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An Integrated Model for Graduate Training in Sociological Practice: The School of Community Service at the University of North Texas

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ABSTRACT

This article contains a description of a model for training in sociological practice at the School of Community Service at the University of North Texas. This model for training is predicated upon four themes in sociological practice: interventionist, multidisciplinary, humane, and holistic. The article also contains a description and a discussion of various academic programs within the School which provide training with respect to these four themes.

In 1979 Dr. Glass, co-founder, first coordinator, and first president of the Clinical Sociology Association, outlined his vision for clinical sociology and sociological practice for the 1980s. It was his aspiration that there would be, somewhere, several graduate programs providing training in sociological practice and clinical sociology. In less than a decade after his presidential address,

Although Cliff Black took the lead in writing this article, the fact that it came to fruition is a result of two years of dialogue between Bill Luker and the other three authors, and his mentoring of them. The identity of the School of Community Service and the clarity of its mission or purpose are direct results of his activities and leadership in the role of dean.

that vision has been partially realized through the Ph.D. program in sociology at the University of North Texas. Equally important, however, is the fact that a whole school providing a practice focus has emerged at this university.

The school referred to is the School of Community Services at the University of North Texas. The purpose of this school is clearly expressed in the four criteria used to characterize sociological practice and clinical sociology. The focus of clinical sociology and sociological practice can be identified as interventionist, multidiscipline, humane, and holistic (Black and Enos, 1982:60; Black and Holman, 1986:14; Fritz and Clark, 1986:7; Black, Enos, and Holman, 1987:146).

These four characteristics will be used to detail the training program provided by this school. In addition, a discussion of the program with respect to these four criteria will also demonstrate the manner in which it fulfills the requirements for the sociologist as clinician and practitioner.

Intervention

One of the most important characteristics that distinguishes sociology and applied sociology from sociological practice and clinical sociology has been the commitment of the latter two to intervention by the sociologist (Black and Holman, 1986:14). The most appropriate place to begin a discussion of the School of Community Service is with its commitment to intervention. From its inception, its focus was on the use of theory, research, and data from sociology, as well as other disciplines, in training practitioners to address human and social needs, and resolving and preventing human social problems at every level. This particular characteristic also serves to introduce a considerable portion of the history of the school. In addition, it provides an appropriate structure for introducing the several academic units, programs, research centers, and institutes.

The academic units, programs, research centers and institutes in this school are committed to training practitioners. The school was initiated in 1972. It had its origin in the Department of Sociology and the Department of Economics in the mid-1960s. The first dean of the school moved into that administrative position from his role as chair of the Department of Sociology. The second dean came to the position from the role of director of the Institute of Applied Economics.

In each case, the individual had designed an academic program and intervention strategy which, it was posited, would operate more effectively under an administrative framework and structure more flexible than that usually provided by a College of Arts and Sciences. In particular, it was anticipated that the tenure, promotion, and merit structure of the College of Arts and Sciences

made it more difficult to accommodate programs and individuals committed to practice and intervention.

The specific catalysts for the development of the school were a series of major funding initiatives. A federal grant of over one million dollars made it possible to establish a Center for Studies in Aging within the school. Grants from the National Science Foundation facilitated the creation of a Center for Economic Education. Finally, grants from the Texas Education Agency gave rise to the Institute for Labor and Industrial Relations.

In all three cases, one of the primary goals of each academic and training program was to enable individuals to intervene with respect to resolution and prevention of human and social needs at all levels—individual, group, organization, community, institution, and society. This included training in intervention skills, research on programs, models/techniques for intervention, and service delivery, publication of such information, and development of new models. The same can be said of every program in the School of Community Service.

Institute of Criminal Justice Studies

This program includes bachelor's and master's degrees. Its major focus at all levels is on community corrections and alternative sentencing. The undergraduate program is certified by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education. Graduates of this program are practicing law enforcement officers, security personnel, probation and parole officers, supervisors and administrators, and public and private correction specialists.

Institute for Emergency Administration and Planning

This undergraduate academic program "is designed to educate students in the sociological and technical consequences of natural and [human] . . . generated disasters . . ." (University of North Texas 1988–89 Undergraduate Catalog, 1988–89:144). The practitioners who emerge from this program "are prepared for careers in the fields of emergency preparedness for business/industry; local, state and federal government, and service organizations, i.e., Red Cross" (University of North Texas 1988–89 Undergraduate Catalog, 1988–89:144). Master's courses are available in this practice program and a master's degree will be available within one year.

Studies on Addiction Research Institute

This is the newest institute in the school. Practitioners will be trained with respect to prevention and intervention related to all types of addiction. They will, of course, also be trained in theory, research, and data with respect to

addictive behavior, intervention, and prevention. This program was initiated in the 1988 spring semester. Interdisciplinary degrees will be available at the undergraduate and graduate levels beginning 1990 fall semester. Faculty in several of the programs, including sociology, are state certified drug and alcohol counselors.

Center for Rehabilitation Studies

Both bachelor's and master's degree programs are available in this field. "While the graduate program focuses on specialized professional areas within rehabilitation, the undergraduate program is designed to prepare students for a wide variety of entry-level human service occupations" (University of North Texas 1988-89 Undergraduate Catalog, 1988-89:145). The practitioner who emerges from this program is qualified for a variety of positions "including rehabilitation programs, mental health centers, hospitals, mental retardation programs, correctional facilities, aging programs, community living facilities, private nonprofit human service programs, and alcohol and drug abuse programs" (University of North Texas 1988-89 Undergraduate Catalog, 1988-89:145). This center provides a certificate program at the graduate level.

Center for Studies in Aging

A practitioner may obtain both a bachelor's and master's degree from this program. An individual so trained can anticipate a career and intervention opportunities in settings such as "retirement and long-term care facilities, housing developments for the elderly, government planning agencies, community service programs, and other services to the aged" (University of North Texas 1988-89 Undergraduate Catalog, 1988-89:147). A certificate program is available at the graduate level.

Department of Social Work

This is an undergraduate degree program. Graduates are prepared for practice and intervention in such settings as "human resources, child welfare, mental health, health care, family services, services to the aged, corrections, developmental disabilities, alcohol and substance abuse, occupational social work, and services to schools and youth" (University of North Texas 1988-89 Undergraduate Catalog, 1988-89:151). Although no graduate degree program is available, graduate courses in social work can be used to supplement other practice programs.

Center for Behavioral Studies

Academic degrees are not available in this center. However, course work can be taken at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. The focus of these courses is to provide practitioners training in the application of "behavioral principles to produce positive change in individual behavior and social systems" (University of North Texas 1988-89 Undergraduate Catalog, 1988-89:153). Graduate level courses are "oriented toward application and are especially suitable for students whose work will primarily involve dealing with people" (University of North Texas 1988-89 Graduate Catalog, 1988-89:155).

Department of Sociology

This academic unit awards bachelor's, master's, and doctor of philosophy degrees. However, the Ph.D. program is identified as the theoretical base for the entire school. The current acting dean assumed that role from the position of chair of the Department of Sociology.

In 1980 this department focused its traditional Ph.D. program on sociological practice. This traditional program has been allotted three specific program specialties by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. These specialties are metropolitan community, family and the life cycle, and social organization. The intent in each of these specialties is to prepare graduates for practice in appropriate professions related to the areas. A student may, of course, choose to complete a traditional Ph.D. without any intention of doing sociological practice. Even in this context, however, the courses are taught from the perspective of the significance of sociological knowledge for practice.

"The minimum program for the Ph.D. in sociology consists of 90 hours beyond the bachelor's degree or 60 hours beyond the master's degree" (University of North Texas 1988-89 Graduate Catalog, 1988-89:150). The course requirements include a minimum of:

1. Twelve hours in research methods and statistics, including at least two 6000 [Ph.D.] level courses.
2. Twelve hours in sociological theory, including at least two 6000 [Ph.D.] level courses.
3. Twelve hours in social organization, including at least two 6000 [Ph.D.] level courses.
4. An additional 12 hours in social organization . . . [family and life cycle, metropolitan community, or deviance, a practice area within other programs in the School of Community Service] or in a minor field including at least two 6000 [Ph.D.] level courses.
5. Twelve hours of dissertation (University of North Texas 1988-89 Graduate Catalog, 1988-89:150).

With respect to item (4), social organization, the student seeking training in sociological practice may obtain such expertise with respect to the specific programs allotted by the coordinating board, or through the courses offered by the other academic programs in the school. Faculty in these programs have the opportunity to provide Ph.D. level courses, in their areas of specialization, in the Ph.D. program. It is also possible to gain practice expertise through work in a degree program outside the school. Special note should be made of the requirement that the twelve hours of practice obtained in social organization is supplemented with an additional twelve hours of practice required in conjunction with the dissertation research.

Students anticipating receiving the Ph.D. in sociology may obtain their master's degree in any one of the academic areas represented in the School of Community Services, including sociology. Students in other master's programs are encouraged to minor in sociology. A master of science degree in Interdisciplinary Studies provides a wide latitude for obtaining sociological practice experience at the master's level.

Each of the programs in the school can provide a maximum of six hours of internship experience. This, of course, provides additional opportunity for training in practice and for developing intervention strategies.

The faculty members of the Department of Sociology at this university have demonstrated their commitment to practice through a variety of actions designed to facilitate the legitimate role of the sociologist in intervention. Through their efforts, sociological practitioners and clinical sociologists have been successful in obtaining licensure as Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) in the state of Texas (Black and Holman, 1986:19). Faculty and graduates of this program have also been certified by the national Clinical Sociology Association (CCS). Finally, this faculty initiated the first state affiliate of the national Clinical Sociology Association (Black and Holman, 1986:19).

Interdisciplinary

Several indications of the interdisciplinary nature of the School of Community Service have already been referenced. These include the reference to administrative appointments of deans that have encompassed both sociology and economics, the use of faculty from each of the practice areas in the school in the Ph.D. program in sociology, and the development of program curriculum across disciplines.

It should also be noted that a commitment to interdisciplinary training continues across the administrative boundaries of the School of Community Service and the College of Arts and Sciences. This is particularly true with reference to programs and faculty. For example, both sociology and social work

are retained as part of the College of Arts and Sciences core curriculum. That college provides all of the general advising for students and maintains degree plans. The programs are administratively located in the School of Community Service. The school was established with the cooperation of the College of Arts and Sciences with respect to providing many joint appointments between the two schools. Many of the department chairs and unit directors hold or have held joint appointments, including joint administrative appointments, in the school and in the College of Arts and Sciences.

A unique indicator of the interdisciplinary nature of this school is evidenced in the inclusion of the Ph.D. program in sociology in the Federation of North Texas Area Universities. This federation is composed of the University of North Texas, Texas Woman's University, and East Texas State University. Students in these universities may take courses at any one of the member schools. Faculty from these schools may serve on and chair student Ph.D. committees at member schools. Additional interdisciplinary efforts are illustrated by the fact that faculty from other practice disciplines in the School of Community Service may serve on and chair student Ph.D. committees. Perhaps the most enlightening structural feature of this program for training in sociological practice is that nonacademic practitioners can also serve on and chair student Ph.D. committees.

The most systematic and thorough treatment for demonstrating the multidiscipline committee of the school is provided by an examination of degree programs, faculty appointments, and research and sponsored project funding.

Degree Programs

Most of the programs in the school were initiated as interdisciplinary programs. This practice has been sustained over the life of the school. It is true of programs at all levels of undergraduate and graduate training.

An undergraduate program that particularly typifies this commitment is the Bachelor of Applied Arts & Sciences degree (BAAS). This undergraduate degree can be earned in any one of the academic programs in the school. The program "is specifically designed for students who wish to complete a bachelor's degree after completing an occupational specialization or applied science program in a community college, or a four-year college or university" (University of North Texas 1988-89 Undergraduate Catalog, 1988-89:141). It is the intent of the program to capitalize on "the unique resources and opportunities of the School of Community Service to provide an interdisciplinary professional development curriculum designed to meet specific career needs of the individual student" (University of North Texas 1988-89 Undergraduate Catalog, 1988-89:141). In practice, however, most of the undergraduate programs in the school

have extensive interdisciplinary components. Each draws heavily upon the social sciences and other closely related practice programs in the school.

Two graduate programs that clearly exemplify this commitment is the Master of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies degree (MSIS) and the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies degree (MAIS). "UNT . . . confers the degrees Master of Arts and Master of Science, with a major in interdisciplinary studies. [This] . . . program offers the student a high degree of flexibility in the selection of course work" (University of North Texas 1988-89 Graduate Catalog, 1988-89:30). Although there is considerable flexibility in the structure of this degree, "ordinarily, the degree program must include no fewer than three separate fields of study, with at least 6 hours in each field. For all sequences, no more than 15 hours may be taken under any one course prefix" (University of North Texas 1988-89 Graduate Catalog, 1988-89:130). This degree provides excellent opportunity for designing a master's program in sociological practice. In fact, however, as already detailed, all master's programs in the school are, in practice, interdisciplinary.

Although sociology has already been referred to as the theoretical foundation for the other practice programs in the school, it is essential to recognize the reality of the interdisciplinary design of all of the academic programs. It is also important to note that two other fields that are accorded significant roles in the programs are economics and psychology. The former is most clearly identified in the programs of the Center for Economic Education. The latter is represented in the Center for Behavioral Analysis.

A final example of the interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum and programs within the school is the Ph.D. program in sociology. The multidisciplinary design of the sociological practice program has already been detailed.

Faculty Appointments

Another indicator of the interdisciplinary commitment of the school is revealed in the employment and assignment of faculty. All tenure is in the School of Community Service, rather than in any specific academic program or unit. Almost all appointments which have been made in the past three years have been joint appointments. Every sociologist who is retained must have an expertise and a joint appointment in one of the other practice programs in the school.

This commitment to the joint appointment is not a mechanical or simple structural acquiescence to the idea of interdisciplinary education and programs. The anticipation is not that some simplistic division of time is made between two programs and that each commands one half of the faculty member's time. Rather, the scholar is seen as grounded in sociological theory which ultimately

culminates in practice. Dual publication, research, service, and teaching commitments do not require twice as much time or even one-half time in each area. Rather, all of the faculty members' work is rewarded as contributing to both academic areas. The University of North Texas Work Load Policy permits continuous revision of assignments to provide the faculty members the fullest opportunity to concentrate in their areas of expertise. In addition, it permits the fullest possible use of this resource to the benefit of the school and programs. Evidence clearly sustains the statement that faculty and administrators in this school are among the leaders in the university in teaching, service, sponsored project funding, and research.

Research and Sponsored Project Funding

Research and sponsored project funding are the final indicators to be used to illustrate the interdisciplinary character of the school. One recent sponsored project was funded by the National Institute of Health for a joint training program developed by the Center for Rehabilitation Studies and the Center for Studies in Aging. The Office of the Governor of the State of Texas recently funded a joint research team from the Department of Social Work and the Institute for Criminal Justice Studies for research on electronic monitoring and house arrest.

Such interdisciplinary program development and research is the norm and not the exception in this school. Examples should be cited for each of the academic units and programs. Equally important, however, are efforts to combine several academic programs and disciplines in doing research and generating sponsored project funding for programmatic efforts. One recent project solicited funding for a project that integrated every unit in the school, with respect to the criminal justice system. Generation and support of such efforts is one of the essential roles of the associate dean in this school.

Humane

With respect to this characteristic of sociological practice and clinical sociology, Straus (1979) states that such practitioners are "committed to helping people cope with their sociocultural and historical situations and institutions" (480). That is, "the goal is to help them reconstruct and shape institutions and situations, in the direction of self-determinism, human values, and human dignity" (480).

This represents one of the primary goals of the School of Community Service. That is, staff, faculty, and administration in the School of Community Service are concerned with addressing human and social needs, and resolving

and preventing human social problems at every level. Of course, the name of the school itself reflects the goal of community and social service. This concern and intervention includes individual, group, organization, institution, community, and total society.

One significant goal of each academic unit, center, or institute is to foster research with respect to human social needs, programs, and service delivery. Such research has the dual role of improving human services and adding to the social science, the sociological practice, and other practitioner literature.

A second goal which is indicative of the commitment of faculty and staff in the school to a primary focus on human needs is the fact that all of the programs are designed to train individuals to be direct service providers in human or social service settings. Each year, many students are graduated from these programs and become direct service providers or administrators of organizations that provide such direct services.

Since it will never be possible for the faculty and staff in these programs to train all of the human service workers required for all societies, the school has, as a goal, the development of transferrable models. Thus, the third, and perhaps the visible evidence of the commitment to and use of sociological practice in service to human beings, is exemplified in these various service delivery programs designed and operated by the faculty and staff in the several departments, centers, and institutes within the school. Considerable time, effort, personnel, and financial resources are invested in developing such responses to human and social needs. Several examples will be outlined to demonstrate the role of this school in serving human beings at all levels. Faculty and staff within each department, center, and institute within the school have participated in the development and operation of such transferrable models. Only a few of these models are described here.

Denton County Jail Computerized Life-Coping Skills Program (CLC)

This program was designed to complement the traditional case management program, initiated in 1973, at the Denton county jail. Both programs were designed and are operated by faculty and staff in the Institute for Criminal Justice Studies, the Department of Social Work, and the Department of Sociology. These programs fulfill the state mandated jail counseling requirements.

Using computer-assisted instruction, participants receive individualized training in a variety of areas in which many offenders have inadequate socialization, a deficiency that contributes to unemployment, excessive debt, family instability, general interaction difficulties, and, perhaps ultimately, to criminal behavior and recidivism. The traditional case management program is grounded in the same assumptions.

The training areas include skills and behaviors required in common social

interaction, job interviewing, job performance, educational settings, personal financial management, and personal health and nutrition. This computer-delivered training includes simulation training in resolving specific personal problems. Individual case managers are available to assist the offender in this process as well.

The Geriatric Assessment Program (GAP)

The Center for Studies in Aging provides an assessment program for individuals needing assistance in the aging process. This can be the individual directly involved in the aging process, a family member seeking assistance in interacting with the aging family member, or neighbors and friends seeking to assist such an individual.

The GAP program, founded in 1985, which operates in both Denton, Texas, and Fort Worth, Texas, provides a physical, social, psychological and emotional, and economic assessment. A registered nurse, with special training in intervention with the aging, family members, and associates, is in charge of the program. After the assessment is made, the director assists individuals seeking such assessment in identifying all available resources for assisting persons in the aging process, or those associated with them.

These services are provided free of charge. The program is funded by a grant from the Texas Consortium of Geriatric Education Centers and special line item funding from the legislative budget of the state of Texas.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Laboratory (VRL)

The Center for Rehabilitation Studies provides direct client service in the areas of vocational evaluation and vocational adjustment. The first is located in "the Vocational Adjustment Unit, founded in 1976, . . . [and the second in] . . . the Adjustment Service Unit, completed in 1981" (University of North Texas 1988-89 Graduate Catalog, 1988-89:144). These two model programs provide one of the most comprehensively equipped rehabilitation units in the state of Texas.

Both deliver "personal, social and work adjustment services within a sub-contract sheltered workshop" (University of North Texas 1988-89 Graduate Catalog, 1988-89:144). The purpose of the laboratory is "to assist persons with a wide variety of mental, physical, and emotional handicaps to identify and achieve their maximum vocational potential" (University of North Texas 1988-89 Graduate Catalog, 1988-89:144).

In addition to direct client services, the programs provide training opportunities for students interested in a practice profession in the area of rehabilitation or a related field. The programs provide excellent research possibilities in the area of

rehabilitation. Ultimately, of course, such research is used to improve programs, services, service delivery, and provide new data in the rehabilitation field.

The programs are provided on a sliding fee scale. The programs are also funded through the Texas Rehabilitation Services.

Holistic

Finally, the goals of the School of Community Service are consistent with the holistic perspective and practice of clinical sociology and sociological practice. That is, clinical sociology and sociological practice are not predicated only, or primarily, on microsociological perspectives. Rather, "it is essential to recognize that the level of . . . [practice] can be at one or more levels of focus from the individual through the societal" (Clark and Fritz, 1984:3). Such practice requires more than a simple recognition of this fact. Specifically, "the translation of social theory, concepts and methods into practice requires the ability not only to recognize various levels but to move between the levels for analysis and intervention" (Clark and Fritz, 1984:3). In effect then, any treatment paradigm or intervention strategy used in clinical sociology or sociological practice, or any program used to train such practitioners must be holistic (Black and Enos, 1982:60).

Training and programs in the School of Community Service are holistic in at least three respects: (1) they are holistic with respect to levels of intervention; (2) they can be demonstrated to be holistic in terms of the theories and methods of intervention and training; and (3) they can be identified as holistic when considered with regard to theory, research, and practice.

First, with respect to levels of intervention, they can be said to seek to address human needs and to resolve and prevent human and social problems at the level of individual, families, groups, organizations, communities, institutions, and societies. It is not enough, however, to simply analyze and intervene at these levels. Rather, intervention strategies and training programs must seek to use the recognition of these levels, and the information provided at the several levels, in intervention and training with respect to any single level.

The transferrable models referred to in a discussion of the humane nature of the programs can be used to illustrate this concept. For example, the Computerized Life Coping Skills Program (CLC) is designed for primary intervention with individuals. However, the development of the program has included an analysis of the interaction and interface of the individual in the context of (1) the family, as an institution, and his/her own family; (2) the group, as a concept, and his/her own personal groups, including peers; (3) the community, in general, and his/her own personal, local community; (4) organizations, in general, and the organizations, such as work and education, which are most pertinent to the offender; and finally (5) societies in general, and the society of the offender in particular, with reference to such issues as defining crime and criminals, and the construction of social realities. In intervention with the offender, at any

level, or in training sociological practitioners, with respect to any one level, all levels inform models and techniques of intervention and training.

As regards the theory and methods of intervention and training, the holistic nature of the school refers to the recognition of the significance of several disciplines in developing appropriate methods, techniques, bodies of data, and training for such intervention. In other words, there is an attempt to "consider the total person in an attempt to understand human behavior. This includes recognition of such factors as biology, environment, socialization, and psychology" (Black, Enos, and Holman, 1987:146).

Thus, the programs in the school rely heavily on interdisciplinary training. No one school or body of theory is held to provide all of the answers with respect to designing intervention strategies for human and social needs. Not only does this school utilize an interdisciplinary approach within the school, but also across schools and colleges within the university, and with schools and colleges in the metropolitan area.

Finally, the school is holistic with respect to theory, research, and practice. Faculty and staff within the academic programs and service delivery programs in the academic units, centers, and institutes have demonstrated a commitment to the use of theory, research, and practice in all of the programs and at every level in the school. The school has a premise that it is not sufficient to theorize. Theories must be tested in practice. A second premise of the school suggests that practice alone is insufficient. Rather, practice must inform theory. In order to test the practice and theory, research is necessary. Thus, research is a third assumption that underlies the intervention and training posited by the faculty and staff of the school.

Summary and Conclusion

The title of this article suggested that the University of North Texas School of Community Service is a model for training in sociological practice. That assertion was based on the fact that the school clearly reflects the four criteria essential to sociological practice and is predicated on sociological theory, methods, and data.

With respect to the latter, Fritz and Clark (1986) indicate the importance of the label for the intervention and training programs. The same arguments can be extended to the primary theoretical foundation for the program. "Your label—sociological practice, clinical sociology, or applied sociology—will let potential students know that it is sociology—that provides the training in this area" (7). It is further suggested that the "generic label should be paired with a functional specialization. . . . This combination of labels lets the community know that sociology provides the education and training and pairs this discipline with well-known functional job titles" (7). Fritz and Clark contend that it is essential "to begin to pair the discipline with the functions, . . . [if this does not occur] other disciplines, departments, and organizations will, and they will be offering the education and training in a number of years rather than sociology" (8).

In addition to the predication of the school on sociological theory, methods, and data, the intervention and training proffered is consistent with the other essential components of sociological practice and clinical sociology. As has been illustrated, the school is interdisciplinary, human service oriented (or humane), and is holistic in its intervention and training.

Finally, it was also suggested in the title of the article that the University of North Texas School of Community Service provides an integrated model for sociological practice. This integration is reflected in at least two ways. First, it is integrated by a commitment to the essential components of sociological practice: intervention, multidiscipline, humane, and holistic. Second, it is integrated by the commitment of administration, faculty, and staff within the school to the utility of the social sciences, and in particular, sociology. In essence, the School of Community Service is a school of applied social science. Indeed, this is the label that is used to identify the school to those who are unfamiliar with its goals and purposes. The underlying thesis of the school, then, is that social science theory, methods, and data can and should be put into practice for the benefit of all humans and society.

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