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Abstract:

Hands-on or experiential learning is widely accepted in adult education, work, and community settings but can be a harder “sell” in academic research and educational environments. Many colleges and universities do not offer visual research methods courses that would provide opportunities for students to review the literature and build experience with and a rationale for using visual methods in academic research. In turn, studies proposing the use of visual methods, particularly participatory methods, can face challenges gaining approval from academic advisors, departments, and human subjects research review boards in institutions without proven visual research track records. Thus established researchers and students may need to be their own teachers in learning how to develop and defend a rationale for using visual research methods, and plan and conduct a study using visual methods. Learning in participatory visual research is also experiential as community members, researchers, and students use visual methods to explore issues of social justice, social policy, community development, and identity. This panel is intended to provide a range of examples from hands-on experience learning about and using visual methods of research. Papers are expected to focus primarily on process. Suggested questions to address include: How did the use of visual methods impact routes to learning? What surprises emerged? What obstacles were faced and how were they overcome? How did the literature inform, support, or contest the approaches used? How did community members engage with and contribute to the visual methods used? What could be done differently in future to strengthen the visual learning process? Established researchers and students are invited to submit abstracts that illuminate a process of hands on learning with visual research methods and provide examples for adaptation to other settings and purposes.

Bio:

Laura Lorenz is senior research associate and lecturer at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University. A former photojournalist, she uses experiential approaches to learning and teaching visual research methods and uses participatory visual methods to explore topics of health, illness, and disability with patients and communities.