



Macro and Micro Social Work as One

By Nadeen Hachem



“I prefer macro social work because I really don’t have to talk to people.” What? This statement is a common one I hear from students in the

supervisor and the opportunity to self-reflect, I realized that the lack of exposure I had towards developing my interpersonal skills was a leading contributor to my nerves and a true weakness in my professional self. My supervisor began to challenge me more and more each day to interact with participants enrolled in the program so that I would soon become sufficiently comfortable to facilitate a workshop. And it worked.

I reflected on how the pressure of labeling this facilitation as “micro-focused” hindered my ability to deliver. In reality, I, as a macro practitioner, I am using such skills every single day. Whether it is through solving conflict between staff members, reporting out data results and analyses to different stakeholders, or assessing a local grievance and offering a sustainable intervention, I am constantly using my interpersonal skills to complement the macro work that I do. Without understanding the vision of integrating micro and macro social work practitioners like myself, narrow our studies and limit our potential for progressive change.

Opportunities to explore the other side of social work, whichever side you might shy away from, do exist to strengthen your practice. This may mean that if you are a school social worker, you take up your neighbor’s offer to volunteer for a fundraiser for a local nonprofit to learn how to identify donors, secure sponsorships, and cultivate relationships with community leaders and philanthropists. On the other hand, if you are the political analyst at a large nonprofit in your community, it may be useful to volunteer at a local nonprofit and become a mentor to a young child. With the integration of macro and micro social work, social work practitioners can provide our constituents with the whole package to create viable impact.

Master’s of Social Work (MSW) program at the University of Michigan. Social workers do not want to talk to people? Crazy! Macro social workers navigate just as many interpersonal relations as micro social workers do. Yet numerous macro practitioners turn the other way when faced with a challenge to engage in interpersonal practice and theory. This philosophy must change. Macro & micro social workers alike must learn to integrate theories of macro and micro social work to create a mezzo practice that will increase capacity and create greater impact for social change.

Faculty, staff, and students at the School of Social Work (SSW) are gradually starting to work towards closing this gap between macro and micro practice. A prime example of this effort would be just a few months ago when potential SSW Dean candidates were in the process of initial interviews. Several stakeholders within the SSW asked the question of how each candidate would work towards bridging the gap between macro and micro practice, especially with the growing fields of community organizing, social policy & evaluation, and management of human services. With The University of Michigan being one of the first universities to focus so heavily on macro social work, Dean candidates had to think outside their boundaries to offer legitimate plans towards integration.

Regardless of these conversations that we have at the SSW, students are still apprehensive and unwilling to integrate their studies while in the program. At my field placement, one of the first things I told my supervisor was that facilitating groups made me extremely nervous, and I just did not understand why. With the guidance of my

