Title	Collaborating with refugees: Power, ethics and reciprocity in documentary filmmaking
Authors	Hughes, Mandy
Publication date	2019
Original Citation	Hughes, M. (2019) 'Collaborating with refugees: Power, ethics and reciprocity in documentary filmmaking', Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media, 18, pp. 160-174. https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.18.12
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	http://www.alphavillejournal.com/Issue18/Dossier1Hughes.pdf - https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.18.12
Rights	© 2019, the Author(s). This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. - https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/
Download date	2025-06-06 05:53:53
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/9403

Collaborating with Refugees: Power, Ethics and Reciprocity in Documentary Filmmaking

Mandy Hughes

Abstract: *Representing stories through documentary film can offer a means to convey multilayered and sensory accounts of the lived experiences of people in extreme transition, especially former refugees. However, along with the potential of this medium comes the responsibility to engage with participants in an ethical and reciprocal manner. This article examines these prerequisites and applies them to two films about the experiences of people from refugee backgrounds in Australia. The first film,* The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour (2015)*, explores the Myanmar community, their sociocultural relationship to food and how this informs their identity. The second film,* 3Es to Freedom (2017)*, documents a supported employment program for women from refugee backgrounds. Despite having different purposes and target audiences, the two films reinforced the importance of establishing informed and negotiated consent with marginalised people as the basis of all interactions and representations on film. Such negotiation seeks to minimise power imbalances and forms the ethical starting point for reflexive filmmaking practice that considers the filmmakers' and participants' intentions, and that promotes a heightened awareness of how knowledge is created through image-making.*

Representing people in transition presents a number of opportunities and challenges for both participants and filmmakers. This paper discusses my experience of collaborative filmmaking with former refugees now residing in Australia. In this instance, I apply Sarah Elder's definition, whereby the collaborative practice "creates an open space for dialogue: a space for filmmakers to learn to pose the questions they do not originally know how to ask, a place where film subjects select the fragments of their reality they deem significant to document, and a moral place where subjects and image makers can mediate their own representation" (94). Collaborative filmmaking was embraced to achieve what Sarah Wiebe conceptualises as "[c]ommunity engaged scholarship" that is "anti-oppressive, anti-hierarchical research … that shifts power relations away from an authoritative expert" (244). The first film, *The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour* (Mandy Hughes, 2015), is a documentary depicting the Myanmar community who have resettled in a regional nonmetropolitan area. The purpose of the film was to depict the community's sociocultural relationship with food and to disseminate the findings through public screenings to local, national and international audiences. The second film, *3Es to Freedom* (Mandy Hughes, 2017), documented the experiences of women from refugee backgrounds from a wide range of countries, including Afghanistan, Myanmar and several African nations, as they participated in a supported education and wellbeing program. The second film was not made available publicly and was instead screened for funders to share the success of the programme and seek additional funding, for other service providers to educate them about the needs of this specific cohort and for the participants themselves to promote a sense of achievement and empowerment. Despite the different target audiences and purposes, there are common lessons to be learnt in terms of working with and representing former refugees. A filmmaker working with people from migrant and refugee background has considerable responsibilities to avoid

representations where "identities are easily ignored, simplified, or conflated" (Kim 58). The complexities of representation and facilitation of voice can only be addressed by establishing a trusting relationship between filmmaker and participants. This article will examine the importance of implementing an ethical approach that fosters trusting and reciprocal relationships when working with potentially vulnerable participants, especially when representing their stories in audiovisual form.

Sharing Stories

There is an increasing number of films, both fiction and documentary, seeking to "convincingly convey the 'truth' of the lived experience" of the refugee in the emerging genre of "the refugee film" (Prime 1). Film festivals focusing on the stories of those in extreme transition encourage a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities for settlers in their new communities. Using film to share cross-cultural stories has the capacity to produce authentic accounts of every-day life (MacDougall; Pink and Leder Mackley); include those previously excluded from the public arena (Cox et al.); and engage and inform diverse audiences (Jackson; Mitchell). Importantly, recent attempts to encourage participants to become fully involved in the process of their own representation (Blomfield and Lenette; Emert; Lennette et al.; MacDougall; Pink) position film as "a key tool" for marginalised communities to engage in self-representation (Evans and Foster 88).

Furthermore, the power of images can present the opportunity to transform groups and individuals (O'Neill and Hubbard 48) by providing a space to perform identity, and this is significant in the context of renegotiated, reinvented identity as experienced by refugees. Identity performativity is especially important in the visual context as it can create a multilayered, potentially "authentic" representation of the self in a particular place and at a particular time, as well as strengthen connections to the past. Andrew Irving suggests that "memory is produced in the act of performance" (187), and memories are significant for people in transition as they begin to reinterpret their identities. Supporting participants to tell their own stories can facilitate a deep understanding of how people experience their daily lives and engage in processes of self-identity (Pink and Leder Mackley). Pink conceptualises film as "a route through which seeing and hearing can lead […] viewers to empathise with and imagine multisensory embodied experiences and not simply the aural and visual worlds of others" (Pink and Leder Mackley 8). Furthermore, the capacity to capture facial expressions enhances the telling of personal experiences (Pink and Leder Mackley) and can potentially promote empathy by encouraging the audience to go beyond spectatorship to evaluate the film participants' reactions to their lived experiences (Van de Peer).

Film as Advocacy: Presenting a Counter Narrative

Australia is experiencing a surge in conservative politics where the "issue" of refugees has been used by politicians as a tool for self-legitimisation (Burke; Devetak; Every). Asylum seekers and refugees are often portrayed sensationally in the tabloid media as faceless and dehumanised groups that threaten national security (Bleiker et al.). Representations of people in extreme transition in mainstream media do not provide agency for these people to speak for themselves, while not showing peoples' faces creates an emotional disconnect. Such representations are not conducive to promoting ethical practice, due to time and budget constraints, as well as a reluctance to allow participants to have a say in, and potentially the

power to veto, their representation (Thomas). In Australia, as in other Western countries like the UK, refugees are usually framed as a "problem" (Bleiker et al.) or are blamed for their own predicament (Kaye). Images inform and reinforce negative public opinion and hence political and social policy. An example of this negative representation of asylum seekers can be observed in the Tampa Affair, an event leading up to the 2001 Australian federal election where senior politicians released selective images of "boat people" seemingly throwing their children overboard. These deceptive and powerful images were used by conservative political and media commentators to justify a harsh stance on immigration detention (Slattery).

As ethical documentary making counters mainstream media's negative representations of refugees, it can provide a space for in-depth, potentially more trustworthy, accounts of transition that seek to encourage social action (Woolley). Michael Fischer confirms the power of film as a "cultural critique" but also a tool to "re-shape debate", especially for people from refugee backgrounds who, if supported, can use their agency to intervene in public debate to tell their own stories (128–9). For example, the Australian refugee documentary *Mary Meets Mohammad* (Heather Kirkpatrick, 2013), which tells the story of an elderly Australian woman's encounters with a male Muslim Hazara asylum seeker, had a clear intention to impact public discourse on asylum seekers (Khorana 72). Director Heather Kirkpatrick's deliberate aim to take the film to those who would not usually empathise saw some audience members (including detention security personal) re-evaluate their attitudes towards asylum seekers (Mathisen). Therefore, storytelling through film has the capacity to provide a counter narrative to the often-negative representation of refugees in mainstream culture (Blomfield and Lenette; Lenette et al.). The intention of the two films discussed in this article was to inform and engage diverse audiences to incite social action. Whilst connecting to film subjects on a personal level may increase levels of understanding, it also important that this new information is acted upon. My intention was that audience members act to support people in transition by increasing funding to community programmes, advocating for policy change, or simply extending an invitation to join a social network. These goals have been successful as I am aware of many positive actions from audience members and the 3Es program has secured additional government funding.

Figure 1: *The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour* (Mandy Hughes, 2015). Screenshot.

The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour is a short documentary (26 minutes) created in collaboration with a Myanmar former refugee community in Australia. The film depicted the participants' social connections to food, as well as their place in the community, and their re-emerging identities. Engagement with food is in itself a sensory experience on many different levels and it is appropriate to employ a sensory medium (video) to capture such interactions, feelings and experiences. Through food interactions, the film focuses on the settlement experiences of eight community members as they face the challenges and achievements associated with reinventing their lives in a new and foreign land after living for many years in refugee camps and transition countries. It is important to recognise the capacity of food-orientated representations of minority groups to oversimplify their identities and ethnicise people "through what and how they eat" (Probyn 28). However, the focus on food in my documentary was willingly adopted by participants who repeatedly stated their joy in sharing their culture through this lens. *The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour* brings into focus differences and commonalities through "showing" the "unsayable" in a way that both shares and creates new knowledge (MacDougall 5). In this case, the knowledge created served to inform and engage the broader community, some of whom had limited awareness of their new community members' life experiences.

3Es to Freedom (17 minutes) was made to document a supported employment programme for women from refugee backgrounds now residing in regional Australia. The community organisation delivering the programme sought an engaging way to not only share a narrative about the features of the programme, but, more importantly, the experiences of the participating women. The organisation also intended to use the film to report back to funders about the success of the programme. Film was chosen as the medium to do this for a variety of reasons already outlined, including its capacity to empower the participants to tell their own stories, and its ability to promote empathy and action by sharing tangible, sensitive and emotive accounts of the programme's impact.

Additional aims of the two films were to share stories that contributed to community education and that enhanced social connectedness and feelings of empowerment in relation to specific experiences, such as interacting with traditional foods or seeking employment. The purpose of the films was to support people in transition to be heard and acknowledged in their communities. Such a desire demanded a collaborative approach, based on respectful interactions with participants that "move[d] beyond harm minimization … to bring about reciprocal benefits for refugee participants and/or communities" (Mackenzie et al. 299).

Working Collaboratively

A collaborative approach can be implemented in a number of ways depending on technical ability/interest from participants, the intended audience (Evans and Foster) and consideration of the ethical issues of identification and anonymity (Hernandez-Albujar; Matthews and Singh). Participants were consulted about the direction of the films and the representation of people and issues. Participants did not seek to film any of the content, although this option was offered. Respectful negotiation and collaboration should always be present in documentary, which means frequently checking with participants to ensure that they are happy with the filmmaking process and to identify any concerns that need to be addressed. In the case of *The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour*, the filming process was explained and demonstrated, and participants were given the opportunity to preview rough cuts, provide feedback and request changes before the final films were screened.

Raw footage and editing capacities were demonstrated to participants who visited my office located on a university campus. Participants could also view unedited footage played back on the camera after filming. The aim was for participants to be fully informed about how the final product might emerge and how they would be represented, which is an essential part of the ethics process in using visual research methods in a social research context (Pink and Leder Mackley). Participants could also opt out of the films at any time and had the right to veto any material that they did not wish to be included. In this way, participants were guaranteed a role in shaping the film and developing a sense of ownership.

I used focused ethnography as my main methodological approach in *The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour* to interact with participants and represent their lived experiences. Focused ethnography draws on the anthropological tradition of participant observation, but is characterised by shorter periods of fieldwork and a narrower focus of investigation (Knoblauch). In *3Es to Freedom*, I used a less academic approach to get to know and interact with participants in order to document the participants' experiences. Both films were produced over approximately ten months, during which time I developed trusting relationships with the participants. Methods for both included observation, conversations, unstructured and structured interviews, walking interviews (see O'Neill and Hubbard; Pink) and participating in social events. These methods were used in a way to understand experiences rather than control them (Higgs 46). The documentaries were made with lightweight, unobtrusive camera equipment with no intervention in lighting or setting.

Figure 2: Conversations during food preparation allowed for casual interactions.
The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour. **Screenshot.**

Semi-formal interviews were used as part of the filming process and it is important to acknowledge that the interviews (especially those on camera) may not necessarily be perceived as "collaborative". Bill Nichols characterises interviews as a "form of hierarchical discourse [...] with an unequal distribution of power" (47). Whilst this conceptualisation of interviews may have historic validity, and such a style of interviewing still exists in mainstream media, it

differs considerably from the model embraced in my films. A more reciprocal interview style was achieved through developing positive relationships with participants over time prior to filming and adopting a conversational, empathetic tone, which reflected my genuine interest in wanting to hear the stories being told. This more casual approach was also achieved by avoiding overly structured interviews and allowing the conversation to develop in a participant-led direction. Although in the early phase of fieldwork I did have a list of questions to prompt me, I soon disregarded this approach. I always asked participants if they were happy to talk about the issues I raised and at the end of interviews I asked if there was anything else they wished to discuss or revisit.

It is important to note that language could have been a potential barrier to appearing on camera. For *The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour*, I had originally intended to conduct interviews in English. This presented a dilemma as I did not want to exclude anyone from the film, but I needed to be realistic about what was achievable within the context of my own language skills and limited budget. However, a community leader sourced interpreters, in some cases the community leader himself, as he was a qualified interpreter. Participants' responses were then translated into English. In the case of *3Es to Freedom,* professional language services were provided by the partner organisation and interviews were subtitled based on the recorded translations made by the interpreters at the time of interview.

Both films are similar in terms of style and aesthetics. The films are observational, but also include conventional interview structure and framing. The style is deliberately understated and naturalistic to prioritise the participants' stories. Lighting is natural so as not to alter the "lived experience" of the participants. There was, however, one instance where a participant wished to set up additional lighting and rearrange furniture in their lounge room. Although I felt the additional lighting was unnecessary, I could see their delight in participating in the production process.

if we cook, next seven doors down

Figure 3: Engagement with the filmmaker. *The Last Refuge:*
*Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour***. Screenshot.**

My on-screen presence was kept to a minimum throughout my films, though there is some engagement at times, including me accepting a plate of food from behind the camera and the inclusion of some questions. In some instances, I made a deliberate choice to call attention

to my presence to acknowledge "the body behind the camera" (such as including my reflection in some scenes) (MacDougall 3). When choosing a stylistic approach for my films, I considered Nichols's exploration of representing reality in the documentary form. Nichols emphasises the highly constructed nature of documentary and having this awareness requires the filmmaker to make decisions about what conventions they will use to mediate what will always be a subjective and contested representation of the "truth".

Ethical Encounters: Power, Informed Consent and Reciprocity

Acknowledging and addressing power relations should be fundamental when collaborating with any film participants. This is especially important when working with marginalised communities and even more so when working with refugee women who have experienced multiple intersections of disempowerment. Differences in culture, gender and access to power must be acknowledged (Elder 94). Reflecting on my position of privilege as a white, middle-class woman was essential in getting to know and ultimately collaborating with the film participants. However, it soon became clear that being female was an advantage and, in fact, a requirement for developing trust and ease in *3Es to Freedom*.

The two films were made as a component of social science research projects, hence ethical approval was sought and approved by the university ethics committee. High ethical standards should be at the forefront of all social research, but working in an audiovisual medium comes with added precautions as anonymity is not always preserved. It was therefore necessary to apply the principles of ethical filmmaking, especially in relation to the filmmaker–participant relationship. Kate Nash reminds us that foundational documentary makers paid little regard to equitable and inclusive relationships between subject and filmmaker and that the participant was often rendered powerless ("Beyond"; "Exploring"). Drawing on Calvin Pryluck's analysis, Nash describes how filmmakers have taken advantage of their participants through "conning and manipulation" and the use of intimidating equipment, as well as the exclusion of participants from the creative process of representation (23). Representation of reality has also come under scrutiny in response to early documentaries like Robert Flaherty's 1922 classic *Nanook of the North*, whereby many scenes were highly staged for audience entertainment (Nistor). An ideal model of ethical documentary making would be one where the filmmaker deliberately avoids the "subject" mentality and surrenders their privileged and powerful role as chief orchestrator, thus taking "the stance of an advocate or enabler" (Brian Winston, qtd. in Nash, "Beyond" 23). I adopted such an approach to maximise inclusiveness and develop the trust of my participants.

Authentic, informed consent was the foundation of participation in the two films, as it should be in all documentary ventures. Therefore, I adopted an "iterative" approach (Mackenzie et al.), whereby trust and understanding were fostered over a period of time and revisited at different stages of the study (Cox et al.; Thomas). This negotiation of informed consent is essential in seeking to promote participant autonomy and self-determination (Mackenzie et al.). Participants were introduced to consent forms at initial meetings where they were explained in English and then translated into first languages. In some cases, family members who were more confident in speaking English were consulted. Consent forms were only signed once each person was interviewed, and the translator and I were satisfied that understanding had taken place about the context, form and implications of appearing in the films.

Participating in a filmmaking project should have benefits for all contributors, and in this context it can represent a kind of "narrative therapy" (Thomas 334) and means of empowerment (Fischer 130). The potential healing power of storytelling for people from refugee backgrounds has been documented by Norwegian researchers Kari Dyregrov, Atle Dyregrov and Magne Raundalen, who found the benefits to include feeling empowered "when taken seriously and being the focus of caring attention" (414). During my time engaging with the Myanmar community whilst making *The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour,* I enjoyed getting to know the participants and hearing their stories. I believe they also found pleasure in telling me about their cultural ways and their personal stories. Several participants stated that telling their stories on camera "made [them] feel proud". An important consideration was my awareness that it can be painful for refugee research participants to relive traumatic experiences.

Anonymity is another important ethical consideration for filmmakers, especially when working with people in extreme transition. Security concerns for people from refugee backgrounds can continue well into their settlement period in their new homes (STARTTS). However, if participants choose to reveal their identity after a process of informed consent, this can transform an anonymous informant into a "person 'with a face'" (Filak and Gorišek 1) and someone with whom the audience can connect. This is still a contentious idea within the context of the ethical review process (Allen; Yang) and anonymity remains the norm in many fields of research. I had planned to accommodate this preference by offering participants the option to appear anonymously (i.e. with their faces overlaid with complementary vision and using their audio only); however, all participants opted to be revealed on screen. Mike Evans asks: "can community centred research [filmmaking] be respectfully undertaken while embracing the notion of anonymity of research participants?" (60). Evans suggests that anonymity can in fact have the effect of obscuring voice (72). In fact, anonymity can sometimes be in opposition to the aims of a study seeking to promote empowerment and can nullify agency (Allen; Cox et al.; Yang). Anonymity can also obscure subtle but important details such as facial expressions and associated emotions (Allen).

In *3Es to Freedom*, the women portrayed have faced considerable trauma in their country of origin and during transition and have, in some cases, been subjected to family violence, thus making them potentially vulnerable participants needing extra care. It was therefore important that the guidelines for ethical filmmaking (Nash, "Beyond"), reciprocal research (Mackenzie et al.) and informed consent were closely followed. I spent several months observing and participating in activities including walking groups, swimming classes, social activities and formal classes before undertaking any filming. Some women in the group did not want to be filmed and so to respect their wishes these women were always framed out of the camera's view. Of the women who chose to appear on camera, one had opted to have her face "blurred" into anonymity. But after becoming more comfortable with the camera being around and viewing some of the footage, this woman changed her mind and chose to show her face. This preference was confirmed with the participant after she viewed the final edited version of the film where she stood by her decision to appear on camera. In negotiating the women's appearances on screen I was constantly reminded of the responsibility I had to avoid stereotypical representations of migrant women as visual symbols of their culture. Although some of the women participants wore the veil, I sought to avoid "cultural curiosity" and an overemphasis on this specific cultural symbol and aimed to capture all women in the programme equally, regardless of dress.

Figure 4: *3Es to Freedom* **(Mandy Hughes, 2017), Anglicare North Coast/Southern Cross University. Screenshot.**

A requirement for obtaining ethical approval from the university ethics committee was the need to ensure benefits to the participants (National Health and Medical Research Council). In making *The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour*, community leaders and key informants did stress the need for some kind of benefit in order for the participants to give up their time and be part of my film. There is, however, ongoing debate about the appropriateness and potential undue influence associated with providing monetary compensation for research participants (Largent and Fernandez Lynch). If implemented responsibly, monetary compensation should not be problematic; however, I chose to emphasise the social benefits of the research, such as influencing future and current policy, and provision of services to this and future groups. Another benefit was the opportunity to come together as a group and represent traditions and culture in a positive way by telling their stories and sharing them with the local community in the form of film screenings.

Screening Strategies

The screening strategy for *The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour* was initially to show the film at small, community-based venues. The first screening was with participants for them to provide feedback on their experience of witnessing their own stories on screen. With participant approval, and with suggested changes made, the film was screened at a local multicultural festival. However, interest in the film led to an expansion that saw screenings at a national touring cultural diversity film festival and selection in international ethnographic film festivals in Finland, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Mexico and Canada. The film was later used by the Myanmar community at local cultural celebrations and distributed to other Myanmar communities in Australia and in other settler nations.

The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour has been screened by local educational institutions and the film plays a particularly important educative role in the current Australian discourse on refuge asylum seeker issues. Several audience members were surprised to learn that some of the participants had secured paid employment and were not a burden to the community, as is so often portrayed in conservative political discourse. Screening the film locally allowed the community to raise its profile and speak on its own terms. The

subjective process of editing will never allow for representations to be "transparent", but by collaborating with the participants and encouraging them to approve their own stories, I can hope that some authenticity was achieved.

3Es to Freedom was never intended to have a wide, public audience and this feature contributed to the participants' agreement to appear on camera. Instead, the film was screened privately to funders and other stakeholders. The film was also screened at an invitation-only event to celebrate the programme's success by showcasing the participants' achievements. All participants were interviewed informally after the screening to ask how they felt about watching themselves and other people witnessing their stories, and all agreed they felt "good", "proud" and "happy". The funders shared some of this sentiment as the programme was extended for two years, encompassing two additional geographic locations with populations of migrant women. Screenings, albeit small private screenings, can have significant impact by being celebratory (Emert) and focusing on achievement in settlement (Lennette et al.), as opposed to challenges and hardships, which are already well publicised.

Reflections on Making the Films

Making the two films was an overwhelmingly positive experience and the documented impact of the films confirms the validity of using audiovisual means to tell stories of transition. Important considerations included ensuring informed consent was appropriately negotiated and ethical filmmaking was implemented throughout (Nash, "Beyond"; Thomas). One minor challenge was the problematic nature of working within one's own community or doing "anthropology at home" (Mughal). In the tradition of ethnography, a filmmaker/researcher will have a clearly delineated entrance and exit to the field (Bird; Sarantakos; Whitehead). This is easily achievable when engaging with a different culture in a foreign land where the researcher has clearly identified the entry and exit points. When the research community resides within your own community, these entry and exit points are not so distinguishable. However, I can identify clear moments when my role transformed from outsider to filmmaker to friend. Importantly, my entry to the field was permitted after I was "screened" by community leaders and staff, and then invited to meet potential participants. My invitation to become a friend came once trust was established over time.

I believe the film projects were successful in terms of meeting and going beyond the filmmaker and partner's hopes and objectives. Measuring success is contentious and subjective in relation to film success or distribution. In this instance, Sukhmani Khorana's concept of "ethical witnessing" can be applied. Success was never going to be determined by audience reach; instead, success was measured by participants' feelings about the film and by locating the "right" audience, an audience that would act upon reception of these narratives. Despite the perceived success associated with selection in international film festivals, *The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Myanmar to Coffs Harbour*'s most "successful" screenings were local. One screening was at a Myanmar community-run event with no input from the filmmaker, the other was for a small Sunday afternoon arts group with a deep desire to support people from refugee backgrounds. Both screenings represented a highlight for me in terms of positive engagement with these stories of transition.

Ultimately, success revolves around assessing the participants' experiences of being in the film. Kim problematises Western portrayals of migrants as "shallow" and "patronizing" (59) but I believe it is possible to achieve a middle ground, one where nonmigrants initiate the

filmmaking process in a manner that is ethical and allows participants to speak for themselves and tell their own stories of transition, both positive and negative. Such an approach portrays people in extreme transition as the experts on their own lives and should assist in achieving agency, a notion far removed from the helplessness of the faceless, threatening refugee so often circulated in mainstream media representation.

References

Allen, Louisa. "Losing Face? Photo-Anonymisation and Visual Research Integrity." *Visual Studies*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2015, pp. 295–308, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2015.1016741.

Bershen, Wanda. "A Question of Ethics: The Relationship Between Filmmaker and Subject." *International Documentary Association*, 30 Sept. 2010, documentary.org/feature/question-ethics-relationship-between-filmmaker-and-subject.

Bird, Jessica Nancy. *"Talking with Lips": Settlement, Transnationalism and Identity of Karen People from Burma Living in Brisbane, Australia*. 2013. Queensland University of Technology, PhD dissertation.

Bleiker, Roland, et al. "The Visual Dehumanisation of Refugees." *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 48, no. 4, 2013, pp. 398–416, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2013.840769.

Blomfield, Isobel, and Caroline Lenette. "Artistic Representations of Refugees: What Is the Role of the Artist?" *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2018, pp. 322–38, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2018.1459517.

Burke, Anthony. *Fear of Security: Australia's Invasion Anxiety*. Cambridge UP, 2008, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511720543.

Cox, Susan, et al. *Guidelines for Ethical Visual Research Methods*. Visual Research Collaboratory, 2014.

Devetak, Richard. "In fear of Refugees: The Politics of Border Protection in Australia." *The International Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2004, pp. 101–9, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1364298042000212565.

Dyregrov, Kari, et al. "Refugee Families' Experience of Research Participation." *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2000, pp. 413–26, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007777006605.

Elder, Sarah. "Collaborative Filmmaking: An Open Space for Making Meaning, A Moral Ground for Ethnographic Film." *Visual Anthropology Review*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1995, pp. 94–101, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/var.1995.11.2.94.

Emert, Toby. "'The Transpoemations Project': Digital Storytelling, Contemporary Poetry, and Refugee Boys." *Intercultural Education*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2013, pp. 355–65, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2013.809245.

Evans, Mike. "Ethics, Anonymity, and Authorship on Community Centred Research or Anonymity and the Island Cache." *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2004, pp. 59–75.

Evans, Mike, and Stephen Foster. "Representation in Participatory Video: Some Considerations from Research with Métis in British Columbia." *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 43, no.1, 2009, pp. 87–108, DOI: https://doi.org/10.3138/jcs.43.1.87.

Every, Danielle, and Martha Augoustinos. "Constructions of Australia in Pro- and Anti-Asylum Seeker Political Discourse." *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2008, pp. 562–80, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2008.00356.x.

Filak, Manca, and Žiga Gorišek. "Making and Presenting Ethnographic Films: Practical and Ethical Dilemmas in Visual Anthropology." *EthnoAnthropoZoom/ЕтноАнтропоЗум*, vol. 12, 2016, pp. 97–117.

Fischer, Michael M. J. "Starting Over: How, What, and For Whom Does One Write about Refugees? The Poetics and Politics of Refugee Film as Ethnographic Access in a Media-Saturated World." *Mistrusting Refugees*, edited by E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen, U of California P, 1995, pp. 126–50.

Flaherty, Robert, director. *Nanook of the North*. Revillon Frères, 1922.

Hernandez-Albujar, Yolanda. "The Symbolism of Video: Exploring Migrant Mothers' Experiences." *Visual Research Methods: Image, Society, and Representation*, edited by Gregory C. Stanczak, Sage, 2007, pp. 281–307.

Higgs, Joy. "Charting Standpoints in Qualitative Research." *Critical Moments in Qualitative Research*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2001, pp. 44–67.

Hughes, Mandy, director. *The Last Refuge: Food Stories from Coffs Harbour*. 2015.

---. *3Es to Freedom*. Anglicare North Coast/Southern Cross University, 2017.

Irving, Andrew. "Ethnography, Art, and Death." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2007, pp. 185–208, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2007.00420.x.

Jackson Jr, John L. "Theorizing Production/Producing Theory (Or, Why Filmmaking Really Could Count as Scholarship)." *Cultural Studies*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2014, pp. 531–44, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2014.888925.

Kaye, Ronald. "'Blaming the Victim': An Analysis of Press Representation of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in the United Kingdom in the 1990s." *Media and Migration*. Routledge, 2013.

Khorana, Sukhmani. "Self-Distribution and *Mary Meets Mohammad*: Towards Ethical Witnessing." *Studies in Australasian Cinema*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2015, pp. 66–76, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/17503175.2014.1002271.

Kirkpatrick, Heather, director. *Mary Meets Mohammad*. Waratah Films, 2013.

Kim, Mee Hyun. "Are There 'Proper' Migrants? The Making of Affective Personhood through Films by Migrants in South Korea." *Visuality, Emotions and Minority Culture: Feeling Ethnic*, edited by John Nguyet Erni, Springer, 2016, pp. 57–70, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-53861-6_5.

Knoblauch, Hubert. "Focused Ethnography." *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2005, www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/20/43.

Largent, Emily A., and Holly Fernandez Lynch. "Paying Research Participants: The Outsized Influence of 'Undue Influence'." *IRB*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2017, pp. 1–9.

Lenette, Caroline, et al. "Digital Storytelling as a Social Work Tool: Learning from Ethnographic Research with Women from Refugee Backgrounds." *The British Journal of Social Work*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2013, pp. 988–1005, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bct184.

MacDougall, David. *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*. Princeton UP, 2005, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400831562.

Mackenzie, Catriona, et al. "Beyond 'Do No Harm': The Challenge of Constructing Ethical Relationships in Refugee Research." *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2007, pp. 299–319, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fem008.

Mathisen, Karl. "Can *Mary Meets Mohammad* Challenge Attitudes about Asylum Seekers?" *The Guardian*. 12 Sept. 2013, theguardian.com/culture/australia-culture-blog/2013/sep/12/mary-meets-mohammad-review.

Matthews, Julie, and Parlo Singh. "Visual Methods in the Social Sciences: Refugee Background Young People." *The International Journal of interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, vol. 4, no. 10, 2009, pp. 59–70, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18848/1833-1882/CGP/v04i10/53007.

Mitchell, Claudia. *Doing Visual Research*. Sage, 2011.

Mughal, Muhammad Aurang Zeb. "Being and Becoming Native: A Methodological Enquiry into Doing Anthropology at Home." *Anthropological Notebooks*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2015, pp. 121–32.

Nash, Kate. "Exploring Power and Trust in Documentary: A Study of Tom Zubrycki's *Molly and Mobarak*." *Studies in Documentary Film*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2010, pp. 21–33, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1386/sdf.4.1.21_1.

---. "Beyond the Frame: Researching Documentary Ethics." *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Programs*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2011, pp. 1–13.

---. "Telling Stories: The Narrative Study of Documentary Ethics." *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2012, pp. 318–31, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/17400309.2012.693765.

National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee. *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. Commonwealth of Australia. 1 Feb. 2018, nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018.

Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Indiana UP, 1991.

Nistor, Adina-Loredana. "Representing Reality in Ethnographic Film Before and in the 60s: *Nanook of the North* and *Dead Birds*." *Coming Together or Coming Apart: Europe and the United States in the 1960s*, Intensive Seminar, 12–24 September 2011, Berlin. Conference Presentation.

O'Neill, Maggie, and Phil Hubbard. "Walking, Sensing, Belonging: Ethno-Mimesis as Performative Praxis." *Visual Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2010, pp. 46–58, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14725861003606878.

Pink, Sarah. *Doing Visual Ethnography*. Sage, 2007, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857025029.

---. "Walking with Video." *Visual Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2007, pp. 240–52, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14725860701657142.

Pink, Sarah, and Kerstin Leder Mackley. "Video and a Sense of the Invisible: Approaching Domestic Energy Consumption through the Sensory Home." *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1–19, DOI: https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.2583.

Prime, Rebecca. "Stranger than Fiction: Generic Hybridity in Refugee Film." *Postscript*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2006, pp. 55–62.

Probyn, Elspeth. "Queer Fish: Eating Ethnic Affect." *Visuality, Emotions and Minority Culture: Feeling Ethnic*, edited by John Nguyet Erni, Springer, 2016, pp. 57–70, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-53861-6_3.

Sarantakos, Sotirios. *Social Research*. 3rd ed., Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Slattery, Kate. "Drowning Not Waving: The 'Children Overboard' Event and Australia's Fear of the Other." *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture and Policy*, vol. 109, no. 1 2003, pp. 93–108, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X0310900110.

STARTTS. *Core Concepts in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds*. Workshop publication, Coffs Harbour, Australia, 2014.

Thomas, Steve. "Collaboration and Ethics in Documentary Filmmaking—A Case Study." *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2012, pp. 332–43, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/17400309.2012.695979.

Van de Peer, Stefanie. "The Physicalities of Documentaries by African Women." *Critical Interventions*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2011, pp. 135–53, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/19301944.2011.10781405.

Whitehead, Tony L. "What is Ethnography? Methodological, Ontological, and Epistemological Attributes." *Ethnographically Informed Community and Cultural Assessment Research Systems (EICCARS) Working Paper Series, University of Maryland. College Park, MD*, 1 Nov. 2016, popcenter.umd.edu/research/working-papers/mprc_series.

Wiebe, Sarah Marie. "Decolonizing Engagement? Creating a Sense of Community through Collaborative Filmmaking." *Studies in Social Justice*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2015, pp. 244–57, DOI: https://doi.org/10.26522/ssj.v9i2.1141.

Woolley, Agnes. *Contemporary Asylum Narratives: Representing Refugees in the Twenty-First Century*. Springer, 2014, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137299062.

Yang, Kyung-Hwa. "Voice, Authenticity and Ethical Challenges: The Participatory Dissemination of Youth-Generated Visual Data over Social Media." *Visual Studies,* vol. 30, no. 3, 2015, pp. 309–18, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2015.1017364.

Suggested Citation

Mandy Hughes is a lecturer in sociology at Southern Cross University, Australia. Her doctoral and post-doctoral projects, from which this article is drawn, examined the lived experiences of former refugees, now residing in a regional city. Mandy has a strong commitment to using audiovisual materials to communicate cultural and social justice issues. Her research interests include refugee studies, regional communities, visual research, documentary, food security/food sovereignty, Communication for Development (C4D), and sociology of health. Mandy worked previously for ABC and SBS, Australia's public broadcasters, and she has also worked in international and community development.