Title:
**Design for Social Change: A Pedagogical Approach to Prepare Students
for Human-centered Design Practice**

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Abstract:

The discipline of design is changing. Today more than ever, there is a growing need for designers to utilize their skills, methods and processes to address complex social challenges. In order to be prepared for this evolving landscape, designers of today must value and carry out a human-centered approach—putting the needs and concerns of people first—and shape design activities that enable and empower people to express, make, evaluate and collaborate in order to creatively solve problems and develop meaningful solutions. Today, design students are being required to expand their skill sets to include design facilitation, and a deep understanding of practicing human-centered, participatory design.

Due to this shift in mindset and approach for social innovation, the design education community must be continuously seeking ways to teach these emerging skill sets and provide learning experiences that prepare students to be successful in today's professional design context. With this focus, research was conducted to shape a process and approach for allowing students to work in real contexts with real people, and build new skills for designing for social change.

This poster will describe a pedagogical approach that utilizes a human-centered process to help students select, develop and deploy participatory design methods in order to identify and frame social challenges. In addition, this approach teaches students to collaborate with stakeholders while generating, prototyping and evaluating solutions to those challenges.

For this research, visual communication design students engaged in this process for a social design project in their senior-level studio course, VC5: Design Methods for Innovation. The pedagogical approach, process, project outline, student outcomes, and challenges/implications for future research will be highlighted.