

## **Actor Training in Social Work Education: A Pilot Study of Theatre Workshops to Enhance Clinical Empathy**

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**Abstract :** Empathy is considered an essential skill for engaging with social work clients. Drawing from developments in medical education, researchers will conduct and evaluate a three-part pilot theatre workshop with master level social work students ( $n \approx 30$ ) to evaluate the workshop's ability to enhance empathy among participants. Outcomes will be measured using semi-structured post-intervention interviews with a subset of participants ( $n \approx 10$ ) as well post-intervention written reflections and pre-and-post intervention quantitative evaluation of empathy using King and Holosko's 2011 Empathy Scale for Social Workers. The content of the workshop will differ from traditional role plays, which are common in social work education, in that it will draw from role theory and research on creative empathy to emphasize role reversal with clients. Workshops will be held February and March of 2017 with preliminary findings available by April.

**Keywords :** education, empathy, social work, theatre

**Conference Title :** ICSW 2017 : International Conference on Social Work

**Conference Location :** Paris, France

**Conference Dates :** May 18-19, 2017