

# CONCEALING IDENTITY



In many situations it may be necessary to protect the anonymity of the people you record. In general, shooting high-quality footage in the field and then altering it with an editing program will give you the most options for concealing identity. Editing tools will allow you to blur faces and distort voices beyond recognition. However, security should always be your main concern. If there is a high threat of your original material being confiscated, it is better to conceal identity during the filming process.

## **Concealing Identity Techniques While Filming**

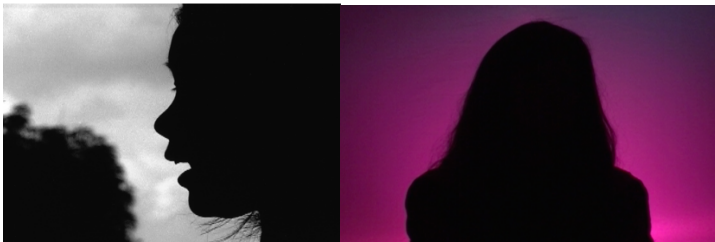
There are several options for concealing identity while recording. You can film an interviewee wearing a non-distinctive article of clothing that covers much of their face, focus only on their hands, or simply record out of focus. If you are concerned that your video might be seized before you can upload it – look into using a tool that is on your own mobile device (for example, WITNESS and the Guardian Project's ObscuraCam app for Android phones).



*Examples of Concealing Identity in the Field*

## **Silhouette Effect**

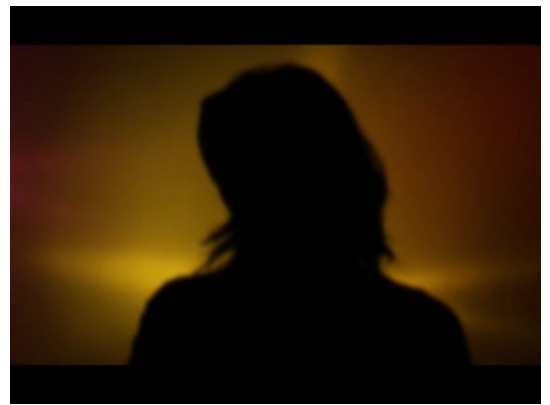
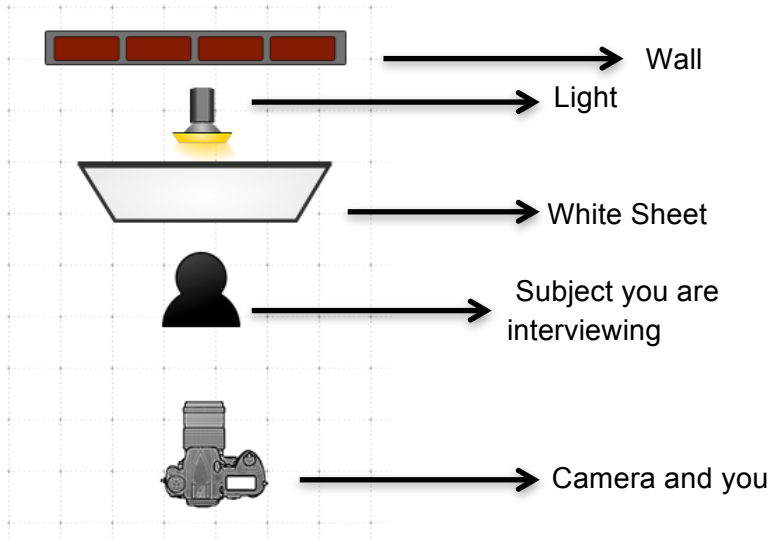
A common technique used by filmmakers is to apply strong lighting behind an interview to turn a person's image into an unrecognizable silhouette.



*Examples of Concealing Identity Through a Silhouette*

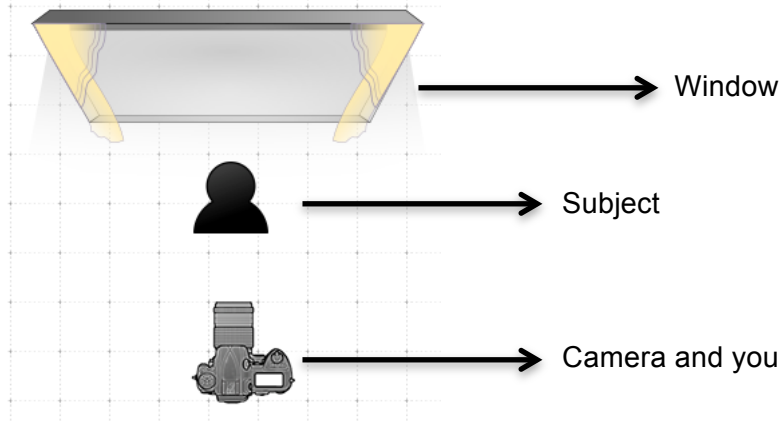
The first step in creating a silhouette is to backlight the subject. Two ways to do this are to either place strong electric lighting behind the person or position the person in front of a window and have the light filter in from behind them. When creating a silhouette, you should make sure that the room is as dark as possible and that there is a light-weight fabric between the light and the subject you are interviewing, such as a white bed sheet, in order to diffuse the light.

### How to Set up if Using a Light



*Example of backlighting using a light*

### If Using a Window as a Light Source:

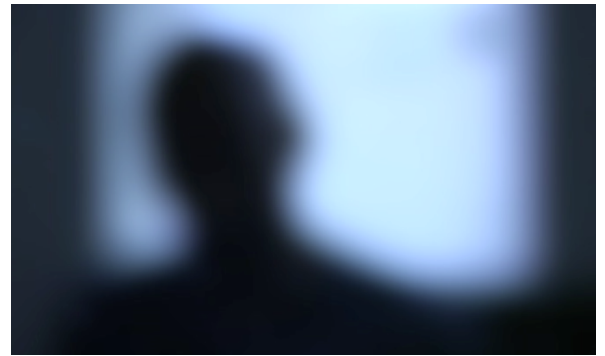


*Example of backlighting using a window*

Next you will have to manually adjust the exposure on the camera so that it lets in less light and darkens the person's face. Note that when your footage is viewed on larger screens, the image may appear brighter than it does on your small camera screen. Adjust your exposure so it is slightly darker than appears necessary. When possible, flip over your camera's LCD screen to get your interviewee's approval of the image.

### **Creating a Blur for Added Security**

While it is difficult to make out a person's identity from a silhouette, your interviewee may not feel comfortable with their outline being visible or the background in the picture may reveal your location. For an additionally secure image, you can use your camera's manual focus to blur the image. Adjust the focus setting so the interviewee's silhouette becomes slightly out of focus. Modify the setting so the effect is subtle while still blurring any identifiable features. If done correctly, your image will be unrecognizable to anyone viewing your footage but remember that the voice will still be identifiable.



***Example of Manual Focus Blur on a Silhouette***

### **While Recording Remember to:**

- Ask the interviewee not to refer to places, locations, or people who are identifiable and specific.
- Never identify their name on camera.
- Ask them to wear non-distinctive clothes.
- Always make sure to keep records, memory cards, and files in a secure place.

### **Concealing Identity During the Edit:**

Most editing software will allow you to both blur and distort voices beyond recognition. During the editing process it is also possible to make sound edits to remove name and place indicators. Although editing tools will allow you the most options of concealing identity, remember your raw unedited footage can be a liability for both you and the people you film.



***Examples of altering image in post-production***

## **YouTube Face Blurring Tool:**

YouTube offers a tool that allows you to obscure the identity of faces in the videos you upload through the site. Once you've privately uploaded your video to YouTube you can edit your video with the face blurring tool then post only the blurred video online (you should remove the intact version from YouTube for safekeeping).

See this link for instructions

<http://youtube-global.blogspot.com/search?q=face+blur>

Remember blurring does not guarantee protection. A person can be identified from many different elements in a video. Some of these are visible – for example, an identifiable location you are in, or a distinctive item of clothing you wear. Some of them are heard – you may have a distinctive voice or accent. Beyond this, remember that the username of the uploader or their IP address might be trackable, and via the person who uploaded the video people seen in the video might be identified.

