

## Appendix 1: Interview guide for focus groups

### Before the focus group

- 2 focus groups divided in homogenous groups (based on age/student's vs non-students which has been assessed in preliminary screening questions for those who showed interest in participating in the focus groups)
  - The overall topic is made clear to participants
  - All participants are asked to sign an informed consent stating their awareness of being exposed to potentially troubling material that may provoke an emotional reaction and that they at any time may take off the goggles to pause or stop watching.
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### Part 1: WELCOME (10 minutes)

*Purpose: To create a nice atmosphere with relaxed participants*

- Welcome
- Explanation of research and focus group
- Introduction of myself
- Description of focus group “rules” (no wrong answers, interested in personal opinions, I am in charge but intend to provide structure rather than fully moderate it so the participants talk **to each other rather than to me (stress this)**, interested in what you want to say rather than what you think I want to hear, distinguish between own opinion and what is believed to represent peers)
- Practicalities of focus group: Nameplates, duration of focus group, everything is recorded, anonymity guaranteed, there are cookies and drinks, VR glasses handed out, participants are asked to download the app 6x9 to their phone (free) and to find Fight for Falluja on Youtube
  - o If anyone cannot make it work, I write down the names and makes sure we can share my equipment (extra phones and headphones)
- Any questions?
- Participants asked to introduce themselves and to tell the group what their favorite film is – or which one they say latest (to encourage people to talk)

**Part 2: WHAT IS VIRTUAL REALITY? (10 minutes)**

*Purpose: To make participants think about what journalism and virtual reality is to them*

**- Questions:**

- Q: How do you use journalism/"the news" in your daily life
  - What is the goal/purpose of it for you / (why use it?)
  - What do you get from it? (which gratifications)
    - Follow-up: What sources of news do you use?
    - Follow-up: Do you consider yourself active news users?
    - Follow-up: (Open for relevant follow-up questions)

- Participants are told, that today we will focus on a new way of doing journalism: using virtual reality techniques for doing so, and that I would like them to write down what they associate with virtual reality in the first place.

**- Association card for each participant:**

- Everyone writes down a definition of VR and what they associate with it
- Cards put on a table for overview and participants can choose to elaborate.

**- Question for discussion based on definitions and associations on cards:**

- Q: What do you think this tells us?
- Q: What do you think about the words others wrote?
- Write down on back of name tag: Can you imagine ways your (daily) news consumption might incorporate VR in the future? **Yes – no – maybe** (and feel free to write down reason why for your own sake because we will get back to it later)

**Part 3: 360-DEGREE JOURNALISM (15 minutes)**

*Purpose: To familiarize participants with the notion of immersiveness within a journalistic context*

- **Participants are told** that there are now many examples of journalistic productions approaching the idea of VR by doing 360-degree journalistic production, and we will now watch one of them. There are various approaches to VR but this is the most popular and feasible so far for journalism.
  - Everyone puts on VR glasses and headphones/earplugs and watches (5 minutes of) the New York Times production “Fight for Falluja” about the war in Iraq. We stop when the voice say, “leaving behind a group of fighters whose job it is to fight until the death” and then there is a black frame.
- **Question** for discussion (5-10 minutes)
  - What did you think of this?
  - Why do you think the NYT made this video?
  - How did you experience it?
  - How did it make you feel/what did it make you think/what are your **reactions**?

**Part 4: CLASSICAL JOURNALISM VS IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM (30 minutes)**

*Purpose: The participants are now familiar with this new and different way of doing storytelling with 360-degree video and VR-glasses. We now make it more immersive by experiencing a piece where the actions of the user determine the content and I want to make them reflect on how IJ differs from and contributes to classical journalism.*

- **Short description** of the differences in the existing IJ productions
  - Difference between VR, AR, 360
  - Computer generated content allowing interaction vs adding layers to reality vs the spherical/360-degree video. Refer to all of it as immersive journalism (IJ)

The next example of IJ is a step further into VR.
- **Example 2 – after short description** of the VR app “6x9: A virtual experience of solitary confinement” by The Guardian on solitary confinement. Participants are told that it is based on the same research as the Frontline documentary “Locked Up in America” which they will now be shown 5 minutes from, before seeing 6x9.
  - 1: On my laptop, we all watch 5 minutes of “Locked Up in America”.
  - 2: Everyone puts on VR glasses and headphones and experiences 5 minutes of “6x9: A virtual experience of solitary confinement” by The Guardian.
- **Question** for discussion based on these two experiences:
  - Q: What do you think / what is your reaction to 6x9?
    - What did it feel like to have the glasses on?
  - How did the documentary versus the glasses feel for you in terms of learning about the content of the story?
  - What effect did each one have on you? (information, emotion, powerful, etc.)
    - What did one have that the other did not have?
    - OR One of them more useful for something than the other?
  - Did you experience any negative feelings in either situation?
  - If you had to do more of one or the other, which would you choose? Why?
    - (Follow-up on what appears to generate the best discussion)
  - Based on these two different ways of doing a journalistic production, how would you say that immersive journalism differs from the more classical journalism, and how does it contribute to it for you as a consumer of journalism?

**Part 5: AUDIENCE PERCEPTION OF IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM (20 minutes)**

*Purpose: Make participants reflect on the potential of immersive journalism*

- Short statement on that this is an example of what is being done now.
- Brainstorm: What kind of topics would you want to see/learn about by using immersive journalism.
- Based on the answers, they are asked to discuss:
  - Q: What characterizes news topics well suited for using immersive journalism?
  - (follow-up on what participants say)
- Based on what you know about it right now and what we have seen so far:
  - **Return to yes-no-maybe to VR in the future:** Participants are told there are a lot of different opinions out there on how the future of virtual reality in journalism will be, but if you listen to yourself and your gut feeling, who here thinks that could be a normal way of consuming news? (as normal as radio, TV, newspaper, web, social media is now) **Everyone** get to answer and say what they wrote down earlier.
  - Q: One who said yes will be asked to elaborate – and how it would look like.
  - Q: One with a no will be asked to elaborate – and why it wouldn't work
  - Q: One with a changed opinion will be asked to elaborate.
    - If no one changed their mind – ask why?
- Main discussion: Will normal media users use it? Earlier we talked about how you use journalism and news. Why you use and what you get out of it. Now, a talk about what IJ could be used for and what you can get out IJ?
  - Do you think immersive journalism is useful? – for what?
    - Why use it? (identify uses)
    - Where use it? (and why there?)
  - What do you get from it? (which gratifications)
    - When most meaningful for you? (and why?)
    - Do you think this could be positive for your media use?  
Better/different?

**Part 6: FINISHING (5 minutes)**

*Purpose: To sum up key insights and allow final reflections before saying thank you and goodbye.*

- Closing statement on the focus group including briefly going through the key insights of it.
- Ask if anyone has any additional final remarks or comments before we say goodbye.
- Say thank you for participating, inform participants they may keep the Google Cardboard VR-viewer, wish them a pleasant day and advertise CREA's proximity for a beer/coffee.

## Appendix 2: Codes in the data of two focus group

- 1. Argument for using VR in journalism (advantages)**
  - Ex: "That would be great for VR"
- 2. Argument for not using VR in journalism (disadvantages)**
  - Ex: "For this, print would be better"
- 3. Comparing immersive journalism with traditional journalism**
  - Ex: "VR brings something that TV does not have"
- 4. Comparison to video games**
  - Ex: "It's like you are in a video game – not reality"
- 5. Description of the focus group IJ experience**
  - Ex: "I even moved my hands to try to take the things, but then I thought 'no, this is not real'"
- 6. Emotions triggered by the IJ experience**
  - Ex: "You care a little bit more, because you feel it"
- 7. Empathy argument**
  - Ex: "It makes me feel for them"
- 8. Expressing a feeling of being immersed or engaged\***
  - Ex: "I felt like I was there"
- 9. Frequency of potential use\*\***
  - Ex: "I would only use it occasionally"
- 10. Gaining a new / personal perspective**
  - Ex: I saw it through his eyes, and it changed my idea of it"
- 11. General perception of VR/IJ**
  - Ex: "It is a cool but not so practical technology"
- 12. Gut feeling about the future of VR in journalism**
  - Ex: "This is going to be the next big thing"
- 13. Identifying audience gratifications**
  - Ex: "I would use it to understand it better"
- 14. Manipulation / over-editing / bias concerns**
  - Ex: "They editors still only show one side of it"
- 15. Moral Issues\*\***
  - Ex: "It's morally wrong to war victims into an *exciting experience*"
- 16. Niche product notion (that this is for the few)**
  - Ex: "Only serious tech-nerds would use it"
- 17. Perception of reality-comment**
  - Ex: "What I see is real"
- 18. Practical issues with the VR technology**
  - Ex: "It's too expensive"
- 19. Seeing exclusive places/being there**
  - Ex: "It's a change to go places you cannot go"
- 20. Social constraints**
  - Ex: "You feel silly when you move"
- 21. Technologic development comment**
  - Ex: It's success depends on how technology develops"
- 22. Topics or content suited for IJ**
  - Ex: "It would be great for nature documentaries"
- 23. Uncertainty or doubt over the medium**
  - Ex: "It's still so new that I don't know what to associate with it"
- 24. VR as a hyped gimmick/buzzword\*\***
  - Ex: "It will die out again like 3D-tv's"

\* Only represented in the com group

\*\* Only represented in the non-com group.

**Appendix 3: Grouping of the code labels following sub-RQ's.****A. Gratifications from immersive journalism**

5. Description of the focus group IJ experience
6. Emotions triggered by the IJ experience
7. Empathy argument
8. Expressing a feeling of being immersed or engaged\*
10. Gaining a new / personal perspective
13. Identifying audience gratifications
19. Seeing exclusive places/being there

**B. Immersive journalism vs traditional journalism**

3. Comparing immersive journalism with traditional journalism
11. General perception of VR/IJ
14. Manipulation / over-editing / bias concerns
15. Moral issues\*
17. Perception of reality-comment

**C. Characteristics of well suited content and topics for IJ**

1. Argument for using VR in journalism (advantages)
2. Argument for not using VR in journalism (disadvantages)
4. Comparison to video games
19. Seeing exclusive places/being there
22. Topics or content suited for IJ

**D. VR as a medium for journalism**

9. Frequency of potential use\*\*
12. Gut feeling about the future of VR in journalism
16. Niche product notion (that this is for the few)
18. Practical issues with the VR technology
20. Social constraints
21. Technologic development comment
23. Uncertainty or doubt over the medium
24. VR as a hyped gimmick/buzzword\*\*

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