

Daniel Pimentel, Ph.D.

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School of Journalism and Communication, University of Oregon
George S. Turnbull Center, 70 NW Couch Street, Portland, Oregon 97209

An applied mixed-methods media psychology researcher dedicated to understanding the prosocial and pro-environmental implications of storytelling through emergent media.

Education

Doctor of Philosophy (Communication): August 2015 – August 2020

The University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

Advisor: Sri Kalyanaraman, Ph.D.

Dissertation: *If I Become the Masses I Will Act: Virtual Reality Animal Embodiment and Psychic Numbing*

Master of Science (Global Strategic Communications): August 2012 – December 2014

Florida International University, Miami, FL

Bachelor of Science (Advertising): August 2007 – December 2011

The University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

Academic Experience

Assistant Professor of Immersive Media Psychology

School of Journalism and Communication, University of Oregon

Portland, OR | August 2020 - Present

Lab Coordinator

The Media Effects & Technology Lab (METL), The University of Florida

Gainesville, FL | January 2017 - August 2020

Adjunct Professor

School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Florida International University

Miami, FL | January 2015 - May 2015

Professional Experience

XR Researcher, The Hydrous

San Francisco, CA (remote) | November 2021 – Present

The Hydrous is a 501c3 non-profit dedicated to leveraging immersive media for ocean education and conservation. As a researcher I am working with their education and product development teams to create an immersive learning framework to deploy at scale within various learning environments.

UX Designer, Razing Liberty Square's LCVR

Miami, FL (remote) | January 2021 – Present

LCVR is a grant-funded VR experience for the Oculus Quest 2 documenting climate gentrification in Liberty City, a historic Black neighborhood in Miami. As the UX lead, I collaborated with the development, art, and audio teams to iteratively create interaction patterns for the VR experience.

XR Specialist, Yellow Wood Immersive

Miami, FL (remote) | January 2020 – Present

Yellow Wood Immersive is a VR/AR creative studio in Miami dedicated to using emergent media to connect audiences with social and environmental issues. As a board member and XR Specialist I have successfully prepared, submitted, and secured grant funding for projects supported by National Geographic, the Knight Foundation, and others. I also develop/test prototypes for use in research.

Official Lens Creator, Snap Inc.

Portland, OR | September 2020 – Present

As an Official Lens Creator I develop Snapchat Lenses in Lens Studio, testing their psychological and behavioral effects in field studies and controlled lab experiments. My most popular lens has generated over 1,500,000 plays.

Oculus Launch Pad Member, Meta Reality Labs

Portland, OR | September 2020 – Present

As an Oculus Launch Pad Member, I have served as the sole developer of a VR experience called Project SHELL, which allows users to embody threatened Loggerhead sea turtles. Current prototypes have been tested in various quantitative and qualitative studies and distributed in various science centers in Florida. This project was done in collaboration with the Sea Turtle Conservancy.

Lens Studio AR Creator Resident, Snap Inc.

Portland, OR | September 2020 - October 2020

As a Creator Resident I collaborated with Snapchat developers to create a Snapchat Lens allowing users to save and interact with a sea turtle hatchling. The project was done in collaboration with the Sea Turtle Conservancy.

Social Psychology Researcher (Ph.D. Internship), Magic Leap

Plantation, FL | May 2019 - August 2019

I collaborated with lead perception science researchers to create an MR prototype on the Magic Leap One using Unity 3D. I then ran a large-scale experiment testing the prototype, which allowed users to collaborate with an AI virtual human (see publications for applied insights yielded by the study).

Graphic Designer, University of Florida Diabetes Institute

Plantation, FL | August 2018 - August 2020

Created marketing and research presentation materials for University of Florida and Stanford University Diabetes researchers.

Doctoral Research Intern, VR Americas

Miami, FL | May 2018 - September 2018

Collaborated with an international team of VR and AR industry professionals to create prototypes for workplace training scenarios, clarifying the role of VR/AR as a global enterprise solution.

VR Director, Changeville

Gainesville, FL | April 2016 - April 2018

As part of the social change festival *Changeville*, I curated an annual showcase of international immersive media content creators and their works addressing social and environmental issues.

Skills

Technical

Game Engines: Unity 3D (C#), Lens Studio

Hardware: Meta Quest 1, Meta Quest 2, Meta Rift (S), Oculus Go, HTC Vive, Magic Leap One, Microsoft HoloLens 1, Mobile AR (AR Core, Snapchat)

Creation/Modeling: Blender, Maya, Adobe Creative Suite

Animation & Video: Rokoko Studio (Body and Face Motion Capture), Adobe Premiere

Statistics: IBM SPSS, AMOS, R Studio, G*Power

Interpersonal

Languages: English (Native Proficiency), Spanish (Native Proficiency)

Project & Team Management: Trello, Slack, Microsoft Teams, Discord

Soft Skills: Collaborative, Empathic, Flexible, Clear Communication, Enthusiastic Lecturer

Publications

Refereed Journal Articles

- Pimentel, D. (2020). Saving Species in a Snap: On the Feasibility and Efficacy of Augmented Reality-based Wildlife Interactions for Biodiversity Conservation. *Journal for Nature Conservation*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnc.2022.126151>
- Pimentel, D., & Kalyanaraman, S. (Under Review). How Multi-Sensory Animal Embodiment in Virtual Reality Influences Environmental Threat Processing and Conservation Behaviors. *Scientific Reports*. <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-957911/v1>
- Pimentel, D., & Kalyanaraman, S. (2021). Virtual Climate Scientist: A VR Learning Experience About Paleoclimatology for Underrepresented Students. *Interactive Learning Environments*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2021.1969582>
- Pimentel, D., Kalyanaraman, S., Lee, Y.-H., & Halan, S. (2021). Voices of the unsung: The role of social presence and interactivity in building empathy in 360 video. *New Media & Society*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444821993124>
- Pimentel, D., Foxman, M., Davis, D. Z., & Markowitz, D. M. (2021). Virtually Real, But Not Quite There: Social and Economic Barriers to Meeting Virtual Reality’s True Potential for Mental Health. *Frontiers in Virtual Reality*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frvir.2021.627059>
- Pimentel, D., Kalyanaraman, S., Fillingim, R. B., & Halan, S. (2021). The Effects of VR Use on Pain Experienced During a Tattoo Procedure: A Pilot Study. *Frontiers in Virtual Reality*, 2, 38. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frvir.2021.643938>
- Pimentel, D., & Vinkers, C. (2021). Copresence with Virtual Humans in Mixed Reality: The Impact of Contextual Responsiveness on Social Perceptions. *Frontiers in Robotics and AI*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frobt.2021.634520>
- Pimentel, D., & Kalyanaraman, S. (2020). Customizing Your Demons: Anxiety Reduction via Anthropomorphizing and Destroying an “Anxiety Avatar.” *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.566682>

Select Conference Proceedings

- Davis, D. & Pimentel, D. (2022). Emerging technologies create new realities in strategic communication. In Proceedings of the 25th International Public Relations Research Conference (IPRRC). International Public Relations Research Conference (IPRRC).
- Pimentel, D. (2021). The Peril and Potential of XR-based Interactions with Wildlife. *Extended Abstracts of the 2021 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3411763.3450378>
- Pimentel, D., & Kalyanaraman, S. (2020). Your Own Worst Enemy: Implications of the Customization, and Destruction, of Non-Player Characters. *Proceedings of the Annual Symposium on Computer-Human Interaction in Play*, 93–106. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3410404.3414269>

Pimentel, D. (2019). Digital demons: Psychological effects of creating, and engaging with, virtual avatars representing undesirable aspects of the self. *26th IEEE Conference on Virtual Reality and 3D User Interfaces, VR 2019 - Proceedings*. <https://doi.org/10.1109/VR.2019.8797907>

Pimentel, D., Kalyanaraman, S., & Halan, S. (2018). Bigger is Better: A VR Penguin Rehabilitation Simulation to Study Animal Conservation Behaviors. *2018 IEEE Games, Entertainment, Media Conference, GEM 2018*. <https://doi.org/10.1109/GEM.2018.8516548>

Pimentel, D., Kalyanaraman, S., & Halan, S. (2018). So cute it hurts!: The interplay between animal cuteness and message framing in environmental advertising. *Proceedings of the Conference of the American Academy of Advertising*, 73.

Popular Press

Laufer, P. (2021). Turning Turtle. *The Tortoise*, 3(2), 134-139.

Snap Creators Collaborate with Google ARCore to Publish 5 Lenses for #EarthWeek. (2021, May 12). *Lenstlist*. Retrieved from <https://blog.lenstlist.co/2021/05/12/snap-creators-collaborate-with-google-arcore-to-publish-5-lenses-for-earthweek/>

Book Chapters

Herrera-Arcos, G., & Pimentel, D. (2019). *Mediated Interdependence in Motion: A Co-op Augmented Reality (AR) and Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) Installation* (pp. 189–194). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24326-5_22

Zheng, L., Phelps, J. E., & Pimentel, D. (2019). Psychological transportation in narrative advertising. In *Advertising Theory: Second Edition*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351208314>

Industry Papers

Pimentel, D., Fauville, G., Frazier, K., McGivney, E., Rosas, S. & Woolsey, E. (2022). *Learning in the Metaverse: A Guide for Practitioners*. Meridian Treehouse Immersive Learning.

Conference Papers

Pimentel, D. & Kalyanaraman, S. (2022). One too Many?: Compassion Fade Effects of Non-Human Casualties in Virtual Reality. *72nd Annual International Communication Association Conference*.

Pimentel, D., Varry, S. & Maloney, D. (2022). The Use of Virtual Reality for Gaming, Escapism, and Social Connection During a Global Pandemic. *72nd Annual International Communication Association Conference*.

Kalyanaraman, S., Pimentel, D., Halan, S., Spiker, T., & Amaya, R. (2019). Decision-making under duress: Virtual reality as a methodological novelty in journalism education. *World Journalism Education Conference*.

- Pimentel, D. (2019). Digital demons: Psychological effects of creating, and engaging with, virtual avatars representing undesirable aspects of the self. *26th IEEE Conference on Virtual Reality and 3D User Interfaces, VR 2019*.
- Pimentel, D., Amaya, R., Kalyanaraman, S., Halan, S., & Bailenson, J. N. (2019). Customizing climate change on your plate: A VR seafood buffet. *26th IEEE Conference on Virtual Reality and 3D User Interfaces, VR 2019*.
- Pimentel, D., & Cardentey, D. (2019). Simulating habitat experiences of living loggerheads. *Seventh Annual Science by the Shore Symposium*.
- Pimentel, D., Kalyanaraman, S., Fillingim, R. B., & Halan, S. (2019). Virtual games and volitional pain: A new methodological approach for testing VR pain interventions on individuals receiving a tattoo. *26th IEEE Conference on Virtual Reality and 3D User Interfaces, VR 2019*.
- Pimentel, D., Amaya, R., & Kalyanaraman, S. (2018). Fast pitch: Effects of walk-up music tempo on MLB player performance. *Ninth Annual Conference on Sport and Society*.
- Pimentel, D., Halan, S., & Kalyanaraman, S. (2018). Customizing your demons: Affective implications of anthropomorphizing the “anxious avatar.” *68th Annual International Communication Association Conference*.
- Pimentel, D., Halan, S., Kong, S., Xiao, M., & Kalyanaraman, S. (2018). Look around or look ahead: Information processing of traditional versus 360-degree video narratives. *68th Annual International Communication Association Conference*.
- Pimentel, D., Lee, Y.-H., Halan, S., Kalyanaraman, S., Kim, M., & Mclean, D. (2018). Voices of the unsung: Social presence, interactivity and empathy-building in 360 video. *68th Annual International Communication Association Conference*.
- Pimentel, D., Lee, Y.-H., & Kalyanaraman, S. (2018). Be careful what you Twitch for: Dispositional inferences of videogame streamers based on in-game behavior. *68th Annual International Communication Association Conference*.
- Pimentel, D. (2017). The effects of interactive, 360-degree video in environmental communications. *2017 CJC Research Symposium*.
- Pimentel, D., & Kalyanaraman, S. (2017). Customizing your demons: The affective implications of anthropomorphizing “the anxious self.” *2017 International Conference on Mobile Brain-Body Imaging and the Neuroscience of Art, Innovation and Creativity*.
- Pimentel, D., Kalyanaraman, S., Kong, S., & Xiao, M. (2017). Not in my backyard? Immerse me in 360 video! 360-degree video and interactivity’s role in shaping attitudes and threat perceptions. *67th Annual International Communication Association Annual Conference*.
- Pimentel, D. (2016). Psychological mechanisms in narrative advergaming. *2016 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) Conference*.

- Pimentel, D. (2016). Philanthropy in virtual worlds: A conceptual model for evaluating purchase intent of cause-related virtual goods in MMORPGs. *Annual CJC Research Symposium*.
- Almujaibel, N., & Pimentel, D. (2013). Advertising in the gulf cooperation council: Analysis and insights. *2013 Arabian Social Media Conference*.
- Pimentel, D., & Almujaibel, N. (2013). Social media privacy and information-sharing. *2013 Arabian Social Media Conference*.

Invited Talks

- Pimentel, D. (2022). *Altruism in the Metaverse: How Mixed Reality Can Connect Audiences to Social and Environmental Issues*. 2nd Annual Science Communication Winter Research Forum. Eugene, Oregon.
- Pimentel, D. (2021). *Immersive Storytelling for Environmental Conservation*. XR Academia. Bogota, Colombia and Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- Pimentel, D. (2021). *The Importance of Mentoring in Getting the Most Out of a Graduate Education*. Florida Education Fund. Tampa, Florida, USA.
- Pimentel, D. (2021). *Cross-reality (XR) Storytelling for Environmental Conservation*. Flagler College, St. Augustine, Florida, USA.
- Pimentel, D. (2021). *Preparing for Communication Careers in the Meta Verse*. Guest Lecture - University of Oregon, Portland, Oregon, USA.
- Pimentel, D. (2021). *Virtual Reality and the Species Divide: Immersive Storytelling for Environmental Communication*. University of Oregon: Better Together Webinar Series. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Hxh4DmJIUc>
- Pimentel, D. (2020). *Ethical Design of Immersive Media*. Portland Design Week Panel. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QcdBD33hMU>
- Pimentel, D. (2018). *Creando Experiencias Interactivas en Unity (Creating Interactive Experiences in Unity)*. Marketing University Webinar Workshop.
- Pimentel, D. (2012). *Picking a Fight with Goliath*. TEDxYouth.

Grants, Fellowships, and Awards

Grants (Funded as PI or Multiple PI/Co-PI)

- 2022: "Vanport AR," Dean's Fund Award, for \$12,000 (PI).
- 2021: "Penguin Rescue!," AR Sustainability Grant sponsored by Snap Inc. and Google, for \$8,000 (PI).
- 2020 – 2021: "Save-a-Turtle Snapchat Lens," Snap Inc., for \$5,000 (PI).
- 2018 – 2021: "Project S.H.E.L.L. (Simulating Habitat Experiences of Living Loggerheads)," Sea Turtle Conservancy, for \$35,560.88 (PI).

2019 – 2020: “Virtual Climate Scientist: A Polar Ice Cap Expedition,” Thompson Institute for Earth Systems (TIES), for \$2,089 (PI).

2019 – 2020: “Immersive Disaster Emergency Application (IDEA),” National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) PILOT Innovation Challenge Innovator Award, for \$15,000 (Co-PI).

Fellowships

2020: Edward A. Bouchet Graduate Honor Society Inductee

2015-20: McKnight Doctoral Fellowship

2015-18: SREB State Doctoral Scholars Fellowship

2015: Board of Education Summer Fellowship

Select Awards

2021: Official Nominee - Best AR Lens: Environmental and Social Good (Lens Fest)

2019: Doctoral Dissertation Research Fund Award

2019: UF Graduate Student Mentoring Award

2019: NSF Doctoral Consortium Travel Grant

2018: Top Student-Faculty Paper Award

2018: Dean’s National Travel Award

2017: 1st Place, IEEE Brain Hackathon

Teaching and Curriculum Development

University of Oregon

User Experience (UX) Design

A master’s level course I created in 2020 providing theoretical and applied insights into core UX and human-centered design principles within the context of strategic communication. Average course enrollment was 12 students.

XR for Social Good

A mixed (graduate/undergraduate) course designed to provide communicators with a high-level understanding of how immersive media technologies (e.g., AR, VR) can be leveraged to address social and environmental issues. Course will be taught in the Spring of 2022.

Quantitative Research Methods

A master’s level course I adapted in 2020 which provides students with foundational skills necessary to collect quantitative research data through various methodological approaches, and subsequently teaches them various statistical analyses to extract insight from their data. Statistical techniques were taught using both Excel and IBM SPSS. Average course enrollment was 9 students.

Student Advising

University of Oregon

Doctoral Student Advising

Shane Burrell (Chair) – Expecting to defend Spring 2025

Waseq Rahman (Committee) – Expecting to defend Spring 2022

Master’s Student Advising

Stephen Alexanian (co-chair) – Defended, 2021

Service

University of Oregon

School Level

Faculty Advisor, BIPOC Affinity Group (Portland), 2020 – Present

Member, Diversity Advisory Committee, 2020 – Present

Member, Technology Committee, 2021 – Present

Personal

Mentorship

Board Member, Gators Unidos Scholarship Fund, 2020 – Present

Helped raise \$10,000 to start a scholarship fund for undergraduate Hispanic/Latino students at the University of Florida

Reviewer for Scholarly Journals

Journal of Interactive Advertising

Journal of Communication Research

Journal of Interactive Learning Environments

Human-Computer Interaction

Journal of Communication Technology

Cyberpsychology

Reviewer for Scholarly Conferences

ACM Computer-Human Interaction

ACM Computer-Human Interaction in Play (CHI Play)

International Communicators Association (ICA)

IEEE VR