, however, Manuel sought a larger platform from which to impart “the science and art of human relations.” He was distressed in particular with the plight of “innocent victims of the new racial and religious prejudice.”⁵ Thus, he quickly accepted an invitation to join the faculty at the University of Texas. Soon after arriving in Austin, Texas, he began the research on Mexican American education which impressively impacted his career. Concomitantly, he institutionalized this personal passion to encompass the work of myriad graduate students and some faculty at the University.

The UT De facto Center on Mexican American Education

Predictably, as a professor at the University of Texas, Manuel’s first step in the institutionalization of his personal mission to improve Mexican American education was to offer a course on the subject. He regularly offered this graduate seminar, titled “Education of the Spanish-Speaking Child,” each summer throughout the decade of the 1930s. Impressively, especially during those Depression-era years, the course “made” each summer. That is, its enrollment matched or exceeded the number of students that the University required to offer a course. This achievement was no minor feat; more often than not, newly initiated courses failed to attract enough students to be offered. Manuel’s summer course, was never in peril, but it never drew a large following. Nonetheless, twenty to twenty-five graduate students routinely enrolled in his summer seminar. An interesting aspect of this course’s history was that it attracted similar numbers of male and female students, likely satisfying his published desire to reach “superintendents, principals, and teachers.”⁶

Manuel offered the course in the summer out of necessity, pragmatism, or benign subterfuge. From 1928 to his retirement in 1958, Manuel only taught four courses each academic year, two in the fall and another two in the spring semesters. He was under “contract,” moreover, to teach courses on intelligence testing. Therefore, he probably had little or no leeway on course offerings during the academic year. However, during summer sessions, Manuel served as departmental chair during one of the two terms, and, likely, enjoyed increased personal prerogatives. Additionally, during the summer, he could position his course as a “general” offering (not defined narrowly as educational psychology) and, thus,

it could appeal to teachers and administrators who came to the University during summers in pursuit of a Master's degree. More importantly, perhaps, his offering of the course during the summer masked it from intra-college scrutiny over perceived relevancy or scientific versus practical integrity.⁷

No syllabus for Manuel's course survives, but *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children* surely served as his prescribed course textbook. Routinely, in the process of writing a book, academic authors use their courses as forums in which to explore issues developed in their books. However, in this case, Manuel assuredly utilized his book as the jump-off point for his and his student's forum on the subject. The book represented Manuel's current thinking on the subject complete with a list of questions to guide "further work."⁸

Manuel's establishment of a scholarly forum on Mexican American education at the University of Texas remains a remarkable achievement. Impressively, no other southwestern university of the times is known to have hosted such a reflective exploration of the full range of issues relating to the education of Mexican American pupils.⁹ Only one other scholar, Loyd Tireman at the University of New Mexico, shared Manuel's wide lens on the topic. However, three particular characteristics of Tireman's teaching and thinking on the subject distinguish Manuel's efforts. Foremost, Tireman's endeavors focused on the unique aspects of New Mexican Hispano life. Also, Tireman's paternalistic outlook on these non-Anglo "others" severely limited his vision. The study of Hispano education occurred only at Tireman's experimental school for children; therefore, his site of study can be describe more realistically as a bustling laboratory, not as a reflective forum for graduate students who would carry the ideas from the University to the state's schools.¹⁰

A second factor also seems particularly significant. At least a decade before any other education scholar offered such a course, Manuel effectively established through this offering a "safe harbor" for those interested in the explication of the pervasive racial prejudices that underpinned the education of Mexican American children and youth. Evidence for this explanation remains inferential, but it is solid. However, Manuel's apparent moral resolve to make inroads against Anglo bigotry certainly supports this likelihood. (Jackson Davis, in a GEB inter-office memo, declared that "Manuel's interest is...full of moral earnestness to do something about the problem."¹¹) Additionally, several of Manuel's graduate students, following the nascent trend in social psychology, undertook "studies of prejudice" for their theses. Likely, the forum represented by the summer course served as the site of deliberation over these and other socially sensitive topics.¹²

However valuable Manuel's university course offering, it was but one part of a larger undertaking. The course spawned a de facto research center within both faculty members and graduate students undertook an impressive array of research projects on issues relating to the education of Mexican American children and youth.

Many graduate students in education at the University of Texas from the late 1920s until well past World War II chose Mexican American education for their Master's thesis topic. In fact, no fewer than sixty-three Master's degree recipients wrote on this topic during the twenty year interval between Manuel's arrival on

the university campus and the end of World War II.¹³ All bore Herschel Manuel's imprimatur. For twenty-three of these student research reports, Manuel served as the first reader and advisor. The busy Manuel served as a second or third reader for 26 of the remaining theses in this group. Even for those students with whom Manuel was unable to work directly, they used his scholarship to underpin their own. Unfortunately, earlier observers have missed entirely their ties to Manuel. The research output from Manuel's de facto research center on Mexican American education remains impressive and unique among southwestern universities of the period. Significantly, for example, the 63 UT theses overwhelms the output of the University of Southern California which had the second highest number of theses (28) written on Mexican American education. In fact, as many theses were written on the topic at the University of Texas than at all other southwestern universities combined.¹⁴ Clearly, Manuel's de facto research center represented the largest and most productive university "think tank" of its time on issues surrounding the schooling of Mexican American children and youth. Significantly, all of this research was accomplished with no external funding except for Manuel's initial research subvention and no overt promotion. Word-of-mouth publicity, as usual, attracted both the faithful and the curious.

A counter-example illuminates in another way the impressive uniqueness of Manuel's de facto research center. During World War I, Bird T. Baldwin established a "science of the child" at the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station at the University of Iowa. The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund liberally supported this facility throughout its existence. Baldwin himself wrote 82 of the 161 total research reports credited to this endeavor. Thus, other faculty members or graduate student researchers wrote the remaining 79 titles. Presumably the Fund's support allowed for ample recruitment of graduate students.¹⁵ Manuel's de facto research center, on the other hand, with no sustaining financial support and no inducement for graduate students except a shared interest in Mexican American education, produced nearly the same number of completed research projects as did students and faculty of the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station less that of its director. This comparison amplifies Manuel's leadership in the evolving research on Mexican American education.

The studies conducted under Manuel's supervision and/or leadership include several attributed to Latino graduate students. The ironic nature of ascertaining the identification of Latino students who worked with him notwithstanding, Manuel's mentoring of Latinos remains an important characteristic of the de facto research center that he founded. Perhaps, students such as Aurora Gonzales, Arcadia Hernandez, and Arnulfo Martinez would not have entertained the opportunity to attend a major university, certainly the principal university in Texas, for an advanced degree had Manuel not been on the faculty. Certainly, George I. Sánchez, who became the "leading light" among Mexican American educators, came to the University of Texas as a graduate student in 1930 specifically because of Manuel's prominence in the new study of Mexican American education. Moreover, Sánchez returned to the University of Texas in 1940 and subsequently assumed from Manuel the leadership of the de facto center on Mexican American Education.¹⁶

Conclusion

Even after his successful encouragement of the University of Texas to employ his former student Sánchez, Manuel continued to toil in other ways for the improvement of Mexican American education. For example, he continued his advocacy through professional and public forums. This work included using his prominent voice to support the “Great Society”-inspired Bilingual education legislation during the 1960s. His construction and regular revision of the Inter-American Parallel Test Series until long after his official retirement in 1958 constituted a near-half century effort to improve the testing of Latino pupils. In 1965, he wrote a follow up monograph to his earlier path-breaking 1930 book. Both volumes were among the earliest books published on Mexican American education in the United States.¹⁷ Quite possibly, Manuel’s establishment of a de facto center on Mexican American education remains his greatest legacy. In a time and region inhospitable to his research, he fostered the human deliberation, study, and research of a vexing social problem. Especially important, George I. Sánchez, his former student, joined Manuel at UT. The two men spent the remainder of their careers in pursuit of their shared goals. Without doubt, Herschel T. Manuel left an impressive and enduring imprimatur on the education of Mexican American children and youth.

End Notes

1. Mark C. Smith, *Social Science in the Crucible: The American Debate Over Objectivity and Purpose, 1918-1941* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994), particularly Chapter 1- “American Social Science: Moralism and the Scientific Method” (13-48). Quotation from pp. 28-29.
2. *Austin* (Austin: Austin Chamber of Commerce, 1924?), np. Herschel T. Manuel, *The Master of My Own Fate: A Discussion of Personality and Behavior with an Emphasis on Personal Direction* (New York: The Century Co., 1929). Idem, *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas* (Austin: The Fund for Research in Social Sciences at the University of Texas, 1930). Smith, *Social Science in the Crucible*, 34. Manuel’s *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas* became a routine source in the academic literature on the Mexican American student for, at least, two decades. However, due to the long absence of a scholarly journal that covers Southwestern education, Manuel’s path-breaking work largely resides in the dust-covered graduate theses and dissertations from that era. Fortunately, the emerging scholarship in Latino educational history has renewed interest in Manuel’s work. For a further elaboration of Manuel’s life and career, see Matthew D. Davis, “Herschel T. Manuel: ‘The Doyen of Mexican American Education’” (Ph.D. Diss., The University of Texas, 2000).
3. Manuel spent the first twenty-three years of his life in Indiana. His family tree extended back, at least, to the Baltimore, Maryland, area at the turn of the nineteenth-century. Apparently, despite his Hispanic-surname, Manuel was viewed as an Anglo in the American Southwest. See Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), for a recent exploration of the phenomenon of all non-Hispanic and non-African American “becoming” Anglo on immigrating to the American Southwest. Manuel’s daughter recalls learning of his fluency in the Spanish language only after she had grown to adulthood (interview of Eleanor Jackson with author, July 30, 1998); however, his closeness to the Mexican American community during the period covered in this paper suggests that he may have learned to speak the Spanish language soon after coming to the University of Texas.
4. Manuel’s graduate degree transcripts and degrees are in the Herschel T. Manuel Papers (HTMP), Eleanor Jackson, Knoxville, TN. For Whipple’s absence at Manuel’s dissertation defense, see Herschel Thurman Manuel, *To Our Grandchildren with Love* (Austin: Author, 1974), 62. For Whipple’s work on the U.S. Army’s tests, see, for example, Leila Zenderland, *Measuring Minds: Henry Herbert Goddard and the Origins of American Intelligence Testing* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Press, 1998)
5. Robert Yerkes, *Psychological Examining in the United State Army* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1921), 27, 14-17, 26. Clatie Eleanor Clark, “B.F. Pittenger and Education” (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Texas, 1961), 124-125. Quotations from “H.T. Manuel Gives Address on Bryan,” *Gunnison News-Champion* (August 6, 1925): 1, 7.
6. “Department Course Report to Registrar,” Educational Psychology, Summer, 1930 to Summer 1940, Microfilm copies, Office of the Registrar, The University of Texas at Austin. Also, see, for example, *University of Texas Bulletin* 3611 (March 15, 1936): 84. James Knight served during the early 1930s as the Laredo office director of the University’s Extension Bureau. See Thomas Hall Shelby, *Development of Extension Education at the University of Texas, 1900-1952* (Austin: University of Texas, Division of Extension, 1966). Knight may have taught a similar course during the fall and spring semesters for Laredo-area teachers.
7. Manuel’s 1929-1930, 1931-1932, and 1932-1933 “Teacher’s Report,” UT Archives, Box 4R103, Folder 2 (CAH, UT-Austin). Manuel’s 1930-1931, 1938-1939, and 1939-1940 “Teacher’s Report,” UT Archives, Box 4R103, Folder 3 (CAH, UT-Austin). Manuel’s 1933-1934 and 1934-1935 “Teacher’s Report,” UT Archives, Box 4R104, Folder 1 (CAH, UT-Austin). Manuel’s 1935-1936 “Teacher’s Report,” UT Archives, Box 4R103, Folder 1 (CAH, UT-Austin). Manuel’s 1936-1937 and 1937-1938 “Teacher’s Report,” UT Archives, Box 3H231, Folder 1 (CAH, UT-Austin).
8. Herschel T. Manuel, *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children* (Austin: The Fund for Research in Social Sciences at the University of Texas, 1930).
9. By the end of the decade a beginning forum may have been underway at the University of Arizona at which Manuel’s former student Victor Kelley “ha(d) developed courses in teaching bilingual children.” See Jackson Davis inter-office memo on visit

to the University of New Mexico, September 2-4, 1940, p.3, General Education Board Papers, Box 598, Folder 6356 (Rockefeller Archives Center).

Hearings before the Special Subcommittee on Bilingual Education, part 1, 90th Cong., 1st Sess., May 18, 19, 26, 29, 31, 1967, pp. 215-216. Herschel T. Manuel, *Spanish-Speaking Children of the Southwest: Their Education and the Public Welfare* (Austin, 1965).

10. On Tireman see David L. Bachelor, *Educational Reform in New Mexico: Tireman, San Jose, and Nambé* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991); Lynne Marie Getz, *Schools of Their Own: The Education of Hispanos in New Mexico, 1850-1940* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1997), particular chapter 4 - "Lloyd S. Tireman: Contributions and contradictions." Unfortunately, both authors under-explore Tireman as teacher. Manuel served as an external reviewer for General Education Board funding which supported Tireman's experimental school. He supported the effort. See Manuel to Favrot letter, March 17, 1930, General Education Board Papers, Series 1.4, Box 598 (Rockefeller Archives Center). Tireman joined Manuel in teaching the 1935 summer course. See "Department Course Report to Registrar, Educational Psychology, Second Summer Session 1936, Microfilm copy, Office of the Registrar, The University of Texas at Austin.

11. Jackson Davis inter-office memo, General Education Board Papers, Box 513, Folder 5478 (Rockefeller Archives Center).

12. On the contemporary move within psychology toward "studies of prejudice," see Frank Samuelson, "From 'Race Psychology' to 'Studies of Prejudice': Some Observations on the Thematic Reversal in Social Psychology," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 14 (1978): 265-278 and Graham Richards, *'Race', Racism and Psychology: Towards a Reflexive History* (London, 1997), 71-72, 133-148.

13. Only a very few doctoral dissertations were written by graduate students in education at the University during this period. Despite the presence of a very few dissertations on the list, the term theses is utilized to save space.

14. The list of theses on Mexican American education were ascertained from a number of sources: the bibliographies from histories of Latino education, the irregular listings of reports on educational issues found in U.S. Office of Education Bulletins, and, Nancy Giles, "Annotated Bibliography of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations in Education, The University of Texas, 1903-1960" (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1963).

15. Hamilton Cravens, *Before head Start: The Iowa Station & America's Children* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 74-75. Baldwin took an immediate leave of absence to serve, like Manuel, in the U.S. Army's Sanitation Corps (76).

16. See Matthew D. Davis, "Buried Deep in the Heart of Texas: Mexican American Schooling Research, 1925-1960." Paper prepared for presentation at the meeting of the Midwest History of Education Society, October 31, 1998.

17. U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare,