

# Mediated Intimacy in Immersive Journalism. Experience, Emotion and Proximity

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**Abstract:** Immersive journalism is often discussed as technological innovation meant to bring audiences closer to news and promote empathy through emotional first-person experience. This article proposes an alternative perspective focusing on intimacy as a mediated relationship rather than as emotional intensity or personal exposure. Following existing research on emotion, digital intimacy and empathy, the paper argues that immersive journalism continues a long journalistic effort to reduce distance between lived realities and audiences. This article shows that emotional responses in this type of journalism are not automatic effects of technology, but results of a mixture of factors such as narrative choices, spatial positioning and ethical considerations. While immersive formats can create a strong sense of proximity and being there this closeness may sometimes produce discomfort or resistance. By connecting theories of intimacy with studies on immersive media, the paper proposes the concept of mediated intimacy as a useful framework for understanding how this type of journalism creates, negotiates and limits closeness. Understanding immersive journalism through this lens can open the space for a more careful discussion and future research on its emotional impact and ethical responsibilities.

**Keywords:** immersive journalism, mediated intimacy, emotion and empathy, digital storytelling, presence and proximity.

**Titlu:** „Intimitatea mediată din jurnalismul imersiv. Experiență, emoție și proximitate”

**Rezumat:** Jurnalismul imersiv este adesea considerat drept o inovație tehnologică menită să apropie publicul de evenimentele relatate și să stimuleze empatia prin experiențe emoționale la persoana l. Acest articol propune o perspectivă alternativă, concentrată asupra intimității văzută ca relație mediată, mai degrabă decât o intensitate emoțională dintr-o expunere personală la subiect. Pornind de la cercetările existente privind emoția, intimitatea digitală și empatia, lucrarea argumentează că jurnalismul imersiv continuă un efort mai vechi al practicilor jurnalistice de a reduce distanța dintre realitățile trăite și public. Articolul arată că reacțiile emoționale generate de acest tip de jurnalism nu sunt niște efecte automate ale tehnologiei, ci rezultatul unei combinații de factori, precum alegerile narative, poziționarea spațială și considerentele etice. Deși formatele imersive pot crea un puternic sentiment de proximitate, prin senzația de „a fi acolo”, această apropiere poate genera uneori disconfort sau rezistență. Prin corelarea teoriilor despre intimitate cu studiile despre media imersivă, lucrarea propune conceptul de intimitate mediată, ca un cadru util pentru înțelegerea modului în care jurnalismul imersiv creează, negociază și limitează proximitatea. Înțelegerea jurnalismului imersiv din această perspectivă poate deschide spațiul pentru o discuție aprofundată și pentru cercetări viitoare privind impactul său emoțional și responsabilitățile etice.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** jurnalism imersiv, intimitate mediată, emoție și empatie, narativă digitală, prezență și proximitate.

## Introduction

Immersive journalism developed as an umbrella term for news formats that offer audiences first person experiences of events or situations happening in the present, building vivid narrative environments in which users are encouraged to take an active role.

While de la Peña et al.<sup>1</sup> define this type of journalism primarily through the first-person experience enabled by immersive technologies, earlier authors offer different views on the format, framing it as an experimental information space defined by embodiment presence<sup>2</sup>. In immersive media, bodily presence refers to the sensation of being inside the represented space, experiencing it through sensory and emotional response that simulate the physical presence in that environment. Later authors see it as a narrative practice that transforms news into an emotionally engaging experience that is spatially navigable<sup>3</sup>. Other scholars<sup>4</sup> emphasise on the role of VR, AR or 360-degree video in defining immersive journalism as a technologically driven genre.

Although the term itself was coined by journalist and documentary filmmaker Nonny de la Peña and her collaborators in 2010<sup>5</sup>, the storytelling tools that reduced the distance between audience and reported realities have a beginning way long back, in another century. Early forms of immersion in journalism can be traced in nineteenth-century reporting practiced that used the journalist's direct involvement, as Fitzgerald<sup>6</sup> demonstrates in his analysis of women literary journalist writing against mainstream conventions. An example is Elizabeth Jane Cochran known as Nellie Bly and her famous undercover work called *Ten Days in a Madhouse*, where she uses her body and emotional responses to document the story and describe the space. Bly transformed lived, first person experience into a primary source of journalistic knowledge, giving narrative authority of the text through physical and emotional sensations rather than from detached observation<sup>7</sup>. These early practices anticipate later conceptualization of immersive journalism, but rather than connecting it only to technological innovation, it makes it more of a journalistic strategy aiming to produce experiential closeness and emotional credibility<sup>8</sup>. In this sense, immersive journalism can be understood as a continuation of an older journalistic impulse of bringing audience closer to the story, through mediated experience.

The rise of this type of journalism as a recognizable genre took place around 2015-2016 when technology advanced and editorial interest in experimental visual formats grew<sup>9</sup>. In the research conducted for Reuters Institute, Kangasniemi suggests that immersive journalism was more likely to become more established when it was incorporated into everyday editorial workflow rather than isolated technological experiments. The author mentions New York Times, USA Today, CNN, Guardian and the BBC among the forerunners in the field and El País (Spain) or Aftonbladet (Sweden) as examples of non-English speaking media that embraced the format. In 2016, a 360-degree VR video called *Surviving Aleppo* was broadcasted by CNN in order to provide viewers with a deeper understanding of the devastation of Aleppo. The video had over 2.8 millions views on Facebook, which made the channel launch the following year a dedicated VR journalism unit that covered major news. A similar action was taken by ARTE channel in the same period<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Nonny de la Peña, Peggy Weil, Joan Llobera, Elias Giannopoulos, Ausiàs Pomés, Bernhard Spanlang, Doron Friedman, Maria V Sanchez-Vives, Mel Slater, "Immersive journalism: Immersive virtual reality for the first-person experience of news," *Presence* 19, no 4 (2010): 291-301. [https://doi.org/10.1162/PRES\\_a\\_00005](https://doi.org/10.1162/PRES_a_00005).

<sup>2</sup> Frank Biocca and Mark R. Levy, eds. *Communication in the Age of Virtual Reality*. (L. Erlbaum, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Angelina Toursel and Useille Philippe. "Immersive Journalism, a 'New Frontier' of Information Experience?," *Brazilian Journalism Research* 15, no. 2 (2019): 336–57. <https://doi.org/10.25200/BJR.v15n2.2019.1230>

<sup>4</sup> Esa Sirkkunen et al. "Journalism in Virtual Reality: Opportunities and Future Research Challenges." *Proceedings of the 20th International Academic Mindtrek Conference* [Tampere Finland] (2016): 297–303, <https://doi.org/10.1145/2994310.2994353>; Radwa Mabrook and Jane B. Singer. "Virtual Reality, 360° Video, and Journalism Studies: Conceptual Approaches to Immersive Technologies," *Journalism Studies* 20, no. 14 (2019): 2096–112, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2019.1568203>.

<sup>5</sup> Nonny de la Peña et al. "Immersive journalism", 291-301.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan D. Fitzgerald, "Setting the Record Straight: Women Literary Journalists Writing Against the Mainstream" (PhD diss., Northeastern University, 2018). <https://doi.org/10.17760/D20289783>.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Marie Lutes, "Into the Madhouse with Nellie Bly: Girl Stunt Reporting in Late Nineteenth-Century America," *American Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2002): 217–53.

<sup>8</sup> Frank Biocca and Mark R. Levy, eds. *Communication in the*.

<sup>9</sup> Jenni Kangasniemi, "What we can learn from the best examples of immersive journalism", accessed March 8, 2026. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/what-we-can-learn-best-examples-immersive-journalism>.

<sup>10</sup> Toursel and Philippe. "Immersive Journalism," 336–57.

Immersive journalism gained wider recognition in 2018 when few VR stories, coming from USA Today and Arizona Republic received the Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting. The jury honoured the vivid and timely reporting that combined text, video, podcast and virtual reality to examine from multiple perspectives the reported major events<sup>11</sup>.

## Emotion and Empathy

Among researchers on immersive journalism, emotion appears in the picture. It is often identified as a central dimension of immersive experience rather than a secondary or incidental result. Tournal and Useille argue that this type of journalism is explicitly designed to intensify affective engagement by placing users in the space of the story that they can explore as if it's their own experience. This possibility transforms news into an experiential form of storytelling. In this way, the authors believe, emotions emerge from the user's perceptual and spatial act of immersion in mediated environments, where the possibility of close navigation produces stronger emotional responses than those associated with traditional news formats. This view resonates with earlier theoretical work on presence and embodiment. Biocca<sup>12</sup> conceptualize presence as a communicative tool for mediated environments to be perceived as immediate and embodied. Even if their framework was not developed in relation to journalism, it still provides a strong explanation for why immersive formats tend to amplify emotional responses: when one feels physically situated in a space, although mediated, emotions arise faster and bigger than positioned as a distant observer. This logic has been adopted by others scholars in order to explain how first-person perspective and sensory cue function as mechanism to enhance affective involvement, as in the case of Tournal & Useille.

While there is agreement on centrality of emotions, other scholars warn against viewing immersive journalism as a producer of uniform or automatic emotional effects. Kukkakorpi and Patti<sup>13</sup> argue that emotional engagement in this type of journalism is not produced by immersion alone but with a mix of aesthetic design and specific configuration of spatial narrative. They show that emotional response in immersive journalism depends on how users are placed within meaningful location that are associated with loss, suffering or vulnerability intensifying emotional engagement accordingly by induced proximity. These emotions are carefully guided through deliberate choices of sound design, camera placement, framing and so on. They all influence how users perceive and emotionally process the environment they are led, indicating that mediated narrative arrangements are the key to emotional trigger rather than spontaneous simple act of immersion. At the same time, Kukkakorpi & Pantti warn that intensified emotional proximity may carry ethical risks, as some immersion can bring the user too close to the story that can lead to discomfort, intrusion or affective overload. The researchers are thus discussing the notion of *proper distance* that immersive journalism editors should have in mind and continuously negotiate a balance between emotional closeness and moral distance to avoid emotional exploitation. This critical view is further reinforced by empirical findings from Greber et al.<sup>14</sup> who question the idea that immersive journalism is a universal generator of emotional responses. Their study demonstrates that those responses vary significantly depending on specific immersive characteristics such as narrative perspective, inclusion and interaction possibilities and that are unevenly distributed across audiences. They show that people who are more empathic do not always have stronger or more positive emotional reaction and that their emotional responses depend on both how stories are designed and who the audience members are.

Immersive journalism is often described as a medium that generates empathy, but there are scholars, like Sánchez Laws<sup>15</sup> who note that empathy is frequently mistaken for intense emotional engagement. She argues that the emotional response this type of journalism might produce does not automatically translate into empathy as its unclear if the person having it is more focused on own sensations or on understanding others. So, for empathy to

<sup>11</sup> Turo Uskali, Astrid Gynnild, Sarah Jones and Esa Sirkkunen, eds. *Immersive Journalism as Storytelling: Ethics, Production, and Design* (Routledge, 2021).

<sup>12</sup> Frank Biocca and Mark R. Levy, eds. *Communication in the*.

<sup>13</sup> Mariia Kukkakorpi and Mervi Pantti. "A Sense of Place: VR Journalism and Emotional Engagement," *Journalism Practice* 15, no. 6 (2021): 785–802. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1799237>.

<sup>14</sup> Hannah Greber, Sophie Lecheler, Loes Aaldering, Yael De Haan, Sanne Kruijemeier, Nele Goutier și Kiki De Bruin. "Feeling the News? The Differential Effects of Immersive Journalism on Emotional Response," *Digital Journalism* 11, no. 1 (2023): 39–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2155205>.

<sup>15</sup> Ana Luisa Sánchez Laws, "Can Immersive Journalism Enhance Empathy?," *Digital Journalism* 8, no 2 (2020): 213–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2017.1389286>.

occur, a clear distinction between self and the represented subject has to be maintained in a clear cognitive framing, Sánchez Laws concludes. While Laws focuses on clarifying the conceptual limits of empathy, the book *Immersive Journalism as Storytelling*<sup>16</sup> change the discussion toward the normative and professional implications of empathy as a journalistic goal. Contributors to the volume argue that empathy has become a desirable outcome in immersive journalism not because of the audience engagement but because it's linked to expectation on journalism social roles such as promoting understanding, morality and civic awareness. At the same time, the book points out that making empathy the central goal of immersive journalism can create tensions with journalistic responsibility and may rise concerns about emotional manipulation and ethical representation. From this point of view, empathy is not seen as an automatic outcome of immersion tactics, but as a deliberate and sometimes problematic professional choice.

Ethical concerns related to immersive journalism resonate with broader debates on the psychological and moral risks of immersive and VR environments. Madary and Metzinger<sup>17</sup> argue that immersive technologies are capable of inducing strong illusions of embodiment and presence that can have lasting effects on user mind after the moment of exposure. From this perspective, the authors consider that immersion is not ethically neutral since it can intensify emotional responses that might challenge users' autonomy, consent and the choice of critical distance. Rather than assuming that stronger emotional impact is positive, immersive journalism has to be more transparent and must negotiate the boundaries between meaningful affective engagement and the risk of emotional harm or manipulation, researchers conclude.

### Intimacy in journalism

What do we refer when we speak about intimacy? "The state of being intimate which is marked by the consensual sharing of deeply personal information. It has cognitive affective, and behavioral components. Intimate reveal themselves to one another, care deeply about one another, and are comfortable in close proximity. Self-disclosure, the sharing of private thoughts, dreams, beliefs, and emotionally meaningful experiences, is often viewed as synonymous with intimacy [...].an intimate experience has not taken place until there is empathic feedback—until acceptance and acknowledgment are communicated verbally or nonverbally as an indication that trust is justified".<sup>18</sup>

Intimacy is commonly understood as a quality of a relationship<sup>19</sup> that plays a significant role in the validation of personal worth, as individuals feel understood and accepted for who they are within that relationship<sup>20</sup>. Intimacy is conceptualized as a sense of closeness that is not dependent on physical proximity. Individuals may feel deeply connected to others who are geographically distant just as they may experience loneliness in the presence of people who share the same physical space<sup>21</sup>. From this perspective intimacy represents a relational feeling of closeness that is particularly meaningful when it is mutual, offering individuals comfort and a sense of belonging. Wong<sup>22</sup> approaches intimacy as a relational process rather than a fixed trait that is negotiated through communication, mutual recognition and shared understanding. He suggests that intimacy varies along several dimensions including situational scope, duration and intensity and talks about a typology. Situational intimacy deals with specific context or domains (politics, religion) and is limited in time and in space, while generalized intimacy extends across multiple areas of life. Intimate relationships may also vary in duration, ranging from short term encounters to long term bond, but the duration does not necessarily determine their quality. Wong believes intensity is the key dimension of intimacy shaped by emotional exclusivity and spontaneity and emphasize that intimacy depends on negotiated expectation and cultural norms about self-disclosure. A similar view can be found

<sup>16</sup> Turo et al. , *Immersive Journalism..*

<sup>17</sup> Michael Madary and Thomas K. Metzinger. "Real Virtuality: A Code of Ethical Conduct. Recommendations for Good Scientific Practice and the Consumers of VR-Technology," *Frontiers in Robotics and AI* 3, art. 3 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.3389/frobt.2016.00003>.

<sup>18</sup> Britannica, accessed March 10, 2026, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/intimacy>.

<sup>19</sup> E M.Waring, "Measurement of intimacy: conceptual and methodological issues of studying close relationships," *Psychological medicine* 15, no 1 (1985): 9-14. . <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291700020882>.

<sup>20</sup> Harry Stack Sullivan, *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1968).

<sup>21</sup> Kym Maclaren, "Intimacy and Embodiment: An Introduction," *Emotion, Space and Society* 13 (2014): 55-64. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2014.09.002>.

<sup>22</sup> Herbert Wong, "Typologies of Intimacy," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1981):435-443. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1981.tb00584.x>.

in the work of Oswin and Olund<sup>23</sup> who conceptualize intimacy not as a private or purely interpersonal phenomenon, but as a relational and political process shaped by power, norms and regulation. They argue that intimacy operates across scales and distances, producing forms of closeness and belonging that are not tied to physical proximity or domestic space. Intimacy is thus understood as a socially governed relation attached to broader cultural institutional and media-based frameworks of recognition and legitimacy.

In scholar literature there are identified between five and twelve types of intimacy, the most frequently discussed being physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and social intimacy. Some authors also refer to aesthetic intimacy, which happens when individuals share an appreciation for beauty, such as a landscape, a work of art, a book, or an elegantly presented meal.<sup>24</sup> Physical intimacy refers to closeness created through bodily presence and physical proximity. It involves sensory forms of connection that express care, comfort or attachment and is usually linked to direct physical interaction between people. Emotional intimacy<sup>25</sup> is defined as the sharing of personal feelings, vulnerabilities and emotionally meaningful experiences within a relationship. It relies on mutual self-disclosure and empathic responsiveness, making individuals to feel they are understood, accepted and emotionally supported. Intellectual intimacy<sup>26</sup> refers to the sharing of ideas and perspectives in meaningful conversation. It is grounded in curiosity and dialogue and involves mutual respect for cognitive differences offering intellectual recognition to each-other. Spiritual intimacy<sup>27</sup> involves a sense of closeness based on shared values, beliefs or existential meanings that sometimes can materialize in common practices or moral commitments providing a deep sense of alignment beyond everyday interaction. Social intimacy<sup>28</sup> means a feeling of closeness and belonging that develop through shared social roles, group membership or collective shared experiences. It is often expressed through social activities in a shared social context

During the pandemic and post Covid period, debates on intimacy focused on *digital intimacy* for obvious reasons. The concept starts from earlier discussions of *networked intimacy* introduced by Deborah Chambers<sup>29</sup> in relation to the forms of social connection facilitated by platforms such as Facebook, where relationships are algorithmically structured through notions of "friendships" that are simultaneously private and public. Digital intimacy refers to the various ways in which individuals use digital media platforms to share personal details, thoughts and emotions with others forming connections that transcends spatial limitation<sup>30</sup>.

### Mediated Intimacy in immersion

Digital intimacy refers to forms of closeness and relational attachment that are produced, maintained and negotiated through digital media environments. Rather than being limited to physical presence, digital intimacy operated through mediated interactions that enable emotional exchange, mutual recognition and a sense of a relational proximity across distance. Scholars on digital intimacy emphasizes that such relationship are not fundamentally different from offline forms or intimacy but they are shaped by constraints and social norms of digital platforms<sup>31</sup>. In this sense, digital intimacy is understood as a relational process that reconfigures established types of intimacy – emotional, social, intellectual or aesthetic – with technologically mediated contexts, rather than

<sup>23</sup> Natalie Oswin and Eric Olund, "Governing intimacy," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28, no.1 (2010): 60-67. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d2801ed>.

<sup>24</sup> Nicole K. McNichols, "7 Types of Intimacy That Deepen a Relationship," *Psychology Today*, 16 July 2024, accessed on March 15, 2026. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/everyone-on-top/202407/7-types-of-intimacy-to-deepen-your-relationship>.

<sup>25</sup> Harry T Reis and Phillip Shaver. "Intimacy as an Interpersonal Process," in *Handbook of Personal Relationships*, eds. S. Duck, D. F. Hay, S. E. Hobfoll, W. Ickes, and B. M. Montgomery (John Wiley & Sons, 1988), 367–389.

<sup>26</sup> Susmita Halder, "Rôle of Intellectual Intimacy in Psychological Well-being: The Cognitive Connection," *Taiwanese Journal of Psychiatry* 38, no 4 (2024): 157-60. DOI: 10.4103/TPSY.TPSY\_37\_24.

<sup>27</sup> Annette Mahoney, "Religion in families, 1999–2009: A relational spirituality framework," *Journal of marriage and family* 72, no 4 (2010): 805-827. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00732.x>.

<sup>28</sup> Oswin and Olund. "Governing intimacy," 60–67.

<sup>29</sup> Deborah Chambers, "Networked intimacy: Algorithmic friendship and scalable sociality," *European Journal of Communication* 32, no 1 (2017): 26-36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323116682792>.

<sup>30</sup> Kamdin Parsakia and Mehdi Rostami, "Digital Intimacy: How Technology Shapes Friendships and Romantic Relationships," *AI and Tech in Behavioral and Social Sciences* 1, no 1 (2023): 27–34. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.aitech.1.1.5>.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, 30.

replacing or diminishing them. Other scholars<sup>32</sup> argue that rather than treating digitally mediated intimacy as detached from everyday reality, intimacy should be seen as a negotiated practice shaped by connection, vulnerability, pleasure and responsibility. This perspective conceptualizes intimacy less as personal disclosure and more as a mediated relational condition marked by affective proximity and mutual recognition, while remaining ethically ambivalent and context-dependent.

While intimacy is usually discussed as a quality of interpersonal relationships, in journalism it appears in mediated and asymmetrical forms. Intimacy does not rely on mutual disclosure or direct interaction, but it is shaped by unequal positions between journalists, subjects and audiences. As Waring argues, intimacy in public contexts is governed and regulated. In mediated communication, closeness is therefore selective and carefully managed rather than reciprocal or spontaneous.

Immersive journalism places users at the center of the scene, allowing visual exploration while limiting any form of intervention<sup>33</sup>. What happens is that users experience events from inside the scene, through a virtualized body, which creates a strong sense of bodily and perceptual closeness. This form of proximity can be understood as embodied intimacy, linked to presence rather than interaction. At the same time, authors argue that users remain observers rather than participants. Although they are spatially close to the events, they cannot influence or alter its course. The result is an asymmetrical relationship without reciprocity. The researchers show that realism in space and sound, gained through authentic locations, ambient audio and testimonies, plays an important role in producing presence. In this context, intimacy emerges through mediated access to private and/or vulnerable spaces rather than through direct interpersonal relationship.

Experimental research on 360° video journalism suggests that immersive proximity can generate experiences that resemble forms of mediated intimacy, exposing their limits in the same time. Van Damme et al.<sup>34</sup> conducted such a study of 360° video on news by the Belgian public broadcaster on social and humanitarian context comparing user's responses to immersive and non-immersive news formats. Their results show that higher levels of immersion increase users' sense of presence and the feeling of *being there* in the reported environment. Same results have been found by Sundar et al.<sup>35</sup> study that discuss forms of relational proximity through senses of togetherness and co-presence with story characters produced by immersion news tools.

At the same time, both studies show that immersion and sensory proximity does not automatically result in moral or relational closeness. This suggests that immersive journalism can create a strong feeling of *being there* but spatial and sensory proximity can also generate discomfort when users perceive close-ups or bodily closeness as intrusive. It does not support lasting forms of relational engagement, pointing that intimacy through immersion is fragile and depends on the effect shaped by narrative framing and user interpretation rather than immersion alone.

## Conclusions

Looking at immersive journalism through the idea of mediated intimacy helps explain why immersive proximity can feel powerful, uncomfortable and ethically difficult at the same time. Closeness does not automatically lead to empathy or understanding. Instead, intimacy is shaped by narrative decisions, the design of the space where the story happens and professional judgement. Immersion on its own does not define the quality of the relationship created between audiences and the realities being reported.

Seeing intimacy as mediated and negotiated also helps make sense of mixed audiences reactions found in previous studies. Feelings of presence and being together can appear alongside discomfort or emotional

<sup>32</sup> Rachel H. Scott, Clarissa Smith, Eleanor Formby, Alison Hadley, Lisa Hallgarten, Alice Hoyle, Cicely Marston, Alan McKee, and Dimitrios Tourountsis, "What and How: Doing Good Research with Young People, Digital Intimacies, and Relationships and Sex Education," *Sex Education* 20, no 6 (2020): 675–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2020.1732337>.

<sup>33</sup> Jorge Vázquez-Herrero and Xosé López-García. "Immersive Journalism Through Mobile Devices: How Virtual Reality Apps Are Changing News Consumption," In *6th International Conference on Software Process Improvement (CIMPS 2017)*, eds. Ricardo Colomo-Palacios, Jose Antonio Calvo-Manzano, Vladimir Afanasyev, and Gerardo Maturro, 3–12 (Cham: Springer, 2017).

<sup>34</sup> Kristin Van Damme, Anissa Ali, Lieven De Marez and Sarah Van Leuven. "360° Video Journalism: Experimental Study on the Effect of Immersion on News Experience and Distant Suffering," *Journalism Studies* 20, no 14 (2019): 2053–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1561208>.

<sup>35</sup> S. Shyam Sundar, Jin Kang & Danielle Oprean, "Being There in the Midst of the Story: How Immersive Journalism Affects Our Perceptions and Cognitions," *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 20, no 11 (2017): 672–82. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2017.0271>.

overload. This shows that intimacy in this type of journalism is unstable. That does not necessarily mean it is a flaw, but this instability points out the need for ethical attention and narrative restraint.

By focusing on relationship rather than technological storytelling, mediated intimacy offers a way to evaluate immersive journalism beyond questions of innovation or emotional intensity. It is about encouraging researchers but also practitioners to think about how closeness is created, when it becomes meaningful and where the limits should be set.

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#### BIONOTE:

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