



**Observational narratives and feminist practice: An analysis of Kim Longinotto's documentary filmmaking using *Rough Aunties* (2008) as a case study.**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Media and Cultural Studies in the Graduate Programme in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

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## Acknowledgments

It was quite impossible to complete this project alone, and therefore, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the many people and organisations that provided various support:

This material is based upon work supported financially by the National Research Foundation (NRF) and therefore I acknowledge the National Research Foundation who funded the commencing and completion of this investigation. However, any opinion, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and the NRF does not accept any liability in regard thereto.

I would like to extend a huge amount of gratitude to Kim Longinotto, who has been more than generous in her communications with me. I must also thank Mildred Ngcobo, who provided invaluable and rare insight into being Longinotto's subject, and Jackie Branfield and the Bobbi Bear team for allowing me access to their workplace and *Rough Aunties* (2008). I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Anton van der Hoven, for his tireless work and patience. It has been an absolute privilege to learn from him. I must also thank my co-supervisor and friend, Subeshini Moodley, who provided moral, academic and administrative support over the years. Thanks also go to Jane Argall, the editor, for her thorough review and endorsement of the final draft.

I thank my parents, Jean and Dragan Milojkovic, for their substantial financial support, their trust and patience which mobilised me to do this work. I am so grateful that they chose this degree as an investment, which I will treasure forever. I hope you will be proud. To my partner, James Theil, for his enduring support, mostly expressed through long deliberations over documentary, feminist film and my fascination with this subject.

I must also say thank you to the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Media and Cultural Studies department. Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank family and friends for the prayers said over this project. These prayers were answered in their entirety.

## Abstract

This research is primarily focused on the feminist filmmaker Kim Longinotto's South African-based documentary *Rough Aunties* (2008). Through a process of close analysis it aims to describe how Longinotto structures the observational material that she gathered for this film; to place this analysis in the context of her other films that share thematic and stylistic similarities; and to explore the link between these filmmaking techniques and Longinotto's feminist agenda. Despite her films falling into what Nichols (2001) describes as the observational mode, this research argues that Bruzzi's (2000, 2006) concept of the mixed-mode documentary provides a more appropriate framework for understanding Longinotto's films. In order to substantiate this view, this research draws on and adapts the analytical framework that Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008) use for the analysis of feature films and shows how Longinotto's film narrative is built out of a series of loosely interconnected *petits récits* (Lyotard, 1984, 1992), a technique which allows her to respect the unpredictable voices of her subjects and also to acknowledge the presence and significance of the camera. Examination of both these elements of Longinotto's film-making practice leads to the conclusion that Smail (2009) is correct when she argues that Longinotto is an underrated feminist filmmaker whose work provides an opportunity for the voices of women on the margins to be heard. The text-based analysis is supported by material drawn from two extended interviews: one with the filmmaker herself, the other with Mildred Ngcobo, one of the leading characters in *Rough Aunties*.

Keywords: Kim Longinotto, observational documentary, mixed-mode documentary, *petits récits*, narrative structure, third wave feminism, feminist filmmaking.

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Table of Figures.....	vii
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework.....	9
2.1 Introduction.....	9
2.2 Representation.....	11
2.2.1 Hall’s account of representation.....	13
2.2.2 Documentary film form and representation.....	17
2.2.3 Picturing truth: the representational potential of the image.....	22
2.3 Documentary forms.....	25
2.3.1 <i>Cinéma vérité</i> .....	28
2.3.2 Documentary practice.....	30
2.4 Crafting the story: Narrative structure and film form.....	34
2.5 Feminist theory.....	38
2.5.1 Acknowledging the Third World woman.....	40
2.5.2 Feminist film practice.....	46
3. Methodology.....	49
3.1 Introduction.....	49
3.2 Film selection.....	49
3.3 Formal analysis.....	50
3.3.1 Documentary studies.....	50
3.3.2 The elements of film form.....	52
3.3.3 Adapting formal analysis.....	54
3.4 The interviews.....	58
3.4.1 The online interviews.....	59
3.4.2 The face-to-face interview.....	61
3.4.3 Authenticity and reliability.....	62
3.4.4 Ethical considerations.....	63

4.	Formal Visual Analysis of <i>Rough Aunties</i> (2008).....	65
4.1.	Introduction .....	65
4.2	<i>Rough Aunties</i> : Structure, salient techniques, their patterns and functions .....	66
4.2.1	Synopsis of <i>Rough Aunties</i> (2008).....	66
4.2.2	Establishing structure.....	67
4.2.3	Dramatic curve or <i>petits récits</i> ? .....	72
4.2.4	Longinotto’s ‘pillow shots’ .....	77
4.2.5	<i>Rough Aunties</i> and the conventions of documentary form.....	80
4.2.6	Cinematography and <i>mise-en-scène</i> .....	94
4.2.7	Sound .....	104
4.2.8	Discussion.....	106
5.	Longinotto’s Feminist Film Activism .....	112
5.1	The process of filmmaking: Negotiating representation .....	112
5.2	Honesty in documentary filmmaking.....	119
5.3	Longinotto’s feminism .....	122
5.4	The role of the medium .....	125
5.5	The ethics of representation.....	128
6.	Conclusion.....	132
	Filmography .....	138
	Bibliography .....	139
	Appendix 1 .....	143
	Appendix 2 .....	155
	Appendix 3 .....	173
	Appendix 4 .....	187

## Table of Figures

Figure 1: The dramatic curve .....	32
Figure 2: Levels of conflict in <i>Rough Aunties</i> .....	68
Figure 3: Colour-coded visual breakdown of the film.....	69
Figure 4: Narrative beats and their level of conflict in a three-act structure .....	71
Figure 5: <i>Rough Aunties</i> title shot.....	75
Figure 6: The team enters the Bobbi Bear house. ....	76
Figure 7: Pillow shot: man on bicycle .....	78
Figure 8: Pillow shot: young men playing soccer (Exterior).....	79
Figure 9: Text as an expository feature to give information .....	81
Figure 10: Mildred uses a bear for therapeutic counselling. ....	81
Figure 11: Mildred's son looks into the camera. ....	82
Figure 12: Child looks into the camera. ....	82
Figure 13: Sdudla in search of a woman who dumped her baby (Exterior). ....	86
Figure 14: Medium shot of Sdudla.....	87
Figure 15: Text informs the viewer of Mildred's resolution to her narrative.....	91
Figure 16: Eureka's importance is signalled in the screen text.....	92
Figure 17: Nonhlanhla is reunited with Jackie's daughter, Sindi .....	92
Figure 18: Close-up of Jackie in conversation with Thuli .....	95
Figure 19: Close-up of Mildred .....	96
Figure 20: Close-up of young girl in counselling .....	96
Figure 21: Pillow shot of girl on trampoline.....	97
Figure 22: Jackie gives a speech at Shubaba's funeral.....	99
Figure 23: An alleged perpetrator is lit by torch light.....	99
Figure 24: Mildred and Eureka celebrate the charge against 'Thobile's mum' .....	100
Figure 25: Colourful bottles blurred in the foreground .....	101
Figure 26: Thuli's handbag in the foreground.....	102
Figure 27: Piles of paper in the foreground. Pictures in the background.....	102
Figure 28: Water from a running tap misses the bucket beneath it.....	104

## 1. Introduction

This project is an examination of some of the films made by the contemporary British documentary filmmaker Kim Longinotto, with particular emphasis on *Rough Aunties*, the film she made in South Africa in 2008. The project aims to investigate the ways in which an accomplished filmmaker like Longinotto manages both to observe and record events as they unfold – following what documentary theory usually refers to as the observational mode – but is also able to shape her films into satisfying communicative forms that have the capacity to engage and move her audiences. Equally importantly, the project hopes to shed light on the ways in which Longinotto’s filmmaking can be regarded not merely as a process through which she represents others to a larger audience but as a kind of feminist media activism that gives her subjects an opportunity to represent themselves and, in so doing, gives them a renewed sense of their own capacity to change lives, both their own and those of others around them.

The first of these two issues concerns how Longinotto finds and then shapes her observational material into highly realistic but also narratively satisfying forms. The word ‘but’ is used in this description because the notion of narrative structure, and the dramatic curve that such a structure is usually thought to entail, run counter to the randomness associated with on-the-ground, real-time observation. Critics of observational documentary often argue that it runs the risk of becoming voiceless, a kind of filmic orphan that lacks the artful construction, engaging narrative and auteurist elements usually found in good films (Rabiger, 1998, 2004). However, Longinotto’s work seems to defy this argument and manages both to maintain a strong fidelity to the events it depicts (even as it remains a representation that must be distinguished from what it records) and to shape the films into works that are both personal, and narratively and aesthetically appealing. Thus, the first key research objective is to analyse Longinotto’s films in order to understand how her seemingly artless observational narratives are shaped into satisfying and coherent films.



The second research question concerns the link between Longinotto's chosen style and the potential for documentary filmmaking to serve a positive social purpose. Many of the subjects that she chooses to film live lives that are mired in adversity. Her films are largely focused on women who find themselves struggling against oppressive cultural practices (*Divorce Iranian Style* (1998), *Sisters in Law* (2005), *The Day I Will Never Forget* (2002)), or battling against other individuals who are all too willing to take advantage of those who are weaker than themselves (*Rough Aunties* (2008), *Runaway* (2001)). And the result is a series of deeply humane films that offer inspiring portraits of women who struggle, often successfully, to overcome their marginalisation in society. But, as much as the typical content of the films provides an impetus for viewers to engage in further social action, it also, and perhaps more importantly, seems to already have helped the subjects of the films themselves. In researching Longinotto's work it soon emerged that her filmmaking practice is itself a process of engaging with and empowering her subjects and their struggles. This issue arose in the research interview conducted with Longinotto herself, as well as an interview with Mildred Ngcobo, one of the subjects in *Rough Aunties*. The material provided in these interviews has helped provide a more comprehensive answer to the question of how Longinotto's filmmaking might contribute to the feminist social agenda.

Perhaps it is her own personal circumstances that have propelled Longinotto down this particular path. Although considerably more privileged than the girls and women whose stories she is drawn to, her own early life was far from easy. She was born in 1952 to a Welsh mother and an authoritarian Italian father, whom she still describes as a "nasty" person (Longinotto interview, 2013). Family life was explosive at times and, at the age of 10, she was sent to a draconian all-girls boarding school, where she battled to fit in (Cochrane, 2010). "After getting lost during a school trip to the theatre," Cochrane tells us, "[Longinotto] was made an example of in assembly the next day ..." (Cochrane, 2010). Her punishment was that no one was allowed to talk to her. But somehow a punishment that was intended for a fixed term lasted a number of years. Longinotto spent a good deal of her school life living alone and eating separately from the other girls, despite writing to the headmistress and begging to return to the dormitories (Cochrane, 2010).

At age 16, Longinotto left the school for a “crammer” where she obtained some of her A-levels (Longinotto, 2014). It was also here that she met her long-time friend and fellow filmmaker Nick Broomfield. After a year, however, Longinotto ran away and lived on the streets until illness forced her to return home for her recovery (Cochrane, 2010). Speaking of her early life, Longinotto says: “I learned that when people have unlimited authority, there’s no safety valve. There was a sense that they could do anything they wanted” (Cochrane, 2010). Later, she received French A-levels while she was working as an au pair in Paris (Longinotto, 2011-2014).

Life after school did not improve immediately. Cochrane (2010) tells us that while studying English and European literature at Essex University she survived by shoplifting. Caught for this crime, she was sentenced to two years’ probation. Her upper-second-class degree complete, Longinotto attended a foundation course in film in Bristol and then enrolled at the National Film and Television school where she studied camera directing (Wood, 2006). Here, she once again met up with Nick Broomfield (Cochrane, 2010). Despite their close association, Broomfield and Longinotto’s documentary styles are very different. As Longinotto said: “I love the way Nick [Broomfield] appears in his films, but I don't want you to be thinking about me, or the camera or the filming when you watch my films. I want you to feel that you're there, standing where I am and going through the emotional experience” (IMDb, 2013). Longinotto’s first successful film, *Pride of Place* (1976), was made with fellow student Dorothea Gazidis while both were still at the National School (IMDb, 2013; Longinotto, 2011-2014). For this production, Longinotto drew on her experience of boarding school, and returned to the school to record the daily life the girls had to endure. After being screened at the London Film Festival, much to the headmistress’s dismay, the school was closed within a year (Cochrane, 2010).

After graduation, Longinotto worked as a television camera-operator before forming the production company Twentieth Century Vixen with Claire Hunt (Wood, 2006, 156). Soon she began making her own films, becoming “[a] documentarist who remains drawn to humanist subject matter ... [and] having a distinct anthropological bent” (Wood, 2006, 157). Perhaps more importantly, Longinotto’s early life experiences – her difficult relationship with her father (who had lived in South Africa and ardently supported apartheid), her school experience and

her life on the street – are what have shaped her subsequent work. As Cochrane reports: “She says that she empathises with “the outsiders, the people struggling. If women have no rights, if they are completely powerless, then they’re the ones you are going to want to make movies about” (Cochrane, 2010).

Since her early student success in 1976, Longinotto has produced a new film every two or three years. In 2009, *Rough Aunties* won the Grand Jury Prize for international documentaries at the Sundance Film Festival and, in 2010, Longinotto was awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Hot Docs festival in Toronto (Lacey, 2010). Longinotto’s latest film, *Salma* (2013), received a warm welcome at the Berlin Film Festival in 2013 (*Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin 2013*). Her core filmography reads as follows:

Table 1: The films of Kim Longinotto. *Women Make Movies*, 2009

2013	<i>Salma</i>
2010	<i>Pink Saris</i>
2008	<i>Rough Aunties</i>
2007	<i>Hold Me Tight, Let Me Go</i>
2005	<i>Sisters in Law</i>
2002	<i>The Day I Will Never Forget</i>
2001	<i>Runaway</i>
2000	<i>Gaea Girls</i>
1998	<i>Divorce Iranian Style</i>
1995	<i>Shinjuku Boys</i>
1993	<i>Dream Girls</i>
1992	<i>The Good Wife of Tokyo</i>
1990	<i>Hidden Faces</i>
1989	<i>Eat the Kimono</i>
1978	<i>Theatre Girls</i>

While this dissertation will focus on *Rough Aunties*, it will also make extensive reference to a number of related films: *Divorce Iranian Style*, *Runaway*, *The Day I Will Never Forget*, and *Sisters in Law*.

This study adopts an eclectic theoretical and methodological approach to Longinotto's work. Although there is a fairly large body of material on documentary film, it tends to be fragmented and to limit its focus on one or other aspect of the genre. This project draws its data from two sources, namely (1) the key texts themselves and, in particular, a close formal analysis of *Rough Aunties* (2008); and (2) interviews with Kim Longinotto and Mildred Ngcobo. This study uses theory drawn from film and documentary studies, on the one hand, and feminist critiques of representation on the other.

The formal analysis of *Rough Aunties* will draw on two methods. On the one hand, there are a number of works that concentrate on the *form* of the documentary film. Here Bill Nichols' (1994, 2001) work is central although, as I shall argue, Stella Bruzzi's (2000, 2006) revisionist analysis of the documentary form seems closer to Longinotto's actual practice. Nichols (2001) argues that documentary film can be categorised according to six modes of representation that serve as 'sub-genres' under the umbrella genre that is documentary film (Nichols, 2001, 99). These six modes are known as the *poetic mode*, the *expository mode*, the *participatory mode*, the *observational mode*, the *reflexive mode*, and finally, the *performative mode* (Nichols, 2001). These modes of representation are then said to "establish a loose framework of affiliation within which individuals may work; they set up conventions that a given film may adopt; and they provide specific expectations for viewers" (Nichols, 2001, 99). Bruzzi (2000), however, argues that while Nichols' typology of modes of representation in documentary film is the most well established, it is no longer very useful since "his categories have increasingly become negatively and weakly defined by what they are not" (Bruzzi, 2000, 1). Instead, she proposes that documentary films are always mixed mode and that it is more useful to see them as

a negotiation between the polarities of objectivity and subjectivity, offering a dialectical analysis of events and images that accepts that no non-fictional record can contain the whole truth whilst also accepting that to reuse or recontextualise such

material is not to irrevocably suppress or distort the innate value and meaning it possesses (Bruzzi, 2000, 39).

Finally, this study will also draw on the work of Michael Rabiger who, as a practitioner-teacher and author of the classic *Directing the Documentary* (1998, 2004), provides a complementary perspective. Rabiger is adamant that every film must have “development, conflict and confrontation” to be a success (1998, 135). Documentaries, therefore, must strike a balance between authorship and strong, objective footage that slowly reveals reality. Rabiger points out that observational documentary is perhaps the most demanding in this regard because it requires realism, as well as a sense of something more than the material events themselves (1998). For him, such films must become signs “that make us want to peer beyond the veil of the material and the literal” (Rabiger, 1998, 45).

However, while the division of documentary film into a series of sub-genres is useful, it generally operates at a very high level of abstraction and so provides limited guidance for the detailed analysis of individual films. In order to do a more fine-grained analysis, it has been necessary to borrow from the formal techniques that have been developed for the study of the feature film. Here, of course, the leading figure is David Bordwell who, along with Kristin Thompson, has written extensively on the formal analysis of the feature films ranging from classic Hollywood productions through to the new Hollywood, and from the work of the French *nouvelle vague* through to the films of Yasujiro Ozu. Bordwell’s basic technique for the analysis of film is useful for understanding how it is that Longino structures her films.

Bordwell is often criticised for his emphasis on film form at the expense of content or the cultural and economic conditions that underpin the production of the films that he analyses. On the other hand, there is also a strong tendency in the discussion of documentary film to focus on the *content* of the films under discussion and largely to ignore the formal processes that underpin the presentation of that content. Important though both such discussions are, they rarely offer insight into the role the medium itself plays, not merely as a more-or-less successful vehicle for the film’s content, but also as a kind of communicative action which intervenes both in the world that is being filmed and in the worlds of those who watch the final product. It was

partly to address this issue that this study relies on interviews with both Longinotto herself and Mildred Ngcobo, one of the 'characters' in *Rough Aunties*. Their gracious participation in this project has given it an added dimension and a depth of detail that would not have been possible otherwise.

These interviews have situated the discussion of the activist dimension of Longinotto's work in feminist theory and, in particular, in the vexed question of whether and to what extent the often privileged first-world woman has the right to speak for the oppressed woman of the Third World. This study will show that this dilemma is, to some extent, a false one and one that Longinotto is able to overcome through her practice. Longinotto's work is inherently feminist, not only in its structure and subject matter, but also in her capacity to engage with her subjects. This investigation aims to explore how this process of engagement takes place in her filmmaking. Longinotto's work, particularly based in Africa and Iran, can be seen as part of this widening of feminism, acknowledging those who are still relatively unknown, providing a space for a voice for the silent, and essentially observing the discreet power in presumably weak groups of people. Smaill (2009) confirms this view when she argues that the purpose of Kim Longinotto's work, particularly in her more recent films, is "to show social change that is instigated from below and from the margins" (Smaill, 2009, 43).

However, despite the importance of Longinotto's work, Smaill (2009) argues that she remains largely neglected by feminists and film theorists. An underlying desire is that this research into Longinotto's more recent work will be a small step towards correcting this neglect, and will help provide legitimacy to a Western woman's work in the third wave of feminism, which, until this point, has displayed a cynicism toward the white woman's feminist voice, despite its ever-present need (Narayan, 2008).

This analysis of Longinotto's film practice will show that these discussions are often, rather like the formal analyses of documentary, used at a high level of abstraction and that looking closely at the actual work will offer a far more complex picture of what can take place when a committed and intuitively sensitive feminist filmmaker, such as Longinotto, engages with the often drastically disempowered women that she has made the subject of her films.

Finally, the inspiration for this research emerged from the researcher's own, albeit highly limited, documentary filmmaking experience. Classes on documentary filmmaking commonly advance the notion that, in order to be successful, all films should follow a particular formula. Any 'good' documentary, or feature film for that matter, apparently has to comprise certain elements: a rise and fall in conflict, a narrative, or a hero's journey, all plotted out in a treatment and various other documents prior to the entry of the camera. As a result, the researcher felt that the story in her documentary had to be distorted and stuffed into a box that was shaped according to a mainstream audiences' frame of references.

In watching other documentaries, however, the researcher observed that this recipe was not always followed. Longinotto's films, in particular, demonstrated the possibility of combining observational material – moments in real-time, as it were – into a selected and constructed whole, which nevertheless seemed to be an honest representation of the world. It was apparent that there were alternatives to the standard filmmaking practice that might perhaps mean more risk for the filmmaker, but be well suited to her specific subject matter. Longinotto's style, paired with the contentious issues that she chooses to make her subject matter, make for powerful, beautiful films.

Longinotto's work stands out for this reason, and it inspires admiration. Her films present the lives of ordinary women who are nevertheless strong and whose strength would never have been as convincing had they been forced to fit into the masculine box that is the hero's journey. This research therefore asked: how does Longinotto lift the veil covering these marginalised worlds in way that captures the dignity and reality of her subjects, but is also able to move her audiences, no matter how distant they might be? The way in which she offers a gentle, unbiased and discreet view of her subjects appears both under-appreciated and intriguing.

## 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Introduction

Theory regarding narrative or fictional film is both abundant and wide-ranging. Yet, it is difficult not to notice the apparent lack of a similar body of theory regarding documentary. It is as if at their very births, with the Lumière brothers producing actualities of real-life events, and Georges Méliès creating fantastical cinema of attractions in the early 1900s, that the two types of film became siblings in rivalry, with documentary being the inferior. As Kolker describes it, early film began as documentary but before long shifted decisively into the production of fictional film:

Early film consisted of a presentation of shots in series, each one of which showed something happening (as in the Lumière brothers' early filming in which a train pulls into a station, or Edison's first efforts in which a shot showed a man sneezing or a couple kissing). Within a few years, during the turn of the century, such shots became edited together in the service of expressing stories. Georges Méliès made primitive narratives of a trip to the moon or a voyage under the sea in which different shots succeeded one another. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* reflects a more complex process in which parts of the narrative that are occurring simultaneously, but in different spatial locations, are placed one after the other (2000, 16).

Kolker continues by describing the way in which this early turn to fictional narratives soon developed into what became known as the "continuity style":

One site where the process of establishing the continuity style can be observed in the series of films made by D.W. Griffith for the Biograph Company from 1908 to 1913 ... we can see the development of what would become the basic principles of continuity: an apparent seamlessness of storytelling; the movement of characters and story that appear to be flowing in an orderly, logical, linear progression, with the camera positioned in just the right place to capture the action without being



obtrusive; and, perhaps most important of all, an authority of presentation and expression that elicits precisely the correct emotional response at precisely the right moment, without showing the means by which the response elicited (2000, 16–17).

So the dominance of the feature film was established and, despite their recent revival, it remains relatively rare for documentaries to be exhibited alongside the mainstream flow of feature films from Hollywood and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, the development of knowledge and understanding of documentary film seems to have run a parallel course: there is a similar paucity of documentary theory and of the analytical tools available for the detailed analysis of documentary films. Indeed, finding information besides that presented in the well-known discussions of the different modes of documentary found in Bill Nichols (2001) and Stella Bruzzi (2000, 2006) is challenging. It is as if the dominance of the feature film has had a trickle-down effect on the associated bodies of knowledge. Although there are various types of documentary, there seems to be little information regarding how to structure an observational documentary, for example, or, for that matter, a poetic film. Indeed, Michael Rabiger (1998, 2004), a well-known authority on teaching documentary film, recommends that filmmakers should draw on the ever-popular, standard dramatic curve that is also found in the classic feature film. In addition, there are comparatively few manuals on how to structure and analyse a documentary, let alone choosing an appropriate form for the envisaged project. On the other hand, conceptual analyses and handbooks on the making of feature films, which describe the process from mind-mapping and treatments to scripting, shooting and editing, are plentiful (see, for example, Field, 2006; Noël, 1998; Vogler, 2007; and Bordwell and Thomson, 1994, 2001, 2008, 2011). As a result, this study borrows from feature film theory in order to analyse the film selected for analysis. By the end of this investigation, the gap in the body of knowledge regarding documentary film will hopefully have narrowed. However, it is an area that will undoubtedly benefit from further research.

Finally, it seems appropriate to offer an initial definition of documentary before discussing the subject in greater detail. Bordwell and Thompson offer a convenient point of departure:

We often categorize films on the basis of how they are made. For example, we often distinguish a documentary film from a fiction film on the basis of the production phases. Usually the documentary filmmaker controls only certain variables of preparation, shooting and assembly. Some variables (e.g. script, rehearsal) may be omitted. Whereas others (e.g. setting, lighting, behaviour of the figures) are present but often uncontrolled (2001, 32).

This definition is then extended to include the range of content one finds in documentary films: “A documentary film purports to present factual information about the world outside the film ... The label leads us to assume that the persons, places and events exist and that the information provided is trustworthy” (Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 110). Rabiger, however, offers a more comprehensive and supple concept of the documentary:

There are no limits to the documentary’s possibilities, but it always reflects a profound fascination with, and respect for, actuality. But what *is* actuality ...? True documentary reflects the richness and ambiguity of life, and goes beyond the guise of objective observation to include impressions, perceptions, and feelings (2004, 6–7).

The remainder of this chapter will be divided into four subsections. It will begin with a general discussion of the concept of representation before moving on to discuss the theory of the documentary form, including the concepts of *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema. It will then discuss the relationship between documentary and narrative form before, finally, turning to feminist theory and film practice. This last is important because, in one sense, a primary goal of this thesis is to explore how documentary film making has and can contribute to the feminist agenda. The first subsections are intended to lay a solid theoretical foundation for a detailed examination of how the documentary form itself can be related to the larger feminist social project.

## **2.2 Representation**

Representation is perhaps the most fundamental concept required for this investigation and, as such, it must be discussed. Nichols argues that:

Representation is a term that bears much of the burden of mediating the relationship between symbolic forms of communication and the social or historical context in which they occur and to which they refer. Representations always involve an externalization of inner experience and thought (quoted in Gledhill and Williams, 2000, 43).

Representation is thus understood as a man-made device: flawed, biased, yet the only method to record or repeat (in part) an experience of the real world with the aid of a medium. O'Shaughnessy and Stadler (2005) acknowledge that unbiased, objective representations do not exist. This is because all representation of the world must come from humans, who are subjective and always operate from a certain position (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2005). Dyer, however, emphasises that this limitation is also an opportunity because, although

there is no such thing as unmediated access to reality ... [whenever] ... we feel that language and representation don't do justice to our sense of reality, we have to find new ways of representing it, and indeed this has been the history of human culture, constantly developing new modes of representation (quoted in O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2005, 73–74).

In general, representation theory has been developed in relation to the linguistic or discursive realm, and thus must be adapted for its application to film, which is not exclusively or even primarily a discursive mode. There is certainly a difference between discursive representation and the mechanical representation which occurs through film. O'Shaughnessy and Stadler point out that media, such as photography, video and film, have often been regarded as neutral "mechanisms that simply mirror the world" (2005, 76):

They can reproduce reality in a mimetic way, and they therefore appear to show us unmediated reality. These media use actual impressions from the real world, digitizing them, and putting them onto film, video, or audio tape, to produce images or sounds (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2005, 77–78).

However, as they correctly argue, film and media studies cannot accept this concept, since the human activities of construction, selection and, finally, interpretation are always part of the

process of representation. Thus, despite these media holding the technological capacity to record at least parts of the real world (by converting light patterns and sound waves into digital codes, for example), it is absolutely essential to be aware that the product is a construction as well (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2005). For example, an image, as a representation, is shown in a two-dimensional form, whereas in reality, it is seen in three dimensions. The image consists of a selected, partial view, from one angle, in one set of light conditions that are probably pre-chosen. Also, the image itself is chosen by a person (or group of people) for particular reasons, who use technology and is able to manipulate aspects of it (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2005). Whatever the difference between discursive representation and the mechanical processes involved in image capture, both still involve people in a process of construction. It is because of this inevitable subjection to human agency that we need to adopt a constructivist approach to understanding filmic representation.

### **2.2.1 Hall's account of representation**

Stuart Hall is a leading theorist in the realm of representation. In the first chapter of *Representation: Cultural representation and signifying practices*, Hall states that "representation through language is central to the processes by which meaning is produced" (1997, 1). He continues by acknowledging that there are three important theoretical approaches to looking at how language represents the world. The first is the "reflective approach", which is based on the idea that language repeats meanings that already exist in the objective world. Hall (1997), however, quickly dismisses this understanding of representation because it lacks cultural sensitivity, ignores worlds that are not physical, and is simplistic in its proposition that language simply mimics the real world with all its associated meaning intact. The second approach to understanding meaning is what Hall (1997) calls the "intentional approach". Here, he argues that it is the speaker who provides the world with meaning through language. In place of these two approaches, which place their emphasis on the world and the subject respectively, Hall advocates a "constructivist approach", which suggests that while it is indeed people that create meaning, they do so using concepts and signs, known as "representational systems" (1997, 24). This approach further suggests that "we must not confuse the real world and symbolic practices and processes through which representation,

meaning and language operate ... It acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language” (Hall, 1997, 24–25). Whereas the intentional approach believes in construction by the individual, and is perhaps too individualistic altogether, the constructivist approach suggests that meaning construction takes place within existing cultural constraints.

In recent years, the constructivist approach has been considered the most influential in media studies. This approach is closely related to the issues in this investigation, especially in the attempt to understand the complex relationship between meaning and content that is found in observational documentary. It is an approach that overcomes the shortfalls of the first two: the representations found in documentary film are not reflections of the real world, the camera a simple mirror that reflects the objects in front of it; nor is the meaning created merely the product of the individual filmmaker who is free from the constraints of what Hall calls “the public, social character of language” (1997, 25), but which we might describe as the conventions of cinematic meaning. As Hall summarises: “Things don’t *mean*: we *construct* meaning using representational systems – concepts and signs” (1997, 25).

The constructivist approach itself can be divided further into the semiotic approach, associated with Ferdinand de Saussure, and the discursive approach, associated with Foucault (Hall, 1997). Hall’s (1997) own position is founded on Saussurean linguistics, but then moves decisively beyond his view of meaning as a system of linguistic conventions to the Foucauldian view of representation as being the product of socially constructed discourses. The differences between these two approaches will be discussed further.

Hall argues that semiotics is primarily concerned with “the production of meaning through language” (Hall, 1997, 16). This means that in the process of representation concepts, communicated through language, refer us, as the receivers, to an external world, be it real or imaginary (Hall, 1997). Meaning is built up out of the relationship between things in the world (such as objects), the concepts attached to these things, and the signs attached to the concepts. For Hall, “the process which links these 3 elements together is what we call ‘representation’” (1997, 19). Culler (in Hall, 1997) reminds us that for Saussure, along with the constructivists,

there is no calculated or essential link between the signifier (the tangible quality of the sign, its form and construction) and the signified (the associated concept). The link is arbitrary. Furthermore, there is no set meaning that is attached to signs, since meaning may vary over time and between cultures (Hall, 1997).

Hall draws on Jonathan Culler: "For Saussure, the production of meaning depends on language: 'Language is a system of signs'" (Hall, 1997, 31). He goes further to suggest that sounds, pictures, and written words, for example, act as signs within language, when their purpose is to communicate, and to do this, Saussure believes they must be part of a "system of conventions" (quoted in Hall, 1997, 31). What Saussure regards as 'the sign', was split into two aspects. He argued that there is 'the form', which is the actual word or image, for example, and then there is the idea or concept with which 'the form' is associated (Hall, 1997). The 'form' is known as the 'signifier', and the concept associated with it, the 'signified' (Hall, 1997). "Both are required to produce meaning, but it is the relation between them, fixed in our cultural and linguistic codes, which sustains representation" (Hall, 1997, 31).

This very general theory has been extended by Foucault, the other theorist associated with the constructivist approach. Although his work is largely influenced by the constructivism in Saussurean linguistics, Foucault focuses on discourse, which includes many more elements than language (Hall, 1997). Unlike semiotics which is language-based, Hall's theory of discourse is more open to the meaning present in non-verbal systems; secondly, it pays far more attention to the question of power which it sees as a generative mechanism that produces both the rules according to which meaning functions and the ability of systems to move beyond the sets of rules that govern them, so as to generate new meanings or meaning systems.

The concept of 'discourse' is similar to that of ideology, but moves it beyond the latter's emphasis on systems of ideas and suggests, instead, the importance of the everyday ways in which people speak, behave and make meaning. Purvis and Hunt argue that "[m]odern social theory is awash with talk of 'discourse' and 'ideology'. Sometimes the two concepts are used interchangeably and at other times they are counterposed" (Purvis and Hunt, 1993, 473). They suggest that while many argue that the concept of ideology has been replaced by the concept

of discourse, the two should be seen as complementary rather than oppositional (Purvis and Hunt, 1993). In achieving this, the question of what 'discourse' is must be answered: "'Discourse' refers to the individual social networks of communication through the medium of language or non-verbal systems" (Purvis and Hunt, 1993, 485). If ideology, in its essence, refers to ways of thinking, then discourse must be less concerned over ideas and considers people's behaviour. Hall argues further that in the process of creating knowledge or meaning, one cannot ignore "questions of power and the body", such questions being linked to discourse; therefore, what is involved in representation is much broader and encompassing than an ideological focus on systems of ideas (1997, 51).

In linking Hall's (1997) view to the subject matter of this investigation, it is instructive to note that he views representation as a kind of performance: "Representation is a practice, a kind of 'work', which uses material objects and effects. But the meaning depends not on the material quality of the sign, but on its symbolic function" (Hall, 1997, 25–26). In this way the link between discourse, action and power cannot be ignored. The 'things' of the world do not have a single or essential meaning, since that meaning has been created by human beings and, as such, has changed over time and across cultures. It is people who associate particular meanings with particular things (Hall, 1997, 61). "So, one important idea about representation is the acceptance of a degree of cultural relativism between one culture and another, a certain lack of equivalence, and hence the need for translation as we move from the mind-set or conceptual universe of one culture or another" (Hall, 1997, 61). Acknowledging this point is particularly important for this project for two reasons. Firstly, the cultural relativism implicit in discourse theory and the consequent "need for translation" are directly relevant to this research. Longinotto typically engages with subjects from other cultures and thus dances along the margins, perhaps, of this very need and potential difficulty of translating between cultures and their meanings, as well as at the margin, dividing her intentions as a filmmaker and the cultural expectations of her audience. Secondly, by foregrounding the importance of power in the process of representation, Hall's theory of discourse links directly to Longinotto's vision of herself as a feminist filmmaker who is centrally concerned with showing and subverting the ways in which women are represented in the dominant discourses.

Hall's theory concerns discourse in general; the focus of this project, however, is on aspects of a particular species of discourse: the feminist documentary film. This study narrows its focus from representation in general to feminist documentary film, beginning with some discussion of the documentary form.

### **2.2.2 Documentary film form and representation**

In their discussion of the feature film, Bordwell and Thompson also adopt a constructivist approach, even if they focus on the individual viewer and the film as an aesthetic object, rather than on the discursive social systems emphasised by Foucault and Hall. Over time, Bordwell and Thompson (1994, 2001, 2008, 2011) have developed the most systematic and thorough account of how films are constructed and, in the process, have developed what is probably the most useful recipe for the practical analysis of film as a symbolic form, in terms of its aesthetics and the techniques through which films typically construct their meaning (see, for example, Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 2008, 2011).

According to Bordwell and Thompson (2001), the dynamic human mind is the key to understanding all meaning; for them the film viewer will persist with finding form in everything she watches. In Hall's terminology, they are 'intentionalists', emphasising the active role of the individuals engaged in the process of filmmaking: the filmmaker and audience draw on filmic conventions in their own construction of meaning. One example to describe this phenomenon is the irritation that may overcome one when a song is stopped before it has reached its end (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 2008); another example may be the abrupt end of many a series episode, frustrating the viewer, and willing them to carry on the story in the next episode. Ultimately, the human mind yearns for form and structure. "The mind is never at rest. It is constantly seeking order and significance, testing the world for breaks in the habitual pattern" (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 39). Bordwell and Thompson (2001) continue to say that artworks, this includes music, paintings, sculpture and, of course, film, "provide organized occasions in which we exercise and develop our ability to pay attention, to anticipate upcoming events, to draw conclusions, and to construct a whole out of parts ... every film coaxes us to connect sequences into a larger whole" (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 39). Understanding this



process requires tapping into the human psyche and breaking down the transmission of information between artwork and viewer.

Bordwell and Thompson (2001) suggest that films, as art works, should be seen as systems which present the viewer with particular “cues” that are carefully organised into “a set of elements that depend on one another”(Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 40). Without our capturing of the cues, the art work is just a thing, an object, void of meaning and incapable of generating emotion. Film, therefore, is not without form. In this regard, form is described as all the elements working together within the systems of the film (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001). The elements discussed here can be separated into two groups: “narrative elements”, which establish the story within the film, and “stylistic elements”, which depend on “film techniques” such as the movement of the camera, colour, and how music is used (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 40). The viewer is able to connect these elements, and so link the systems. For example, vigorous camera movement is usually used to indicate action, and a particular piece of music may earmark heightened emotion, or give warning of a surprise about to occur on the screen (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001). They write:

From our standpoint, subject matter and abstract ideas all enter into the total system of artwork. They may cue us to frame certain expectations or draw certain inferences. The perceiver relates such elements to one another dynamically. Consequently, subject matter and ideas become somewhat different from what they might be outside the work ... Thus subject matter is shaped by the film’s formal content and our perceptions of it (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 41).

Furthermore, Bordwell and Thompson (2001) argue that film form has the potential to change our minds, to see known aspects of life in a different light, and to suggest new ways of experiencing and thinking. We, as viewers, have a need for form; we need to be able to complete the patterns of elements by interpreting the cues. We have expectations for the elements, and expect them to form patterns according to those expectations. If form presents a surprise in proving these expectations incorrect, we readjust them, willing to predict the next

part of the pattern. As mentioned, much of the theory drawn on in order to collect tools for the analysis of documentary comes from theory on traditional narrative:

The prevalence of stories in our lives is one reason that we need to take a close look at how films may embody narrative form. When we speak of 'going to the movies', we almost always mean that we are going to see a narrative film – a film that tells a story (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 59).

This is particularly true in this discussion of form. A clear example would be a Hollywood love story: boy meets girl, they fall in love, boy loses girl (conflict), boy finds girl (resolution). We expect a romance to follow this pattern and, in viewing, will this to happen so as to complete the desired end for the protagonist. "Even simple actions ask that the audience participate actively in the on-going process by making certain hypotheses about 'what will happen next' and readjust expectations accordingly" (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 42). Yet, in the same breath, these expectations do not have to be "immediately satisfied"; when there is a delay in our expectations, they become suspended, and so what we know as "suspense" is created, ensuring we stay to complete the pattern (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 42).

Some art works may be more pleasant to experience than others. Some fully intend to be disquieting for the viewer. "Yet even in disturbing us, such films still arouse and shape formal expectations ... When our expectations are thwarted, we may feel disorientated, but we are also urged to try out anticipations more appropriate to this particular film" (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 43). Film has the ability to ascertain in us our expectations of what we take to be normal: "they coax us to reflect on our taken-for-granted assumptions about how a movie must behave" (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 43).

Many films share a set of common characteristics that we come to know as conventions. One example of a convention in narrative form is that the ending should tie up the ends of the narrative, and solve any unresolved conflict that the characters may have faced: "Bodies of conventions constitute norms of what is appropriate or expected in a particular tradition. Through obeying or violating norms, artists relate their work to other works" (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 44). This notion of conventions is similar to that found in Nichols' (2001)

discussion of documentary form, as he discusses conventions which create both guidelines for the filmmakers and expectations for the viewers. An example here would be the use of a hand-held camera. This is a convention associated with raw, spontaneous footage, usually referring to cutting-edge news broadcasting. This style has a sense of validity and reality since it is essentially self-reflexive about recording an event, acknowledging the presence of the camera, that it cannot be held still because of the urgency to make the footage. Yet, this technique has also been used by fictional narrative films to give a sense of reality, leading the viewer perhaps to question whether what they were watching was real or staged. It is important to bear in mind, however, that it is rare for the meaning of any particular technique to remain stable. The increased use of the hand-held camera, for example, in narrative film for the purpose of a particular effect, may begin to change its signification altogether, and so, take on a new meaning.

On the other hand, Bordwell and Thompson argue that “artworks can create new conventions by refusing to fit into established ones” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 44). In this case, one gets an “unorthodox formal system”, made up by rules established by the art work itself (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 44). With time and the repetitive use of the new system, these originally ‘odd’ art works establish conventions which lead to new expectations in the viewer (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001). For Bordwell and Thompson (2001), the relationship between such formal conventions and audience responses is, as a result, unpredictable: “Just as formal conventions often lead us to suspend our normal sense of real-life experience, so form may lead us to suspend our normal sense of real-life experience, so form may lead us to override our everyday emotional responses” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 45). An example of this may be found, once again, in traditional feature film of a narrative kind: typically, the audience would feel empathy for the protagonist, leading the audience to drive him or her towards their goal, or success. This becomes the expectation, and the desired one at that. As mentioned previously, when the outcome of an expectation is delayed, suspense is created, which may lead to sympathy or anxiety. When an expectation is met, a sense of relief is granted for the viewer; a virtual pat on the back for guessing the correct outcome (Bordwell and Thompson,

2001). Bearing this simple model of emotional response in mind, Bordwell and Thompson (2001) state:

There is no general recipe by which a novel or film can be concocted to produce the 'correct' emotional response. It is all a matter of context – that is, of the particular system that is each artwork's overall form. All we can say for certain is that the emotional response felt by the spectator will emerge from the totality of formal relationships she or he perceives in the work (2001, 45).

Although primarily interested in the feature film, Bordwell and Thompson also discuss the types of form within documentary:

Many documentaries are organized as narratives, just as fiction films are ... There are however, other non-narrative types of documentary form. A film might be intended to convey information in a simple fashion and hence draw upon what we can term categorical form; or the filmmaker may want to make an argument that will convince the spectator of something. In this case the film draws upon rhetorical form (2001, 114).

The categorical form is recommended for organising a film according to groups or categories. The risk of this technique is that the film may become boring to the audience if they inherently pick up on the pattern used (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001). Therefore it is important to constantly create changes in expectations to prevent this (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001). The rhetorical form, as Bordwell and Thompson (2001) suggest, can be used to "persuade the audience to adopt an opinion about the subject matter and perhaps to act upon that opinion. This type of film goes beyond the categorical type in that it tries to make an explicit argument" (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 122). The rhetorical form is deeply focused on a pre-decided way of thinking, and, in failing to provide a hard conclusion, will tap into the emotional responses of the audience in order to sway them into making a definitive decision about the film's subject matter (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001).

However, Bordwell and Thompson's simple division of documentary film into two forms is unsatisfactory because the film at the centre of this investigation fits into both: in Bordwell and

Thompson's terms, *Rough Aunties* (2008) is both categorical and non-narrative, but it is also clearly narrative. Perhaps, they might argue, this is an example of an 'odd' art work that is changing the established conventions that these authors use in their account of the documentary.

As shown in this section, Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008) focus on the individual engagement which creates meaning, whether it is the director's construction of the film or the audience's interpretation of that construction in the viewing experience. This links their approach to the constructivism advocated by Hall, although many film scholars would see their largely apolitical approach to be far removed from Hall's emphasis on discourse and power. But while their account of the documentary form does seem to be somewhat limited, the techniques they develop for the formal analysis are probably the most useful available to any scholar who would like to link their account of a film's meaning to construct the film itself. Their explicit account of the steps required in a formal visual analysis will, with some adaptation, provide a vital tool for the dissection of Longinotto's films, and allow for further insight into the social impact of her films.

The details of this formal analysis will be discussed in the methodology chapter. Perhaps what is still required here is more discussion of both documentary and representation. Bordwell and Thompson (2001), for example, suggest that documentaries come with the expectation of being honest and honourable. Of course, this is not always true since any documentary film can prove unreliable and in the past many a documentary has been criticised for its failure to tell the truth (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001). Indeed, some documentarians even strive to do this in order to pull the wool over the eyes of the audience for a specific purpose of their own.

### **2.2.3 Picturing truth: the representational potential of the image**

Photography is said to have become increasingly popular and accessible in the 1930s, at the same time as the philosophy of positivism. Positivism advocated that "science and technology advanced our capacity to understand the physical and social world through acquisition of factual knowledge" (Berger quoted in Hamilton, 1997, 82). This means that photography was seen as a tool, and since it was regarded as being able to capture mechanically representations

of the external world, it went very well with positivist philosophy of the time. Yet, the idea of photography's capability to capture such factual representation is certainly not assured (Hamilton, 1997). While the common view of the photograph is that it is an objective record of the world out there, what is not considered is that, firstly, as with all records, photographs are open to alteration; secondly, through framing, lighting and other technical devices it is impossible for the photographer to avoid putting their stamp on the resultant image.

But matters are more complicated than this constructivist position suggests. Andre Bazin, for example, writes in his essay 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' (2005), that around the middle of the twentieth century, a crisis occurred in modern art. Photography and cinema, however, were able to provide an explanation for this crisis. Painting was found to be incapable of ever achieving pure realism. Man was too involved in the reproduction process, and therefore far too many doors stood open for tampering with the subject matter, since subjectivity is a permanent feature of human beings (Bazin, 2005). Bazin writes: "Painting was forced, as it turns out, to offer us illusion and this illusion was reckoned sufficient unto art. Photography and the cinema, on the other hand, are discoveries that satisfy, once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism" (2005, 12). However, it is not the process that is flawless in creating this true representation, since painting, for example, will always be better at reproducing colour. Rather, it is a psychological matter "... to wit, in completely satisfying our appetite for illusion by a mechanical reproduction in the making of which man plays no part. The solution is not to be found in the result achieved, but in the way of achieving it" (Bazin, 2005, 12). Bazin (2005) believed that the power of photography lay in its ability to show us things that otherwise would not have been noticed and so it is not wholly our construction at work in creating the still image. Kolker (2000) also draws a comparison between film and the other art works such as painting and literature. Yet, Kolker's comparison acknowledges the enlightening experience that film offers, drawing the viewer both into the art work, but also into their own real world: "The textuality of film is therefore different from a novel or a painting. Less personal, but more accessible. Neither unique nor intimate, yet closer to the world most of us live in, engaged in its dailiness, and powerfully in touch with the social" (Kolker, 2000, 11).

Since photography won the battle for realistic representation, modern painters were able to detach themselves from the “resemblance complex” (Bazin, 2005, 13). It was the first time that an image was able to be created with the use of a mechanical device that exceeded the human being’s control over the creative act. The photographer’s only involvement is in choosing the subject matter and the purpose for the image. It is acknowledged that the product will carry pieces of the photographer’s involvement and signature to a point, but in photography the end product exceeds this involvement in ways that differ significantly from the control a painter exerts over their product. If the traditional arts rely on man’s involvement and creativity, photography differs in that its advantage lies in the lack of man’s presence (Bazin, 2005).

Bazin (2005) argues that this automatic capturing of images has led to great changes in people’s consciousness of the image. Photography offers objective production of images of the world, and so is far more credible than any other way of image creation (Bazin, 2005). Bazin (2005) suggests, then, that we are obligated to accept the reproduced object as a piece of reality.

A very faithful drawing may actually tell us more about the model, despite the promptings of our critical intelligence; [but] it will never have the irrational power of the photograph to bear away our faith ... The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted or discoloured, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the model (Bazin, 2005, 14).

Thus, photography is said to be able to preserve time, while art constructs perpetuity (Bazin, 2005). For Bazin (2005), photography should be understood as one of the most important events in the history of the plastic arts: it heralds the arrival of a new form and, at the same time, it sets Western painting free from its painful obsession with reproducing reality, and allows it to develop its authenticity once more. Bazin (2005) thus concludes his argument by proposing that the photographed image, a reproduction, allows the world to be seen in a moment frozen in time, and so allows us to love something we could not have without the aid

of a mechanical device. Simultaneously, it allows us to love the painting as its own medium, a direct link to nature no longer the determining feature of its making and purpose.

In recognising the capacity of the photographic image not only to *record* but also to *reveal*, Bazin (2005) presents an anti-constructivist notion that conflicts with the standard constructivist position developed by Hall. What, then, can be drawn from this conflict, and can it prove useful in this investigation? The answer, perhaps, is that both must be borne in mind: together they offer a postmodern bid to understand photographic representation as both constructed, and as a mechanical extension of our senses that enables us to reveal things that are not only the product of our construction (although we may subsequently offer secondary constructions of what has been revealed using photography as an aid). In combining structure and observation in her documentaries, as Longinotto seems so seamlessly to do, the source of her films lies both in her choices and in the recording capacities of the camera. Whilst abiding by conventions and constructions of filmic modes, her representations ultimately draw on the mechanical capacity of the camera. The objective of observational documentary exploits Bazin's point: that the camera image cannot be fully constructed as it exceeds the constructed intentions of the person. It is this, for example, that allows for the *petits récits* of her filmmaking to be revealed.

### **2.3 Documentary forms**

Nichols argues that documentary film can be categorised according to six modes of representation that serve as "sub-genres" under the umbrella genre that is documentary film (Nichols, 2001, 99). These six modes are known as the *poetic mode*, the *expository mode*, the *participatory mode*, the *observational mode*, the *reflexive mode* and finally, the *performative mode* (Nichols, 2001). These modes of representation are said to "establish a loose framework of affiliation within which individuals may work; they set up conventions that a given film may adopt; and they provide specific expectations for viewers" (Nichols, 2001, 99). The modes may also overlap, as a film does not necessarily have to stick to all the conventions within one mode, whilst adopting some from another (Nichols, 2001). According to this typology, Longinotto's films are largely observational, adopting a 'fly-on-the-wall' approach, just as in the earlier



*cinéma vérité*. However, there are also moments when these categories are transgressed: for example, in *Divorce Iranian Style* (1998), there are moments where the filmmakers are asked to be witnesses by the women in court. The filmmakers answer the women, and so adding a participatory element to the film, if only for a few seconds. Also, in the key film that this investigation is based on, *Rough Aunties* (2008), interviews are included with select individuals who work at the Bobbi Bear Centre. Yet, the rest of the film is observational.

Nichols (2001) argues that each mode of documentary has emerged because of filmmakers' discontent with existing forms, as well as the invention of new technologies. In this way, the different modes represent the history of documentary, at least in part. The introduction of 16mm cameras and magnetic tape recorders around the 1960s formed part of the development of the observational mode of representation (Nichols, 2001). This new way of filming, which relied on recording events as they naturally occur and offered the ability for filmmakers to make themselves less obtrusive, suddenly made the earlier poetic mode too non-concrete and artistic, and the expository mode too instructive, since filming could now immerse itself in the everyday world without much intervention or staging of events (Nichols, 2001).

Yet, this mode also leads to the development of others.

Observation was necessarily limited to the present moment as filmmakers recorded what happened before them. But observation shared a trait, or convention, with poetic and expository modes of representation: it too, camouflaged the actual presence and shaping influence of the filmmaker. Participatory documentary then took shape with the realization that filmmakers need not disguise their close relationship with their subjects by telling stories or observing events that seemed to occur as if they were not there (Nichols, 2001, 100).

Stella Bruzzi (2000), however, argues that while Nichols' typology of the different modes of representation in documentary film is the most well established, it is no longer very useful since "his categories have increasingly become negatively and weakly defined by what they are not" (Bruzzi, 2000, 1). Instead, she proposes that documentary films are always mixed mode, and that it is more useful to see them as a

negotiation between the polarities of objectivity and subjectivity, offering a dialectical analysis of events and images that accepts that no non-fictional record can contain the whole truth whilst also accepting that to reuse or recontextualise such material is not to irrevocably suppress or distort the innate value and meaning it possesses (Bruzzi, 2000, 39).

Bruzzi (2000) goes on to explain that the key flaw in Nichols' thought is that it "imposes a false chronological development onto what is essentially a theoretical paradigm" (Bruzzi, 2000, 2). There is evidence for this in that, according to Nichols (2001), the expository mode is primitive and therefore "replaced" with other forms such as the observational as documentary filmmaking developed. Yet, even today, the use of voice-over, a typical characteristic of the expository mode, is frequent, and so is observation. Often, these devices are even found within the same films (Bruzzi, 2000). To some extent, Nichols acknowledges as much when he is quoted in Bruzzi: "None of these modes expel previous modes; instead they overlap and interact. The terms are partly heuristic and actual films usually mix different modes although one mode will normally be dominant" (2000, 2). Perhaps, this is a little contradictory, since Nichols (2001) has also been noted as saying that each mode arises out of apparent frustrations with another and in this way represents the history of documentary.

Nevertheless, Bruzzi's (2000) point is clear, and while Nichols' typology provides the researcher with a useful map of possible documentary forms, a filmmaker like Longinotto always uses multiple modes in her filmmaking. For this reason Bruzzi's proposal that we examine the documentary form in terms of the goals that are set for each particular film provides a better theoretical starting point for this project.

A third approach to understanding the documentary form can be found in teacher practitioners such as Michael Rabiger, whose book *Directing the Documentary* (1998, 2004), provides a complementary perspective. Rabiger is adamant that every film must have "development, conflict and confrontation" to be a success (1998, 135). Documentaries, therefore, must strike a balance between authorship and strong, objective footage that slowly reveals reality. Observational documentary is perhaps the most demanding in this regard (Rabiger, 1998). It

requires realism, as well as a sense of something more than the material events themselves. Rabiger describes it as signs “that make us want to peer beyond the veil of the material and the literal” (Rabiger, 1998, 345).

A key piece of advice that Rabiger offers to filmmakers is to create a working hypothesis at the very beginning stages of production. He terms this a “thematic organizing principle” (Rabiger, 1998, 106), which aids the selection of individuals within the subject, provides a sense of what to include and what should be recorded, and how (Rabiger, 1998). Such a statement would provide a basis for what the film is attempting to say. The reason for the use of this device is that it is very difficult to represent real life in the form of an intriguing story. There is no script for how events should run, or how people should act. Bearing this in mind, Rabiger (1998) criticises those who refrain from stamping their film with authorship, essentially avoiding the meaning created by the subject. He goes on to say that today’s audiences will not be impressed by a film that does not suggest a greater purpose, or bear a message (Rabiger, 1998). However, the reality of real-life filming is that this hypothesis is usually impossible to follow throughout the production; at best, it serves as a useful guideline or aim, which may change over time (Rabiger, 1998). This study will also explore the degree to which Longinotto’s filmmaking bears out Rabiger’s contention.

### **2.3.1 *Cinéma vérité***

Within the documentary genre, the films that seem most to approach the ideal of objective observation that Bazin sees as a key element in filmmaking is *cinéma vérité*. Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008) describe this form of filmmaking as follows:

The direct-cinema documentary characteristically records an on-going event ‘as it happens’, with minimal interference by the filmmaker. Direct cinema emerged fully in the 1950’s and 1960’s when portable camera and sound equipment became available and allowed films like *Primary* to follow an event as it unfolds. For this reason, such documentaries are also known as *cinéma -vérité*, French for ‘cinema truth’ (2001, 112).

But while some claim that *cinéma vérité*, or “direct cinema” as it was referred to in America, was once a popular technique used to bring documentary film closer to reality, there is considerable disagreement as to its value. Bruzzi cites Errol Morris who argues that the form inhibited the development of documentary filmmaking by 20 or 30 years (Bruzzi, 2000, 68). However, contradicting this point, Bruzzi argues that *cinéma vérité* has been and remains highly influential, since it “freed both the style and the content of documentary” (Bruzzi, 2000, 68). Since such films aim for as little intervention as possible, filmmakers set out to follow action, rather than control or manipulate it, and by simply recording what occurs in front of the camera, perhaps capture reality.

Bruzzi (2000) acknowledges, however, that ‘capturing reality’ remains a highly elusive, perhaps ultimately impossible, goal. It is now generally accepted that no documentary film is capable of representing events in a way that simply restages the originals (Bruzzi, 2000). Indeed, observational documentary has been harshly criticised for this ‘weakness’:

Direct cinema is a ‘problem’ because its exponents believed that, with the advent of portable equipment and with the movements more informal style, they could indeed show things as they are and thus collapse, better than any other form of documentary, the boundary between subject and representation (Bruzzi, 2000, 68).

However, this should not and does not annul the goal of observational filmmaking. The mission of observational documentary is always to attempt, in the best way, to show people and events in as natural and untampered a state as possible (Bruzzi, 2000); if it cannot ever fully succeed then it shows is that *cinéma vérité* is the product of two opposing imperatives to represent the world without bias and so move ever closer to reality, and to realise that such an unmanipulated representation of reality is impossible (Bruzzi, 2000).

Rabiger’s (1998) more practical approach may provide a way out of this dilemma. He prefers to describe documentary in terms of the relationship between the filmmaker and subject matter and divides documentary into two branches. He labels these branches “intercessional and non-intercessional films,” with the latter being the equivalent of “*cinéma vérité* and direct (or observational) cinema” (Rabiger, 1998, 323). If the filmmaker intercedes, by questioning a

subject, for example, or making their presence more invasive, this is known as intercessional filming, but if the filmmaker minimises their intervention then the filming becomes non-intercessional. In neither case is the filmmaker regarded as entirely absent. This position puts Rabiger closer to Bruzzi, who argues that more recent developments in documentary filmmaking show that the ideal of pure observation is impossible to reach:

Docusoaps and other recent evolutions in British observational documentary indicate that the puritanism of early direct cinema has been replaced by more realistic expectations that permit the correlation within one film of observational practice and more obtrusive filmic elements. Likewise, the journey film is entirely the result of capturing an encounter – capturing, therefore, the collision between off-screen, establishes truth that was there before the cameras turned up, and the truth that emerges from the dialogue that intrusion elicits (Bruzzi, 2000, 73).

### **2.3.2 Documentary practice**

Rabiger's account of documentary film differs from both Nichols' and Bruzzi's in that it is based on practical advice for aspirant filmmakers. For him, observational documentary is burdened not only with the task of showing reality, but also with ensuring that the objective footage does not appear as an orphan film, void of voice or an ability to reveal the complexity of the world it represents. Rabiger (1998) suggests that the lightening of this burden is made possible by three main factors. Firstly, the subject of the film should be original and enticing. Secondly, the point of view which the producers have adopted should be flexible, yet definite. However, Rabiger (1998) states that if too much of the filmmaker's view point is placed on the subject matter, it will seem as if the subject matter itself is simply not convincing enough. Finally, Rabiger (1998) argues that the conventions associated with the kind of film being made must be used successfully.

According to Rabiger (1998), there are many aspects that contribute to how a film is structured. Unlike with traditional narrative film, the structure is limited to the real-life situation, which documentary should follow. However, above all these elements, time is the most defining factor. "Documentaries often have trouble giving an adequate sense of development, so the

power to abridge, and to make comparisons between past and present, may be vital to showing that change is indeed taking place” (Rabiger, 1998, 336). Rabiger (1998) provides a number of categories, defined by how films may be structured. They can be referred to as: (1) the *event-centred film*; (2) the *process film* that shows its development through a chain of events; (3) the *journey film*, which typically consists of a definite beginning, middle and end; (4) the *historical film*; and (5) the *walled-city film*.

The walled-city film perhaps needs a little more explanation, since it is the closest to Longinotto’s work. Rabiger (1998) defines it as this: “the walled-city film investigates a microcosm in order to imply criticism on a much wider scale” (1998, 339). Such a film would focus on a particular group or institution, which has developed its own set of rules, but through this examination the rest of society is also placed under the spotlight (Rabiger, 1998). Rabiger offers two films by Nick Bloomfield as examples: *Soldier Girls* (1891) and *Chicken Ranch* (1982). The first is about women soldiers and their training regime and the second, about women who work in a brothel, as well as their clients (Rabiger, 1998). What these films have in common, however, is that they are both about women and about how life within a group or institution tends to pressure those within the group to lose their individuality and follow the group’s code or way of life. In this way, each film makes its audience more knowledgeable, not only about a particular group but also about the world in general and, in so doing, they encourage critical thinking (Rabiger, 1998).

Rabiger argues that another area in which many documentary films fall short is in neglecting what he regards as the “essential ingredient” of any story, and that is a significant change in the character(s) or event(s) (1998, 135). The reason for this may lie in the unfortunate truth that most documentary films have a limited time in which the shooting has to take place. As a result, such films may leave the audience frustrated. Rabiger (1998) suggests that filmmakers should always be on the lookout for change. It may appear in various forms such as a physical journey, a movement in time, or a significant psychological change or development. As Rabiger puts it: “Showing change comes from a sensitivity to people and their issues ... The element of struggle,

contest and will be at the heart of drama in every medium, including documentary. A documentary without a struggle for movement is just a catalogue of episodes” (1998, 136).

In order to determine the suitability of a proposed subject, Rabiger advises aspirant documentarists to use the “Dramatic Curve” (Figure 1). At first glance, this curve appears to emulate the mythic structure popular in classic Hollywood scriptwriting:

The Dramatic Curve concept is derived from Greek drama and represents the way that most stories state their problem, and develop tension through scenes that show increasing complication and intensity, until the central conflicts arrive at an apex or ‘crisis’, after which there is a change and resolution- though not, let me say quickly, necessarily a peaceful one (Rabiger, 1998, 137).

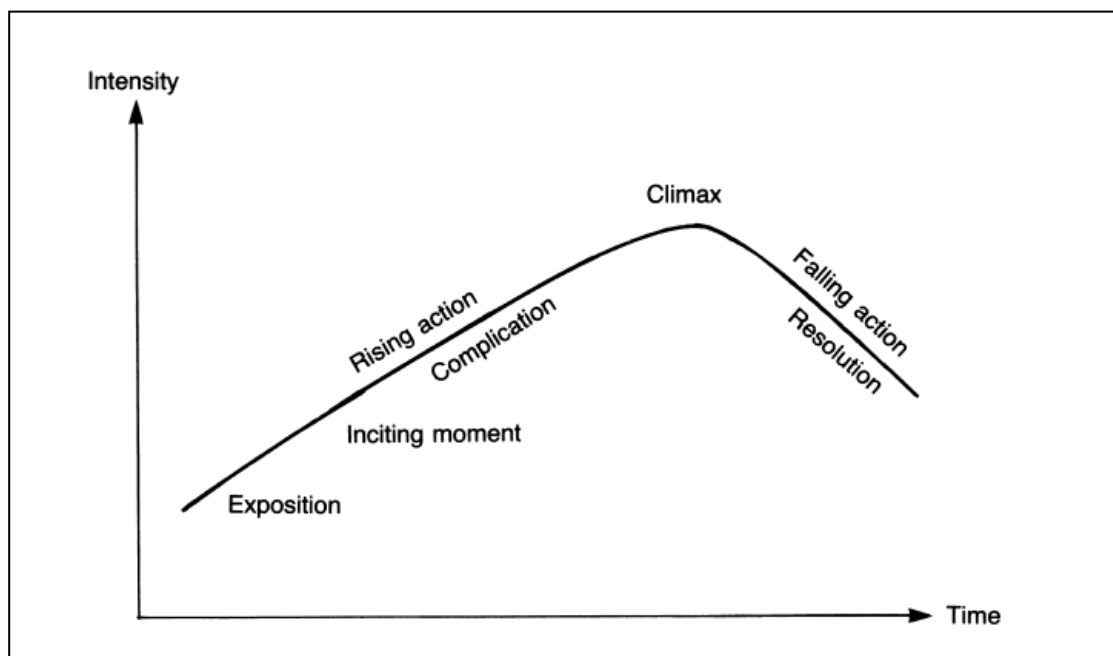


Figure 1: The dramatic curve

The stages of the dramatic curve are as follows: Firstly, the exposition where the characters are introduced, and the situation and time, and are made clear to the audience. The conflict, which Rabiger (1998) argues is hugely important, is set into motion at this early stage. The second phase is the “inciting moment” when the characters or situations introduced have met opposition, resulting in the complication phase of “rising action”. The film “shows the basic

conflicts being played out as variations having surprise, suspense and escalating intensity” (Rabiger, 1998, 138). This is followed by the “climax” or point at which the final struggle takes place and creates change. The final phase is the “resolution” or “falling action” which concludes the story, and presents the overall consequences, where the characters end up, and what the final interpretation may be (Rabiger, 1998, 137–138).

Rabiger (1998) acknowledges that few documentaries comply fully with this formula, though “some memorable ones do” (1998, 138). He argues that some fidelity to this structure is necessary if your audience is to be kept content (Rabiger, 1998). He compares the pattern of increasing in intensity and decreasing towards a solution to breathing, as he believes it to be part of life, something humans are already well familiar with (Rabiger, 1998). The heightened success of this pattern is found in films where each scene consists of this dramatic formula in miniature, ending each scene with a new position. On this matter, Rabiger (1998) mentions the fulcrum point, which is the point of change, or, in his words: “the basic unit of any scene containing dramatic interchange” (1998, 138).

Indeed, Rabiger (1998) suggests that there must be an actual confrontation, a clash, between opposites, before the conflict can move towards its resolution. If necessary, this should be arranged (Rabiger, 1998). How perfectly disappointing for those who still believe in the truth, even as a representation, that separates documentary from traditional Hollywood film! Such a formulated construction does not seem to fit well in a genre where conventions used strive to be objective and represent the truth as closely as possible. However, since such fidelity can never be achieved, as we have seen Bruzzi (2000) argue, it becomes important to consider how good documentaries are to be constructed. On the one hand, Rabiger argues that something like the dramatic curve is necessary for audience engagement. On the other, his ‘formula’ could lead the documentary form into becoming all too predictable, as the structure on which audience interest initially rests, ironically, itself becomes uninteresting, at least for discerning audiences. The way this dilemma plays out in documentary film surely warrants further research. The question it raises for this investigation regards the possibility of audience interest,



despite deviation from this all-encompassing, dominant structure. To what degree does Longinotto use this structure as a tool within her observational works?

## **2.4 Crafting the story: Narrative structure and film form**

Although it is not the only structure available to documentary filmmakers, narrative is the most important, no doubt because of its general cultural dominance and its seemingly unavoidable presence in time-based media. As Bordwell and Thompson put it:

Narrative form is most common in fictional films, but it can appear in all other basic types. For instance, documentaries often employ narrative form ... Because stories are all around us, spectators approach a narrative film with definite expectations. A spectator comes prepared to make sense of a narrative film (2001, 59).

Bordwell and Thompson go on to describe narrative as a succession of changes occurring between one situation, at the beginning, and the situation that holds at the end. These changes are described as being in a “cause-effect relationship” with “the set of all the events in a narrative, both the ones explicitly presented and those the viewer infers, constitutes the story” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 60–61). Narrative, according to Bordwell and Thompson, depends on the following: “plot and story; cause and effect; time; space; openings, closings and patterns of development” (2001, 61–68). The notion of cause and effect lies quite heavily on the characters within the story. It is the characters that create happenings and respond to changes in the storyline. Human desires are key in the growth of the narrative (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001). For them, the final point – the “openings, closings and patterns of development” – are critical to understanding film narrative. This is because the phrase refers to the structure of the narrative, the beginning, climax and resolution of the three acts system of narrative:

A film does not just start, it begins. The opening provides a basis for what is to come and initiates us into the narrative ... A film does not simply stop; it ends. The narrative will typically resolve its causal issues by bringing the development to a high point or climax (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 68–69).

For Bordwell and Thompson, cinema is dominated by a particular narrative form: “Historically... fictional cinema has tended to be dominated by a single mode of narrative form. We shall refer to this prevailing mode as the ‘classical Hollywood cinema’” (2001, 76). This mode, although born in the studios of the United States, determines the shape of many a film, both American and foreign (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001). Bordwell and Thompson (2001) also state that many documentaries, including their perennial example, *Primary*, comply with the techniques of Hollywood narrative. This involves the characters determining or revealing their wants or needs and the ensuing narrative revealing the ways in which these wants or needs are met. Typically, this is made more interesting by suspending easy achievement through conflict, usually represented by another character, with a goal quite the opposite of the protagonist (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001). “As a result, the protagonist must seek to change the situation so that he/she can achieve the goal” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 76).

While Bordwell and Thompson do state that “the classical Hollywood mode is, however, only one system among many that have been and could be used to construct films” (2001, 78), they do not go so far as to divulge what alternatives they have in mind. Indeed, it is hard not to notice, through further reading of structure on narrative, that classic Hollywood narrative and its variants dominate not only film production but also writing on film. Perhaps this gap is attributable to the success of narrative structure: it is a system that works and has catered for audiences both past and present, and will do for future ones too. The extent to which it can or should apply to documentary is, as we have seen, somewhat problematic.

Examining the structure of Longinotto’s *Rough Aunties*, it rapidly becomes apparent that neither the classic Hollywood model, nor Rabiger’s documentary version of it, really apply. Indeed, it seems to me that this account of film narrative relies on a concept of the *grand or meta-narrative*, as *Rough Aunties* appears to be built out of a series of *petits récits*. These terms are, of course, taken from the philosopher Jean-Francoise Lyotard who is possibly most well-known for his book, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984).

Lyotard has been described as bringing “a unique intellectual voice, a range of powerful critical tools and a demand for openness and the will to question disciplinary rules and structures”

(Malpas, 2003). Malpas (2003) suggests that Lyotard's book, *The Postmodern Condition*, has been both controversial and influential since its earliest days and is considered a key text of postmodernist theory. Although the book is primarily about "the development of knowledge in contemporary Western societies" (Malpas, 2003, 17), it is Lyotard's emphasis on narrative and in particular his distinction between grand or meta-narratives, on the one hand, and *petits récits* or small narratives, on the other, that is most useful in this context. Malpas explains that, for Lyotard,

narratives are the stories that communities tell themselves that explain their present existence, their history and ambitions for the future. Although the term 'narrative' is commonly associated with literary fiction, all forms of discourse employ narratives to present their ideas (2003, 21).

Examples of such narratives are the discourses of history and psychology, the former being made up of stories gone by, the latter made up of stories we tell about individuals and individual development. In short, narratives inform us of 'who we are', both in terms of what we have done and how we might fulfil our beliefs and aspirations (Malpas, 2003, 21).

Lyotard himself explains the concept of meta-narratives using the example of story-telling in the Cashinahua, a native Indian tribe living in South America. The Cashinahua use a standard formula or set of phrases to introduce and conclude all their stories and it is this that allows a link to be created between the speaker and the subject, and for the stories to be passed on through the generations. This link between speaker and subject, echoed as a link between past and present, is one example of a common meta-narrative (Malpas, 2003). In Western modernity, however, another form of meta-narrative – the grand narrative – has developed. As Malpas describes it:

In contrast to this form, which is based on the relationship between the past (the stories themselves) and the present (their narration), Lyotard describes another form of metanarrative: the grand narratives of modernity. For Lyotard, modernity is defined by its reliance on grand narratives that depict human progress. Their difference from traditional metanarratives is that they point towards a future in

which the problems facing society (which is most often thought of as all of humanity) will be resolved (2003, 25).

Lyotard goes on to argue that, over the course of its history, Western European culture has developed a range of grand narratives ranging from the narrative of Christian redemption through to the secular enlightenment narrative of human emancipation. However, Lyotard argues that none of these narratives remains convincing: each of them has been undermined by historical events (such as the Jewish holocaust), social failures, and the increasingly insistent presence of non-Western cultures:

... knowledge is no longer organized towards the fulfilment of universal human goals. Instead, postmodern knowledge is valued in terms of its efficiency and profitability in a market-driven global economy ... Truth, the basis of the speculative grand narrative, and justice, the goal of the grand narrative of emancipation, no longer have the universal appeal they did for modernity (in Malpas, 2003, 28).

For Lyotard, the decline of the grand narrative is a good thing, partly because it encourages the recognition of otherness and partly because “the main threat facing postmodern society is the reduction of knowledge to a single system whose only criterion is efficiency” (in Malpas, 2003, 30).

Lyotard does not argue for the replacement of any of the old grand narratives with a new one, but notes that justice is not a value that should be discarded, despite the impossibility of universal concurrence (in Malpas, 2003). Therefore, his suggestion of a solution is this: “We must arrive at an idea and practice of justice that is not linked to that of consensus” (Lyotard, 1984, 66). “This practice focuses on the individual ‘little narratives’ and their differences from each other, the fact that they are not all reducible to the criterion of efficiency” (Malpas, 2003, 30). For Still (2007), these *petits récits*, these “little narratives”, defy what Lyotard calls the “singularities” of modern culture (Lyotard, 1984, 60); instead they acknowledge plurality and no longer care much for universal consensus:

The relation of little narrative to grand narratives, then, would be analogous to the way in which the postmodern may be read as already inscribed in the modern. Such little narratives would mark, from within, those moments when grand narratives implode, collapsing in on themselves (Still, 2007, xvi).

Whereas grand narratives are all encompassing, *petits récits* allow for the postmodern plurality of other voices. It is not even necessary for these 'little' narratives to be compatible with one another. *Petits récits* minimise construction and allow individual stories to speak for themselves.

Lyotard's concept of *petits récits* seems particularly appropriate to Longinotto's *oeuvre*. If traditional Hollywood structure – the Hero's Journey with its three-act structure and dramatic curve – is a species of grand narrative, then the structure typically found in Longinotto's films is one of *petits récits* which are not reconciled but each given independent voice. In *Rough Aunties* (2008), the structure consists of little narratives of cases and individuals: each has its own protagonist and they cannot and should not all be combined into a single meta-narrative. Indeed, the aim of her *petits récits* may be explained as providing opposing examples that are in conflict and defy a unified consensus that obliterates "the singularity of events" (Still, 2007, xvi).

## **2.5 Feminist theory**

Feminism is traditionally divided into waves in an attempt to understand the changing ideals that have characterised the movement over the course of its history. Of course, these waves are not homogenous and there is considerable debate within the most contemporary wave, the third wave, that is, one that is largely characterised by attempts to consider women of colour and those who live beyond the borders of the world in which the movement originated.

The third wave is speculated to have come about as a reaction to the second wave's drive to change the pervasive sexist representation of women, focused primarily on critiquing media texts which, the second wave feminists argued, tended to encourage the audiences to sexually objectify women, and take pleasure in viewing and assessing them on this basis (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2005). However, this meant that women's efforts to express their own agency and

sexuality through the media was not particularly foregrounded (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2005). In addition, as the feminist filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989, 2005) argues, this second wave feminism is largely white and First World, with little understanding of the position of women in the developing world, who are likely to have arguably more invasive problems than being sexually represented, through the potential colonising of the body, for the purpose of commodities. It seems as if these tendencies have spilt over into parts of the third wave as well, in which Western women seem to call the shots, in a wave that is more complex to define.

Winifred Woodhull supports this latter view by arguing that “[i]f anything can be said with certainty about third wave feminism, it is that it is mainly a first world phenomenon generated by women who, like their second wave counterparts, have limited interest in women’s struggles elsewhere on the planet” (Woodhull, 2003, 76). However, despite this glaring flaw pointed out by Woodhull (2003), Spencer (in Gillis, Howie and Munford, 2004) discusses the complex background of the third wave movement:

Class difference, racial diversity, the multiplicities of sexual orientation and gender identity have been made the basis of different kinds of identity politics. Feminism has moved towards related forms of oppositional politics, while being itself repeatedly declared dead by the media ... There is no clear argument as to what third-wave feminism is even about (Spencer 2004, 9).

Following the suggestions made by Minh-ha in *Woman, Native, Other* (1989), the “Third World” is challenging the dominant Western conceptions of women with a variety of alternatives. Despite her initial critique, Woodhull concludes, “Third-wave feminism claims – and rightly so – that new modalities of feminism must be invented for the new millennium ... It is crucial that Western feminists engage with women’s movements the world over” (2004, 252).

This third wave project is still under way and it should, perhaps, be seen less as a destination and more as a journey of discovery of Third World women and their experiences. As Ednie Kaeh Garrison states:

The very claim to know what third-wave feminism means is riddled with contradictions and problems ... The only general consensus to have emerged is that it has become a name assigned to those who have no real clear sense of what feminist ideology or praxis, feminist movement, or feminist identity have meant across time and place (2004, 24).

Despite the usefulness of the wave metaphor, there is reason to believe that this is perhaps not the best metaphor for the job (Cochrane, 2012). One wave seems to obtain specific criteria, separating it from the ones that follow and precede it. There is also an apparent lack of acknowledgment regarding the dendritic structure of these movements that would, perhaps, be regarded as the rippling off-shoots of the holistic wave. Furthermore, waves are connoted towards potential destruction, and also have an ending, a predestined end to movements that are still necessary, leaving behind a mess. Nevertheless, the currency of the movement is essential to this argument, and so is explored in terms of its strengths, limitations and practice in film.

### **2.5.1 Acknowledging the Third World woman**

Chandra Talpade Mohanty's 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses' (1988) is probably the most celebrated analysis of the concept of the 'Third World woman' in feminist discourse. In her view, the concept of the Third World woman is a highly problematic and monolithic concept which, through the "hegemony of western scholarship" (Mohanty 1988, 199), serves to further rather than counter the colonising impulse of the First World:

I would like to suggest that the feminist writing I analyse here discursively colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world, thereby producing/representing a composite, singular 'Third-World woman'- an image which appears arbitrarily constructed but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of western humanist discourse (Mohanty, 1988, 196–197).

Mohanty supports her claim with a careful examination and critical reassessment of the discourse of Western feminist writing on the Third World, focusing specifically on questions of

“power and struggle” (Mohanty, 1988, 198). Feminist writing, she argues, is based on three assumptions:

The first analytical presupposition ... is ... the assumption of women as an already constituted and coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy which can be applied universally and cross-culturally. The second analytical presupposition is evident on the methodological level, in the uncritical way ‘proof’ of universality and cross-culture validity is provided. The third is a more specifically political presupposition, underlying the methodologies and the analytical strategies, i.e. the model of power and struggle they suggest (Mohanty, 1988, 199).

Taken together, these assumptions create an image of an “average Third-World woman”, who is bound to lead a life constrained by her gender and origin; she is “sexually constrained; ignorant; poor; uneducated; tradition-bound; religious; domesticated; family-orientated; victimized; etc.” (Mohanty, 1988, 199). This characterisation, in turn, fixes Third World women in binary opposition to evidently more impressive Western women who are assumed to be “educated”, thinking individuals who are typically “modern”, hold “control over their own bodies”, and are able to exercise “‘freedom’ to make their own decisions” (Mohanty, 1988, 199–200). Mohanty (1988) sums the matter up plainly: “These distinctions are made on the basis of the privileging of a particular group as the norm or referent” (Mohanty, 1988, 200).

As further evidence for her position, Mohanty analyses the problematic use of the category ‘women’ in a good deal of feminist analysis and its tendency to regard “Third-World women” as a unified group of victimised women caught within structures they are unable to resist:

In these texts women are variously defined as victims of male violence (Fran Hosken); victims of the colonial process (M. Cutrufelli); victims of the Arab familial system (Juliette Minces); victims of the economic development process (B. Lindsay and the liberal-WID school); and finally, victims of the economic basis of *the* Islamic code (P. Jeffery). This mode of defining women primarily in terms of their *object status* (the way in which they are affected or not affected by certain institutions and systems) is



what characterizes this particular form of the use of 'women' as a category of analysis (Mohanty, 1988, 200–201).

Mohanty (1988) correctly critiques these generalising perspectives. Firstly, in labelling women as victims of male violence, Western feminism creates a universal battle between women (the defended) and men (the perpetrators) (Mohanty, 1988, 201). But, despite the pervasive presence of male violence against women, she argues that each society affected by violent, patriarchal rule needs to be studied in itself so that the attempt to know it can be linked, not to haughty generalisations, but to practical attempts to make changes: "Sisterhood cannot be assumed on the basis of gender, it must be forged in concrete historical and political praxis" (Mohanty, 1988, 201).

In her analysis of "Married Women as Victims of the Colonial Process", in which she deals with Bemba women, Mohanty writes:

To treat them as a unified group, characterized by the fact of their 'exchange' between male kin, is to deny the specificities of their daily existence, and the differential *value* attached to their exchange before and after initiation ... Women as a group are positioned within a given structure, but there is no attempt made to trace the effect of the marriage practice in constituting women within an obviously changing network of power relations (1988, 201).

Again, with regards to women and development, Mohanty points out that grouping Third World women before they enter the so-called "development process" equally fails to take into account the specificities of their different lives. In this paper, all Third World women suffer the same problems and have the same needs, longings and dreams for their future (Mohanty, 1988). But it is highly unlikely that, for example, educated, working Egyptian wives living in the city think or suffer the same way as their impoverished, uneducated domestic maids do: the development process will, of course, effect these two 'subgroups' of women differently: "They are not 'women' – a coherent group – solely on the basis of a particular economic system or policy. Such reductive cross-cultural comparisons result in the colonization of the specifics of

daily existence and the complexities of political interests which women of different social classes and cultures represent and mobilize” (Mohanty, 198, 206).

Throughout *Under Western Eyes* (1988), Mohanty makes similar arguments. Although writing in their favour, much Western feminist work on the Third World pays little more than lip-service to the women it is ostensibly defending and instead marginalises them further as objects of the Western knowledge system. Mohanty summarises her position as follows:

In other words, western feminist discourse, by assuming women as a coherent, already constituted group which is placed in kinship, legal and other structures, defines Third World women as subjects *outside* of social relations, instead of looking at the way women are constituted as women *through* these very structures ... Without the overdetermined discourse that creates the *third* world, there would be no (singular and privileged) first world. Without the ‘third-world woman’, the particular self-representation of western women mentioned above would be problematical. I am suggesting, in effect, that the one enables and sustains the other. This is not to say that the signature of western feminist writings on the third world has the same authority as the project of western humanism. However, in the context of the hegemony of the western scholarship establishment in the production and dissemination of texts, and in the context of legitimating imperative of humanistic and scientific discourse, the definition of the ‘third-world woman’ as a monolith might well tie into the larger economic and ideological praxis of ‘disinterested’ scientific inquiry and pluralism which are the surface manifestations of a latent economic and cultural colonization of the ‘non-western’ world. It is time to move beyond the ideological framework in which even Marx found it possible to say: They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented (Mohanty, 1988, 213–216).

More recently, other feminists have complicated Mohanty’s argument. Uma Narayan (1997), for example, acknowledges that third wave feminism is a modern Western product, but she notes that this is only a half-truth, since a great number of third wave feminists are denied their agency on the grounds that their ‘Western education’ has caused them to think in such untraditional ways: “Many feminists from third world contexts confront voices that are eager to

convert any feminist criticism they make of their culture into a mere symptom of their 'lack of respect for their culture' rooted in the 'Westernization' that they seem to have caught like a disease ..." (Narayan, 1997, 6). Using her own relationship with her mother as example and metaphor for the evolution of Third World feminism, Narayan writes:

So it is strange, and perhaps not strange at all, that my mother adds her voice to so many others that blame my being "Westernized" for my feminist contestations of my culture ... One thing I want to say to all who would dismiss my feminist criticisms of my culture, using my "Westernization" as a lash, is that my mother's pain too has rustled among the pages of all those books I have read that partly constitute my "Westernization", and has crept into all the suitcases I have ever packed for my several exiles (Narayan 1997, 7-8).

Indeed, Narayan (1997) argues that it is a misconception that "Westernization" is the sole source of the feminist perspective; in her case, it was her own childhood experience of gender positioning that precipitated her turn an enlightenment-based feminist perspective (Narayan 1997). Thus, unlike Mohanty, Narayan's (1997) strong words are aimed not only at the unthinking Western feminist, but also at who blame her:

Those in third world contexts who dismiss the politics of feminists in their midst as a symptom of "Westernization" not only fail to consider how these feminist experiences within their third world contexts have shaped and informed their politics, but also fail to acknowledge that their feminist analyses are results of political organizing and political mobilization, initiated and sustained by women within these third world contexts (Narayan 1997, 13).

While Narayan (1997) acknowledges that there is some truth to the claim that "traditional culture is under threat from Westernization" (Narayan 1997, 20) – particularly through the financial and political agendas of the more powerful Western countries – this does not mean that "Westernization" should be taken to be a uniform vice on which all the Third World's troubles should be laid (Narayan, 1997). Narayan continues:

I believe Third Wave feminists need to elicit greater public debate about what the label “Westernization” means. We need to point out that it often is a rhetorical device, predicated on double-standards and bad faith, used to smear selectively only those changes, those breaks with tradition, that those with authority define “tradition” deplore (Narayan, 1997, 29).

In Narayan’s view, then, the opposition between the privileged Western First World feminist and the poor Third World woman needs to be complicated, not least because of the globalised, media saturated world in which we live. Speaking personally, she writes: “First, having lived the first quarter century of my life in third world contexts, and having come of age politically in such contexts, a significant part of my sensibilities and political horizons are indelibly shaped by third world realities ...” (Narayan, 2008, 377). In providing this rather personal account, which is not so much indulgent as necessary, she provides a counter to some of the more simplistic oppositions that have plagued third wave feminism with its often unwitting echo of outdated and unhelpful oppositions: “The sound and fury of these cultural ‘my culture is better than your culture’ conflicts between male-dominated colonial governments and male-dominated Third World nationalism often served to obscure the fact that women were clearly second class citizen in all these cultural contexts” (Narayan, 2008, 383). What is needed now is a more nuanced sense of shared goals amongst feminists rather than internal battles within the feminist institution. “I believe that, instead of locating ourselves as ‘outsider within’ third world cultures, third wave feminists need to challenge the notion that access to ‘Westernized educations’ position us ‘outside’ of our home cultures” (Narayan, 2008, 388).

While Mohanty’s ground-breaking work alerted feminists to the many different ways in which the powerful can objectify those they seek to help, Narayan’s account of her own position, in which Western feminism has played an *enabling role*, suggests that it is possible to move beyond the troublesome ideological disagreements of early third wave feminism that Mohanty diagnosed and to imagine a more co-operative relationship between feminists based or educated in Europe and women embedded in the Third World. Indeed, it may be that the similarities between these two groups are as important to acknowledge as are their differences. As Narayan puts it:

Thus, while women in Western contexts might be unfamiliar with violence against women rooted in the institutions of dowry and arranged marriages, they are no strangers to battery and violence present within their own forms of marriage and family arrangements. They are no strangers either to the sense of shame that accompanies admitting victimization, or to a multiplicity of material, social and cultural structures that pose serious impediments to their leaving abusive relationships or to seeking assistance (Narayan, 2008, 381).

Indeed, without acknowledging this possibility, it is impossible to understand the work of a feminist filmmaker like Kim Longinotto who, though she grew up and lives in the UK, is nevertheless able to give sympathetic voice to the women whose lives she records in her documentary films.

### **2.5.2 Feminist film practice**

Third wave feminism generally subscribes to a constructivist approach to female identity: women's identities are constructively differently in different places around the world. If this is the case, and if most white women are likely to view the world through the often privileged Western identities they have been able to construct, then a feminist filmmaker like Longinotto clearly has to take care that she does not impose her own privilege onto the subject matter she has chosen to film. However, as Narayan (1997, 2008) suggests in her discussion of the term, "Westernization" (and, we might add, 'Western'), one should not turn this difference into a binary opposition. Since Narayan (1997) uses a personal account of her experience to support her argument, perhaps a similar acknowledgement will help in an understanding of Longinotto's film practice in the context of this study.

Longinotto, born and currently residing in the United Kingdom, would typically be thought of as the model-answer, white woman, Western feminist. However, her troublesome relationship with her almost-absent Italian father surely complicates her supposed privilege (Cochrane, 2010; Longinotto, 2013): she cannot be reduced to being a "bearer of the Western gaze" but is, instead, a woman who has herself struggled both personally and socially in a patriarchal system. (Similarly, I, the researcher, a young white South African woman of European ancestry

and who lives (mostly) according to Western ideals, might also seem to fit into the typical third wave feminist description as being part of the “white, middle-class and first world” hegemony (Woodhull 2003:78). Yet my home and my lived experience has all been in South Africa, a strange, fluid, contested, cultural space that cannot easily be located at the First World end of the continuum.)

This study argues that contrary to the “colonising gaze” that Mohanty diagnoses in earlier third wave feminism, Longinotto’s work, particularly the films that are based in Africa and Iran, can be seen as part of the far more sympathetic feminism that Narayan advocates: her films always strive to acknowledge those whose struggles tend to go unnoticed. She provides a voice for the silent, but also observes, reveals and discreetly encourages the discreet power in presumably weak groups of people. In this sense, her films cannot be regarded as instances of the overpowering and unilateral gaze of the Western feminist that Mohanty rightly deplores.

Smaill (2009) confirms this view when she argues that the purpose of Kim Longinotto’s work, particularly in her more recent films, is “to show social change that is instigated from below and from the margins” (Smaill, 2009, 43). Smaill continues to suggest that Longinotto’s work differs from conventional ethnographic documentary, that tends to arrange its subjects systematically so that “they occupy a time and space which ‘we’ must recreate, stage or represent” (Nichols quoted in Smaill, 2009, 44). Instead, Longinotto’s “observational approach” (Smaill, 2009) allows “binaries such as passivity and agency; insider and outsider; modern and pre-modern; knowable and unknowable [to remain] constantly at play”:

Constituting a more contemporary phase of feminist practice, her work employs the conventions of realist documentary to seek renewed understanding of the structuring of social relations, the dynamics of transformation, and the different ways women across cultures are finding to function in this dynamic (Smaill, 2009, 44).

Smaill (2009) thus argues that Longinotto’s filmmaking is an excellent example of positive third wave feminist practice. The subjects, narratives and patterns found in her work show that she is intimately concerned to help her subjects engage with their own cultural conflicts and, in so doing, help people move and reform the hegemonic dynamics that govern their lives. Typically,

her documentaries overcome the false binary of the active First World versus the passive Third World woman as she shows how women, particularly those who form part of the cultural other, are the very agents of change (Smaill, 2009).

However, despite the importance of Longinotto's work (which now dates back to the 1970s), Smaill (2009) argues that she remains largely neglected by feminists and film theorists. This thesis is a small attempt to address this neglect and to reveal that Longinotto is an example of a Western woman who is capable of observing and reflecting the *petits récits* of marginalised individuals in the Third World; she is not simply another white woman gazing down and describing her subject, according to the dictates of some Western grand narrative.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This investigation is based primarily on a qualitative visual and structural analysis of a film by the documentary director Kim Longinotto, drawing on the techniques of formal analysis that have been developed in film studies generally as well as in documentary theory. Although a number of Longinotto's films will be used to contextualise the analysis, this research will take the South African-based film *Rough Aunties* (2008) as its primary focus. The analysis will be supported by the data obtained from two semi-structured interviews, one with Kim Longinotto, the filmmaker herself, the other with Mildred Ngcobo, an important participant in the case study film. This chapter will briefly justify the choice of films and then discuss the methods used in the analysis. It will also include a brief discussion of the methods used to conduct the two interviews, as well as the ethical precautions taken in this regard. This chapter will close with a comment on the potential limitations of the methodology and ways to mitigate them.

#### **3.2 Film selection**

As indicated, the primary focus of this study will be Kim Longinotto's documentary *Rough Aunties* (2008). This study will, however, contextualise the analysis by relating the film to a number of earlier films by the same director: *Divorce Iranian Style* (1998), *Runaway* (2001), *The Day I will Never Forget* (2002), and *Sisters in Law* (2005). A contextualised case study will be done on *Rough Aunties* (2008), which is the primary focus. This study focuses on *Rough Aunties* for several reasons: (1) it is the most recent film to which we have access; (2) it was filmed in the same country as this research is being conducted, thus making some of the thematic content familiar to the researcher; (3) the participants of *Rough Aunties* (2008) are also accessible, and so there is an opportunity for a deeper investigation into this particular film through interviews with the participants; and (4) the film is a personal favourite of the researcher's. The remainder of the films used to contextualise the analysis, often only briefly, have been chosen because of their thematic similarity to *Rough Aunties*: they all focus on women living in Third World contexts (namely Africa and Iran). They all are filmed in the



observational mode and they all adopt what might be called a sympathetically engaged feminist stance towards their subjects.

### **3.3 Formal analysis**

Formal visual analysis will constitute the largest section of this investigation. The frame of this analysis comes from documentary studies which theorise about the different modes of documentary as developed by scholars such as Nichols (2001) and Bruzzi (2000). However, documentary theory has tended to focus on the general typology of documentary forms and typically pays very little attention to the detailed analysis of structures within those forms. For this reason, this study looks to other accounts of film form in order to develop an appropriate method by which to analyse *Rough Aunties*. This will involve a discussion of the basic elements of film – the shot, the cut and the final arrangement (Kolker, 2000) and will draw on the method of formal visual analysis that has been developed by the American film scholars David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (2008). Because this method of analysis was developed in the context of the feature film rather than documentary, there are some limitations that will be mitigated as adaption takes place. These limitations are acknowledged later in this chapter. This study aims to make a small contribution to the development of a new method of analysis, one that is more appropriate for documentary studies, and, in particular, to the way in which the observational impulse common to many documentaries can be accommodated in films that also often assume a degree of narrative form.

#### **3.3.1 Documentary studies**

Bill Nichols is a key writer on documentary film. As Austen and De Jong put it, he “has lectured widely and published over 100 articles. Among his several books, *Representing Reality* (1991) provided the first rigorous examination of documentary film form while *Introduction to Documentary* (2001) continues to serve as the most widely-used textbook in the field” (2008: ix). The six modes established by Nichols are known as the *poetic mode*, the *expository mode*, the *participatory mode*, the *observational mode*, the *reflexive mode* and, finally, the *performative mode* (Nichols, 2001). The observational documentary mode, according to Nichols

(2001), is one that strives to remain unobtrusive and rejects interventions and staging, but is never neutral:

Observation was necessarily limited to the present moment as filmmakers recorded what happened before them. But observation shared a trait, or convention, with poetic and expository modes of representation: it, too, camouflaged the actual presence and shaping influence of the filmmaker ... Observational documentary de-emphasizes persuasion to give us a sense of what it is like to *be* in a given situation but without a sense of what it is like for the filmmaker to be there, too (Nichols, 2001, 100–116).

This definition provides a framework in which to understand Longinotto's work and this study constantly tries to remain aware of Nichols' account of the observational mode and its ability to give the viewer "a sense of what it is like to *be* in a given situation."

Austen and De Jong continue by stating that: "Bill Nichols' familiar characterization of screen documentary as grounded in the promise of delivering 'views of the world' is flexible and suggestive enough to worth retaining. But by itself it cannot (and is not intended to) arbitrate on disputed cases at the margins of the mode" (2008, 2). This is a point that Stella Bruzzi (2000, 2006) pushes further when she suggests that most, if not all, documentary films are mixed mode and thus not susceptible to Nichols' systematic categorisation. As Bruzzi argues,

Documentary has not developed along such rigid lines and it is unhelpful to suggest that it has ... An insistent implication of Nichols' 'family tree' is not merely that documentary has pursued a developmental progression towards greater introspection and subjectivity, but that its evolution has been determined by the endless quest of documentary filmmakers for better and more authentic ways to represent reality, with the implied suggestion that, somewhere in the utopian future, documentary will miraculously be able to collapse the difference between reality and representation altogether (2000, 2).

This research takes note of Bruzzi's counter arguments concerning both the supposed purity of the different documentary forms and the impossibility of collapsing the barrier between reality and representation.

### **3.3.2 The elements of film form**

Film is, if nothing else, an intricate and complex medium made by the human hand and for the human eye. In his essay 'The film text and film form', Robert Kolker (2000) argues that "[b]y examining the internal structure of film narrative, the way images are made and put together in order to tell us stories, we can discover a great deal of information about what films expect of us and we of them" (2000, 13). Drawing on the history of film theory, Kolker argues that film is built up out of two basic elements: "the shot and the cut" (Kolker, 2000). These are then combined in a specific way to make up the "final arrangement" that is the film itself (Kolker, 2000, 13). For Kolker, the shot refers to the image that is created on the film (or CCD) as light falls upon it. It is the recorded image that is seen through the lens. The cut, however, refers to the abrupt end to a particular image and its replacement by another one. "The third element is the completed structure of image and editing that communicates the narrative (or overall shape of the film)" (Kolker, 2000, 13).

For Kolker (2000), the central concern for film theory is the battle between these two elements that seem to be so effortlessly combined in the third component, the edited structure: "In the writings of Sergei Eisenstein and Andre Bazin, especially ... belief in the priority of one element over the other has determined the way films are made and understood" (Kolker, 2000, 13). For Eisenstein, the cut is the quintessential key to cinema: it gives film the ability to transport the viewer into multiple different settings instantaneously, and Eisenstein, as a filmmaker, foregrounded montage, the placing of shots together in order to influence one another (Kolker, 2000). For Eisenstein, the power of film lies in the edit. He revelled in the notion of extending a single event over multiple shots, and watching an effect before watching the course, so as to make something appear as if it is happening more than once (Kolker, 2000). As Kolker concludes, "montage, in short, was a tool that allowed the filmmaker to address history, as well as art, in a dialectical way" (2000, 13).

The Bazinian approach, by contrast, emphasises the notion of the uninterrupted shot as being the heart of cinema. “For Bazin, editing was the deconstruction of cinematic form, indeed the deconstruction of the essence of cinema. For him, it is the shot, the unedited gaze of the camera onto the world before its lens, that constitutes cinema’s aesthetic core” (Kolker, 2000, 13). The long take, according to Bazin, offered an opportunity to view the whole truth, the world in its purity, unaltered by “time and space” (Kolker, 2000, 14). “Editing is manipulative; it forces us to see what the filmmaker wants us to see. The shot is reverential. Political, too” (Kolker, 2000, 14). Unlike the edit which guides the viewer’s attention, the long takes favoured by Bazin give the viewer a choice of focus. Bazin’s cinema relies on framing, light and the unravelling of the scene over time: “The construction of *mise-en-scène* – the complex articulation of space through composition, light and movement – is pre-eminent in Bazin’s theory” (Kolker, 2000, 14–15).

The difference between Bazin and Eisenstein, when it comes to demands on the audience, is this: Bazin offers the opportunity of thought and meditation through the gaze of the camera. He requires us to puzzle the elements together, since the physicality of the image and how it is made are of grave importance (Kolker, 2000). Eisenstein, however, challenges the viewer to engage with images as they contrast with each other; their juxtaposition is the primary way in which the filmmaker creates meanings that the audience is required to understand (Kolker, 2000).

In mainstream feature film these two approaches come together, allowing for seamless integration that remains invisible to the average viewer. “The continuity style developed because it worked, and its working was measured by the fact that it allowed filmmakers to make stories that audiences responded to with ease and with desire. They liked what they saw and wanted more. We want more still” (Kolker, 2000, 16). The arena of feature film makes use of scripts, written and rewritten, and shot after shot until the desired outcome is obtained, and the pieces of construction caught on camera and created in highly controlled environments are edited into a capturing piece. This is the classic Hollywood form. The arena of documentary stipulates integration quite different from this one, however. The nature of documentary elicits

a greater tension between the shot and the cut, since there is quite obviously less control over the shot in obtaining lived events and a greater emphasis on observing the world. But, despite the greater importance of observation, the need for the montage is still apparent, and so a difficult negotiation is required. This, of course, will vary from mode to mode, but is likely to be heightened for the observational mode in which the filmmaker has minimal control over the *mise-en-scène*. This analysis will pay close attention to the integration of the shot and the cut in Longinotto's work.

### **3.3.3 Adapting formal analysis**

This study employs the technique of a close formal visual analysis of *Rough Aunties* (2008), and compares the film in a more general way to the other selected films. The results of the initial close analysis will determine the perspective adopted in the comparison.

In their influential work on the feature film, Bordwell and Thompson (2008) describe formal visual analysis as including a study of the *mise-en-scène*, sound, editing and cinematography used. An analysis of film style involves four essential stages: (1) the structure providing organisation must be established; (2) significant, or salient, techniques need to be recognised; (3) the pattern of techniques used must then be determined; and (4) suggestions should be made regarding functions for the discreet salient techniques, as well as the patterns present. Since the researcher has been unable to find similar accounts of the documentary film, this analytical method has been adapted to the study's concerns, in the hope that the data gathered and the resulting analysis will assist others who are attempting to develop analytical techniques appropriate to understanding the specificities of documentary film in ways that are more fine-grained than the well-known theory of types found in writers like Nichols.

The first step in this process of data collection and close visual analysis is a rigorous observation of both the case study film *Rough Aunties* (2008) and the other films selected from Longinotto's *oeuvre* that have been selected for this study. This means that each of the films were watched multiple times, for a number of reasons. Firstly, the researcher aimed to detach herself from the strong emotional responses that viewing these films tends to elicit in order to arrive at an objective account of the narrative, structure, and evident trends of *mise-en-scène*, sound,

editing and cinematography that contribute to these aspects of the films' composition and style. Although the emotional responses were noted, as this contributes to the viewer's continued interest, a degree of detachment was necessary in order to determine the films' make-up. Since this is a contextualised case study, *Rough Aunties* (2008) was viewed in the most detailed way and then compared to the other selection films in order to search for threads of similarity.

Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008) suggest four stages to the analysis of film style: (1) the establishment of structure; (2) the recognition of noticeable techniques; (3) the determination of patterns through those techniques; and (4) the proposal of suggestions for the purpose of the determined techniques and patterns. In the first stage of the analysis, Bordwell and Thompson suggest determining if the film is a narrative or takes on a non-narrative form:

If the film is not a narrative, the analyst should seek to understand what other types of formal organization it uses. Is the film unified as a set of categories, or an argument, or a stream of associations? Or is it structured by an abstract set of technical features? In understanding either narrative or non-narrative form, making a segmentation is usually helpful. Grasping the logic that underlies the whole film supplies a context for its use of film techniques (2001, 329).

In the second stage, in which techniques are examined, Bordwell and Thompson argue that “[y]ou need to be able to spot things such as colour, lighting, framing, cutting and sound, which most viewers don’t consciously notice. Once you notice them, you can identify them as techniques – as nondiegetic music or as low-angle framing” (2001, 329). Here, Bordwell and Thompson stress that the analyst needs to take on a new way of looking, a way that must be learnt, in order to develop “an eye for [the] salient techniques”, used in a film (2001, 330).

This second stage in the procedure for analysing film style is more open and depends on the perspective of the analyst:

In addition, what is salient depends on the analysts' purpose. If you want to show that a film's style is typical of one approach to filmmaking, you may focus on how

techniques conform to stylist expectations ... If, however, you want to stress unusual qualities of the film's style, you can concentrate on the more unexpected technical devices ... The analyst's decision about what techniques are salient will thus be influenced partly by what the film emphasises and partly by the analyst's purpose (Bordwell and Thompson, 2008, 330).

This analysis was guided by the comments obtained from two interviews – one with the filmmaker, one with one of her subjects. The interview methodologies are outlined later in this chapter. By aligning the analysis with the views of two major participants in the filming of *Rough Aunties*, the conclusions of this research were less dependent on “the analyst's purpose” than might otherwise be the case in Bordwell and Thompson's methodology.

The third stage of close analysis involves discerning the patterns typically found in Longinotto's films. Bordwell and Thompson suggest that “techniques will be repeated and varied, developed and paralleled, across the whole film or within a single segment” (2001, 330). They suggest that determining these patterns can be done in two ways: (1) the analyst can become self-reflexive, paying careful attention to his or her emotional responses to music, for example, as well as expectations developed from particular shot sequences, among other things; and (2) the analyst may seek out the ways in which the stylistic elements underpin the “formal organization” of the film, the narrative or non-narrative composition (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 330). They do, however, also note that this is not always the case: “[S]ometimes, however, stylistic patterning will not respect the non-narrative or narrative structure of the film. Style can claim our attention in its own right” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 331).

Finally, Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008) suggest that the analyst must determine the very reason for the chosen style and link it to the “effects of the film”: “style may enhance *emotional* aspects of the film” (2001, 331). This inevitably involves some speculation since “there is no dictionary in which you can turn to look up the meaning of a specific stylistic element. Instead the analyst must scrutinize the whole film, the patterns of the techniques in it, and the specific effects of film form” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 331). Despite this, it is also important to bear in mind that not every stylistic element is attached to a deeper meaning; some have more

superficial purposes, such as to distract or complicate the viewers' experience (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 2008). Thus the analyst should be wary of not overanalysing style to the point where functions are created instead of discovered, and the stylistic elements should always be convincingly linked to the themes within the film, and so deeper analysis is allowed more so for some than others. In this analysis of *Rough Aunties*, therefore, care has been taken care to balance an understanding of the meaning of the film (using the interviews as additional evidence) with the use of evidence from the film itself, gathered using the techniques developed by Bordwell and Thompson (2008).

Having preconceived ideas of the films under investigation may be a challenge to be overcome during analysis. Because of the researcher's deep regard for Longinotto's work and especially *Rough Aunties* (2008), it may have been a challenge to detach from a subjective engagement of the work and achieve an objective, fresh stance with the films. However, as suggested earlier, repeated viewings of the films aimed to help overcome this limitation and achieve a less explicitly emotional effect. However, the emotional response were also noted. The researcher focused on structural devices and narrative in the film. The film therefore became (to the researcher) a structured collection of devices working together to create meaning in the whole, rather than the narrative emotional experience it is for the regular viewer. This process of 'distancing' was addressed early in the research process, through self-reflexivity and practising objectivity, desensitising to the films, and through working with the supervisor of this project as someone to be accountable to, and someone who would ensure objectivity and accuracy. Furthermore, this analysis has the capacity to be replicated by others: since the film is a recorded text, it allows for other researchers to use it to perform their own formal visual analysis to confirm or qualify the results of this study.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that the methodology of formal visual analysis used has been borrowed from work on the traditional narrative feature film, and was not developed for the study of documentary film. The researcher has been unable to find parallel work on the documentary film that would provide the techniques needed to answer one of the primary questions of this research: how do observational filmmakers structure their films into satisfying



wholes while maintaining the unplanned, observational ethos of individual sequences and, indeed, of the film as a whole?

### **3.4 The interviews**

In order to provide a validating context for the formal analysis of *Rough Aunties*, two interviews were also conducted. Firstly, the director and filmmaker, Kim Longinotto, was interviewed. This was done partly by email and partly using Skype, as the best possible alternative to a face-to-face interview. Secondly, Mildred Ngcobo, a key participant in *Rough Aunties* (2008), was interviewed. This was a semi-structured, face-to-face interview relying on a set of guiding questions that arose from the researcher's viewing of *Rough Aunties*. Both interviews used methods that tended toward the non-structured, non-standardised side of the continuum, described by Deacon, Pickering, Golding and Murdock (2010). This approach was selected as appropriate because it was most likely to create an "organic and responsive" interaction which would "generate deeper insights into subtle and complex perceptions and beliefs" (Lindlof quoted in Deacon *et al.*, 2010, 65).

These two interviews and their methods were selected as part of the methodology for this investigation in order to supplement the data collected from the formal visual analysis and, through the comparison of these results with the literal responses from participants, a richer, more reliable conclusion may be drawn, and the objectives for this project correctly met. The key aim of the interview with Mildred Ngcobo was to learn how the film has impacted the real world, an objective of this study, as well as gain insight into the lived experience of being part of a documentary film which is naturalistic and seemingly so honest. With the Longinotto interview, the aim was to get the filmmaker to answer questions directly regarding the production and structuring processes of the film which could then be aligned with (or conflict with) the findings from the formal visual analysis.

In this regard, it is worth discussing the question of the rapport that was established between the researcher and both participants. Both Deacon *et al.* (2010) and Lindlof and Taylor (2011) argue that the rapport gained prior to the research taking place enables high-quality results

from the interview outcomes. The researcher built up a considerable rapport with Longinotto, through long-term communication via email. Through this communication, the researcher was able to describe to her interest in and admiration for Longinotto's work, her desire to learn from Longinotto's methods, and the intentions behind the research. Longinotto facilitated contact with Mildred Ngcobo at the Bobbi Bear Centre in Durban, since the pair have remained good friends. When the researcher first met Mildred Ngcobo and explained to her the research objectives, Ngcobo appeared eager to contribute to the project and expressed interest in the idea that the documentary form can create positive social change. Judging by what Longinotto has said in previous interviews, the nature of her documentaries, and the nature of Ngcobo's work at Bobbi Bear, this was probably an important factor in strengthening the rapport and even the creation of a sense of camaraderie between the researcher and both interviewees.

In discussing rapport, Lindlof and Taylor write that:

In the initial stage of interaction, we try to achieve rapport with our participant. Rapport means that while we may not always agree with each other's viewpoints, our viewpoints are worthy or respect. Rapport also means that we implicitly agree about the communicative rules of the interview, such as the turn taking of questions and answers, the right to finish a thought without interruption, and the freedom to use any form of expression (2011, 194).

The camaraderie established between the researcher and her subjects was built on the researcher's strong admiration for the work the subjects do in their respective fields. However, while the rapport created helped elicit information, it also brought with it the potential hazard of bias towards the participants. The researcher was aware of this possibility. To mitigate the problem, the research emphasises that the interviews are not analysed as independent data, but as potential support for or conflict with the formal analysis. This would ensure that the effect of any such bias would be minimal.

### **3.4.1 The online interviews**

The online interviews with Kim Longinotto took place using both email and the video-conferencing program Skype (Sedgewick and Spiers, 2009). They involved both synchronous

and asynchronous components. Longinotto requested the Skype interview. The limitations of using this method in South Africa (given the speed and unreliability of broadband access) were largely overcome by finding the best possible location. It was important to do so since this was the interview technique of choice by the interviewee. This interview was both preceded and followed by email correspondence in which preliminary and additional questions of clarification were answered. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) discuss the advantages and disadvantages of these two different forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC), indicating the value of both:

Due to the staggered, time-delayed form of messaging, asynchronous CMC (e.g. Email) is not capable of achieving the same level of engagement as synchronous CMC (e.g. Chat rooms) ... However, recent comparisons of email interviews with more traditional forms of interviewing (e.g. face to face, telephone interviewing) reveal that people often enjoy the ability to create thoughtful answers and use the flexible reply time to gain more control of the “dialogue”, and are able to return to previous answers to reassess or inspire them further for a “more fully reflexive interview” (2011, 190–191).

In the engagement with Kim Longinotto, the researcher was able to take advantage of both these methods and combine the rapport-building mutual responsiveness of the Skype interview with the more considered initial questions and the subsequent mutual clarification enabled by email.

Computer mediated communication, however, does have its limits. As, Sedgewick and Spiers point out, the loss of certain “visual cues” that appear in real-life conversation, but remain subconscious to a degree, including head nodding and eye gazing, as well as other features like interruptions and pauses between speakers, is inevitable, and result in an interaction that is “less natural” and “more formal” (2009, 3). In this research these difficulties were to some degree mitigated by two factors: firstly, by the fact that both parties involved in the interview were familiar with the technology, and therefore might already be subconsciously (at least) aware that it is by no means the same as an in-person interview. Secondly, Skype video-conferencing offers more visual cues than do telephonic or email conversations.

The questions that formed the framework for the Skype interview with Kim Longinotto can be found in the appendix, as are records of the conversations that occurred via email.

### **3.4.2 The face-to-face interview**

As powerful as the face-to-face interview is in obtaining insightful experiences, a corrupted rapport between parties may affect everything. Establishing rapport with research subjects is the responsibility of the interviewer. As Lindlof and Taylor put it:

If interviews are the 'digging tool' of social science, the skilled interviewer should ask the question in an effective, nonthreatening way ... If interviews are partly conversation, the interviewer should be an engaging, maybe even charming, conversationalist. If interviews are learning situations, the interviewer should be a willing student (2011, 171).

The interview environment places the interviewer in a more powerful position. The researcher has dominant control of the conversation and could potentially 'intimidate' the individual answering the questions. The interview between the researcher and Mildred Ngcobo negotiated an inversion of this assumed power-relationship for a number of reasons. Firstly, the researcher was in a student-like role to learn about the work of Bobbi Bear and about Ngcobo's experience of being on Longinotto's camera. A more informal semi-structured format facilitated this. Secondly, the researcher, being younger than Ngcobo, further established her position as the student and this engendered a deeper respect for Ngcobo and her story-worthy life. However, a dynamic between Mildred Ngcobo and the researcher that cannot be ignored lay in their 'difference'. Since they were both 'others' to each other, coming from different South African cultures, there was undoubtedly a level of (mis)understanding that had to be acknowledged and managed throughout the interaction.

Prior to the interview, the researcher met with Ngcobo, partly to make arrangements and partly to set her mind at ease. During this interaction, the researcher made clear her admiration for Longinotto's work and for the work of Bobbi Bear, the NGO for whom Ngcobo worked. This first meeting helped pave the way for an interview that was comfortable and profitable.

Gubrium and Holstein argue that the process of creative interviewing involves moving beyond the confines of words and phrases in sentences drawn out of the respondent and, for this achievement, “mutual disclosure” is a critical ingredient (2003, 72). Just as the feelings and deeper experiences of the respondent are expected to be revealed, so the interview should provide the space in which the interviewer’s enthusiasm to contribute his or her own responses should emerge (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003). The semi-structured, face-to-face interview in a free format is, as Deacon *et al.* (2010) argue, is the most appropriate format in which this can occur.

As already indicated, the interview itself was a semi-structured, face-to-face interview using a free format that approximated normal, casual conversation, such as that between friends. Deacon *et al.* (2010) argue that this is the best possible method since interviewees are more likely to feel comfortable and so offer complex responses to questions. In this interview, establishing an informal relationship appeared to be the best way to overcome the language barrier that existed between the researcher and Ngcobo. The interview was conducted in the researcher’s home language, English; however, Ngcobo is a native isiZulu speaker whose command of English occasionally required that the interviewer probe for clarity. Through meeting face-to-face, interview and subject were able to iron out most language-based misunderstandings that arose. In the view of the researcher, the result was a highly insightful and productive interview. The guideline questions used in the interview with Mildred Ngcobo can be found in the appendix.

### **3.4.3 Authenticity and reliability**

Although this study involved two interviews, it was not an empirical research project. Each of these interviews used a different method of delivery due to the location of the participant and largely the convenience factor (Deacon *et al.*, 2010). Kim Longinotto was interviewed online, through a face-to-face, semi-structured online interview in a free format, using Skype and email (Deacon *et al.*, 2010). Although there are a number of limitations with the method of interviewing, these were mitigated by creating a good rapport between Longinotto and the researcher. The rapport was established over three years of communication (Deacon *et al.*,

2010). A limitation of the Skype interview method was the internet connection in the area of South Africa, which is unreliable and would make the interview difficult and potentially cause answers to be misheard or ignored accidentally. However, the area of conducting the interview was carefully selected and little interference occurred; hence, a more natural online conversation unfolded.

Mildred Ngcobo was interviewed through a semi-structured, face-to-face interview in a free format (Deacon *et al.*, 2010). This interview method was found to be the most comfortable for Ngcobo and the best way to understand complex responses to questions (Deacon *et al.*, 2010). Validity, reliability and rigour was maintained in the interview process and in data collection and analysis. Any misunderstandings due to cultural and language barriers were able to be kneaded out through the re-wording of research questions.

The interviews contributed greatly to the contextualised case study of *Rough Aunties* (2008). A more viable and accurate study of the film was made possible by the contribution of the perceptions of people involved in the making of the film. Cross-examination of the data obtained from the two interviews, as well as the analysis results, yielded constructive information, furthering the documentary agenda and the feminist perspective. The other films selected for comparative analysis provided an idea of the presence or absence of particular trends. Various limitations were attached to this process also. One of these was that only one researcher's observational results were noted. However, limitations were reduced through repeated viewing of the films, to ensure that all important aspects and possible limitations were properly acknowledged, in the effort for the researcher to remain objective and fair. The film is an available text on which further research may be conducted. In other words, its availability will allow for a comparison of this research's findings by other research projects.

#### **3.4.4 Ethical considerations**

Lindlof and Taylor (2011), among many others, make it clear that interview research must always be done ethically. The UKZN has established protocols in this regard: before any research project is approved the researcher must submit their research proposal, as well as draft of the questions that will be used in the interviews. In addition, it requires that all

interviewees sign an informed letter of consent before the interviews can proceed (see Appendix 4).

Once the project as a whole had been deemed ethically acceptable by the university, the researcher made every effort to ensure that the interviews were conducted in an ethical fashion. The face-to-face interview with Mildred Ngcobo (see Appendix 1) took place the Bobbi Bear House (Ngcobo's place of work), a place where she felt at home. The researcher made every effort to ensure that she was comfortable and understood her rights.

In the case of the interview with Kim Longinotto (see Appendix 2 and 3), slightly different issues needed to be borne in mind. As Lindlof and Taylor point out, we must take care to note:

... the special ethical issues of interviewing people in the porous setting of the internet- and some precautions that will help to ensure these issues do not turn into problems ... In many organizations, including academic ones, an employee's email is legally subject to being monitored by administrators. With this in mind, it is not a good idea to let any messages from our interviews subjects sit in the in-box for very long. New emails should be stripped of identifying information (with a code number replacing the respondent's name and email address) and placed in a computerized file system; soon afterwards, the emails can be deleted ... Subjects should be told that their emails and other data will not be forwarded to, or shared with, a third party. In general, people will feel more secure about being interviewed online if our confidentiality measures are sound, justified, and transparent (2011, 191–92).

The researcher took a number of initial steps in order to take care of these issues. Firstly, the researcher gained institutional approval for the interviews. Secondly, by using a private email address, the researcher avoided the problem of organisational monitoring.

In the event, both participants felt happy with the process as it unfolded. The researcher felt satisfied that the information gathered would prove invaluable to the study.

## 4. Formal Visual Analysis of *Rough Aunties* (2008)

### 4.1. Introduction

This analysis will fall into two main parts. The first will be a detailed analysis of the case study film, *Rough Aunties*, in order to understand how Longinotto remains true to the observational nature of her material, yet manages to shape it in a way that makes for an engaging and satisfying viewing experience. Following this, the analysis will investigate how Longinotto's film works as an example of a progressive feminist social practice, one that contributes to the advancement of women's rights rather than one that engages in the condescending 'othering' that represents women of the Third World from the apparently 'lofty heights' of the First.

The initial analysis is based on close observation of the film and on the theoretical tools discussed in Chapter 3. This comprises a thorough analysis of *Rough Aunties* (2008), using an adapted version of the format suggested by Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008). It also draws on Nichols' (2001) and Bruzzi's (2000, 2006) accounts of documentary film, as well as questions of Rabiger's (1998, 2004) of the dramatic curve and the three-act structure, and their application to documentary filmmaking.

The analysis is supported by a contextualisation of *Rough Aunties* in Longinotto's *oeuvre*, and by a discussion of the interview responses from Longinotto herself and from Mildred Ngcobo, a key subject in the case-study film. Longinotto's *oeuvre* is by now quite extensive. Not all her film works can be covered in a project such as this one. However, a comparison of a selection of her films assists in identifying the key characteristics of her filmmaking. It also notes changes over time as reflected in the sample. The interviews deepen the analysis by drawing on the lived experience of Longinotto's filmmaking from her own perspective and from the perspective of one of her subjects. Both perspectives are important to understanding the film's potential as progressive feminist practice. In this way, Longinotto's film practice will be discussed in relation to contemporary debates within contemporary feminism and theories of representation.



## **4.2 *Rough Aunties: Structure, salient techniques, their patterns and functions***

### **4.2.1 *Synopsis of Rough Aunties (2008)***

Durban, South Africa, 2008. In the now established democracy of South Africa, a group of women, white and black, fight for the rights of abused children. They work for the organisation 'Bobbi Bear', named after a custom-designed therapeutic toy used to comfort and aid children as they recount the abuse they have suffered. The work of several of these women is followed, as they deal with each little victim and their associated perpetrators. Through observing the challenges they face in their work, more about the lives and relationships of the women are also revealed.

Mildred Ngcobo is met in her rural home with her own children. As a fieldworker for Bobbi Bear, she counsels a child that has recently been raped by a neighbour. Following this, Mildred sits with Eureka, a colleague from Bobbi Bear, and discusses the charges against a perpetrator on the phone with the inspector. At night, an intervention ensues, resulting in the arrest of another alleged perpetrator. This is followed by a celebration amongst the Bobbi Bear team over another successful charge.

Mildred's work and personal life is revealed through observing her daily life and an interview about her past. Her work and life, along with that of fellow colleagues and friends, Jackie (the founder of Bobbi Bear), Eureka, Thuli and Sdudla, are presented. We follow the ups and downs of these women as they celebrate their victories. We join them as they mourn the loss of Sdudla's son who has drowned in a nearby river as a result of sand-mining, and of Eureka's relative, who loses his life in a violent attempted home robbery. However, life and work continue.

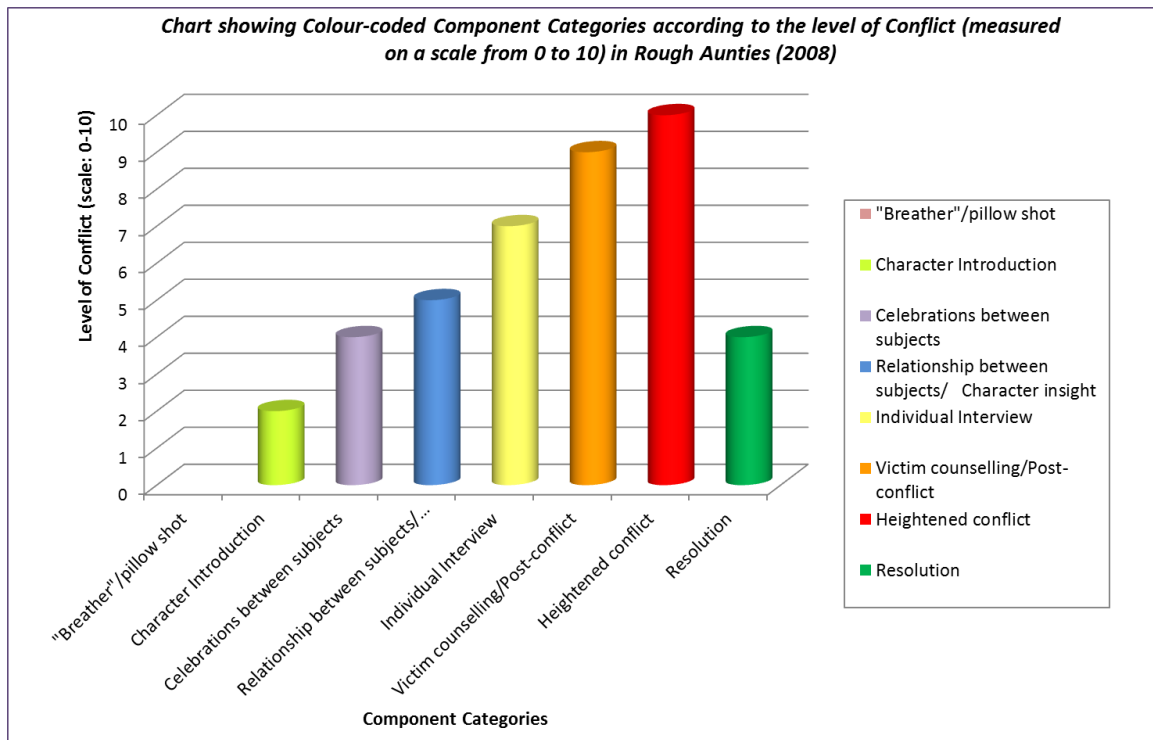
The film ends when Mildred makes the decision to leave her abusive husband and move into a place of her own, and Jackie adopts Nonhlanhla, an orphaned girl who has repeatedly run away from her uncle's home.

#### 4.2.2 Establishing structure

Nichols (2001) would most likely label *Rough Aunties* an observational documentary since Longinotto remains largely unobtrusive as she allows the audience to observe the daily lives of the Bobbi Bear team. Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008), on the other hand, would probably describe the documentary as categorical since each character could be regarded as a 'category', and is introduced using their name as an inter-title. But the films are also strongly narrative and, as appropriate as both these labels are, they miss this key element as well as the agency Longinotto grants to both herself and her subjects in the filmmaking process. While largely observational, her films include interviews, expository material (making use of voice-over) and a degree of engagement with the camera that lends them a reflexive and participatory element. In this sense, it is likely that a more appropriate categorisation of this film will come from Bruzzi's (2006) concept of the mixed mode, a more flexible concept that allows for the combination and negotiation between a number of stylistic and constructive choices. The researcher found that *Rough Aunties* and other films by Longinotto are best described as using a mixed mode: although the majority of the footage used is observational, the films nevertheless have a narrative structure – usually using multiple narratives – that is able to hold the viewers' attention. However, the films also use techniques that are more often linked to the participatory and reflexive modes, as Longinotto continually negotiates her camera's presence with the subjects, often for different reasons and to different ends.

With repeated viewings, the researcher came to this view of *Rough Aunties*. In-depth viewing aimed to determine whether there was any kind of pattern of conflict and resolution present, as there is in narrative feature film. As Rabiger (2004) argues, this is to be found in most successful documentaries also. To do this analysis the researcher initially divided the film into a set of components comprising the episodes it covered: particular events, character introductions and interviews, as well as what may be described as a type of 'Pillow Shot', which will be discussed in further detail in 4.2.4 of this chapter. These potential narrative beats (a term borrowed from the feature-film model) were recorded over time and colour-coded according to the conflict it involved. A 'conflict scale' was constructed using a range of 0 to 10, where 0 represents no conflict or response and 10 extreme conflict and response. Obviously,

this is a relatively crude measure of conflict since the scale is small and, to some extent, subjective in that event categorisation may differ from one researcher or viewer to the next. But the absolutely accurate measure of conflict in a case like this is probably impossible and, for the purposes of this research, such accuracy was less important than the pattern (structure) that may or may not exist between the conflicts. These methodological problems could be relatively easily mitigated if other researchers were to observe the film and develop their own subjective impressions. These difficulties notwithstanding, the results are highly illuminating. Figure 2 below provides a graphic representation of the conflict scale devised after repeated viewings of the film. Each component is allocated a numerical level of conflict (understood as narrative conflict or tension experienced by the viewer) and coded with a separate colour to help to identify the structural pattern of the film.



**Figure 2: Levels of conflict in *Rough Aunties***

Mildred
Eureka
Night perp hunt
Children play
Bicycle across frame
Jackie
Celebration over charged perp
Mildred & Eureka celebrate/goodbye
Mildred interview
Night storm
Nami charge office
Thuli
Martin
Eureka lecture celebration
Men soccer
Thuli & Nami's family celebrate
Thuli nami interview
Dr. Mahommed Thuli
Thuli interview
Eureka family shot
Jackie cleans house
Jackie and Eureka's family child
Daughter of shot man on trampoline
Eureka crying; Dick's passed away
Woman on dirt road
Sdulda
Dolly car park police station
Nonhlanhla and Mildred
Shubaba death
Shubaba funeral
Children play
Boys play soccer
Jackie and Tree Woman lecture
Eureka and Sdulda
Jackie and Thuli
Long shot- location
Nonhlanhla Mildred Jackie
Mildred and Jackie
Zanzibar
Eureka and boy child
Allan
Byron
Cindy
Jackie says goodbye to Nonhlanhla
"Allan wont let me adopt another one"
Cindy and Jackie conspire
Mildred moves
Cindy and Nonhlanhla hug

Figure 3: Colour-coded visual breakdown of the film

The highest level of conflict in Figure 2 is labelled quite simply, 'Heightened Conflict'. This category consists of highly demanding scenes that contain disturbing or strong emotional content; here the audience is likely to react with shock, pain or sadness. Heightened Conflict is thus most likely to refer to negative situations; typically, positive outcomes tend not to elicit the same strong emotion as do those conveying the far less stressful emotions of relief and joy. The researcher assigned two of the categories 4 out of 10. These are the 'Resolution' and 'Celebrations between subjects' categories. Both categories signify positive moments in the film, and some of the celebrations labelled are a response to case resolution, hence the two categories overlap. The 'Pillow Shot' category is awarded the lowest level of conflict as these are largely scenes that fall outside of the narrative and are often distant, objective shots. 'Character Introduction', 'Relationship between subject/character insight', 'Individual Interviews' and 'Victim counselling/Post-conflict' categories fall between the highest and lowest levels of emotional demand or conflict, as they draw the viewer into the narrative and often involve moving insightful moments regarding the key characters. Figure 3 offers a straightforward visual breakdown of the film itself using these categories. This coding device allowed the researcher to see if there were patterns in the film.

Finally, Figure 4 offers an alternative visual representation of the category conflict levels that allows one to see the temporal arrangement of the film's narrative. Interestingly, Longinotto's own account of her how she achieves structure in the filmmaking process reveals it to be the result of practical and narrative considerations that seem to be both intuitive and the product of her own filmmaking experience. She describes the loose framework she employs as follows:

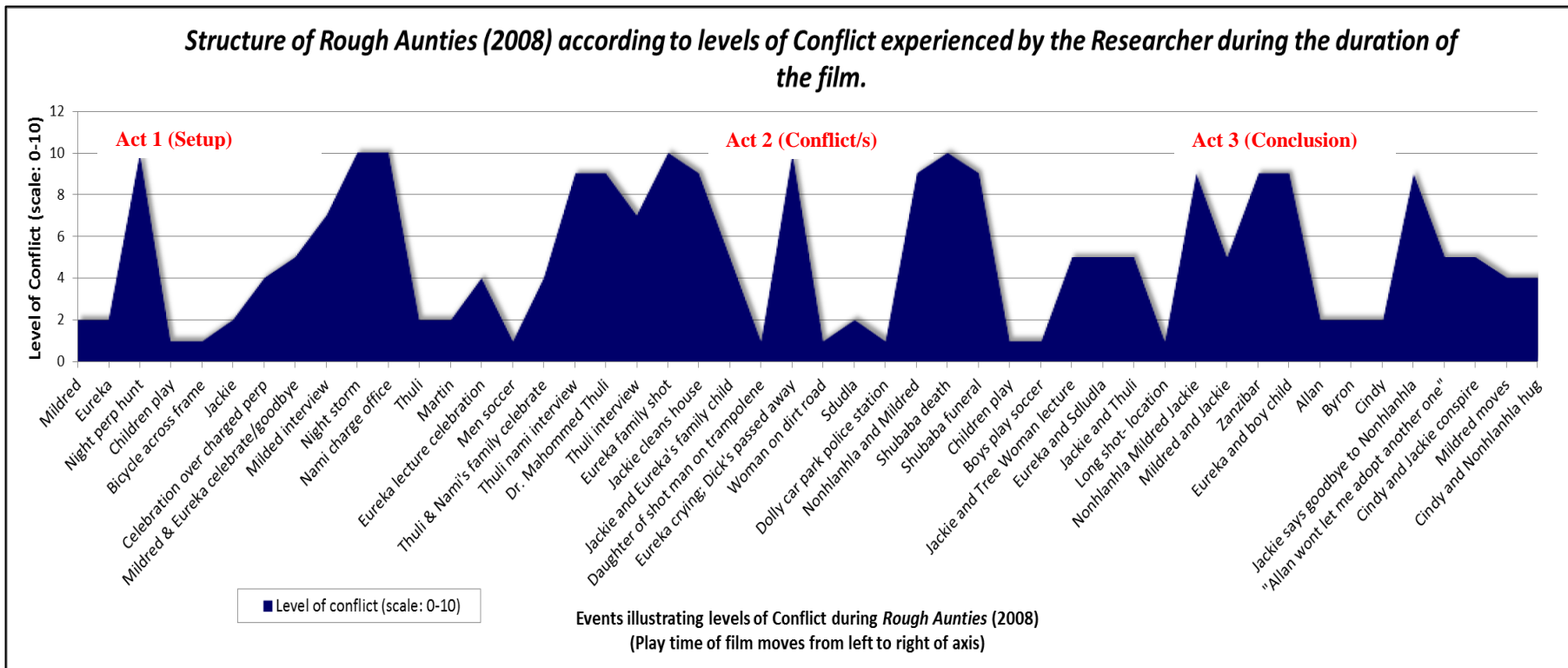


Figure 4: Narrative beats and their level of conflict in a three-act structure

Usually [filming lasts] ten weeks, except for *Sisters in Law* which was 12 weeks because we had to get the result of the last court case. And usually I know when we have filmed the last scene. In *Sisters in Law*, the last thing we filmed actually was the last scene, the scene in the university, I knew that was the end, and that was completely Vera's idea. And in *Rough Aunties* when Mildred moved into her new house I knew that was the end, and with *Runaway*, Parisa became quite a big character, so her leaving seemed to be quite a natural end. She left to go back to her family. And in *The Day I Will Never Forget*, the court case is so clearly the end, they had won their court case, there couldn't be another end. (Longinotto interview, 2013)

Structure is thus closely tied to events as they actually unfold: "I have to think about what the structure is when I'm making it. The same with *Runaway*, you couldn't put the girls in the wrong order because they would be in the background, they would be there" (Longinotto, 2013). To meddle with the structure and continuity would mean being at risk of losing all authenticity, in the event that the camera gives the filmmaker up in an embarrassing exposure of manipulated timelines. Ngcobo was able to verify this chronological structure for *Rough Aunties*, stating: "[Longinotto] didn't jiggle anything". She believed Longinotto maintained a successful coverage of the events that took place during production (Ngcobo, 2013).

#### **4.2.3 Dramatic curve or *petits récits*?**

This analysis of the structure of *Rough Aunties* reveals that the film consists of a combination of an adapted version of the conventional dramatic curve, and a set of *petits récits*. The dramatic curve is evident in the film's loose framework around a three-act structure, but so are the smaller conflicts that make for the various 'spikes', as seen in Figure 4. However, unlike the conventional dramatic curve, these curves are often made up of multiple pieces of discreet narratives, or *petits récits*, which are then combined to create a film that follows something like the general narrative curve suggested by Rabiger (1998, 2004).

The graph (Figure 4) succinctly demonstrates that patterns of conflict through the film do exist as they build and subside, and reveal the overall structural narrative with the use of the components on the x axis. Throughout the film, there are various rises and declines in conflict.

These 'spikes' are comparable to the dramatic curve suggested by Rabiger (2004). According to Figure 4, they are present in the film. This alone draws a similarity with the rules of thumb used in feature film, and all other narratives for that matter. However, unlike feature film, which maintains a single key dramatic curve that is structured around the narrative of the whole film (although it exists in micro versions within each scene as well (Rabiger, 2004), Figure 4, again, displays multiple narratives, confirming the use of *petits récits* rather than a single dramatic curve. These multiple curves are also constructed with different narratives that co-exist in the story. The curves thus borrow conflict and resolution stages from a variety of related, but more separate, narratives for their construction.

Using the scale devised, the conflict at the beginning of the film is at level 2, and at the end reaches level 4 (see Figure 4). These are low conflict measures, which precede heightened conflict in the introduction and follow it at the end. The first and last spike have something else in common. After the introductory rapid rise in conflict, there is a rapid drop where two pillow shots co-exist. This leads on to the next gradual rise in conflict with the introduction of another key subject, Jackie. This pattern is partially symmetrical in its general shape with the last spike in the graph, as three individuals are introduced before the final curve or spike, and so a few moments are spent at lower levels of conflict before the last high-conflict moment (Jackie saying goodbye to Nonhlanhla). The introduction of these people at this point is important since the film ends on a positive personal note for Jackie and Mildred, typical of a resolution or concluding act. We learn a little about Jackie's personal life, her husband and children, which is necessary to understand and empathise with the family's decision to take in Nonhlanhla. Likewise with Mildred: during her interview, we learn about her difficult marriage. This is resolved through her moving out into her own home, away from her abusive husband. In her interview, Longinotto stated that they stayed on location for slightly longer than originally intended, in the hopes that Mildred would move out, because this would provide some resolution to Mildred's narrative, as well as in her actual life. For Longinotto, these two are linked in a complex way: "I was really proud of her that she didn't move in with her boyfriend, but moved into her own place. We probably encouraged her, you know, but not for the film; we would have encouraged her anyway as a friend. So once that happened I knew that was the



end” (Longinotto, 2013) (see Appendix 2). And, in her interview, Mildred clearly indicates her gratitude: “I don’t actually know what happened but it was Auntie Jackie and Kim [who helped me get my own place]. Because the state of my life ... If they did not do that, for as much as I was strong ... I don’t know” (Ngcobo, 2013) (see Appendix 1). Ngcobo ominously does not complete her sentence about her potential alternative fate.

Figure 4 also reveals that there is a concentration of dramatic curves (seen as spikes) in the middle section of the graph, particularly between the shots of men playing soccer and the shot of the dead man’s daughter jumping on the trampoline. This, the longest section of the film and the one with the highest level of conflict, could be regarded as a version of the conventional ‘second act’ of a film narrative. However, while the film can be placed into a classic three-act structure, it is less a pre-planned attempt to achieve the classic dramatic curve than the accumulation of a series of loosely related episodes separated by ‘Longinotto pillows’, a device adapted and used for particular purposes (and discussed in Section 4.2.4 below).

In other words, it appears that *Rough Aunties* is structured according to a kind of ‘natural continuity’ that requires little manipulation. As Longinotto stated in the interview, “I don’t have to worry about structure; it’s very clear what the structure is because you can’t put them out of chronology” (Longinotto, 2013). The order in which events unfold itself provides a suitable backbone on which to hang the details of the interweaving narratives. Longinotto supports this by suggesting that the footage demands, to a degree, the order in which events unfold since the real-time of events provides a solid guide for the structure that is dangerous to meddle with: “I think the material demands to be in a certain order. Because they’re not set up films, because there’s a definite chronology, you usually have to stick to the chronology” (Longinotto, 2013).

The film provides ample support for this view of the film’s structure. For example, as Longinotto herself explains, Sdudla’s son Shubaba’s death is followed by the proceedings of his funeral (Longinotto, 2013), events which clearly demand to be in their chronological order for us to respond appropriately. In addition, Eureka’s relative is shot and killed prior to Shubaba’s death, and it becomes clear in a discussion between Jackie and Eureka that this was their real-time

order, thus contextualising Eureka’s comment at the site of Shubaba’s death, that there has been “... too much death this week” (Longinotto, 2013). Therefore, although continuity is not as dominant in the structure of the film as it is in the average feature film, it is present and strong enough to allow the audience to follow the multiple *petits récits*, which need not fit the rigid structure determined by continuity alone.

In terms of establishing location before moving to interior scenes, Longinotto does seem to conform, at least to a degree, to this rule of thumb from traditional narrative filmmaking. In the beginning of the film, we are presented with Mildred Ngcobo at her home with her children. Mildred being at home is implied through her actions of collecting the laundry while her children play outside next to her (see Figure 11). Seeing Mildred in her home, a more personal space than her workplace Bobbi Bear, indicates her importance in the film, and briefly introduces Mildred as a mother and a worker (joyful and poor). This was obviously Longinotto’s intention, since she states that Mildred was the person she fell in love with after meeting the Bobbi Bear team. Her admiration for Mildred leads her to giving Mildred a key role so that, perhaps, the audience will experience something similar (Longinotto, 2013). Following this, the title for the film appears in rustic font against a montage of tracking shots (presumed to be taken from a car window) of the bushy roadside and informal housing on the hills in the



Figure 5: *Rough Aunties* title shot

distance (see Figure 5).

Location and the wider environment are established, and with this, the rural socio-economic landscape of the area. It is as if the viewers are driving there themselves and gathering some information about the nature of the location on the way. From here, the viewer is taken to the Bobbi Bear Centre, and watches the women walk upstairs into their building. Text is used to identify the Bobbi Bear house as the team enter it before moving to interior shots signalling their 'arrival' (see Figure 6). This establishes location before the interior sequence which creates continuity (exterior). In this way, Longinotto makes use of the establishing devices associated with continuity editing in order to communicate to the audience information about time location.



Figure 6: The team enters the Bobbi Bear house.

Other Longinotto films use similar establishing devices. *Sisters in Law*, for example, is introduced in a similar way to *Rough Aunties*: a tracking exterior montage and the title of the film are followed on the outside of the offices, and the arrival of an officer who parks his bicycle outside. The audience then moves inside the office and meets the various characters who are pivotal in the film's narrative structure, such as State Prosecutor Vera Ngassa.

A similar continuity convention is used later in *Rough Aunties*, as Longinotto includes another exterior tracking montage of the car park of a police station, followed by interior shots of what the viewer assumes is the interior of the station. Another example of this simple continuity involves Ziba from *Divorce Iranian Style*. Here, a discussion of a family meeting within the court is followed by a tracking montage taken at night from a car window, and the 'arrival' at home where Ziba and her family discuss the terms of her divorce. Again, in *Runaway* there is a similar pattern. The opening of the film includes a woman walking into a building, taken from outside of it. She looks at and greets the camera, enters the building, and the camera pauses for a beat on the exterior of the building, indicating its importance. This is again followed by an interior sequence, which we assume to be inside the building we have just observed. Continuity is further implemented by the subjects. Setareh befriends a girl, Parisa, and, on her leaving, a different Parisa arrives. Again, the order of these events in the film is suggested as their real-life order, and Setareh states "I had a friend Parisa, she left yesterday". Again, as with *Rough Aunties*, this evidence in *Runaway* also reiterates the use of multiple narrative strands made through Longinotto's use of *petits récits*.

#### **4.2.4 Longinotto's 'pillow shots'**

The term 'pillow shot' has been used a number of times thus far in order to describe moments of low conflict that act as transitions between different narrative beats. The term is borrowed from David Bordwell (1998) who coined it to describe the "intermediate spaces" that he found in the work of the Japanese filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu. Bordwell describes pillow shots as visual pauses which give the audience a moment to 'breathe' and absorb whatever has preceded the pillow (1988, 103). This analysis shows that Longinotto includes her own version of the pillow shot, which often functions in a similar way by allowing the viewer to absorb what has happened, or perhaps 'recover' from something disquieting, before moving on to the next part of the story. However, Longinotto does attach other purposes to these shots, such as establishing a change in location and time, perhaps making them less Ozu-like, and more akin to conventional transitional shots. Furthermore, Ozu's pillows occur in feature film within a single narrative, unlike in Longinotto's case, where multiple *petits récits* co-exist in documentary films and aid the separation and juxtapositioning of these micro-narratives.

Initially, Longinotto's version of the pillow shot was used after high-conflict content in the narrative and to separate *petits récits* within the overall narrative, as well as establishing time and location at times. This is evident in Figure 4 earlier in this chapter. Hence, it's naming, for the purposes of this analysis, as the Longinotto pillow, allowing the viewer to catch their breath and capture a glimpse of normal life in rural South Africa, as seen in Figure 7, a pillow moment which allows a rural man to come in and out of frame on this bicycle, peering (it seems) at the camera as he passes. Such pauses also include the children playing a game that involves ducking and diving around a ball, after the night-time perpetrator hunt, the last of the three events in the set-up of the film. A similar pause, keeping to the theme of ball games comes during the funeral procedure for Shubaba; yet another, as a few young men play soccer outdoors (see Figure 8) after Eureka gives her delightful speech and pep talk to the other women, and tells of how they became 'rough aunties' because of the nature of their work. Although the function of the shot is seemingly indeterminate, Bordwell (1988, 103) suggests that they may serve as extended versions of more well-known transitional devices.



Figure 7: Pillow shot: man on bicycle



Figure 8: Pillow shot: young men playing soccer (Exterior)

Through the compilation and visual interpretation of Figure 3 and 4, the placement of Longinotto's pillows is also visually interpreted, allowing a more accurate understanding of their positioning. The pillow-type shots which Longinotto seems to adopt and adapt are present in all the works selected for this study and they have multiple functions (see Figure 5, 7, 8 and 21). They are typically taken over a longer, more distant vantage point, from the view of the observer, rather than as close and mid-shots used in conjunction with the subjects in focus.

Ultimately, the Longinotto pillow seems to have three key functions: (1) to act, as discussed and as Ozu intended, as a moment outside the narrative to absorb what preceded the pillow (Bordwell, 1988); (2) to function as a more conventional transitional shot to establish time and location often involving a different *petit récit*; and (3) to offer subtle comment that links them metaphorically to the themes within the film as a whole.

The use of the exterior montage is another device that Longinotto favours when establishing space and the time of day, another adapted use of the Longinotto pillow, which dances along with the definition of more traditional establishing and transitional shots. This is evident in *Sisters in Law*, as the evening horizon is paired with the background noise of evening prayers, and the mornings confirmed by a crowing rooster, a semiotic code that signifies morning. In this

way, the development of events over time is more clearly understood by the audience. The exterior montage successfully fulfils its purpose. However, what separates the multifaceted Longinotto pillow from the original transitional shots (which have an obvious function of establishing time and space and a change of the elements within the narrative) is that, as mentioned previously, Longinotto's transitional pillows are dripping in meaning that is more abstract from the obvious narrative(s). They are used to comment discreetly on the world around the subjects. They also, more traditionally, indicate the next 'chapter' or 'subchapter' of the narrative.

#### **4.2.5 *Rough Aunties* and the conventions of documentary form**

Both Nichols (2001) and Bruzzi (2000, 2006) offer related but different accounts of the documentary form. From Nichols' point of view, Longinotto's work is most likely (and has been described by reviews as) observational. In the case of Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008), categorising *Rough Aunties* would be more difficult, since it maintains elements from both narrative form and categorical documentary, a type of non-narrative film. But a closer examination of *Rough Aunties* reveals that it is impossible to categorise the film with any precision because it incorporates features associated with almost all other modes. Hence, Longinotto adapts techniques of Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008) and draws on the discourses of Nichols (2001) and Bruzzi (2000, 2006) in her mixed mode, categorical narrative documentaries. She produces her film with the aid of a flexible plan, something she considers imperative so that she is able to avoid the risk of having nothing to film. Rabiger (2004) strongly recommends planning. According to Longinotto:

I have a very clear idea about what the films about. You can't film everything; you have to be very clear. So, I knew it was Mildred, and I thought Jackie, so I'll follow them and then I'll follow one another person, which was Thuli, so I thought I'll follow three main characters, I'll follow their work, I'll follow their lives (2013).

According to Nichols (2001), a key feature of the expository mode is the transfer of information through voice-over, an onscreen presenter, or text. In *Rough Aunties*, Longinotto makes minimal use of text to communicate vital information. As the women walk up the stairs into the

centre, text appears explaining their location (Figure 6). When Mildred is introduced, text occupies the screen with her as she cuddles the abused child (Figure 9) whom the audience has just witnessed being counselled (see Figure 10), as she explains her work at the Bobbi Bear Centre. There are also interview-like monologues with Mildred and Thuli and Longinotto uses these to teach the viewer more about the characters, their work and their everyday lives. These are all established expository features which have slipped into an apparently observational documentary. In other films, such as *The Day I Will Never Forget*, Longinotto also makes use of voice-over, another expository feature.



Figure 9: Text as an expository feature to give information



Figure 10: Mildred uses a bear for therapeutic counselling.



The conventions of filmmaking within the observational mode are challenged further. At times, Longinotto includes a child who looks straight into the camera, breaking the forbidden ‘fourth wall’ and obliterating, if only for a brief moment, the typical observation ‘fly-on-the-wall’ experience. In Figure 11 below, the film is introduced with Mildred at home with her children. Her son turns and looks into the camera while helping his mother.



Figure 11: Mildred’s son looks into the camera.



Figure 12: Child looks into the camera.

In another example, Figure 12 shows an unsuspecting child looking briefly into the camera during a surprise night search for a particular perpetrator (Interior). Longinotto makes little to no attempt to disguise her subject's awareness of the camera. This supports the notion of the mixed mode, as does Longinotto's using people's honesty in her films as an example of moments when they are able to make the film their own:

So you can see in scenes when people are being truthful and when they're not and I find that really interesting, and you can see it in *Divorce [Iranian Style]* when Jamileh is whispering to us, and she giving us a little insight into what's really going on, and the theatre is in the court, the theatre is being played out, but we are seeing the truth of it, she's breaking [the conventions] of observational films, people say you're not supposed to speak to people that are filming you, but I love the fact that she talks to us, and I love the fact you can see two scenes at once. With all of these things you can break the rules as much as you want. You don't have to do it purely observational (Longinotto, 2013).

The use of multiple modes is not uncommon for Longinotto. In other works, again subjects have turned to talk to the camera, crushing the boundaries and transforming an observational mode film into a more reflexive and participatory film. To this ownership of the film by its subject, Longinotto responds:

... in *The Day I Will Never Forget*, one of my favourites things, and we use it as a turning point in the film, a turning point from what FGM ( female genital mutilation) is about and how destructive it is to the girls fighting back, it's about half way through the film, and that's little Fouzia saying "I want to tell you a poem about the day I'll never forget ... it was on a Sunday morning my mum said to me" and then she reads the poem ... little Fouzia came and got me and said "I want you to come to my home" ... And when we got there, I had the camera obviously, she said "stand there" and she stands and does the poem. So she ran that whole scene. She made sure we were filming in the beginning, to make sure it was Kim filming this, she made sure everything was in English so everyone knew what was going on, and she arranged for her mother to come it, she arranged everything ... I'll have dreams and wishes and

hopes for the film, but in all of them it's the people in the film who take control of it, and it's their film, and I want them to feel it's their film (Longinotto, 2013).

And so, Longinotto's subjects become directors amongst a group of directors that includes Longinotto. It is clear, then, that Bruzzi's (2000, 2006) view that documentary is almost always made in a mixed mode holds true for Longinotto. There is also an apparent contradiction evident in the film's labelling as both narrative and non-narrative (non-narrative derives from the categorical element that Bordwell and Thompson (2008) suggest is a type of non-narrative documentary). Rigid labels prove problematic for this type of film. *Rough Aunties* most certainly involves a series of narratives, multiple *petits récits*, and so negotiates its form as both categorical and narrative. This is inferred by the multiple dramatic curves present in Figure 4. The narrative possibility of a categorical documentary seems to have been neglected by Bordwell and Thompson (2008). Its categorical classification comes from the film being organised according to characters, that is, through both the women working at the Bobbi Bear centre, who are introduced one by one, as well as through the children they work with. Each individual dominates the narrative for a time after their introduction, before the next character is introduced. As the women at Bobbi Bear are introduced, so the audience also learns of their relationships with one another and gains insight into their work. And so, the Bobbi Bear team forms a twined rope of lives that are gathered and linked. This the viewer comes to know as the story unfolds.

The women who make up the categories that are the backbone for the structure of *Rough Aunties* are met in the following order: Mildred, Eureka, Jackie, Thuli and Sdudla. These women form more distinctive categories than the cases they are involved in since the viewer does not always see the outcome of the cases and is not always aware of the specific developments of each individual case. These cases form miniature narratives within the categorical narratives established by the Bobbi Bear team, their purpose being to bind the key narratives together and offer insight into each category of 'rough auntie', as Longinotto calls the women. The children in the cases represented form the finer threads that make up and bind the thicker twine together. For example, in the beginning of the film, we are introduced to Mildred as she

works with a child who has been raped. The child is unnamed, but her name is later revealed by Longinotto's interview with reference to pre-production planning:

The admiration I had before I went was like ten-fold when I left because it's like a battle every day and frightening as well. Where they live, there is danger all around them, like you saw in the police raid you saw how insecure the houses were that these men were going around raping children. Pinkie's story in the beginning her rapist broke into the house and raped her, and he was a neighbour. I think the way their lives are comes through in the film, but I wasn't expecting that, so I couldn't have done a treatment (Longinotto, 2013).

In this quote, Longinotto compares her pre-production planning to that of narrative feature film and other forms of documentary that involve a treatment that loosely determines the film's running. The next scene involves Eureka on the phone, talking about a case that needs to be followed up. Mildred is with her. This is followed by a night scene in which a child is taken to identify her perpetrator amongst a group of men. The man she identifies is then put into a police van and taken away, with passers-by shouting: "They have got you now, haven't they, you bastard". And so, a resolution is reached in this introductory micro-conflict; the first dramatic curve is completed, but with the use of pieces of multiple stories.

Although it appears that these sequences of events are all to do with the same case, this is only an impression. The girl in the first scene is unnamed in the film; the girl identifying her perpetrator remains in the darkness of the night, but we learn that her perpetrator's name is 'Nkosikhona' (see Figure 12 and 23), and the girl who Eureka discussed with the inspector on the phone is also unknown, and finally, the perpetrator that causes the celebration within the team in the beginning of the film is called 'Thobile's mum' (see Figure 24). Therefore, although the conflict is resolved, the case, or cases, dealt with do not form definitive category boundaries. Instead, each of these cases represents a piece of narrative that creates a rise in conflict leading to a resolution (see the first spike in the graph in Figure 4). The allowance of the cases as incomplete narratives makes them more like *petits récits*, since they are allowed the freedom to exist as their own narratives despite them being 'incomplete'. This is less like the

strong continuity found in mainstream film and other documentaries, in which a protagonist is followed on a hero's journey, encountering obstacles to overcome as external and internal needs are met or not (see Figure 1 in Chapter 2, which shows the three stages that precede the climax and the resolution that follows it). Another example is when Sdudla is introduced to the audience. We watch her look for a girl who was responsible for dumping her baby in Figure 13 below. When she finds the girl, Sdudla's character is seen through the powerful warning and advice she gives the girl in Figure 14. The fate of the dumped baby is unresolved; however, this scene establishes the theme of parenthood for Sdudla, who later loses her own child by accident. Sdudla's loss is made more painful for the audience who earlier learnt of her love for children and her anger towards the girl who dumped her baby. This is an example of the way in which the micro and macro-narratives are combined.



Figure 13: Sdudla in search of a woman who dumped her baby (Exterior).



Figure 14: Medium shot of Sdudla

The cases that unfold on the screen as the film plays out form similar micro-narratives that seem to draw out the inner characters of the Bobbi Bear team. The first child (named by Longinotto in interview, but not in the film) is introduced alongside Mildred Ngcobo. Mildred introduces the film in the opening scene, and, as Longinotto's key subject, is the first individual to be interviewed (Longinotto, 2013). Mildred's importance to Longinotto echoes through her choice to have Mildred open the film at her home and then in her workplace. The interview reveals the strong admiration Longinotto has for Mildred, which leads to her importance in the film. As Longinotto stated in her interview "I met Mildred, after about five minutes I thought 'this is who I want to make the film about'. It's like falling in love, it's that feeling, it was immediate and I thought 'I love this woman, she is fantastic'" (Longinotto, 2013). The connection seems to be felt by Mildred as well as she talks about the relationship between Longinotto and herself: "We are really friends now. She's my sister. We love each other, we admire each other" (Ngcobo, 2013).

Although some cases are seen from start to end, others are not; some children are named, such as Nonhlanhla, who Jackie adopts at the end of the film, while others are not. In fact, Nonhlanhla is the only victim whose situation is clearly resolved. The other cases remain bitty –

either open-ended, or resolved, leaving the viewer without a sense of the start of the victim's troubles. This reiterates their position as micro-narratives used to support the narratives of each character. Ultimately the overall narrative is loosely based on the three-act structure, on an adapted dramatic curve and the telling of the story of Bobbi Bear: the whole rope of the film (See Figure 4). Furthermore, there is not enough time for each case to be presented to the audience from start to finish; nor is there enough time for the rest of the cases to be given screen time, as Mildred Ngcobo confirmed. However, the pieces of narrative that are seen are enough to provide insight into the work of the characters, the focus of the film, and create interest, conflict and satisfaction to keep the viewer watching.

Longinotto's other works tend to follow a similar structure: *Runaway*, for example, presents us with the lives of several different girls, each one forming a category, and so creating a categorical documentary (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 2008). As in *Rough Aunties*, the names of important characters appear on screen as they are introduced to the audience. The presence of one subject's name and not another's flags the change in subject importance for the audience. *Divorce Iranian Style* and *Sisters in Law* also follow this format to a degree, as the films are made up of a variety of cases involving different women and children, and are also both categorical and narrative, revealing multiple *petits récits* once again. Here, names are not used to identify key subjects; however, their screen time determines their importance, as well as the completeness of their episode as the audience observes the introductions and conclusions of many of these story-strands, with a complete narrative present for one girl and not another.

Longinotto's use of Fouzia's poem as a turning point from despair to hope in *The Day I Will Never Forget* indicates the use of continuity in the overall narratives of her films. From this turning point, Longinotto carries out the narrative of power pertaining to the girls who, up until Fouzia's poem, seem at the mercy of their parents' wishes and of the untrained people performing the circumcision. The 'turning point' is also another name for the climax within Rabiger's (2008) dramatic curve (Figure 1), and is useful to Longinotto. The resolution is carried out as an independent group of girls leave home to seek legal advice and protection from this

cruel and traumatic procedure. The court cases are followed continuously, as any other way would make little sense. Longinotto relies heavily on continuity of events for clarity in viewing. She stated that continuity and the order of events determines, to a large degree, the overall structure of each film (Longinotto, 2013).

In drawing comparisons with *Rough Aunties* and Longinotto's *oeuvre* in terms of structure, *Sisters in Law* maintains apparently similar chronological continuity throughout particular cases, forming similar categories to those found in *Rough Aunties*. However, in the first film, there are a few cases that form stronger categories than the cases in *Rough Aunties*, and are more similar to the categories established by the members of the Bobbi Bear team. *Sisters in Law* adheres to continuity in the cases of Sonita, Amina and Ladi. In each of these cases, we meet the woman (or girl, in the case of Sonita) and watch her case develop until a resolution is seen. Amina and Ladi are the strongest case categories in this sense. Longinotto keeps returning to their narratives whilst dealing with other events in the film. In the end, their resolution is loud and clear and positive and hopeful, as Vera brings the two women into her lecture theatre and publicly congratulates them on standing firm in demanding their independence from their abusive husbands.

Longinotto adheres to some necessary forecasting prior to production in order to obtain the clear vision she requires for her film. However, she is apparently light about this phase of production and relies far more on the law of chance with the camera's presence. Her flexible plan mentioned earlier is established largely during the two weeks she spends on location prior to filming, although Longinotto stated that she finds this time uncomfortable as events inevitably occur in which she wishes for the presence of the recording camera (Longinotto, 2013). Therefore, it is a combination of planning and observation, with and without the camera, which determine its potential. Planning documents and the essential blueprints of a film are also no doubt necessary in securing funds for film production. This can become a protracted affair, as Longinotto describes: "... it took so long to raise the money and get permissions, it would be silly to go get the court to agree, and it took two years to raise the money, so by then the judge probably would have moved on. [Explanation that Iranian judges move in and out of



the seminars often]” (Longinotto, 2013). With regard to the preparation in the pre-production phase, she states: “It’s mainly logistical things, where are we going to stay, paying the air fares, finding a sound recordings, packing ... it’s not much! I always think ‘God I’ve got so much to do’, but really, what have I got to do? Getting some nice books to read when we’re there, buying some knickers, I don’t know, that sort of thing” (Longinotto, 2013). She refuses to undertake a thorough research of her subjects prior to production (Rabiger, 2004), saying that the process feels pretentious. She prefers to learn about her subjects through the camera, and so a more natural revelation occurs for both her and her audience, instead of her subjects having to repeat to the camera things they have already confided in Longinotto alone. Anything more than the briefest of research endeavours, she suggests, requires the camera to capture the authenticity of each revelation. She discusses *Rough Aunties* as an example of part of her pre-production:

I went there, met them, had that talk with them and then spent a while at Jackie’s house getting to know Jackie. Every time something would happen in the night I thought “Oh no I should be filming this”, so it was quite uncomfortable and difficult. I couldn’t wait to get home and go back with the camera. I don’t really like spending time with people before we actually film. It feels weird ... It’s that the period without the equipment feels slightly false, because I come there and I don’t have a role, so I would do the washing-up or put food on the table or try and do things around the house, so I had a role ... (Longinotto, 2013)

Another convention Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008) advocate for film more generally is that the end of the film should see to the neat and tidy completion of the narrative, as any unresolved conflicts are resolved in a package act that is the resolution. This is a less rigid convention for Longinotto, although she does look for a definite ending: “I looked for the end, I really wanted there to be a positive ending for Mildred. For both her as a person and her in the film, and so we stayed an extra two weeks hoping that she would move out of her home” (Longinotto, 2013). Mildred moves out her home and ends her terrible marriage (see Figure 15 below) and Nonhlanhla is taken in by Jackie’s family in *Rough Aunties* in the final shot of the film. In Figure 16 below, Nonhlanhla is reunited with Jackie’s daughter, Sindi. This signifies a



Figure 15: Text informs the viewer of Mildred's resolution to her narrative.

positive ending for the case of Nonhlanhla as Jackie brings her into their home with the intention of adoption.

The presence of *petits récits*, constructed by multiple cases witnessed at different stages of their micro-narratives, and multiple conflicts within the different lives of the Bobbi Bear team means that not all the narratives are tied up in the way Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008) suggest. Yet, this form of representation is still satisfying and the viewer leaves the film pleased. In their defence, perhaps, Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008) do advocate that “[t]hrough obeying or violating norms, artists relate their work to other works” and may also “create new conventions by refusing to fit into established ones” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 44).



Figure 17: Nonhlanhla is reunited with Jackie's daughter, Sindi

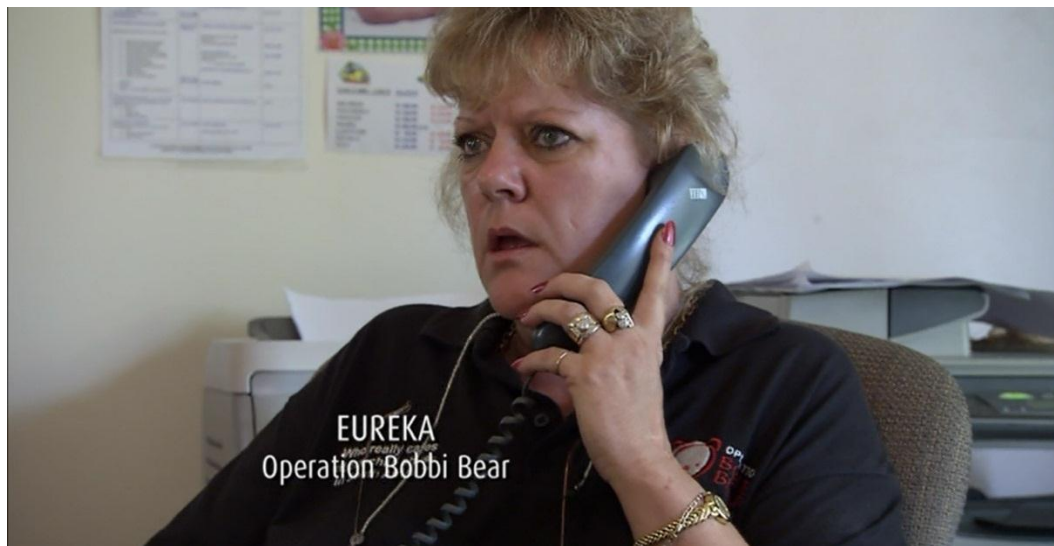


Figure 16: Eureka's importance is signalled in the screen text.

The editing of this film conforms to the categorical format adopted as the structure, and so contributes to this structure rather than the continuity style. Typical continuity-style editing elicits a closer following of a character by the audience so that no piece of the puzzle is unseen. One non-diegetic element of the *mise-en-scène* that Longinotto does include is text. Although

used minimally, text conveys small pieces of information that the audience must know for the purposes of the narrative (see Figure 15). In this way, she uses it in the place of a voice-over, and adds an expository element. Text is also used in the subtitles, on a more obvious level, and also as titles. An example of this can be seen in Figure 17, as each key subject is introduced with her name in text, indicating who she is and flagging her importance, and category (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 2008).

The editing establishes a moderate pace that generally runs throughout the film. However, the film does 'take rest' by making time for pauses or 'breathers' that act as diversion from the scenes of heightened intensity. At other times a slightly quicker pace is used in upbeat scenes of celebration. Therefore, the pace does show some evidence of supporting the level of conflict or emotion that is felt (or intended to be felt) at moments within the film.

Longinotto is a filmmaker who heartily embraces Bruzzi's (2000, 2006) view that the camera becomes part of the reality, and enjoys the reactions that this elicits from subjects. In this way, Longinotto says, the subjects make the film their own. As a truly mixed-mode documentarian, Longinotto's use of the camera and her subjects' reactions will be discussed later in relation to her feminist practice and social agenda; however, within this subsection, such flexibility is acknowledged as interesting observational viewing and as a practical example of what Bruzzi (2000, 2006) suggests for the mixed-mode documentary. It is an approach that presents a new version of the truth.

Longinotto thus applies two methods to establishing the structure of the film: she establishes key characters and she establishes the general issues by discreetly exposing them through her observations with her camera. She highlights the problems in a society with the use of particular cases and subjects. She looks for change, as conflicts rise and reach a turning point, as in Fouzia and her poem, and she feels for an ending that is positive and hopeful. This loose framework, is analogous to the general structure of other films, both documentary and feature film, and is most certainly an overall narrative made up of many others. It is, as Rabiger (2004) suggests, a system for story-telling that works. Beyond this is the actual lived chronology of the stories that unravel in front of Longinotto and sets up a natural structure for the film. And so, it

seems as if Longinotto includes her audience as closely as possible to her own experience of filming and learning about her subject, without neglecting the elephant (or camera) in the room. Suddenly, her observational works are apparently reflexive and participatory, as well as observational, and therefore, ultimately mixed mode in approach.

#### **4.2.6 Cinematography and *mise-en-scène***

Aside from looking at narrative structure and form, Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008) also argue that a full understanding of a film requires detailed analysis of elements that are used in making a film. In this way, one is able to find the salient techniques that constitute a particular filmmaker's style, the building blocks out of which they create their particular vision. Although they suggest the separation of *mise-en-scène* and cinematography when engaging in film analysis, this investigation will discuss the two components together. In documentary filmmaking, and observational documentary in particular, control over the *mise-en-scène* is naturally limited, and decisions concerning it are usually made at the time of filming.

Longinotto is responsible for her own camerawork. The most obvious sign of the observational nature of her filmmaking is her use of a handheld camera (White, 2006). But her filmmaking instincts allow her to combine natural observation, careful aesthetic composition, direct engagement with her subjects and an awareness that her audience is able to interpret images. Her framing is always naturalistic, and includes slight pans when it becomes necessary to capture the full dimensions of a scene. While her footage is certainly never as aggressive as the 'crisis' footage favoured by news broadcasts, for most of the time, the camera wobbles ever so slightly and, in so doing, augments the viewer's sense of the reality of the events unfolding. But this is achieved without pushing the viewer 'out' of the film or acknowledging the cinematographer as an important presence. As we have seen, Longinotto herself said: "I don't want you to be thinking about me, or the camera or the filming when you watch my films. I want you to feel that you're there, standing where I am and going through the emotional experience" (IMDb, 2013).

Close-ups and medium close-ups are a prominent feature of the cinematography in *Rough Aunties*. Typically, they work to draw the viewer more closely into the events. This includes

linking the viewer to other members of the Bobbi Bear team or even bringing the child victims closer to the viewer, especially in the intimate moments of their counselling (see Figures 9, 10 and 19). In general, this type of cinematography is a signifier of the intensity of the scene that is generated by its subjects, a convention that is well understood by viewers and used in all types of film. Longinotto also uses a combination of mid-shots and close-ups in her monologue-style interviews with Mildred and Thuli which provide the audience with particular insight into their lives. Here, her use of close-ups works in a multi-layered way, providing the viewer with insight and emphasising the sense that one is participating in authentic, lived experience. Figure 18 below shows a close-up of Jackie as she has a personal conversation with Thuli. The scene involves intercutting close-ups between Jackie and Thuli as Jackie requests Thuli's forgiveness.



Figure 18: Close-up of Jackie in conversation with Thuli



Figure 20: Close-up of young girl in counselling



Figure 19: Close-up of Mildred

In Figure 19 there is a silence between the young girl and her counsellor as she places a plaster on the bear's mouth and smiles. The viewer understands that the plaster is a signifier of past harms done to her.

In Figure 20, a close-up of Mildred is presented as she becomes tearful during her intimate interview monologue. The scene ends in the middle of a sentence which Mildred cannot complete due to her emotions.

Long shots are used less frequently and are mostly outdoors, often showing a group of people or location functioning as what has been described as 'Longinotto pillows', signalling a transition to another *petits récit*. Figure 21 presents a pillow shot of the daughter of Eureka's relative on her trampoline, as her father lies in a government hospital after being shot in an armed robbery. Moments of suspense pass in this pillow shot. The girl looks at the camera and waves.



Figure 21: Pillow shot of girl on trampoline



Tracking shots are even less frequent but are used occasionally to show the environment and give the viewer the sensation of travelling to a new location. The two most significant tracking shots in *Rough Aunties* are the one used in the title sequence (see Figure 5) and a second, much later one, showing the parking yard of a police station.

When it comes to other visual aspects of the film, Longinotto works in a naturalistic mode, often sacrificing high production values for important content. The over-exposed 'in-the-moment' lighting in Figure 22 is an example, in which the natural lighting of an event is used to convey presence, content and drama to the scene. In her interview, Longinotto mentions that she usually lights darker areas in order to improve her image quality but, as is evident in *Rough Aunties*, this she does in an 'amateur' style, using what is available in the household rather than a professional lighting kit. Once again, the intention is to give the viewer a sense of being present amongst the subjects of the film and caught up in the events as they unfold (Longinotto, 2013).

But it would be a mistake to equate this 'realism' with artlessness. While Longinotto is aware that contemporary audiences are able to interpret 'poor' footage as evocative of the actual events that are taking place 'in the moment', she artfully exploits these resources for her own filmmaking purposes. This is evident in Figure 18 where, one could say, Jackie's importance 'outshines' the over-exposed background. In Figure 22, Jackie gives a speech at Shubaba's funeral with an over-exposed background. The over-exposed background is compensated for since it is juxtaposed with vital content found in the focus on Jackie and her speech.



Figure 22: Jackie gives a speech at Shubaba's funeral

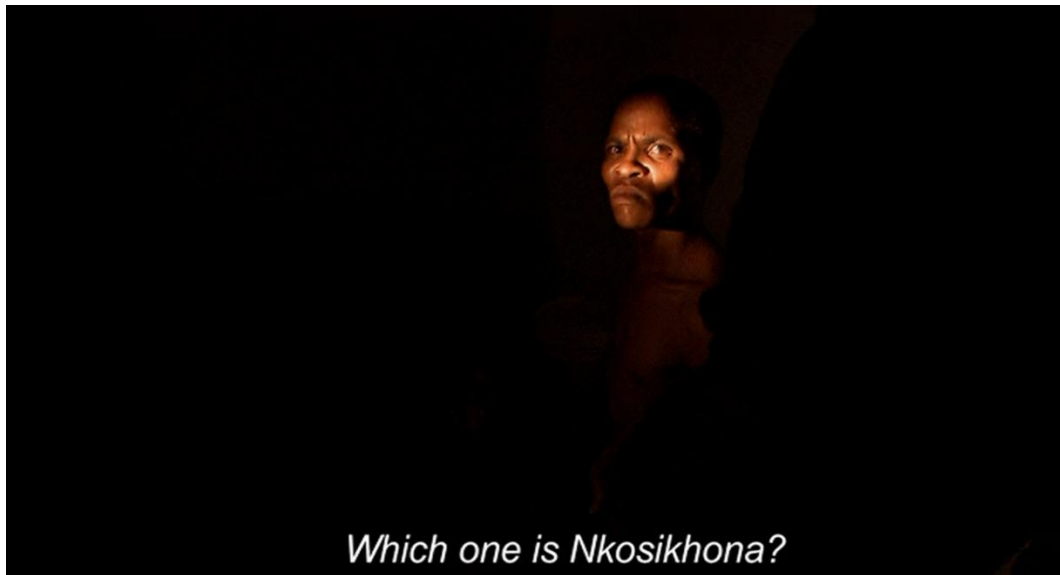


Figure 23: An alleged perpetrator is lit by torch light.



Figure 24: Mildred and Eureka celebrate the charge against 'Thobile's mum'.

More dramatically, this can be seen in Figure 23, where the naturalistic lighting (which comes from the actual torch light used to find the potential perpetrators) provides a heavily dramatic high-contrast image that recreates the tension of the event as a perpetrator is ambushed in the dark.

Another example of Longinotto's ability to use available resources artfully is visible in a cluttered *mise-en-scène*. This is not only incorporated into visually satisfying compositions but also seem to reinforce the viewer's sense of the pressures under which the Bobbi Bear centre works. Frames are often very full and the foreground cluttered. This can be seen in the spontaneous conversation over an open car door (see Figure 24) in which Mildred and Eureka celebrate the charge against 'Thobile's mum'. A car door separates their interaction from the observing camera, yet signals to the viewer that they are 'present' in the moment shared.

In Figure 25, colourful bottles are blurred in the foreground of Eureka's mid-shot. The content in frame gives information about their work, and breaks the conventions of a business-like desk environment. It is as if the viewer is sitting at the desk with her.



Figure 25: Colourful bottles blurred in the foreground

In Figure 26, Thuli's handbag occupies the foreground of the shot. The bag's positioning further guides the viewer's eye to the policewoman and the papers she deals with, an example of Longinotto's combining of natural observation and careful composition. Longinotto's inclusion of these close, often out-of-focus objects suggests that she uses them as deliberate elements in her shot composition. While foreground 'clutter' can give the sense of distance, with careful composition and the events deliberately framed, it also has the capacity to provide a sense of presence, almost being in the actual space with the subjects. Once again, this is a testimony to Longinotto's ability to combine observation, composition and the audience's interpretation, which, as she mentions repeatedly, she hopes will allow them to feel as if they were there (IMDb, 2013).

Aside from enhancing a sense of presence, each element in the *mise-en-scène* conveys additional information concerning the subjects and the environment in which they work, which includes objects like children's drinking bottles (Figure 25) and official files (Figure 27). In these shots the women also have photos of their families pinned up behind them, providing further

concrete insight into their lives. In virtually every shot the viewer is given a full frame to read and through which to contextualise the unfolding narratives.



Figure 26: Thuli's handbag in the foreground



Who's going to drive the Chev?

Figure 27: Piles of paper in the foreground. Pictures in the background

In this way, the majority of the shots that make up *Rough Aunties* can be classified as artful observation. In her interview Mildred Ngcobo confirmed this. When asked whether any direction was given by Longinotto, she answered “That documentary [*Rough Aunties*] is natural. There was nothing like ‘Oh, I’ll pose for the camera’ No ... there is no instruction there” (Ngcobo, 2013). For Longinotto, however, observational filmmaking is something of a compromise. Discussing her approach to filming in the interview she stated that:

I think the strength is that you are capturing action that feels like it’s happening in front of your eyes, so it feels as if you are actually there and the fiction I like is the films that you feel that same thing. I think sometimes a limitation is that you can’t get a real real real scene that you can get in fiction, for example you can’t get the whispered conversations at night and when people are in bed together or have those little conversations, you can’t be there all the time you will miss those things. But that’s what fiction can do (Longinotto, 2013).

But, as already suggested, Longinotto is able, to some extent, to get around this limitation by challenging or extending the conventions of observational filmmaking. Her films often include shots that deliberately break the “fourth wall” and thus go beyond the standard observational mode. At times it is a child, at times a worker, at one time even a perpetrator looks directly at the camera and so, by extension, out at the audience (see Figure 11, 12, 20, 21 and 23), resulting in a more engaged or participatory viewing experience. This, in effect, gives her filmmaking a dimension that a more strictly observational approach might miss. Longinotto clearly treasures these moments and what they can reveal:

So you can see in scenes when people are being truthful and when they’re not and I find that really interesting, and you can see it in *Divorce [Iranian Style]* when Jamileh is whispering to us, and she giving us a little insight into what’s really going on, and the theatre is on the court, the theatre is being played out, but we are seeing the truth of it, she’s breaking [the conventions] of observational films, people say you’re not supposed to speak to people that are filming you, but I love the fact that she talks to us, and I love the fact you can see two scenes at once. With all of these things you

can break the rules as much as you want. You don't have to do it purely observational (Longinotto, 2013).

#### 4.2.7 Sound

Longinotto's use of sound marries well with her cinematography and *mise-en-scène*. The loud sounds of the Bobbi Bear centre, including children laughing and crying, can often be heard in the background. This is not always noticeable on a first viewing, but careful attention will reveal that environmental noise plays an important part in Longinotto's attempt to provide a more accurate representation of the actual environment. All the sounds heard communicate information about the area to the audience, be it the ever-present nattering of children, the shrill ring of a telephone in the middle of a conversation, or the abuse shouted from passing traffic, which happens twice in *Rough Aunties*, once when Nkosikhona is arrested and, again, when Nami is being counselled by Thuli outside her home. Such instances suggest that the rapes are local knowledge, that these issues are a community affair over which most people have an opinion, and that the girls' identities are anything but secret.



Figure 28: Water from a running tap misses the bucket beneath it

When outdoors, the howling coastal wind is also heard, as seen in Figure 28, where water from a tap misses a bucket below it. This gives insight into Mildred's home life and the film's wider location. It is also a metaphor for the hardships the rough aunties face. However, it is not avoided but embraced, such as the opening scene, when Ngcobo gathers her washing from the line, some time is spent watching a running tap completely miss the bucket under it as the wind blows the stream of water almost parallel to its top, and this wind is heard as well. Perhaps a sign of the difficulty of Mildred's rural lifestyle, or perhaps a deeper metaphor can be interpreted: the problematic systems in South Africa that lead to the devastation of rape on rural children who may never be heard or helped. Perhaps the wind also signifies the continual resistance the Bobbi Bear women face in trying to provide a need: the collection of water in the bucket, for the justice for abused children.

When asked about the production values in her work, Longinotto emphasised the importance of good sound. "I'm not like some of my friends. Some of my friends make films on their own and they have the microphone on the camera, and they don't work with a sound recordist. I want the sound to be really good. I want there to be really clear sound" (Longinotto, 2013). The importance of capturing the sound well is illustrated in *Divorce Iranian Style* where a whispered conversation between Ziba and her husband Bahman plays an important role, as does a second whisper about their divorce by mutual consent which the young Ziba addresses directly to the camera. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Sound appears to work indexically in Longinotto's films as an extension of her camera's observation. It is another element of the reality to be captured and communicated, as, for example when the background noise of children 'intrudes' on the intimate moments between the audience and Ngcobo during her emotional interview (Figure 20), or when people speak over each other and telephones ring off-cue and mid-sentence, as in the early scene when Eureka and Mildred discuss a perpetrator who is threatening a victim. Paradoxically, then, Longinotto's emphasis on sound also means that her films include imperfect sound bites, such as when an individual is speaking too softly and cannot be heard. In such cases, subtitles are



sometimes used; at other times, they are presented as a natural part of the environment. This is an important observational tool for Longinotto.

True to her mixed-mode filmmaking approach, Longinotto also makes some use of non-diegetic sound, but she does so sparingly. In *Rough Aunties*, there is no music other than a single track which is used in conjunction with the title at the beginning of the film, and as the credits roll at the end. In *Divorce Iranian Style*, Longinotto also uses voice-over to transmit important pieces of information. This helps audiences understand Iranian court procedures. Similarly, in *The Day I Will Never Forget*, she makes use of voice-over to provide audiences with information critical to understanding the situation they are watching.

Unusually, *The Day I Will Never Forget* also includes a slow-paced, mournful sound-track to accompany the exterior shots of the location and to emphasise the grievous nature of the subject matter. A somewhat similar but rare use of sound accompanies the shot in *Rough Aunties* where a loud wind blows in the yard of Ngcobo's home, forcing the water to miss the bucket beneath it (Figure 28). In this case, the natural sound of wind on the microphone strengthens the metaphoric meaning of the scene.

#### **4.2.8 Discussion**

The primary aim of this chapter has been to offer a structural analysis of *Rough Aunties*, in order to show the application of analysis theory according to Bordwell and Thompson (2001), who revealed that the film, although categorised as categorical as aligned with their definitions of non-narrative documentary, also includes a narrative which is built up on multiple *petits récits*. These construct a loosely shaped narrative arc which follows the film from beginning to end. This adaptation of narrative structure suits Longinotto's natural tendencies to follow the chronology of events, her filmmaking style, as well as her goals of representation. The structure evident in Longinotto's *Rough Aunties* can be succinctly described as mixed mode also, aligning with Bruzzi (2000, 2006) and challenging Nichols (2001). However, Nichols' (2001) depiction of the modes is still required as *Rough Aunties* maintains a largely observational character, but one that is also artfully built up out of shots and sounds that draw on the cinematic conventions that viewers understand.

In returning to the literature that founds our understanding of documentary and its modes, it is quite obvious that Longinotto operates largely through observation, and so, although problematic, the attribution of her work and style of filmmaking is “observational”, according to Nichols’ (2001) very useful modes. Alas, such a genre of film cannot go unscathed and it has elicited much criticism throughout history, as Bruzzi (2000) highlights. The rather negative reputation of self-proclaimed truthfulness that the observational mode has commandeered is no doubt something Longinotto has had to overcome through her work, and she does so successfully by acknowledging the new dynamic that the camera contributes. She uses this dynamic to create a new ‘truth’, one that accounts for the environment with the camera’s presence, and incorporates this in her construction of the final product, as well as a multiple modes which are mixed, and jump from observation, to expository to reflexive within moments, according to a few cinematic changes, or the address of the subject.

Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008) suggest that the first step in analysis should be to establish the structure of the film. However, in this analysis, structure is discussed within the analysis of editing, since the two aspects are intrinsically married and can be more fully explored together. Therefore, the stylistic component of editing, which is included as an aspect of analysis according to Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008), is divided into two sections: (1) establishing the structure and (2) narrative continuity. However, even between these divisions there are overlaps. Longinotto stated in her interview that continuity essentially is the structure:

... usually I don’t have to worry about structure; it’s very clear what the structure is because you can’t put them out of chronology. So, for example, you can’t have Shubaba dying before he died in the film, because it would just feel weird, and you know that the two deaths are very close together because Eureka says “too many deaths in one week” and Mildred is going to leave her husband in the end, there is a logic to it, scenes demand to be in a certain place (Longinotto, 2013).

This statement alone challenges the conventions about continuity according to Nichols (2001): “Documentary is therefore much less reliant on continuity editing to establish the credibility of the world it refers to than is fiction” (Nichols, 2001, 29).

Longinotto employs a form of categorical structuring to her observation films, which can be interpreted as being more mixed-mode than observational since they are adapted to host all the modes, according to Nichols (2001). Longinotto also maintains multiple narratives or *petits récits*. Her work as mixed mode, therefore, is far more aligned with Stella Bruzzi’s (2000, 2006) concepts, and Bruzzi’s suggestions regarding the observational form as including, rather than pointlessly ignoring, the fact of the present camera. This is something Longinotto practises further. The dramatic curve, a feature that Rabiger (2004) recommends as a formula for success for all film, is present in Longinotto’s work, as evident in Figure 4 displaying the narrative beats. However, its presence is far more natural than it would be if Longinotto effected a structural adjustment of the subjects’ narratives to make them fit into the film recipe. Although the curve is present, however, it too has been adapted. Each curve in the overall narrative is made up of multiple narratives and so captures interest. However, Longinotto relies less on the need for continuity than feature film does. She uses a loose framework for the wider structure of her films, presenting key characters and the wider social issue dealt with, but also relies on the chronology of events experienced during production to determine the finer details of the structure. Using these methods, there is ample space for the unexpected, unique experiences that define each film and give the subjects ownership of it.

Longinotto’s mixed mode films are most evident by the multiple modes she draws on. Despite their labelling as observation, as this is the dominant mode, they are also expository, participatory and reflexive. Each film provides evidence of these modes as subjects refer to the filmmakers (*Divorce Iranian Style*) and at times look into camera (*Rough Aunties*). Voice-over and text are used to convey nuggets of information (*The Day I Will Never Forget; Rough Aunties*); interviews are included (*Runaway, Rough Aunties*); the filmmakers are communicated with by subjects (*Divorce Iranian Style; Runaway*); and subjects use the camera for their own narratives as a witness to their actions (*The Day I Will Never Forget; Divorce Iranian Style*). Each

film fills the role of multiple modes of documentary established, yet also obtains narratives that are emotive and touching, whilst exposing a greater issue of a particular society. To date, there has been little written regarding the narrative power of documentary. Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008) suggest that a categorical film is further labelled as non-narrative. With regards to Longinotto's filmmaking, this is not true.

Longinotto draws on other filmic techniques as well. She has adapted the Japanese filmmaker Ozu's pillow which she uses as a moment in which the audience can absorb the subject matter of the film. Her version of the pillow shot also has multiple functions. At times, they are widening, indicating the exclusion from the more intimate narrative. They provide breathing space for the viewer, which is more aligned with their original purpose. However, they also more firmly define subsections within the film, signalling the end of a micro-conflict or the start of a new micro-narrative, and they also sometimes establish time and space. The pillow shot, along with other narrative beats, juxtaposed with conflict, creates the interest and, more specifically, the dramatic curves that Longinotto uses to create her honest and narratively satisfying films. Heightened conflict is an aspect Longinotto looks for in deliberating over a potential film, as her response to a question around what she looks for in a film reveals:

I think just stories where there is action, and I knew there would be with *Rough Aunties* because I knew they were going out and rescuing kids, I knew they went on police raids and that there were a group of them, and they all had relationships, so I knew that there was a story there (Longinotto, 2013).

Longinotto provides evidence in her films that aligns them more properly with the notion of being mixed mode and narrative. As previously mentioned, she includes moments where subjects turn to the filmmakers as witnesses as in *Divorce Iranian Style*, such as when Maryam tells the court "there are also these film ladies" who could bear witness to her actions. She uses text and voice-over minimally to convey important nuggets of information, something expository. Further, she mixes the modes by including interview monologues (an intentional oxymoron that describes the scene better than either term alone). Answers to questions are seen and heard as the subject talks to the camera, and a type of monologue is created by

intercutting pieces of the subjects' speech, such as in *Rough Aunties*, fourth-wall breakages as subjects look into camera, and narrative patterns more commonly associated with feature film (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 2008).

Bruzzi (2000) accounts for the value of the observational mode within which Longinotto's work predominantly operates: "The observational mode, despite the vigorous arguments mounted against it, remains extremely influential, for it freed both the style and content of documentary" (2000, 68). She further expands on the critical dimensions of documentary that Nichols overlooks. In her discussion of 1990s British observational documentaries, she highlights Nichols' mistake in assuming the death of the observational mode with more 'developed' and reflexive ones (Bruzzi, 2000, 2006). Bruzzi argues that since the 1960s, the observational mode has evolved and states that "the moment of encounter – so key to direct cinema – has become the starting point for varied reassessment of the aims of the observational mode" (2000, 8).

Another adaptation within this analysis concerns the inclusion of the other films selected for this investigation to compare and draw threads of similarity and difference with Longinotto's handling of *Rough Aunties*. The comparisons establish trends used by Longinotto in her work. This has been found to be the most accurate way to draw conclusions regarding Longinotto's work.

This analysis is supported by the data obtained from the two interviews, conducted with Longinotto and Ngcobo. These allowed findings of the analysis to be cross-referenced and checked. This is useful in validating findings and finding difficult or conflicted areas within this type of filmmaking.

The adaptation of Bordwell and Thompson's (2001, 2008) analysis of technique meant that less emphasis was placed on *mise-en-scène*, since this aspect is less constructed in the observational form than in feature film, as each *mise-en-scène* intends to communicate a particular code. Bearing this in mind, the filmmaker's selection of *mise-en-scène* is still critical. The audience gains much information about the Bobbi Bear centre from the *mise-en-scène* in *Rough Aunties*.

What is required now is a more careful look at the flaws in the labels of Longinotto's films as both 'categorical' (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001, 2008) and 'observational' (Nichols, 2001). The problems regarding these types of documentary have been discussed with particular emphasis on what they are not in *Rough Aunties* and other works by Longinotto. A more useful concept is Bruzzi's (2000, 2006) point which allows modes to fuse in a less rigid fashion than the rigid boundaries separating Nichols' (2001) modes. Instead, Bruzzi proposes that documentary films are always mixed mode and that it is more useful to see them as:

... a negotiation between the polarities of objectivity and subjectivity, offering a dialectical analysis of events and images that accepts that no non-fictional record can contain the whole truth whilst also accepting that to reuse or recontextualise such material is not to irrevocably suppress or distort the innate value and meaning it possesses (Bruzzi, 2000, 39).

The meta-reality created through observation, married with Longinotto's acknowledgment of camera's intrinsic presence, allows an engagement with existing conceptions of the world. This deliberate meta-reality disrupts the modes of perception, and rids Longinotto's use of direct cinema and observation of its previous ideology of 'true representation'. This is done through her artful use of *mise-en-scène*, cinematography and sound, as well as a careful inclusion of the camera's presence and the use of this by her subjects, who are ultimately also participating directors in the final product. The lack of a disappearing act by the camera therefore means that, in this way, it can become a tool for social action. As a result, Longinotto is not the only one doing the representing, but her subjects represent themselves and each other.

## 5. Longinotto's Feminist Film Activism

Kim Longinotto describes herself as a feminist filmmaker, although she uses the label gingerly, acknowledging its fractured meanings. Her concern is with oppression generally and, in the interview with Cochrane (2010), she says that: "If there was a place where men were being kicked around and women were locking them in cages, then you'd focus on [the men]" (Longinotto, quoted in Cochrane, 2010). In this section, we will examine the ways in which *Rough Aunties* and other films can be seen as a legitimate and positive feminist engagement with her subjects and with documentary filmmaking as a feminist representational practice. This will begin with a discussion of Longinotto's filmmaking practice as it is revealed through the interviews with Longinotto and Ngcobo. The work itself will then be discussed in relation to its communicative capacities and the degree to which it embodies an ethics of representation that contradicts the stereotypical picture of the 'privileged' First World feminist who condescends to record the struggles of less fortunate women. Instead, it will be argued that Longinotto is a filmmaker whose skills are best seen as a gift that she offers to her subjects who are then, themselves, able to participate in the making of the films. The resulting representations are a combined effort between engaged filmmaker and subjects. As Longinotto herself puts it, she always wants her films to 'belong' to her subjects (Longinotto, 2013).

### 5.1 The process of filmmaking: Negotiating representation

Most often, Longinotto finds her own subjects but, in the case of *Rough Aunties*, matters were a little different. In the interview she describes it as follows:

I [had] just finished *Sisters in Law* before *Rough Aunties* and I was editing it and Jackie Branfield came to London and came and saw us in the cutting room, and said she really wanted a film made about her little group of women ... they felt very much that the *Rough Aunties* were very alone in society. They were against the social workers, they're against the police, they're against the hospital, they are fighting against big business, everywhere they go there is somebody against them ... and they had very bad experiences with local TV. And in fact when I was there before we started filming, I saw what one of the, say, TV crews treated them like. What they would do

is come in the door, and say 'do that', and tell them what to do, and they are meant to be working. And then they would interview them in a very formal way, and sometimes they would try and interview them when they were in the middle of doing something... And they said they had films made that had been really terrible because you've got these sorts of South African men interviewing the children, and that was rather upsetting and difficult ... So when Jackie came to see me, I wasn't sure whether I would want to make the film or not, because it would have been the first time I would have made a film for somebody, it would be with them, but I had been invited into their space it wasn't something I had thought of, it was something they had initiated, so that had never actually happened before (Longinotto, 2013).

But her sympathy is deeply rooted in a strong sense of her own integrity, and what she refers to as her one overriding bias: "I have a problem with authority" (quoted in Lacey, 2010). Thus, despite being 'commissioned' to make the film, the next stage of the process was one in which Longinotto made her terms clear:

I showed them a DVD of *Sisters in Law* and said this is very much how the film will be made ... it will be your film, I won't do anything that you don't want me to do, I told them how I would work, and I said if anyone doesn't want to be filmed obviously I won't film them, you can say no, and of course they all wanted to be in the film, but that would be as far as I would go, if people wouldn't trust me and didn't want the film made then I wouldn't make it, I don't try and earn people's trust they either do or they don't (Longinotto, 2013).

The experience of watching *Rough Aunties* (2008) is an emotional one, possibly enhanced by Longinotto's very direct and honest approach to representation that is based on a mutual respect both for her subjects and for herself as filmmaker. Longinotto helps her subjects represent themselves; she does not, as the angrier third wave feminists might argue, assume the role of the white woman who condescends to represent the other on their behalf.

Bordwell and Thompson's (2001, 2008,) and even Hall's constructivist approach to understanding representation tends to focus on the individual, the director or the viewer, who creates or interprets meaning based on a set of shared conventions. In her filmmaking,



Longinotto has a different emphasis: throughout her interview, she makes clear that she is only one director amongst the others who are also the subjects in her films. There are multiple individuals constructing their own messages through the text and these are not always absolutely aligned with her own flexible vision. Yet, Longinotto loves these occurrences, these “social experiments” in front of the camera, which are enhanced by her refusal to restrict herself to one mode of documentary filmmaking. As the following statement makes clear, Longinotto exploits the filming situation in which her subjects are at times aware and at times unaware of the camera:

I think in each scene, people will go in and out of being aware of the camera, so in a whole scene people have completely forgotten you are there. An example of that is the divorce scene in *Sisters in Law* when Amina goes to court get her divorce, and the men are really rude to her, and said terrible things to her, they said “we’ll send you back to your husband and he’ll split you open” and they were obviously unaware that we were filming at that point, they would never have spoken like that if they knew it would be on record. Then when the drama has finished and she wins her case then they think, “Oh, we better put a good front on and be a friend to her,” so then they say “This is what Cameroon want, we want our women to be happy” so they do a bit of PR at the end, as if this is what they wanted all along.

So you can see in scenes when people are being truthful and when they’re not and I find that really interesting, and you can see it in *Divorce [Iranian Style]* when Jamileh is whispering to us, and she giving us a little insight into what’s really going on, and the theatre is in the court, the theatre is being played out, but we are seeing the truth of it, she’s breaking [the conventions] of observational films, people say you’re not supposed to speak to people that are filming you, but I love the fact that she talks to us, and I love the fact you can see two scenes at once (Longinotto, 2013).

In her interview, Mildred Ngcobo offers further evidence for this methodology when she describes what it is like to be filmed by Longinotto. She says that having the camera present was of no concern to her and interrupted her job very little. Her job was the most important thing to her and she began with very low expectations of the film being captured on

Longinotto's camera. Ngcobo also suggests that at times during production, subjects became unaware of the camera altogether, even if it was for only a moment:

... sometimes I ended up crying, not because of the camera, but because of the hurt of the child. Like I said, I didn't care about the camera; my concern is the child, as long as you not harming the child with the camera its fine by me, that was my concern. But with the camera, sometimes they weren't inside, sometimes you don't see them, or you don't notice them [until] only later because they are by the window (Ngcobo, 2013).

Later, Ngcobo makes an interesting additional comment which suggests the way in which the presence of the camera can have unforeseen results. In the course of downplaying the importance of the filmmaker's presence, she includes a moving realisation of how valuable the experience has been for her:

... it wasn't very serious because if I was serious then how was it going to be like to the victims, so for me it was like the normal duty, like I said she would come with these big cameras ... and like "ah ... whatever", but at the end its where I realized, when I was watching, it where I was like "Oh my God." I really cried, "Oh my God, I really did that ... that ... that." And it was serious.... I'm a friendly person; it didn't bother me like I said before ... you walk around with a camera? Whatever (Ngcobo, 2013).

It thus becomes clear that Longinotto's filmmaking practice creates and engages with what we might call a new kind of meta-reality. It is neither the reality that exists as if the camera was not present, nor one that systematically acknowledges its presence. Instead, her filmmaking often creates a liminal space that is made up of the camera's presence and its simultaneous absence. It is this tension that creates the dynamic and intriguing social experiment-type footage that Longinotto perpetually includes in her apparently observational films. She is evidently engaging in a new kind of observational cinema. It would be difficult to find a better example of Bruzzi's claim that when analysing documentary we should not remain caught in simplistic or dogmatic arguments about the possibilities of pure observational cinema, but instead notice that "what

has occurred is an evolution from within the parameters of observational documentary, so that the form, in all its permutations, remains recognisably 'observational', whilst incorporating many of the tactics and devices of its so-called interactive, reflexive and performative successors" (Bruzzi, 2000, 75).

Instead of constructing her films as records of uncontrollable external events that are outside of her own plans for the film, Longinotto consciously makes space to include such events, repeatedly saying in her interview that she wants the film to be not only about her subjects, but also for and by them. This requires deep engagement with her subjects, as is the case in *Rough Aunties* where she finds herself closely involved in the death of Sdudla's son and is called to film the scene in which Sdudla mourns, just moments after her son drowns:

... there are very painful scenes in the film like when Shubaba dies and how that happened was one of the ladies there called us and said something terrible has happened at the river, and they called us there, so there was never any point I felt I shouldn't have been there or that we weren't there with them. I always felt I was there with them, that was them being so generous in wanting the film to be made (Longinotto, 2013).

Again, with *Runaway*, Longinotto explains that the women running the centre where the girls live are very strict about what they could and could not do with their camera. They further only allowed them three days of filming in an attempt to protect the girls since previously they had had traumatic and frustrating encounters with film crews. However, Longinotto's less-obtrusive, subject-centred approach led to the girls trusting her, calling her into their rooms and, in the end, they were allowed to stay for as long as they needed to complete the film.

This last example demonstrates a further characteristic of Longinotto's filmmaking interventions as it shows how she is able to turn the event into an opportunity for the girls to express themselves and, to some degree, to override the centre authorities. These under-age girls, arguably agency-less in their uninformed youth, are the marginal of the marginal, but it is they who ultimately effect a change in the filming schedule:

... we said to the women who ran the centre “we promise we won’t interview any of the girls” because they said we could only stay for three days because people who had come before had upset the girls, so much like the crews that had filmed the *Rough Aunties*. So we had been there three days and our time was coming to an end but the girls kept coming to us and saying “Come to our rooms and talk to us” so we started to help out a bit, we bought them magazines and we hung out, and then the women in the centre said we were fine with the girls and we could stay as long as we liked, and then it was very much a 2 way thing, it was the girls who felt comfortable with us ... (Longinotto, 2013).

In this example, then, the presence of the camera is consciously used by the girls as an opportunity for them to ‘speak’ to a wider world. This is another reason why Longinotto’s films are such good examples of what we might call interventionist feminist engagement: she allows her presence, and the presence of the camera, to be used as an occasion for empowerment. This is particularly visible in the interviews that she incorporates in her films. For example, in *Divorce Iranian Style*, she includes footage where the women confess things that they wish the audience but not their husbands to know. Maryam confesses to the camera that she did tear up the order she was given, but lies to authorities saying her husband was the actual liar. And after attempting to divorce her husband, Jamileh whispers to the camera “I feel sorry for him ... I love him ... That will teach him.” Longinotto describes this phenomenon:

[Jamileh] wanted to be filmed, she wanted to tell her story, she wanted the audience and us to know that she was playing this incredibly clever game to get revenge on her husband, but also to make him stay at home with her, so she was much smarter than the men in fact! (Longinotto, 2013).

Longinotto describes a similar situation while discussing the importance of having a good sound recordist during filming. Again referring to *Divorce Iranian Style*, she states:

... with little Ziba, you know, she was saying ‘he beats me’ and he says ‘I don’t beat you’, [Ziba]: ‘Be quiet be quiet!’” So there is all sorts of little games going on in front of our eyes and that’s very nice when that happens and that’s in every single film you have scenes where the people are taking control of the film (Longinotto, 2013).

But perhaps the most memorable example of Longinotto allowing her subjects to contribute to the filmmaking process occurs in *The Day I Will Never Forget*. Longinotto describes this moment in the film as “a turning point from what FGMs about and how destructive it is to the girls fighting back”:

... it's about half way through the film, and that's little Fouzia saying 'I want to tell you a poem about the day I'll never forget ... It was on a Sunday morning my mum said to me' and then she reads the poem. And how that happened was we were filming the discussion where her mum was, and her mum was the most desirous person at the meeting in favour of FGM, and at the end of the meeting little Fouzia came and got me and said 'I want you to come to my home ... And when we got there, I had the camera obviously, she said 'stand there' and she stands and does the poem. So she ran that whole scene. She made sure we were filming in the beginning, to make sure it was Kim filming this, she made sure everything was in English so everyone knew what was going on, and she arranged for her mother to come in she arranged everything (Longinotto, 2013).

Longinotto gives further insight into this event in another interview when she explains events preceding the filming of the actual mutilation scene:

Fardohsa talked to me beforehand; she'd been working in that community for a couple of years and she'd convinced that particular man to let the circumciser do it the easy way, not the complete thing with the stitching that all that girls' friends had had. She'd been trying to stop it in that area and couldn't get the family not to do it. So she'd got that concession. She said to me: 'Kim, whatever you do, if it's too upsetting for you just go out of the house, because if you try to intervene or make a fuss it's going to ruin all the painstaking work I'm doing in the community. And if you try and stop it they'll just wait until you go and then they'll do it anyway, so you mustn't do anything' (quoted in Fowler, 2004, 104).

It is this willingness to submit herself to the events she is filming that allows Longinotto's work to move beyond generalised assumptions of third wave feminism, and to embody Woodhull's demand for new a new modality within the third wave activism. The evidence gathered in this

study from the interviews and the films fully supports White's argument that Longinotto's filmmaking practice is an excellent example of a new and far more successful contemporary feminism: "The crew of two women works to make their subjects comfortable with their presence, effacing their actual shooting by communication without words .... Ultimately, I suggest, Longinotto's relation to the women's stories ... precisely follows the 'feminist solidarity model' Mohanty advocates ...." (White, 2006, 123).

Another further, if more formal, aspect of Longinotto's participatory technique is that she regularly acknowledges the women who facilitate her work by crediting them as co-directors. Thus, as White (2006, 121-122) reminds us, Ziba Mir-Hosseine, an expert in Islamic family law who was present throughout the shoot, is credited as co-director of *Divorce* and *Runaway* and in *Sisters in Law*, and Florence Ayisi, who helped Longinotto make contacts in Kumba, Cameroon, are both given co-director credits.

Longinotto's negotiation of the filmic space largely relies on a relationship of deep trust between her and her subjects. Although such trust is not always given freely, as with the women of authority in *Runaway* who are tenacious in protecting their girls, it must be present. As Longinotto puts in her earlier quote "... if people wouldn't trust me and didn't want the film made then I wouldn't make it, I don't try and earn people's trust they either do or they don't" (Longinotto, 2013). Instead of denying her subjects agency in the making of each film, she celebrates it as a crucial component of the new reality that emerges when she begins to film. The filming process thus becomes is a shared filmic event in which Longinotto and her subjects have an equal part.

## **5.2 Honesty in documentary filmmaking**

Bordwell and Thompson (2001, 2008) discuss the conventions used by both filmmakers and audiences to ensure that the text is properly understood. One such convention expects documentary films to maintain a level of honesty. For Longinotto, this honesty is not the result of some kind of 'pure objectivity' that has traditionally been associated with the work of observational filmmakers. Instead, Longinotto's honesty is better described as being based on

an intersubjective conception of the filmmaking process itself. In order to be a good film, the final product must accord with her subjects' experience and this communal honesty is what resonates with those who watch the completed film:

I think we make the films that really reflect the people we are, I think it's as simple as that. I'm not somebody who feels comfortable asking people to do things or organizing people or breaking into their lives and changing what they would do normally. So it's a type of filmmaking that satisfies me and makes me feel comfortable. But there's another layer to that, I think, for me, I get better scenes because people aren't doing it for me they're doing it for themselves, and I think you get a more interesting film like that (Longinotto, 2013).

Ngcobo's experience of *Rough Aunties* clearly supports this notion: "It's a true story," she declares and, when asked whether she would go through the process again she responds, "Ya! Easy! (*Laughs*) as long as you are not going to instruct me and distract me from my job of helping my kids" (Ngcobo, 2013). Unsurprisingly, her experience of being filmed resulted in her forming a deep bond with Longinotto, whom she grew to love as a sister (Ngcobo, 2013).

On the other hand, Longinotto's admiration for Mildred comes through loud and clear. She is given a key role in the film, including opening the film at her home, giving her a revealing interview/monologue, and showing her counselling a young girl in the introduction of the film. This was completely Longinotto's intention:

I met Mildred, after about five minutes I thought "this is who I want to make the film about". It's like falling in love, it's that feeling, it was immediate and I thought "I love this woman, she is fantastic". I remember telling Paul [Taylor, producer] "I want the film to have Mildred in the centre of it, I love Mildred" (Longinotto, 2013).

This initial subjective bond between Longinotto and one of her subjects was then extended to include other key characters. For the viewer, these are Mildred, Thuli (who is the only other subject given her own interview) and Jackie, in that order. Longinotto describes the process as follows: "So, I knew it was Mildred, and I thought Jackie, so I'll follow them and then I'll follow one another person, which was Thuli, so I thought I'll follow three main characters, I'll follow

their work I'll follow their lives" (Longinotto, 2013). Longinotto also reveals that initially she had not planned on giving Thuli one of the key roles as she had not known about her in the earliest stages of planning and production, but that Thuli emerged through the production process as one of the strongest and most interesting characters.

This honesty is partly what allows Longinotto to include records of even the most difficult situations that she encounters. One such example is the drowning of young Shubaba, son of Sdudla, one of Bobbi Bear co-workers. Commenting on her reasons for including this footage Longinotto says:

I loved the fact that straight after the funeral Sdudla's thinking about work the next day, there's lots of things going on in that funeral, like the way Sdudla recovers so quickly, and recovers by thinking of other people, and the way that Jackie and Eureka and everyone is there for her and the way the community has this energy, so I think imbibing a lot through watching it about what their lives are like. Funerals are quite regular occurrences you get the feeling that there are a lot of funerals in that community, lots of people get shot and killed, there had already been seven children killed trying to cross that river, the way they deal with tragedy as part of everyday life (Longinotto, 2013).

In this ways Longinotto combines the demands of filmmaking with a surprisingly open and personal engagement with her subjects. It does not seem inappropriate, then, to describe her films as gifts, as tributes to her subjects whom she obviously loves and admires. As she says of *Rough Aunties*, "... It's a love letter to Mildred and Thuli really" (Longinotto, 2013).

But Longinotto also says that *Rough Aunties* "is a feminist film" (Longinotto, 2013), indicating that, for her, the personal engagement cannot be separated from wider social and political imperatives. Thus, the inclusion of the traumatic event of Shubaba's death is deeply intentional. His funeral, and Sdudla's clear need to get back to saving other children is not only an account of one individual's reaction to a traumatic personal tragedy, but is also part of a highly motivated feminism that, amongst other things, acknowledges Sdudla's real strength in adversity. In addition, it also shows Sdudla's life as an example of the precariousness of the lives



of marginalised people living in rural and peri-urban South Africa where uncontrolled sand-mining has made rivers unsafe.

### 5.3 Longinotto's feminism

Longinotto describes herself as a feminist and it is hard not to see her films, which typically engage with strong women who are usually hidden from the mainstream media, as further evidence for this feminism. She does, however, acknowledge that the term has accrued negative connotations particularly since the “backlash politics” of the 1980s when men turned on women accusingly, and women turned on themselves (Garrison in Gillis *et al.*, 2004, 29). In her interview, Longinotto puts it this way:

... how would you go into these lives and see what happens to girls and women and not call yourself a feminist? So of course yes, I am a feminist. But at the same time people use the word and they use it in weird ways, I'm reluctant to use labels because the word means different things to different people, but for me being a feminist just means women should have as much rights and dignity as men, and should be valued as much as men (Longinotto, 2013).

Even if one is happy to accept this cautious self-labelling, the question of Longinotto's right to represent marginalised Third World women might be questioned by the women themselves or by more critical feminists like Mohanty (1988). But, despite Longinotto being both white and Western, the most critical of third wave feminists, who condemn Western women for their self-indulgent tendencies, are surely likely to accept Longinotto as an exception to their rule. The evidence thus far presented shows that Longinotto cannot be accused of cultural imperialism. On the one hand, both her filmmaking practice and the resulting films suggest that Longinotto is extraordinarily open to her subjects' points of view. Despite her final control over each project, it would not be inaccurate to describe the films themselves as cooperative ventures in which she allows her subjects to have their own voice. On the other hand, Longinotto does not subscribe to a simplistic view of the politics of representation. Just as it is culturally imperialistic to suggest that Western culture offers the correct view of life in other parts of the world, perhaps it is also a mistake to assume that all traditional culture is sacred and should be left

untampered with. For Narayan (1997, 2008), Longinotto is well aware that 'culture' and 'tradition' are far from being the innocent others of an imperial Western gaze.

In her interview, Longinotto describes an occasion in which she, along with Judge Vera Ngassa from *Sisters in Law*, attended a debate at the United Nations: "... the woman before her said, 'We have to respect culture and tradition. We at the UN work within tradition.' Vera said, 'My whole life has been spent fighting tradition'" (quoted in Lacey, 2010). Indeed, Vera Ngassa's critique of patriarchal tradition is a key element of Longinotto's activist feminism. White describes an early scene in *Sisters in Law*, in which a young woman (married off by her father in what is described as 'country fashion') pleads her case against this practice. We witness Judge Ngassa's wrath for the first time:

Turning to the young mother, [Ngassa] demands "Madam, what should I do with these two?" Evident power and class differences, signified in dress and language ... divide her from the woman she serves, but she addresses her with the same honorific 'madam', with which a series of suave male lawyers appeal to her (White, 2006, 122–123).

But the working of patriarchy is not confined to the overt actions of men and there are numerous other examples in the films where women confront each other. As White puts it in relation to *Sisters in Law*, Longinotto is "not above trumping the sisterhood invoked in the film's title with her characteristically tart tongue: when Lum Rose admits to beating her young niece and pleads for mercy, Ngassa snaps: "Don't 'sister' me!" (White, 2006, 123).

There are numerous other examples. A key instance is when young Fouzia demands to read the poem whose title was to become the title of the film *The Day I Will Never Forget*. She reads her poem facing the camera straight on, publicly reprimanding her mother for forcing her mutilation and pleading that her younger sister is not treated in the same way. In her interview with Fowler, Longinotto describes this sense and its ripple effects as follows:

When I arrived she said, "Are you ready, Kim?" I said "yes" and she just sat down and started talking to Fardohsa. She was circumcised when she was eight and, nine months later, she'd written that poem when she was recovering. She'd had it all that

time and was desperate to read it to somebody; she'd written it in English because she wanted to reach a large audience ... Documentaries are a two-way thing. She was using us; the deal in her discussion was "I forgive you if you don't do it to my sister". Just as we were leaving I asked her, 'do you think your mother will keep her promise?' She said, 'of course she will, because you've filmed it'. The fact that she had adult witnesses and it was in a film was enough for her; she knew it was her chance. Fouzia came to Sundance with me and Fardohsa to represent the film. At the end of the film it was all dark and they shone a light on to Fouzia and Fardohsa; the whole audience stood up and they got a standing ovation. People were asking them questions and I think it was wonderful for Fouzia because, if you do stand up against your culture, you feel like an outsider. So there was a full cinema of adults standing up and clapping (Fowler, 2004, 106).

Similarly, in *Rough Aunties*, the power of Sdudla is clearly evident when she gives a stern warning to another young mother for dumping her unwanted baby. In the case of *Rough Aunties*, both the filmmaker *and* her subjects seem to have found the experience extremely positive. In the interview, Longinotto sums her experience up as follows:

I think my intention was a celebration of the women, but also what excited me about *Rough Aunties* was it was like a snapshot of a new South Africa in action, where you had white and black women working together... I knew Mildred would be fabulous, and she was even more fabulous than I imagined. All my expectations of her, and Jackie and Sdudla and Thuli and Eureka, I couldn't have imagined how wonderful they were, so everything I had hoped for happened in front of my eyes really (Longinotto, 2013).

Ngcobo, for her part, also seems to have benefited directly from the experience. Although, as mentioned earlier, she could not have cared less about the presence of Longinotto's camera, she also found the experience surprisingly unobtrusive and affirming. She enjoyed the experience of being part of the film, especially due to the friendship she built with Longinotto which has lasted long after the project was completed. More significantly, in my interview with Mildred, it was clear that the film gave her a sense of pride and strengthened her resolve to

continue with her work: it was probably the rarest kind of pat-on-the back for someone working at an independent charity organisation such as Bobbi Bear. Questioning Ngcobo's reaction to the final product did reveal her own sadness at the inclusion of the scene in which she counsels the little girl. However, it soon became clear that this sadness stemmed not from Longinotto's decision to include these difficult scenes, but from her recalling the actual experience of the child. Ngcobo was asked whether she would have preferred the counselling scenes not be present since she felt strongly about the children's protection, she responded: "No, it was ok. And also to see myself, because I was a victim. Wow, I was proud of myself. I was. Because I'm no longer a victim I can help that child" (Ngcobo, 2013). Later, she also expressed her openness to being part of a documentary again, as long as it follows Longinotto's style of filmmaking (Ngcobo, 2013). In closing, she added:

What I could say is I thank Kim for being her... Not to instruct us, not to give orders, but to let the film be what it was. And also to thank Jackie, for being who she is to let Kim get to know the women and the organisation, she did not hide anything like others who don't like the exposure. But the exposure is to expose the suspects and also to expose what we are really doing at Bobbi Bear, because I think Bobbi Bear is based on to make a difference out there (Ngcobo, 2013).

It is hard to imagine stronger positive testimony to Longinotto's filmmaking and the possibility of a shared feminist process of representation and advocacy.

#### **5.4 The role of the medium**

Aside from discussion of the filmmaking process, it is impossible to ignore the impact of the final product if one is to consider it as an instance of feminist social action. O'Shaughnessy and Stadler (2005) point out that selection is a critical aspect of representation, and this is something that Longinotto negotiates, at times finding it difficult to maintain a balance between the honesty of her filmmaking process and the potential interest her film will have for a wider viewing public. In the interview, she describes an example of this difficulty occurring during the post-production phase of *Rough Aunties*. As filmmaker, she initially felt that the significance of a particular scene had been downplayed because the editor had given it very

little screen time. But, as Longinotto goes on to explain, this was necessary in this phase of the production process as her experience was not as important as the audience's experience of the film, and in maintaining their interest in the subject. Longinotto states:

When you see it as a film in the cutting room, you see it as a film, when you see it when you're filming it your seeing as a person, so that's a big difference. So it's very different seeing it on the screen, an example of that is I remember seeing the scene with Sdudla and the baby, she said a woman had abandoned her baby, and I remember walking around in the burning hot sun for about three hours with Sdudla and she was asking people about the baby, had they seen the baby, and in my mind I imagined it as quite a long scene in the front looking for the baby, and I remember Ollie [Oliver Huddleston, the editor] just showed a shot of the road, and bang, into the house and I went "Oh! I thought there would be a little bit more of walking to the house ..." and that's because it was so painful to shoot, it was such an ordeal and Ollie said "Well, you know Kim, the audience aren't really interested in you walking to the house" and I thought, "Oh God yes of course they're not!" (Longinotto, 2013).

This is undoubtedly one of many examples of how Longinotto's individual expectations were altered for the sake of reaching an audience and, of course, there is a need to do so if the equally important task of wider dissemination and persuasion is to be successful.

Once the final cut has been completed, however, the effect of the film becomes far less predictable. As Longinotto points out, "... we can't imagine or hope what a film can do; we just have to trust that others will take them and use them" (Longinotto, 2013). On the other hand, it seems that her films have had considerable positive impact:

I know *The Day I Will Never Forget* has been used a lot by all sorts of people and organisations as a tool against FGM and I know there's a great change now in society where people start to really criticise FGM and not see it as a cultural thing that they don't dare criticise. *Rough Aunties*, I know Teddy [Leifer] the producer just said we just sent them about 20 000 pounds, so we've raised a lot of money through *Rough Aunties* for them which I'm really thrilled about, not many of the films have done that. *Divorce Iranian Style* was very influential in Iran ... I know DVDs have gone all

over, and most people say they have seen the film, so that seems to have been influential, and I know it's been a big influence on the film *A Separation* [Farhadi, Asghar, 2011], I know he was very influenced by that film, I know it was a spark that helped him decide to make the film, a fiction film which has reached a much bigger audience than *Divorce Iranian Style*, but I think we can't go making films thinking they're going to change something, we just have to make the best films we can and hope that they will (Longinotto, 2013).

In the case of *The Day I Will Never Forget*, Longinotto has said the following:

I want to give it back to the Africa it came from. It was shown at Fespaco and there were nearly 2,000 people there, so I was really excited about that. But Fardohsa and I are trying to raise some money so the film can go freely around villages. Fardohsa will take the film around in Kenya because she's saying it's her life now, campaigning against FGM (Fowler, 2004, 107).

Ultimately, it does not seem inaccurate to describe Longinotto's filmmaking goal as a combination of helping women exercise power in their own context and of showing this exercise of power to a larger audience. Her representation of the people she focuses on is based on respect and empathy, but not pity. She gives them the presence of the camera as a gift which they choose to use under their own direction for their own purposes, just as Fouzia did with her poem (*The Day I Will Never Forget*), as Mildred does with her story of survival (*Rough Aunties*), and as Jamileh does for her marriage (*Divorce Iranian Style*). Speaking of her later Indian film *Pink Saris* (2010), Longinotto says: "My dream is to have it shown in villages in India" (quoted in Lacey, 2010) and, indeed, changing local perspectives is a key goal for her as a filmmaker. Although the changes are often small, they are clearly important. Her subject-participants achieve a measure of power and they do so on their own terms. For international audiences, on the other hand, these same representations show Third World women not as victims but as agents of their own fate struggling against the limitations of the patriarchal culture they have inherited. Through her examples, Longinotto has provided other feminist filmmakers with a model of responsible social engagement.

## 5.5 The ethics of representation

Before concluding, it is important to consider, albeit briefly, a potentially controversial element in Longinotto's work that has particular relevance to *Rough Aunties*. This concerns the exposure of some of the participants in her projects and the harm that may occur to them as a result. In *Rough Aunties* the visual identity of both the rape survivors and the perpetrators are included. It is for this reason that Jackie Branfield, the Director of Bobbi Bear, has limited the screening of the film in South Africa. When I went to Bobbi Bear House to collect my copy of the DVD, Jackie informed me that she thought it was important to know that the film is not available for public viewing within South Africa in order to protect the identity of the rape survivors. She did, however, qualify her statement by saying that the film can allowed to be screened in private homes and at film festivals. As a result, the detailed conditions for screening remain somewhat vague.

While it would certainly have been possible for Longinotto to darken or blur the faces of the victims, it is likely that she feels that such an approach would be dishonest and place the audience at a greater distance from the events that she records. Longinotto's intention, however, is not aimed at shaming her subjects and, in the case of *Rough Aunties*, she is protesting against the notion that victims of rape should hide under a shameful veil that comes with the crime committed against them (Longinotto interview, 2013). In her view, not only is the distinction between the public and the private hard to sustain (since, typically, other people do know about the person's status) but she is herself potentially complicit in the violence that is committed.

During the course of this research, the question of whether it was ethical to 'parade the victims' was raised in a seminar that I gave and in which I used some stills that I had extracted from *Rough Aunties*. Subsequently I put the objection to Longinotto herself and she replied in an email:

I don't agree at all with the 'paraded as victims'. They're not 'paraded' they speak up for themselves with dignity and grace. It feels a very patronizing comment to me as if the children don't exist in their own right, as if they have to remain invisible as

'victims' rather than proud survivors. Mildred was very keen to say in the film that she's experienced rape herself – she'd be very annoyed by these comments – as if she has to hide away and keep silent. We could only portray the perpetrators as they were convicted. Their photos appeared in the newspapers also when they were convicted (Longinotto, 2011-2014) (see Appendix 3).

Elsewhere, Longinotto's purposeful inclusion of the victims' faces has caused a mixed reaction. In her interview, Longinotto describes the stir that was caused at a South African festival as well as her hope that the discourses concerning women and rape will change:

We had a screening at a Film Festival, I think it was in Johannesburg, and after the screening a man stood up and said, "I think it's outrageous that you show the girls faces and rape is a shameful thing!" and women started standing up all over the theatre saying I've been raped, I've been raped, it was like *Spartacus*, they were coming forward and talking to the Rough Aunties afterwards, it was a really big deal and it was a wonderful screening and experience. These women felt if those girls can do it so can we, we will speak out, so I think they're wrong, I think it's wrong to ban it and I think it's stupid, and I think one day it will be shown in South Africa; we just have to be patient (Longinotto, 2013).

Here, Longinotto is clearly challenging conventional views which, in her view, are more likely to shore up than undermine patriarchy. As White suggests, her work "helps frame questions about feminisms' claims to the public sphere" (2006, 121).

Longinotto also raised a related but slightly different ethical issue she had to confront while filming *The Day I'll Never Forget*. This occurred when she filmed the act of genital mutilation that is the core subject of the film. To be a witness to this scene itself felt monstrous, and Longinotto had a strong urge to intervene. However, she went against her instinct and allowed her subjects to do the representing they desired, as Nurse Fardhosa and the translator on location with Longinotto desperately wanted every horrific detail of the procedure captured on film (Lacey, 2010). To deny Nurse Fardhosa her choice to include this gruesome scene would mean to undermine the filmic gift Longinotto offers to her subjects. Instead of 'saving' one girl



(as Fardhosa assured Longinotto that stopping the procedure would mean they continue it later, in a more painful fashion), such an intervention would contradict the agency pertaining to the subjects who are representing themselves *through* Longinotto.

Perhaps more so than with *Rough Aunties*, this scene from *The Day I Will Never Forget* presented Longinotto with a difficult ethical dilemma in which there is clearly no simple right or wrong. If she tried to prevent the mutilation from taking place she would, in all likelihood, have been relegated to the role of the arrogant outsider interfering in a time-honoured local practice while, simultaneously, becoming the ‘hero’ of the film she was making – something that would, we have seen, been anathema to her own particular feminist project. Longinotto thus resisted the urge to act on her own personal desire to intervene and so frame herself as the ‘white heroine’ who has, as we have seen, caused so much trouble in third wave feminism. Equally importantly, to intervene would have compromised the long-term goal of the project, as imagined by Nurse Fardhosa.

Longinotto’s view seems, unsurprisingly, to be based on her belief in the potential agency of the victims and in a filmmaking process that encourages that agency. In the case of *The Day I Will Never Forget*, she was proved spectacularly right when the young victim herself used the film to disseminate a message that she long wanted to communicate.

In the case of *Rough Aunties*, the matter is, perhaps, less clear. Longinotto’s choice was between protecting the rights of the minor child or shoring up the discourse of shame that surrounds rape, and other issues regarding female sexuality – a discourse that helps to keep the matter of rape in the realm of the unspoken or the personal, but never the public and political. The researcher felt that it would be hard not to agree with Longinotto’s hope that it will not be long before all girls and women feel free to speak out against the violence that has been perpetrated against them. However, the ethical dilemmas associated with the representation of victims, such as rape-surviving children, remains unresolved and achieving the proper balance between the protection of vulnerable individuals and ameliorative feminist action appears to be problematic. As the case of *Rough Aunties* demonstrates, there is a tension between Longinotto’s desire for the film to be widely screened and her insistence on making an editorial

decision which inhibits such distribution: in the statement quoted above Longinotto admits that all that she is left with is a hope that the film will be more widely screened sometime in the future. This is clearly an area in need of further analysis and research, both regarding the general ethics of representation, and Longinotto's negotiation of such ethical dilemmas in her activist film-making practice.

## 6. Conclusion

Kim Longinotto's work is most often described as observational documentary filmmaking. Patricia White, for example, argues that "Like much of Longinotto's work, *Sisters in Law* is strictly observational ... characterized by empathy and non-intervention" (2006, 123). This dissertation begins with a discussion of Nichols' taxonomy of documentary forms in which the observational documentary is characterised by a fly-on-the-wall objectivity that typically eschews the addition of voice-over, explanatory text, or sound effects, does not use interviews, and generally attempts to record events as they happen in real time (Nichols, 1994, 2001).

Although Nichols regards both his taxonomy and his description of individual modes as establishing what he terms a "loose framework" that establishes conventions from which a filmmaker may work (Nichols, 2001, 99), it is clear from this analysis of a selection of films by Longinotto, and from her own account of how she makes her films, that describing them as observational is not particularly useful. In this regard, Stella Bruzzi's (2000, 2006) is more convincing. In her view, the contemporary documentary is better seen as a mixed form. As far as the observational documentary is concerned, Bruzzi argues that, far from adopting a neutral attitude, it often includes a critical dimension and even an element of self-reflexivity. She writes:

Any documentary, including observational ones, testifies to the absence rather than the presence of purity at its heart. Having presented itself as the mode most capable of collapsing the difference between image and reality, of best representing an unadulterated truth, direct cinema suffers particularly harshly from such a realization. If one strips the films of the theoretical baggage they come burdened down by, they offer less stifling, more exciting possibilities ... The core of direct cinema films is the encounter before the camera, the moment when the filmmaking process disrupts and intrudes upon the reality of the world it is documenting. This neither invalidates it as a means of recording and conveying that reality, nor does it mean that documentary is simply an elaborate fiction (Bruzzi, 2000, 72).

It would be difficult to offer a better theoretical context for the discussion of Longinotto's work which, I have argued is always mixed and combines categorical and reflexive elements and is narrative as well as observational and participatory. One of the most important elements in Longinotto's films is the way they not only acknowledge but also exploit "the moment when the filmmaking process disrupts and intrudes upon the reality of the world it is documenting" and even White tempers her account of her films by arguing that "Longinotto's reliance on *cinéma vérité* practices in most of her work seeks to avoid imposing an interpretive perspective on the films, yet the form's alliance and complicity that may be invisible in observational cinema are often foregrounded" (White, 2006, 121).

This study has shown that *Rough Aunties* intentionally embraces moments of direct engagement with various subjects who look straight into the eye of the camera resulting, in turn, in a more direct engagement with the viewer than would be the case in strictly observational material. This is most clearly seen in the interview/monologues with Mildred and Thuli. These stand very much alone (but not outside) of the narrative of the film as a whole. If anything, this expository feature contributes to the conflicts visible in the film and strengthens the audience's desire to see the subjects reach their goals. As Longinotto put it in her interview, "[y]ou don't have to do it purely observational" (Longinotto, 2013).

This analysis of *Rough Aunties* has also shown that, contrary to what conventional theory claims about the observational mode, this film has a clear narrative component. But unlike Rabiger's (1998, 2004) relatively uncomplicated (but nevertheless significant and useful) suggestions for narratively structuring and planning of any documentary using variations of the standard dramatic curve or three-act structure, Longinotto uses the narrative model rather loosely, and chooses to follow the chronology of the events themselves which, we have seen, she feels include a narrative of their own. However, she does not deny that her own (and her editor's) selectivity contributes to this process of structuring. As her account of the filming of *Rough Aunties* makes clear, she identifies the key subjects whom she will follow closely and she also seeks a positive ending to all her films, endings that she hopes will further her feminist agenda.

In particular, this analysis of *Rough Aunties* shows that it does embrace a version of the three-act structure, and includes multiple smaller dramatic curves. Key subjects, such as Mildred Ngcobo, are introduced clearly in the set-up stage of the film, which is a reasonably conventional introduction. This is then followed by a variety of narrative conflicts and resolutions that open windows into the lives of these South African women. There is also a clear resolution when Mildred Ngcobo is finally able to leave her unhappy marriage, and to exercise her now familiar strength as she moves into a home of her own. In the interview, Longinotto admits that she extended the shoot, waiting for this to happen, because she wanted the film to end on a positive note. In addition, this positive ending is cemented by another involving Jackie and Nonhlanhla: as the film ends, Sindi (Jackie's adopted daughter) and Nonhlanhla happily embrace because Nonhlanhla has now been adopted by the Branfield family (see Figure 16).

However, as this double ending suggests, although the film does indeed have a narrative structure, it cannot be reduced to the single, overarching dramatic curve that Rabiger advises documentary filmmakers to follow. Instead, I have suggested that the film utilises a pattern akin to Lyotard's conception of multiple *petits récits*, a form that does not attempt to impose a single grand narrative onto the film. Indeed, the aim of Longinotto's *petits récits* may be explained as providing opposing examples that are in conflict and defy a unified consensus that obliterates "the singularities of events" (Still, 2007, xvi).

The second step of this dissertation concerns what has been termed Longinotto's feminist film practice. It has been argued that the forms of her films are the product of a very specific feminist production process. In her interview, Longinotto made it clear that her filmmaking involves two stages which, while having much in common, must also be differentiated. Unlike the conventional production process in which each stage is primarily a step taken en route towards the final product, Longinotto's filmmaking process demands that we consider the initial process of filming as an independent stage. This is the stage that Bruzzi has described as "... the moment when the filmmaking process disrupts and intrudes upon the reality of the world it is documenting" (2000, 72).

While the ultimate end for a socially-aware documentary is to reach a larger audience, both global and local, in the hopes of facilitating change through aid and awareness (and we have seen Longinotto express this desire in various interviews), her actual filmmaking process must also be seen as an independent element of her practice. It is built up out of her interaction with her subjects: the very birth of *Rough Aunties* came from Jackie's invitation to Longinotto to alleviate their "alone[ness]" in South African society (Longinotto, 2013); Mildred Ngcobo, for her part, uses the camera to come to terms with her situation and overcomes the difficult personal obstacles of rape and an ugly marriage; and in the difficult scene moments after Shubaba's drowning, Longinotto is called to the scene in order to capture the event on camera.

The result is a much more open form of filmmaking in which the director is willing to relinquish a degree of control to her subjects. However, she does this gladly, since the film is a gift to her subjects for them to use and mould as they decide, and she marvels in the moments in which the subjects use their own agency to find the usefulness of Longinotto and her camera. Longinotto's filmmaking shows that she is equally concerned to engage with her subjects and to help them change their worlds *before* the film reaches the auditorium. This deep engagement and acknowledgment of the agency of her subjects is something that emerges when she brings her camera into the environment. Although her subjects "will go in and out of being aware of [it]", it is clear that Longinotto is aware that her presence provides her subjects with an opportunity that she both exploits and enjoys (Longinotto, 2013). In this way, the final product is more a record of a kind of communicative practice and a memory of a shared time together than it is a representation of events that only achieves its meaning and purpose through dissemination as a documentary film. This is what Longinotto means when she states, in the interview, that *Rough Aunties* is really "a love letter" that she wants to give to Mildred and Thuli (Longinotto, 2013).

The subsequent editing and release of the film constitutes a second, less personal and perhaps less concrete feminist intervention. Longinotto herself acknowledges that the results are both less certain and potentially more far-reaching. As the example of *Rough Aunties* shows, while the film has helped with raising money for Bobbi Bear, public concerns regarding revealing the

identity of rape victims (which Longinotto contests) have inhibited wider distribution of the film.

In her article on *Sisters in Law*, White (2006) also considers Mohanty's (1988) critique of Western feminist social practice – its tendency to portraying Third World women as people who need to be rescued by their enlightened Western counterparts – and its applicability to Longinotto's filmmaking. This study has argued that this is not an accurate account of Longinotto's films or her filmmaking practice and White agrees. She argues that:

Longinotto's work scrupulously avoids this structure; her subjects, methods and emphases are transnational rather than global(izing), that is to say, the films compare and connect gendered spaces and practices across cultures and borders without disavowing the power of the gaze ... (White, 2006, 121).

In the opening phrases of her text, White (2006) suggests using the term 'transnational' in order to describe a feminism which, while attempting to connect feminist agendas in various parts of the world, is at great pains to avoid the colonising gaze and to communicate honestly with women from those other parts. White borrows the term from Grewal and Kaplan, who write that "transnational feminism ... is not to be celebrated as free of asymmetrical power relations. Rather, transnational feminist *practices*, as we call them, involve forms of alliance, subversion, and complicity within which asymmetries and inequalities can be critiqued" (quoted in White, 2006, 121). Ironically, in this context, Longinotto's white skin becomes something that her subjects can use to their advantage, should they wish to do so. Although White then qualifies her claim by suggesting that the term may be too "academic" for as instinctive and practical a filmmaker as Longinotto, it seems that the films studied here are indeed good examples of exactly this kind of transnational feminism.

Far from disavowing power relations, Longinotto is acutely attuned to them, to the ways they constrain freedom and to the opportunities that are hidden beneath them. Longinotto does not objectify her subjects but instead provides them with the space to exercise power: they are able to decide how they will represent themselves and as this active representation takes place, some subjects are uplifted and others disgraced. One example from *Rough Aunties* occurs when

Sdudla, after searching for a particular mother and child, finds the mother and angrily reprimands her for attempting to dump her baby. There is an intensity in the cinematography that matches Sdudla's harsh words that frame her role as a mother and her strong authority as she sits aggressively gesturing throughout her warning, donned in her Bobbi Bear uniform (see Figure 14).

Longinotto's deepest desire is for her films to make waves within the context from which they came and according to the purposes of the women who have been her informal co-directors. As we saw in Chapter 5, she has said this regarding *Rough Aunties*, which she hopes will one day be readily accessible throughout the country (Longinotto, 2013) as well as regarding *The Day I Will Never Forget*; and, according to the Women Make Movies collective's website, she has similar hopes for her newer Indian film (Salma, 2013).

Smaill (2009) argues that Longinotto's work has been largely ignored by feminist theorists who stand to learn a good deal from her filmmaking practice. By engaging with, indeed by "loving" her subjects, Longinotto has developed a way "to show social change that is instigated from below and from the margins" (Smaill, 2009, 43). This study concurs with Smaill (2009) and aims to offer another blow against Longinotto's previous neglect. Longinotto undoubtedly deserves to be at the forefront of contemporary feminism, white skin, British accent and all. Writing more recently, another British feminist, Kira Cochrane argues that despite the fact that the goals of previous waves are yet to be met, feminists are currently in a fourth wave despite themselves (2012, 75). She ends her book with an exhortation that I am sure Longinotto would share:

The [feminist] movement is popular and flourishing, and it will need to be. Hopefully it will continue to rise, in the UK, and around the world, millions of women calling for equality and respect, for the right to be treated, essentially, as human beings. Misogynists, you'd better watch out. (Cochrane, 2012, 75).



## Filmography

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## Appendix 1

### Transcript: Interview with Mildred Ngcobo of *Rough Aunties* (2008) (Conducted 5/7/2013)

Shannon: [General greetings.] Are you supposed to be going to court today?

Mildred : There's court...there's counselling at the police station, to make some arrangements for the funeral for the 15 year old that was raped and killed

Shannon: Shame...

Mildred: It's a long day

Shannon: You are doing such good work I admire it so much

Mildred: Thanks (Laughing)

Shannon: What I'm hoping to do with this project is see how documentary can further social purpose. If it can spread it and see if that good work can increase. But I was speaking to Jackie just now I didn't know that she had the film banned in South Africa because they wouldn't blur the faces.

Mildred: Mmm... It's sad that.

Shannon: Ja

Mildred: But hopefully one day maybe if we make another one

Shannon: But she did say that it can still be viewed in homes.

Mildred: Yes

Shannon: So maybe that is how people must watch it and learn about it.

Mildred: Ya, people with DVDs they just download it and see it on the road... that's how I feel about it. But it's happening. You can't hide it. It's better for... You only feel sorry for the victims. But at the same time if the victims had proper counselling they would be like.... [Impression of strength] (Laughing).

Shannon: Exactly. We'll just start with preproduction, before the film took place.

## **A. PRE-PRODUCTION**

1. a) Shannon: What was your initial response to the idea of being part of a film?

b) Mildred: Ah... to be honest, for me it was just work, the work that I do every day. It was not really like 'film', but to me it was just the normal job that I do every day. So I didn't take it seriously, to stress about it, I was just doing what I was supposed to do every day, that was my way of dealing with it...'ah, a film, so what?'

c) Shannon: You have bigger things to think about...

d) Mildred: Yes I've got bigger things to think about, not about the film, I have to think about the child all the time, look at the best options for the child first so film is fine.  
(Laughing)

2. a) Shannon: Did you think it would be like a promotional film? What kind of film did you think it would be?

b) Mildred: No, it was explained that it was for the organisation, so it's not for promotion it's for the organisation.

c) Shannon: For whose organisation?

d) Mildred: For Bobbie Bear. So for me, ah, for Bobbie Bear, I'll do anything... for me. Because of my background with Bobbie bear. I think I will do anything when it concerns the children, when it concerns the victim because I was one of the victims. So for me, I don't really think about...What is going to happen ra ra ra ra... I only think is the child going to get help, I don't really think 'is it promotion?' 'money, no money' I don't care... my concern is the child.

e) Shannon: Yes, and if more children can be helped?

f) Mildred: yes, that is my concern. Above everything, because I always compare the victims about my previous experience so you feel like you are always putting yourself in the victim's shoes. And what you think of first is the best interest of the child. So I don't care who does what who says what, it's the child first. Also the training that I had with Jackie... she had that impression, I was like "Ok, God, thank God I have finally found the right person". So for me if it's in me because of Jackie so... ya (laughing).

[Shannon: Expression of admiration for Mildred and her work. Discussion of general issue of rape in South Africa and the effect of rape on victims]

3. a) Did you know why Kim wanted to film the ladies at Bobbie Bear?

b) Mildred: Actually she didn't choose who she wanted to work with. Actually I was the last person to know because I don't work in the office, I'm a field worker. I'm only here because you asked me, otherwise you will never find me her. [Discussion of her work in the field and the need for it and Mildred's passion for it]. I saw them, it was explained, and then I left. I didn't take it seriously, really. But by working, I think they were inspired. By working, then coming back, telling Auntie Jackie this is what happened, by reporting back, that's is when the relationship started, especially with me and Kim. With the others, we are not from exactly the same background but we all have our stories. If you are here at Bobbie Bear, it won't be easy if you don't have any story behind you that drives you because to deal with a child is not easy, especially the raped child, it's not easy. So you need to have that in your heart, the passion the love; the dedication. I'm not blaming people who haven't been hurt before, but we all had that previous experience of being hurt, so I think she [Kim] wanted to know why are we all here working together as a family, because Bobbie Bear is a family organisation, we treat each other as brothers and sister [discuss Bobbie Bear family dynamic].

c) Shannon: So you didn't know a lot about what she wanted to do before she came in to film?

d) Mildred: No no....You see like, I was just working. My concern is this child in front of me that is my concern. I didn't take it seriously. I didn't care, but I was friendly. [Mildred talks about her passion for the child].

4. A) Shannon: Was there a time for getting to know Kim before she started filming?

b) Mildred: To be honest I can't remember. I think she came before... I can't remember when, maybe Auntie Jackie will remember. I'm not sure if she was doing like research like you or something, I'm not sure. But I think so because I remember working with her it was nice because she was very friendly like me, so it was easy.

5. a) Shannon: What did you think the film would be about, or be like in the end?

b) Mildred: Like I said, I didn't know and I didn't care if it was going to bring money, I just carried on with my job. That's what I'm here for (laughs).

## **B. PRODUCTION**

6. a) Shannon: What was it like for you to be filmed? How did it make you feel?



b) Mildred: With that also, it wasn't very serious because if I was serious then how was it going to be like to the victims, so for me it was like the normal duty, like I said she would come with these big cameras...and like "ah...whatever", but at the end its where I realized, when I was watching, it where I was like "oh my God" I really cried, "Oh my God, I really did that...that...that. And it was serious. When I was watching the movie I realized, but while we were doing it, being busy with the film, I'm like...

c) Shannon: You tried to be as natural as possible?

d) Mildred: yes, yes yes, but at the end, oh that's where I come from, this is what the children go through. It is really where I burst into tears.

[Discuss each other's experience of watching the film, and the emotions involved. Mildred talks about Jackie as her mother who saved her life, and was sent by God to start Bobbie Bear].

7. a) Shannon: Did you feel comfortable with the camera?

b) Mildred: I don't care about the cameras.

8. a) Shannon: You were so brave to talk about your personal life in the interview, how was that for you? Was it very difficult?

b) Mildred: It was, because to deal, yes, I had counselling, but to take somebody back...it's not easy. But it's also therapy, that's what I've gone through, it's not a problem anymore, it's a challenge, I'll overcome that. But it was not easy, if I look where I come from, raped 4 times; got married, and you find your husband having sex with your sister, that's another story. I did not grow up with my parents...that is another story. It was not easy to talk about it but I did because of the good support from Auntie Jackie, she was a good counsellor to me.

c) Shannon: So do you think it's because you had counselling before that you were able to have the interview with the camera?

d) Mildred: Exactly

[Mildred compares her experience to a child going to trial, the child must have counselling before going for cross examination, and ends by saying she will no longer be victimized because she is a survivor.]

9. a) Shannon: Did you have a good relationship with Kim when you had the interview?

b) Mildred: Yes... We are really friends now, she's my sister. We love each other, we admire each other.

10. a) Shannon: Is Jackie still friends with Kim even through the banning of the film in South Africa?

b) Mildred: Ya... It's not personal. But with the kids, it was sad, with the faces, it was sad but, also, it's not easy for me to comment. The sad part was not to blur the faces of the children, the film itself, I admire it. If you look at the empowerment of the women.

[Shannon: talk about how the film inspired her to learn to do the same]

11. a) Shannon: How long did it take for you to get used to Kim having a camera around?

b) Mildred: I'm a friendly person; it didn't bother me like I said before... you walk around with a camera? Whatever.

12. a) Shannon: How long did Kim film for, some weeks or months?

b) Mildred: I think some months, maybe 2 months or 1... I can't remember. But it didn't take like 3 months; it was less than 3 months.

c) Shannon: And was she filming for the whole time?

d) Mildred: Yes all the time. But she wasn't just dealing with me, you can ask Thuli, Sdulda, Jackie, Eureka... Sometimes you come back here you pissed off, you going "ah... the cops...that one... ra ra ra" and then you [see the camera] "Oh God, this woman...with the camera! Is this on the film!?! Oh gosh come on!" (Laughs) Ya, but it was nice.

13. a) Shannon: Did you and perhaps the others too, feel you could be yourselves and do your job as usual even with Kim and the camera being present?

b) Mildred: Oh ja. Them I don't know... I can't comment on the other people, and I can only comment on myself. But for me it was easy, like I said I really didn't concentrate on the camera.

14. a) Shannon: Were you there for the whole filming process?

b) Mildred: Yes I was with Bobbie Bear all that time, but sometimes she followed the others. Because it was not about me actually... it was about the organisation, if it was about 1 person then she would have followed me all the way, but she was going to do it on all the women in the organisation.

15. a) Shannon: Were there any events that weren't filmed that you felt should have been?

b) Mildred: Because I didn't know what she was looking for, I think it was ok, there was a lot that was filmed, but I think if she can get another chance we'll do more, there's a lot of stuff that wasn't there.

16. a) Shannon: What sort of things would you have liked to see in the film as well?

b) Mildred: There were so many cases, but then I think also though you can't spend like 4 hours watching a movie, you'll get bored, I think that's why she picked some.

[Mildred names some of the cases that weren't included and how Bobbie Bear does not turn people away]

17. a) Shannon: So do you feel there should have been more cases shown in the film?

b) Mildred: Yes, that was missing, but at the same time if you look at the time, its 104 minutes, I think it's too much. It's ok, 104 minutes but if its 2 hours I think people will get bored so I'm not a filmmaker I don't know... but learn because there are people like you. (laugh)

18. a) Shannon: To your knowledge, how did your colleagues feel about being filmed?

b) Mildred: I never sit with them "Ah guys, how was the..." (laughs) You see on *Rough Aunties* when we all ra ra-ing with Eureka, wa wa wa wa. I think we all enjoyed it, we are a team.

19. a) Shannon: Would you say it was almost as if the camera wasn't there?

b) Mildred: The camera wasn't there sometimes but sometimes you [don't notice it]. "Ah come on Kim, you can't follow us with that... camera!" (laugh).

20. a) Shannon: Did Kim ever tell you to do anything for the camera?

b) Mildred: No.... no. That documentary is natural, there was nothing like "Oh, I'll pose for the camera" No.

c) Shannon: She never instructed you?

d) Mildred: No. there is no instruction there.

21. a) Shannon: Did you ever feel embarrassed being in front of camera, for example when you were talking about the new man in your life? Why, or why not?

b) Mildred: Ya, I was (laughing). [Referring to the scene where she talks about a new man in her life with Jackie] I was like “Ah, God she’s going to kill me” (Laugh). And she says “I’ll kick your bum”... ah come on now Jackie, I’m a big girl (laughing). Ya I was.

c) Shannon: Did you ask Kim to stop filming?

d) Mildred: no I didn’t. Because also I’ll get over it, I’m a big girl (laughing). I carried on.

22. a) Shannon: Were there any moments that were difficult to be in front of the camera, for example, when you were with a child?

b) Mildred: Oh ja, that was difficult. To deal with a rape victim, it’s not easy hey, it’s where, it brings back the memory, but at least justice will be done. For me there was no justice [compares her situation with those who get justice]

c) Shannon: But was it made even harder with the camera being there?

d) Mildred: It was harder, because sometimes I ended up crying, not because of the camera but because of the hurt of the child. Like I said, I didn’t care about the camera; my concern is the child, as long as you not harming the child with the camera its fine by me, that was my concern. But with the camera, sometimes they weren’t inside, sometimes you don’t see them, or you don’t notice them only later because they are by the window. Because if you are counselling you can’t really let other people in the room. That’s intimidation that’s secondary abuse. That is impossible, you cannot do that. So, they have to find their own way around it.

e) Shannon: so all those counselling scenes Kim wasn’t in the room?

f) Mildred: no no no, how can she be? She had to find her own way around. Counselling is confidential you have to keep confidentiality for the client...Or else you can ask the child, but camera, if you come with the camera that’s distraction with a child, she won’t concentrate, and you think she’s fine and she’s not because she’s concentrating on the camera, posing, smiling.

g) Shannon: When you were counselling the children, do you think they were aware of the camera?

h) Mildred: I think they are aware of the camera, but [they] won’t see people running around the room, because they had to find their own way. And also the consent, the consent form had to be filled, but that form doesn’t mean you will come in. It’s only that

the child might see ... if it happens outside. But my concentration was to deal with the victim.

23. a) Shannon: How did the children cope with the camera being present?

b) Mildred: It is hard for the child, it's hard for them anyway, especially for the rape victim. You have to find a way to communicate with the child. If there is a third person, you have to introduce that person to the child, then cameras; that is something else. Sitting and observing someone doing counselling that is something else [emphasises the distraction that a camera might cause]. They had to find their own way and they were very professional about it.

c) Shannon: So did you ask the children if they would mind being on the camera?

d) Mildred: (long pause for thought) I did. I remember one of the kids... she was 13? Or 12 years. She saw me with Philip and the camera. She asked who is that lady carrying that big camera? "Oh, that is auntie Mary, they are making a film" "Oh, ok". Some, I did introduce some, some are too small, but some like the teenagers ask question so you can't lie to the kids, but for them to film, it was not inside, I did not allow them to come inside. But the kids, like the teenagers, some knew because they not stupid, kids are very clever... But they had to make their own way.

e) Shannon: those that knew about the camera, would you say they were natural in front of the camera?

f) Mildred: They were not concentrating on the camera, we had eye contact. Concentration is important... you can't talk to a child the same time she was looking at the camera.

24. a) Shannon: Were you surprised watching the end product then, that there was quite a lot of counselling in it?

b) Mildred: ya I was surprised. That's where I cried [emphasises her realization of the importance of their work].

## **C. POST-PRODUCTION**

### **C1. Character representation**

25. a) Shannon: What was it like watching yourself in the film? Do you think the film showed Bobbie Bear, your colleagues and you in the right way, for example, how everything is in reality?

b) Mildred: Yes. Yes.

c) Shannon: Do you think Eureka and Jackie were shown as who they really are?

d) Mildred: Yes. Everyone. That's why I said we are a team, a family. All of us have a past experience, and that's why we are dedicated because we have seen the difference towards us first we can make a difference out there.

e) Shannon: So would you say by watching RA do you think I can get to know you all by watching the film?

f) Mildred: Yes! You have done that already! (laugh)

g). Shannon: How about Thuli and Sdudla, do you think we can come to know them a little by watching *Rough Aunties*?

[Covered above]

26. a) Shannon: What did you think of the final product, *Rough Aunties*, in terms of how you and your colleagues at Bobbi Bear were shown?

b) Mildred: Yes that's what we said.... Natural. Team spirit, that's how we are.

### **C2. Narrative selection & structure**

27. a) Shannon: Was there anything important about Bobbie Bear that you felt was left out of the film?

b) Mildred: Some of the cases like I said before, just some of the cases, ya.

c) Shannon: Would you say, though, that in the 104 minutes that was the end film Kim managed to cover everything that Bobbie Bear is about?

d) Mildred: Yes she did.

28. a) Shannon: Do you know if Bobbie Bear has received much help since the film was made?
- b) Mildred: Not really, I'm not sure. I don't deal with finance.
29. a) Shannon: In *Rough Aunties*, did you notice anything about the time between events in the film? For example, did the things that happened in the film happen in the same order in reality?
- b) Mildred: It's a true story. For me she did her best. She didn't jiggle anything. But ja, she did it very well.
- c) Shannon: So you didn't notice any gaps between events? For example, when Jackie's family member passed away, then after that in the film, Shubaba drowned, did those things happen close together?
- d) Mildred: yes, yes.
30. a) Shannon: Do you remember if there were there any large gaps between events in reality that were shown together in the film?
- b) Mildred: No.

### **C3. Thematics**

31. a) Shannon: What do you think the film was about in the end?
- b) Mildred: Bobbie Bear.
32. a) Shannon: What would you say its purpose was?
- b) Mildred: For Kim to get to know the women who work at Bobbie Bear and to get to know Bobbie Bear better. This is my thinking, to know the women, why, because, to deal with rape victims is not easy and point of rescue is...difficult. I think her impression was to know the women and the organisation better.

### **C4. Final assessment**

33. a) Shannon: Was the finished product close to what your expectations of it were?
- b) Mildred: Actually, I didn't have expectations. I didn't worry about it; it was only at the end...It did surprise me.
34. a) Shannon: Were you sad to see counselling in the film?

b) Mildred: Ya... it was sad.

c) Shannon: Would you prefer it not to have been there?

d) Mildred: No it was ok. And also to see myself, because I was a victim. Wow, I was proud of myself. I was. Because I'm no longer a victim I can help that child.

[Talk about her current relationship with Philip and the fact that she still lives in her own home, maintaining her independence]

35. a) Shannon: Did Philip give that place to you to be your own?

b) Mildred: No. Actually Kim helped me. I don't actually know what happened but it was Auntie Jackie and Kim [who helped her get her own place]. Because the state of my life...If they did not do that, for as much as I was strong... I don't know. Because to have... you think you have a husband, and he'll come back from work, and he'll sit by the edge of the bed, and start emotionally abusing you. And then you let go, for you to sleep for like 1 in the morning. Then you have to wake up and sort out children for school, and get ready for work. It was not healthy. It was emotionally not physically, but, emotionally... I was bleeding inside. At the same time I was studying, so I was studying with tears in my eyes. And UNISA, the school was looking for the assignment and he's there and the theories are talking about you [referring to herself] (laughs). All of my assignments were based on me, because everything that was in the books was happening to me, so if I write an assignment I was talking about myself! So, I really thank Kim and Jackie, Jackie is my mother, I really thank them for what they did for me.

36. a) Shannon: In the end, would you say that the film shows the reality of the lives of the ladies at Bobbie Bear?

b) Mildred: Yes [Answered previously]

37. a) Shannon: Is there anything else you would like to share with me about this experience of being in as famous documentary, sharing your story, and seeing yourself on a film?

b) Mildred: What I could say is I thank Kim for being her... Not to instruct us, not to give orders, but to let the film be what it was. And also to thank Jackie, for being who she is to let Kim get to know the women and the organisation, she did not hide anything like others who don't like the exposure. But the exposure is to expose the suspects and also to expose what we are really doing at Bobbie Bear, because I think Bobbie Bear is based on to make a difference out there.



38. a) Shannon: Would you be part of a documentary film again?

b) Mildred: Ya! Easy! (Laughs) as long as you are not going to instruct me and distract me from my job of helping my kids.

c) Shannon: Did you enjoy how Kim worked by following you and sneaking around with the camera?

d) Mildred: Yes, yes, she was natural.

[Interview ended with talk of where the women of Bobbie Bear went for the screening of *Rough Aunties*; Mildred also mentions that they received more attention from the film's release, for example in the Netherlands, people were coming forward looking for counselling, and without a base they performed their work for international victims].

## Appendix 2

### Transcript: Skype interview with Kim Longinotto:

Dear Kim,

Thank you once again, for agreeing to be part of this research. As I have mentioned before, I admire your work deeply and my hope, in writing this MA, is to learn as much as I can from the films you have made. In particular, I am deeply attracted to the ways in which you are able to make films that engage audiences, deal with significant social issues but seem also to retain the integrity and purity that I take as your hallmark of your work.

Even though I have only produced one film thus far, I like to think of myself as an aspiring documentary filmmaker. Briefly, my film tells the story of a woman who escaped the genocide in Rwanda, then travelled through Africa in search of her missing husband. They were eventually reunited in Pietermaritzburg where they now live with their two children.

It was the experience and process of making this film that first led me to your work and my motivation for doing this MA research is primarily to learn from you and your method of filmmaking. When making my honours film I was taught, and more-or-less expected to follow, the conventional Hollywood model of the Hero's Journey. But when I attempted to apply this structure to my film (after all, my "heroine" was quite literally on a journey) I felt that I was forcing a rather more complex story into a formula that did not really fit the events. I had to "find" a climax, and thus ended up creating a "love" story out of what should really have been a story of duty and fortitude.

It was only after watching your films that I realized that there were other methods, that a film can be interesting and engaging even if it does not follow the traditional formula and that alternative approaches seem more able to give documentary films the space to be themselves. So the question I am now hoping to answer is how does one shape a film and make it appealing while still remaining honest to the material?

In my thesis I have chosen to focus primarily on *Rough Aunties*, but I know and will, where relevant, compare it to some of your other works, particularly *Sisters in Law*; *The Day I Will Never Forget*; *Divorce Iranian Style*, and *Runaway*. In answering my questions please feel free to draw on your experience of making these films as well.

Thank you, once again for your co-operation.

## GENERAL FILM MAKING METHODOLOGY:

### Pre-production

1.a) Shannon: You seem to have such a natural way of making a piece of real life into the most amazing story. How can you explain this? How do you go about choosing a topic, do you come across the subjects yourself?

b) Kim: OK, it's different for each film, so I'll talk about [*Rough Aunties* (2008)]. I just finished *Sisters in Law* before *Rough Aunties* and I was editing it and Jackie Branfield came to London and came and saw us in the cutting room, and said she really wanted a film made about her little group of women, and it wasn't because they wanted a 'aren't we wonderful film' it's because they felt very much that the *Rough Aunties* were very alone in society. They were against the social workers, they're against the police, they're against the hospital, they are fighting against big business, everywhere they go there is somebody against them, and they are against taking money from the government because it gets complicated, so they are very independent and they have a problem with money all the time, and they had very bad experiences with local TV. And in fact when I was there before we started filming, I saw what one of the say TV crew's treated them like. What they would do is come in the door, and say "do that", and tell them what to do, and they are meant to be working. And then they would interview them in a very formal way, and sometimes they would try and interview them when they were in the middle of doing something... and to be fair to the crews it was mostly because they had their day or 2 days, so the *Rough Aunties* had to fit in with them, rather than us [referring to filmmakers] fitting in with them, do you see what I mean? So that's why they wanted the film made and why it hadn't really worked before. And they said they had films made that had been really terrible because you've got these sorts of South African men interviewing the children, and that was rather upsetting and difficult. It's hard enough for the kids anyway without having to be interviewed again by TV. So when Jackie came to see me, I wasn't sure whether I would want to make the film or not, because it would have been the first time I would have made a film for somebody, it would be with them, but I had been invited into their space it wasn't something I had thought of it was something they had initiated, so that had never actually happened before. In fact the only time that had happened before but in a slightly different way was with *The Day I Will Never Forget* because I was asked by Channel 4 to make a film about FGM (female genital mutilation) and it was something I really felt strongly about, so that was an issue film that I was brought into. So those are the 2 films that that has happened. So, anyway I went to Durban with Paul Taylor, and he had already made a film near Durban about an orphanage, and what it was, I met Mildred, after about 5 minutes I thought "this is who I want to make the film about". It's like falling in love, it's that feeling, it was immediate and I thought "I love this woman, she is fantastic". I remember telling Paul [Taylor] "I want the film to have Mildred in the centre of it, I love Mildred" he looked very shocked, but that's how it worked it was an immediate thing and then I had to be very careful to stay away from Mildred as much as possible because I didn't want to get to know her without the camera, without making the film, I didn't want her to tell me anything, I didn't want to see anything, so after that I just stayed in Jackie's house and tried to stay away. Then on the last day, I

remember going with Paul, we gave Mildred a lift home which was like this little mud house in the middle of a township and I remember being really amazed because when she's at Bobbie Bear, her clothes are always immaculate, she's smart, she looks so professional, and me after 5 minutes my clothes are covered in mud just from like being in the township, I got filthy. And she was washing clothes in cold water from a little tap and she had no food in the house, and then all the love I had for her went into admiration as well, I felt this love and admiration and awe for her. And I thought, you are the most amazing person, and she told me it was really nice having a lift, otherwise she had to walk... and I suddenly saw how hard her life was and it just strengthened me and I thought well, I really want to make this film. So that's how *Rough Aunties* just came around.

2. a) Shannon: And what would you say the ingredients are that can make reality into a beautiful, and moving, story?

b) Kim: I do look for things, especially if we are talking about *Rough Aunties*, I looked for the end, I really wanted there to be a positive ending for Mildred. For both her as a person and her in the film, and so we stayed an extra 2 weeks hoping that she would move out of her home. And I was really proud of her that she didn't move in with her boyfriend, but moved into her own place. We probably encouraged her, you know, but not for the film we would have encouraged her anyway as a friend. So once that happened I know that was the end.

3. a) Shannon: How do you earn the trust of those being filmed? How do you approach them with your intentions, and how long does this process take?

b) Kim: There were 2 things. When we went the first time to do the research, I got to meet the *Rough Aunties* and thought that Mildred was the main one, but I showed them a DVD of *Sisters in Law* and said this is very much how the film will be made, it will be your film, I won't do anything that you don't want me to do, I told them how I would work, and I said if anyone doesn't want to be filmed obviously I won't film them, you can say no, and of course they all wanted to be in the film, but that would be as far as I would go, if people wouldn't trust me and didn't want the film made then I wouldn't make it, I don't try and earn peoples trust they either do or they don't. They did, and they followed Jackie's lead. If they had said they didn't like *Sisters in Law* then it wouldn't have worked either. Of course, I did everything I said I would do, we wrote a letter saying we won't interview the children if you tell us... but it's just so they had a letter saying these are the guidelines of how we work.

4. a) Shannon: How do you gain permission form all your subjects to go ahead with the film? Are the subjects aware of the intentions of the film? (How much do they know?)

b) Kim: Well that's sort of the same question really, because they are not going to give you a release form if they don't want the film. And what was really nice about making *Rough Aunties* was they always thought of us as a team, there was never a sense that we were there

encroaching on them, there are very painful scenes in the film like when Shubaba dies and how that happened was one of the ladies there called us and said something terrible has happened at the river, and they called us there, so there was never any point I felt I shouldn't have been there or that we weren't there *with* them. I always felt I was there with them, that was them being so generous in wanting the film to be made.

5. a) Shannon: Traditional feature films use treatments, scripts and storyboards together with the Dramatic Curve or Hero's Journey in the planning process. What process do you use to plan your film narratives? For example, would you ever use a formula like the one Michael Rabiger suggests?

b) Kim: I can't really do that, I don't know what going to happen, it like going on a journey. For example with *Rough Aunties*, I had no idea that the outside world was going to come in the way it did, I thought it would be very much about the work that the *Rough Aunties* did and maybe a little bit of them, but with Shubaba's death, with Eureka's son-in-law's death, and then with Thuli reliving her own son [being shot], these things happened all the time and I felt it was important to film them because that was the only way you would understand what their lives were like. It also told you a lot about SA society, the violence of it, and the uncertainty of their lives, and how brave they have to be. So when Eureka says "Never stop crying for the children." you really know what she's saying because they're not just crying for the children their crying for their own lives too. The admiration I had before I went was like 10 fold when I left because it's like a battle every day and frightening as well. Where they live, there is danger all around them, like you saw in the police raid you saw how insecure the houses were that these men were going around raping children. Pinkies story in the beginning her rapist broke into the house and raped her, and he was a neighbour. I think the way their lives are comes through in the film, but I wasn't expecting that, so I couldn't have done a treatment.

6. a) Shannon: And is this similar for your other films?

b) Kim: Well, I always have to do like an imagine scenario, so I imagine. With *Rough Aunties* said the main character is Mildred and the other main character is Jackie. I didn't know about Thuli then, and we'll follow their lives, you know? With *Divorce Iranian Style*, we knew that we wanted to film at the law courts, and we didn't know which law court, we had to go and find the court when we got there. You see, it took so long to raise the money and get permissions, it would be silly to go get the court to agree, and it took 2 years to raise the money so by the then the judge probably would have moved on. [Explanation that Iranian judges move out and back into the seminaries often]. The judge we had, you can see in *Divorce Iranian Style*, he's quite a religious man, and he left quite soon after we finished filming, he didn't really feel comfortable... He found the truth of life very troubling, he liked being in the Koran and reading about his beliefs, but he found implementing the Sharia law very difficult, and you see it all the way through the film. Like when Ziba says "Aren't I too young to be married?" and he says "well, no...no". And he looks very uncomfortable and she says "What age is it that I must be married?" and he looks very embarrassed and says "A girl can be married after puberty, after 9

years old” and she’s shocked, and it is shocking it’s a terrible shocking law, not shocking in the profit’s time but very much so in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So you can see bringing the Sharia law up against a young girl who wants to go back to school is very troubling for him. And that’s why we chose a judge that we liked, we didn’t just want a ‘baddy’, we chose someone we knew would be conflicted and find the law difficult, because it seemed more truthful, it seemed as if this is what Iran was going through, there were many changes in the country at that time [Mention Iranian conflict between 21<sup>st</sup> century and ancient laws]. We also chose that court because it was in the middle of Tehran so you would have middle class people like Massi and poor woman like Marion. And, when we wrote the proposal, we said we wanted a woman who was trying to get custody of her kids, because we wanted that, we want a young girl who wants to go back to school, so when we were there we went looking for those kinds of cases. So, that’s quite an unusual way of getting around it. The reason why we wanted a woman trying to get custody of her child was there was a lot of mythology at the time, and the Iranian government was encouraging as well, because they said “we love our Mothers of Martyrs” “We love the mothers who send their sons to war”. Because they just had the Iran Iraq war, so these mothers were glorified. So we wanted somebody who didn’t want their child to go to war, who wanted to hold onto her children and fight for her children, and that felt much more universal and much more honest as something that audiences around the world could relate to. I couldn’t relate to those mothers I felt it was such a weird thing, and most of the mothers we met in Iran said they would be devastated if their son had to go to war. So, it was the minority, the extreme religious minority. So for that one, the proposal was almost exactly the same as the film.

### **Rough Aunties: Pre-production**

7.a) Shannon: What were your original intentions for this film? Do you have a set goal before the shoot that or did the goal emerge as filming happened?

b) Kim: I think my intention was a celebration of the women, but also what excited me about *Rough Aunties* was it was like a snapshot of a new South Africa in action, where you had white and black women working together, you had white policemen who were often bossed around by the women, and I remember once when Thuli said to the policemen “you’re wrong!” or something, and Mildred’s boyfriend was there and we watched him stiffen and he had grown up in Apartheid and he said “God, if one of us had done that when I was growing up we would have been hit and taken away” so it’s about change and seeing change. My dad grew up in Johannesburg so I had been brought up with thinking about SA in certain, and I didn’t want to come to South Africa until Nelson Mandela was released and until the new regime, so for me it was like celebrating a new South Africa as well which attracted me so much into doing that film.

8.a) Shannon: I’ve read that your Dad was Italian? Which part of Italy was he from?

b) Kim: Yes, he was from Florence. But obviously he did spend some time in Italy, but mainly South Africa and then Germany so he spent his childhood in South Africa, and sort of took in all the beliefs of the apartheid society and whole-heartedly endorsed it. And that was source of

why I never liked him, I could only feel... I don't know what I felt for him it certainly wasn't any affection. He was damaged by his beliefs really; they turned him into not a very nice person. And then you meet the Rough Aunties and they are so full of love and generosity, and they are these wonderful people, so it was very relieving for me to go and make the film.

9. a) Shannon: How did you find Bobbie Bear, and decide to use the ladies there as a subject matter for a film? Did you spend much time at Bobbie Bear before filming took place? What was this experience like? Was there anything you discovered that you hadn't known of before?

b) Kim: I didn't really do research, I went there, met them, had that talk with them and then spent a while at Jackie's house getting to know Jackie. Every time something would happen in the night I thought "Oh no I should be filming this" so it was quite uncomfortable for and difficult, I couldn't wait to get home and go back with the camera I don't really like spending time with people before we actually film, it feels weird. Because I'm not there to stay with Jackie, I'm not there as a friend, even though I hope we will become friends. It's that their period without the equipment feel slightly false, because I come there and I don't have a role, so I would do the washing up or put food on the table or try and do things around the house, so I had a role, because I didn't have a role the first time I was there. So it was much better when I was there [with the equipment] and was part of the team and I had my Bobbie Bear t-shirt on.

10. a) Shannon: How much planning was done before shooting? And what was the nature of this planning? Did it involve getting to know the characters, or perhaps drawing up a basic story line and structure that you hoped the film would follow? What do you see as the most important stages in planning and producing?

b) Kim: With *Rough Aunties* I did it with a production company, it was their idea they were the people that told Jackie about me, so they did a lot of the planning. With *Divorce Iranian Style*, *Runaway*, and *Sisters in Law*, I didn't have a producer I produced those, whatever that means, so I would do the planning I had to make sure everything was in place for when we got there. With *Sisters in Law* I worked with a Cameroonian friend who got their early and got the hotel ready, so we had somewhere to go to, but with the 2 Iranian films I had to plan it all. It's mainly logistical things, where are we going to stay, paying the air fares, finding a sound recordings, packing... it's not much! I always think God I've got so much to do, but really, what have I got to do? Getting some nice books to read when we're there, buying some nickers, I don't know that sort of thing. Those are the things I do the few weeks before we go.



## Production

11. a) Shannon: You seem able to establish a very trusting, caring and natural relationship between yourself and your subjects. Would you be able to comment on this, and perhaps share some insight into how you achieve it?

b) Kim: What it is, it's a bit like first day at school or something. It's a two way thing. You don't just decide "I want to be that person's best friend" it would be a bit sad if you did that because they might not feel the same way. It has to be reciprocal, so with Mildred it seemed to be reciprocal, and with *Runaway*, it was very much the girls would come forward to us. Because we said to the women who ran the centre "we promise we won't interview any of the girls" because they said we could only stay for 3 days because people who had come before had upset the girls, so much like the crews that had filmed the RA. So we had been there 3 days and our time was coming to an end but the girls kept coming to us and saying "Come to our rooms and talk to us" so we started to help out a bit, we bought them magazines and we hung out, and then the women in the centre said we were fine with the girls and we could stay as long as we liked, and then it was very much a 2 way thing, it was the girls who felt comfortable with us and the girls we liked. So it will be similar for all the films, it has to be 2 way thing. If somebody comes in and they don't want to be filmed we won't film them. And you can see that in *Divorce Iranian Style*, there's a women who comes in and she's pretending that she wants a divorce, and we actually had never met that woman before. She comes in and sort of [signal] to me and Ziba as if to say "Come on, film this!" so she demanded to be filmed, we started filming it, and then she starts whispering into the camera, "I love him really I don't really want a divorce" and that's exactly what happened, she took as much control of the situation as we did. She wanted to be filmed, she wanted to tell her story, she wanted the audience and us to know that she was playing this incredibly clever game to get revenge on her husband, but also to make him stay at home with her, so she was much smarter than the men in fact! So she was whispering one thing and then saying another. And the same with little Ziba, you know, she was saying "he beats me" and he says "I don't beat you", [Ziba]: "Be quite be quite!" so there is all sorts of little games going on in front of our eyes and that's very nice when that happens and that's in every single film you have scenes where the people are taking control of the film. Like in *The Day I Will Never Forget*, one of my favourites things, and we use it as a turning point in the film, a turning point from what FGM's about and how destructive it is to the girls fighting back, it's about half way through the film, and that's little Fouzia saying "I want to tell you a poem about the day I never forget... it was on a Sunday morning my mum said to me" and then she reads the poem, and how that happened was we were filming the discussion where her mum was, and her mum was the most desirous person at the meeting in favour of FGM, and at the end of the meeting little Fouzia came and got me and said "I want you to come to my home" and I said "Fouzia, look, we really tired we have been filming all day I don't want to go to your home" and she said we had to come, that she had been waiting for us for 9 months we had to come. And she was so insistent that we went back to her home. And when we got there, I had the camera obviously, she said "stand there" and she stands and does the poem. So she ran that whole scene. She made sure we were filming in the beginning, to make sure it was Kim filming this,

she made sure everything was in English so everyone knew what was going on, and she arranged for her mother to come it, she arranged everything. So really, I would turn your question on its head because it's never a question of me... I have dreams and wishes and hopes for the film, but in all of them it's the people in the film who take control of it, and it's their film, and I want them to feel it's their film.

12. a) Shannon: Do you experience any difficulty from people unaware of the filming or less involved, for example, the men in *Divorce Iranian Style*?

b) Kim: It's a very weird thing... In a situation like that, because the law is on their side, they have always been told they are right the women are wrong, because they feel so secure in their position as being worth more than women. The women are fighting for respect, the women are fighting for some kind of leeway, some kind of dignity and they lose eve time, and the men win eve time, because the law is on their side, and that's what making the judge so uneasy and embarrassed. The men love being filmed, they think they're right. That's why you get Barack whose Ziba's husband looking at us and saying, you know, that she's difficult, and Ziba's saying "Serves you right for marrying a 14yr old girl!" And I was so shocked that she said that. But he has been told all his life that he's right that he doesn't even bother with her... "oh that's just a silly women saying something" so the men are all so confident that it doesn't end in their heads, and they have seen the film and like the film, because they are still thinking that their behaving well, because they *are* behaving within Sharia, it's the women that are the outcasts, and they're asking for divorce so they are really breaking all the rules, they're shameful.

13. a) Shannon: Would you say the story is present before the shoot, or do you find it in the shoot? At what point do you decide there is a story to tell? And perhaps, when do you know you have enough footage to tell that story?

b) Kim: I wouldn't make the film if I didn't think there was a story there, which is why I went to meet the Rough Aunties that's why I wouldn't just make a film and hope the story comes, because I don't film very much either, I would only make a film where it was very clear that there was a story there. I find it very fighting to go somewhere just to make a film. The only time where I made a film where I didn't know the story was at all was *The Day I'll Never Forget*, because that was a film I was making about an issue, and we had sleepless nights for 3 weeks trying to find people who knew it was happening, because I knew we wanted peoples experiences, and I knew I wanted to watch people going through experiences like with Samoa going back to her village and meeting her mother but I couldn't imagine that I had to have faith that it would happen. But that was very frightening; I wouldn't ever want to make a film like that again. And the only reason I took that big risk and made that film was I felt so strongly about the subject and really wanted to make a film about it.

14. a) Shannon: During production, how often do you view the footage you have accumulated? How much footage do you find you have to discard because it is not up to the required quality in terms of production values?

b) Kim: I never watch any of it, I might just check to see that's its ok, I might watch like 20 seconds it to make sure it was actually there, but I find it very weird to watch stuff I've filmed while I'm filming it because you have this illusion, even though you know it's not true, you are making a film and your with people, so I wouldn't want to make a film about Mildred and then watch her in the evenings on the film it would just be peculiar, so I'm experiencing it as an experience, then when I come back I can watch it as a film, so there are 2 very distinct stages for me. And also I'm so tired usually I don't want to be bothered with what I've filmed... and I don't film very much.

15. a) Shannon: What do you mean when you say that you don't film very much?

b) Kim: I probably film... *Sisters in Law* we filmed 13 hours, which is much less than other people would to make a film, with *Divorce* it was about 10 hours, *Runaway* about 12 hours, because that was on film. And with *Rough Aunties* It was about 16 or 17 hours, so we can watch it easily in a week.

16. a) Shannon: it sounds as if filming is a very natural process for you?

b) Kim: I find it a very scary process. I find it very very scary because I'm always scared I won't get a film or something will go wrong, you're always hoping a story will emerge from this journey. And each time I think my God this is hell why am I doing this? I find it very scary making films.

17.a) Shannon: What aspects do you look for that will make an interesting story?

b) Kim: I think just stories where there is action, and I knew there would be with *Rough Aunties* because I knew they were going out and rescuing kids, I knew they went on police raids and that there were a group of them, and they all had relationships, so I knew that there was a story there.

18. a) Shannon: How much attention do you pay to production values? Were you conscious of things like lighting, mise-en-scene, depth of field etc...? The things one analyses in a film analysis. These are typically structured in feature films etc., what can you say about them in your documentaries?

b) Kim: I'm not like some of my friends, some of my friends make films on their own and they have the microphone on the camera, and they don't work with a sound recordist. I want the sound to be really good, I want there to be really clear sound. I also want the picture to be good so I work with a really good camera, and if something is dark I will light it. So what we do, like in *Bobbie Bear* I bought a couple of lamps on stands and put them in in the morning because the place was very dark, so we bought a couple of house lights, just at a department store. They loved it, we left them behind when we left because they got so used to having the lights we couldn't bear to take them away, and we didn't need them we were going home.

## Rough Aunties: Production

19.a) Shannon: How long did it take to film all the material you needed for *Rough Aunties*? How do you decide when you have enough footage for a compelling film?

b) Kim: Usually ten weeks, except for *Sisters in Law* which was 12 weeks because we had to get the result of the last court case. And usually I know when we have filmed the last scene. In *Sisters in Law*, the last thing we filmed actually was the last scene, the scene in the university, I knew that was the end, and that was completely Vera's idea. And in *Rough Aunties* when Mildred moved into her new house I knew that was the end, and with *Runaway*, Parissa became quite a big character, so her leaving seemed to be quite a natural end. She left to go back to her family. And in *The Day I Will Never Forget*, the court case is so clearly the end, they had won their court case, there couldn't be another end.

20. a) Shannon: Did the production phase meet your initial expectations? If not, in what ways was it different?

b) Kim: It did, yes, I knew Mildred would be fabulous, and she was even more fabulous than I imagined. All my expectations of her, and Jackie and Sdudla and Thuli and Eureka, I couldn't have imagined how wonderful they were, so everything I had hoped for happened in front of my eyes really.

21.a) Shannon: What would you say the most difficult part of making this film was for you? How do you manage to film in such difficult situations, such as the funeral? Did you ever have to face conflict with people who didn't want to be filmed, such as the perpetrators of violence? Were you ever afraid during this shoot?

b) Kim: I didn't find filming the funeral difficult because it was like a formal event but I found the death of Shubaba heart-wrenching, really heart-wrenching. Your thinking, this is my friend and her child has died and it's probably the worst thing that will happen in her life, and I can't let myself feel what it means I have to film it, I have to be thinking about filming it. And that feels very dislocated. And in the same way in *The Day I Will Never Forget* filming the circumcision, even though I knew we had to film, and a lot of Africa film-makers have used that scene in their films again FGM, I knew it was a necessary scene to film, and I knew it wasn't going to make any difference whether we filmed it or not whether it happened or not, it was going to happen, and if we stopped it, it would have happened when we left. That's what Fardohsa told me she said if we stop this after we leave they still do it and they'll do it the more extreme way, so the kindest thing we can do is just to be there. And I needed this community to keep trusting me I can't course a fuss, you know, she said trust me and just film the best you can. But even when you know that in your mind its necessary it feels difficult filming it and you do feel like a monster. I think those are the two most difficult scenes I've ever had to film in my life. And there obviously were scary times, like when we were in the townships and you always aware in Durban that there's violence around the corner, and that you are always at risk

wherever you are. But it would have felt weird to worry about our own safety when everyone else is there too, and they live with it all their lives and we are just there for 3 months, I would never have allowed myself to feel that scared because it would have felt like such a selfish, self-regarding emotion.

22. a) Shannon: I understand this section of the film must have been quite painful for you, but please may I ask, why did you choose to place so much focus on the funeral in *Rough Aunties*? Did you feel this was important in terms of the structure of the film?

b) Kim: I think the funeral has a real point in the film because it's when the whole community comes together, and I love the bit before the funeral when the policeman breaks down and says we can't really say anything, and you realise these police love these women and children, and then you see the whole community comes together and you see Jackie is a spokesperson for them, so there is a lot of things you can learn through them in the funeral, but also you learn this incredible resilience that people have. I love the way they dealt with the funeral. The funerals in England are just so miserable, and hymns are so dreary, and I loved the way the funeral started off slowly and then they started to dance, and this life that comes back, and I loved the fact that straight after the funeral Sdudla's thinking about work the next day, there's lots of things going on in that funeral, like the way Sdudla recovers so quickly, and recovers by thinking of other people, and the way that Jackie and Eureka and everyone is there for her and the way the community has this energy, so I think imbibing a lot through watching it about what their lives are like. Funerals are quite regular occurrences you get the feeling that there are a lot of funerals into that community, lots of people get shot and killed, there had already been 7 children killed trying to cross that river, the way they deal with tragedy as part of everyday life.

## Post-production

23. a) Shannon: Could you perhaps explain your approach to the editing process? How do you use this process to create structure and conflict, and the overall point of view of the film?

b) Kim: Well usually I don't have to worry about structure; it's very clear what the structure is because you can't put them out of chronology. So for example you can't have Shubaba dieing before he died in the film, because it would just feel weird, and you know that the 2 deaths are very close together because Eureka says "too many deaths in one week" and Mildred is going to leave her husband in the end, there is a logic to it, scenes demand to be in a certain place. What we usually do in all of the films like *Sisters in Law* and *Divorce Iranian Style*, you have a scene in the front that kind of sets up the film. So for example in *Sisters in Law* you have a woman from the village whose husband has kidnapped her daughter and how they were married in the village way and how Vera stands up and says "you people in the village... the way you treat

women” so it’s very clear in that first scene that the film is about a battle between modernity and tradition. And it’s in every single film. In *Divorce Iranian Style* you have the woman, whose the most traditional of all of them, whose not been answering the phone for 30 years and whose had a hellish 30 years of marriage and then after her you get the more modern women. So you have the older school women in the beginning, the village women in the beginning of *Sisters in Law*, then after that you have the pioneers, the girl of 6 who dared to run away from her aunt, you have the girl of 12 who dared to stand up to her rapist, so you have the hope. The same in *The Day I Will Never Forget*, you have the past in the beginning, the circumciser, and you have all of that information about what it is, and then you have the girls fighting back, and it all falls of Fouzia, that was the key, when she speaks up, then after that you have the girls rebellion. I know very clearly when I’m making the films what the structure is; otherwise it would be too difficult to make the film, I have to think about what the structure is when I’m making it. The same with *Runaway*, you couldn’t put the girls in the wrong order because they would be in the background, they would be there.

24. a) Shannon: How do you decide on “the angle” of each film? Would you rather say that structure emerges from the material you have filmed or that it must be imposed by the filmmaker? Where would you say your filmmaking fits on the event-to-structure spectrum?

b) Kim: I think that’s the same question in a different way, I think the material demands to be in a certain order. Because they’re not set up films, because there’s a definite chronology, you usually have to stick to the chronology. Apart from having a scene in the front which, like in *Runaway* we’ve a got a little scene in the front with the women arriving and Moneray, who was actually the first person who came, and you can see she’s more like an ordinary girl she wants to wear her clothes as if she wants a bit of freedom, and she’s the more normal sort of girl, that we could relate to, and she had to be in the front, but she was the first girl anyway. You see, you can’t muck around with the structure too much.

25. a) Shannon: It sounds as if then, that the material dictates the structure?

b) Kim: Well it’s mainly that but also I have a very clear idea about what the films about. You can’t film everything, you have to very clear. So, I knew it was Mildred, and I though Jackie, so I’ll follow them and then I follow one another person, which was Thuli, so I though I follow 3 main characters, I follow their work I follow their lives. You can’t film all the Rough Aunties, there would be bits missing, you know you’ll be with one and something else will be happening with one of the others, so you have to take turns with a few of them.

### **Rough Aunties: Post-Production**

26. a) Shannon: How do you feel *Rough Aunties* fits into your work?

b) Kim: I don't know really. I suppose it's like what people feel like when they have lots of kids, you know, I love it and I love them and I feel very grateful to them for letting us in.

27. a) Shannon: How closely did you oversee the editing of *Rough Aunties*? Did the final product fit into the idea you had for it in the beginning or do you feel it took on a life of its own?

b) Kim: I'm always there every day all the time, and I usually work with somebody I'm very close to and I respect what they do, so I never argue with him. I might sometimes just suggest something very gently but on the whole I trust what Ollie does. I love watching it come together. When you see it as a film in the cutting room, you see it as a film, when you see it when you're filming it you're seeing as a person, so that's a big difference. So it's very different seeing it on the screen, an example of that is I remember seeing the scene with Sdudla and the baby, she said a woman had abandoned her baby, and I remember walking around in the burning hot sun for about 3 hours with Sdudla and she was asking people about the baby had they seen the baby, and in my mind I imagined it as quite a long scene in the front looking for the baby, and I remember Ollie just showed a shot of the road, and bang, into the house and I went "Oh! I thought there would be a little bit more of walking to the house..." and that's because it was so painful to shoot, it was such an ordeal and Ollie said "Well, you know Kim, the audience aren't really interested in you walking to the house" and I thought, Oh God yes of course they're not. So that's what so nice about having an editor, they're seeing it as a film.

28. a) Shannon: Do you have any mottos or other pieces of advice that you draw on when producing documentary?

b) Kim: No, I don't really give advice, we all do it differently, don't we? And I don't like to give advice because you might give the wrong advice. Every film there has to be a different way of doing it.

### **THERORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF FILM: OBSERVATION AND NARRATIVE STRUCTURE:**

29. a) Shannon: Your films are often regarded as observational. How and why, would you say, you use the observational form?

b) Kim: I think we make the films that really reflect the people we are, I think it's as simple as that. I'm not somebody who feels comfortable asking people to do things or organizing people or breaking into their lives and changing what they would do normally. So it's a type of filmmaking that satisfies me and makes me feel comfortable. But there's another layers to that, I think, for me, I get better scenes because people aren't doing it for me they're doing it for themselves, and I think you get a more interesting film like that.

30. a) Shannon: In your experiences with filming in an observational way, what would you say the strengths and limitations of this type of film are?

b) Kim: I think the strength is that you are capturing action that feels like it's happening in front of your eyes, so it feels as if you are actually there and the fiction I like is the films that you feel that same thing. I think sometimes a limitation is that you can't get a real real real scene that you can get in fiction, for example you can't get the whispered conversations at night and when people are in bed together or have those little conversations, you can't be there all the time you will miss those things. But that's what fiction can do. At the same time I think a lot of fiction isn't as powerful as documentary because documentary can give you things that you can't imagine, I could never have imagined a Mildred or a Parrissa in *Divorce Iranian Style*, I would never have though little Fouzia could have written a poem like that In *The Day I Will Never Forget*, each film has people in them that I could never have dreamt up, I could never have scripted. They are always more amazing, braver, more extraordinary and more... strange than I could have imagined, in a good way. [Mentions Fouzia as an example as a girl wanting to save her sister in *The Day I Will Never Forget*], if that had been a fiction film people would say "that's a bit far-fetched, no 8 year old girl can is like that" but it's so obviously true, and it's so obviously happening, and she so obviously wrote that poem that nobody can dispute it I suppose that why I like making documentary more than fiction.

31. a) Shannon: What do you think the relationship is between an observational documentary and reality?

b) Kim: Um... I think in each scene, people will go in and out of being aware of the camera, so in a whole scene people have completely forgotten you are there. An example of that is the divorce scene in *Sisters in Law* when Amina goes to court get her divorce, and the men are really rude to her, and said terrible things to her, they said "we'll send you back to your husband and he'll split you open" and they were obviously unaware that we were filming at that point, they would never have spoken like that if they knew it would be on record. Then when the drama has finished and she wins her case then they think, Oh, we better put a good front on and be a friend to her, so then they say "This is what Cameroon want, we want our women to be happy" so they do a bit of PR at the end, as if this is what they wanted all along. So you can see in scenes when people are being truthful and when they're not and I find that really interesting, and you can see it in *Divorce* when Jugular is whispering to us, and she giving us a little insight into what's really going on, and the theatre is on the court, the theatre is being played out, but we are seeing the truth of it, she's breaking [the conventions] of observational films, people say you're not supposed to speak to people that are filming you, but I love the fact that she talks to us, and I love the fact you can see two scenes at once. With all of these things you can break the rules as much as you want. You don't have to do it purely observational.

32. a) Shannon: What would you most like other documentarians to learn from your films and methods, and how would you like to see the documentary develop



b) Kim: I don't have a clue, Shannon. I would like documentaries to be more entertaining, I see a lot of documentaries that are a bit dull and have a lot of interviews in, less interviews and more action I suppose.

### **FILM AS SOCIAL ACTION:**

33. a) Shannon: How do you think documentary can contribute to positive social change? Which of your films do you think have had the most impact, and why?

b) Kim: I think we can't imagine or hope what a film can do; we just have to trust that others will take them and use them. I know *The Day I Will Never Forget* has been used a lot by all sorts of people and organisations as a tool against FGM and I know there's a great change now in society where people start to really criticise FGM and not see it as a cultural thing that they don't dare criticise. *Rough Aunties*, I know Teddy [Leifer] the producer just said we just sent them about 20 000 pounds, so we've raised a lot of money through *Rough Aunties* for them which I'm really thrilled about, not many of the films have done that. *Divorce Iranian Style* was very influential in Iran, I know that because people have told me that people download it, and but the DVD's and take them to Iran and give them to their friends. I know DVDs have gone all over, and most I speak say they have seen the film, so that seems to have been influential, and I know it's been a big influence on the film *A Separation*, I know he was very influenced by that film, I know it was a spark that helped him decide to make the film, a fiction film which has reached a much bigger audience than *Divorce Iranian Style*, but I think we can't go making films thinking they're going to change something, we just have to make the best films we can and hope that they will. You never know how a film will work anyway, and how people will use them and how it will change things. None of us really know how it will work do we.

34. a) Shannon: When I met Jackie, she told me the film had been banned in South Africa because of the lack of blurring of the faces, did that sadden you?

b) Kim: I'm sure they'll show it one day, because I think that Jackie and the women are so clever, they say the girls shouldn't be ashamed they're not the one who should be, it's the perpetrators should be the ones who should be ashamed. And by not showing the film the girls are just continuing this ridiculous thing of somehow its humiliating to show the girls faces, and I know Pinkie, the first girl in the film whose neighbour raped her, the whole community knew she had been raped, because she's taking him to court, and she's was proud of being in the film. That's what the Rough Aunties say Bobbie Bear says we are proud of you, take the guy to court we will change things, and its only when we lose this ridiculous thing that somehow the person that's been raped is shamed that we'll get something to change, in South Africa, in UK, in Europe, all over, we have to stop that sort of thinking , and I know we had a screening at a Film Festival, I think it was in Johannesburg, and after the screening a man stood up and said, "I think it's outrageous that you show the girls faces and rape is a shameful thing!" and women started standing up all over the theatre saying I've been raped, I've been raped, it was like Spartacus, they were coming forward and talking to the Rough Aunties afterwards, it was a

really big deal and it was a wonderful screening and experience. These women felt if those girls can do it so can we, we will speak out, so I think they're wrong, I think it's wrong to ban it and I think it's stupid, and I think one day it will be shown in South Africa we just have to be patient.

35. a) Shannon: Mildred also said that she didn't allow you to come into the room when she was counselling a child, how did manage to get those scenes?

b) Kim: With Mildred and Thuli, we said, if you don't want us in the room we'll go, and in the beginning I remember Thuli said this girl isn't talking I think it's because you are in the room, so we went out and when we were out she didn't talk either, so we have Pinkie being counselled in the beginning, and none of the kids minded they were proud to be in the film, and we only filmed the kids that were proud to be in the film and the kids that came forward to Bobbie Bear and said we want to take our rapists to court were the ones that were proud, so we never had any problem with that.

36. a) Shannon: There have been many descriptions of your work being feminist. Would you be happy to call yourself a feminist? Do you think documentary film has the potential to contribute to the feminist agenda and would you say that your films contribute to the feminist agenda?

b) Kim: Yes of course I'm going to be, when you go somewhere like Iran or when you witness FGM it would be weird if you weren't a feminist you know, it's sort of weird when you realise what happens to women [explains FGM compared with male circumcisions] how would you go into these lives and see what happens to girls and women and not call yourself a feminist? So of course yes, I am a feminist. But at the same time people use the word and they use it weird ways, I'm reluctant to use labels because the word means different things to different people, but for me being a feminist just means women should have as much rights and dignity as men, and should be valued as much as men, it's so straight forward and that's what it means, and you are either a feminist and you believe that or you think women are inferior, so why would I think that you and I would be inferior? It's just stupid.

37. a) Shannon: Would you say that *Rough Aunties* has a feminist perspective? Can you perhaps explain your view, and whether this was your intention from the start?

b) Kim: Well you can't make a film about those women and not be a feminist, they are so amazing, and when you see what they are doing and how strong they are, and even making a film with women in the centre, there are so few films with women at the centre, that alone makes it feminist because we are used to men being in the centre of films and being the heroes, we are so used it that when we see women in the centre we think it's strange, but actually its strange that there are so few films with women in the centre. So yeah, it is a feminist film. It's a love letter to Mildred and Thuli really.

38. a) Shannon: Do you have any desires for documentary's development for the future, in terms of social change?

b) Kim: I think it's part of loads of things, part of book, articles, poems, films, docs, fiction, they are all part of the same thing they are all part of opening little windows in our worlds. Did you ever watch a film called *Lives of Others*, a German film about the Nazi's? That film made a big impact on me because it's about a guy who's a Nazi spy, and its set in East Germany during the war, and it's a man spying on a family to expose them, and it's through spying on the family that he falls in love with the family and it changes his life and he becomes a different person, and I suppose that what I loved about that film, it's a metaphor for things we experience changing us fundamentally, and I just wish my dad could have had that experience, somehow, I mean, it probably wouldn't have worked on him he was too far gone, but maybe he could have watched a film about black people and fallen in love with just one of them and just see that these images that he had of them were all based on fear, and his own self-hate, because he couldn't see people different to him as being as valuable as him, and that's what made his own life so limited and nasty and him into such a nasty person, he could have been a much happier person if he had opened up, and that's what *Lives of Others* is saying, that man learnt humanity through watching other people and letting himself like them.

39. a) Shannon: What advice would you give those who hope to give voice to those ignored by society?

b) Kim: (Laughing) I don't know, that a difficult one... I can't answer that one I really don't know.

40. a) Shannon: Is there any further commentary that you would like to add about anything discussed above?

b) Kim: No, I've enjoyed this actually it's been great. It's been lovely to get to know you a bit.

## Appendix 3

### Email Correspondence with Kim Longinotto and Women Make Movies

On 22 Jun 2011, Shan Milojkovic wrote to: [jwhang@wmm.com](mailto:jwhang@wmm.com) (Women Make Movies):

To whom it may concern,

I am a documentary student in South Africa, and am currently doing my Masters degree- focusing on the works of Kim Longinotto. I was wondering if there is any way I might be able to contact her, or get some of her films which I have not been able to buy?

If you can provide me with any help I would be most grateful.

Regards  
Shannon Milojkovic

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On 22 Jun 2011, Kim Longinotto wrote to [bugsy\\_srm@hotmail.com](mailto:bugsy_srm@hotmail.com) (Shannon Milojkovic):

Dear Shannon

Women Make Movies passed your email on to me - I don't know where about in South Africa you are but if you're in Durban or Cape Town you may be able to borrow the DVDs from the film festivals - They should still have copies of several of my films

Good luck!

very best wishes  
kim

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On 22 Jun 2011, Shan Milojkovic wrote to [kimlonginotto@hotmail.com](mailto:kimlonginotto@hotmail.com) (Kim Longinotto):

Dear Kim,

Thank you very much for your message. Of course, I am a huge fan of your work and look very forward to studying it. I'm particularly interested in structure at the moment, since I have only been taught about narrative structure thus far. I think I will learn lots from your film, I cant wait.

I did contact DIFF, but they said they did not have the right to do that, but I will try again. I am quite close to Durban, so that will work perfectly.

Thank you once again, I really appreciate your interest and help.

Regards  
Shannon

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**On 22 Jun 2011, Kim Longinotto wrote:**

Dear Shannon

I made Rough Aunties at the Bobbi Bear centre in Durban they are wonderful people I'm sure they would lend you a DVD of the film if you haven't seen it You could contact Eureka there her email is eurekabb@lantic.net

bye for now  
kim

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**On 24 Jun 2011, Kim Longinotto wrote:**

Dear Shannon - just a thought - If you did go to meet the Bobbi Bear team in durban - you could talk to Mildred who is the main character in the film She'd be able to tell you so much about how we worked together, what it felt like being filmed, how we organized the day to day filming etc. It would give a completely different angle to your writing i'd also love to know what it felt like seeing herself in the film Something I never could ask her!

They are all also very interesting people I envy you meeting them!

k

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**On 26 Jun 2011, Shan Milojkovic wrote to :**

Hello Kim,

Thank you again for your help! I contacted Eureka and will collect the film on Wednesday. I am really looking forward to it. I will try my best to meet Mildred and have an interview with her, I think it would be a privilege, as well as an interesting conversation. I will definitely keep you posted in that regard.

I cannot wait to meet them.

Thank you again!

Shan

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**On 26 Jun 2011, Kim Longinotto wrote:**

Wow, you're so lucky, I'm jealous! Do let me know when you have time any news. Good luck with all your work

Kim

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**On 30 Jun 2011, Shan Milojkovic wrote:**

Hello Kim!

I went to Bobbi Bear on Wednesday and got the film! I wish I had more time there, it was chaos when I arrived, but I'm setting up a meeting with them in the next few weeks to find out how the filming process was for them.

As for the film. Wow, I was so incredibly moved. They are amazing women! I can see how it has won so many awards, and I think it deserves so many more. I hope I can tell stories like that one day. It was an amazing feeling watching people I had just met, and I hope I can get involved in their project one day. It is a great film, but this I'm sure you know. Definitely one of my favourite. Thank you for making it!

I will let you know about the upcoming interview. Thank you again!

Shan

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**On 30 Jun 2011, Kim Longinotto wrote:**

It must have been very strange meeting them all & then watching them in the film! I love Mildred

Kim

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**On 3 May 2012, Shan Milojkovic wrote:**

Hello Kim!

I hope you are well.

I'm sorry I have not been able to deliver yet in terms of my interview with Mildred, but I definitely intend to do it soon, thank you for being patient. If you have particular questions you wish to ask please send them through so I can include them. I get the impression they are extremely busy, but as soon as I can I will organise the interview.

After a few delays, the masters is back on track. I have a big favour to ask, and I would be extremely grateful if you would consider it. I was wondering if you would kindly consider partaking in an emailed interview? I have some questions regarding how you produce such powerful films, and I think it would give great support to my thesis.

Thank you for all your time and help thus far I really look forward to your response.

Regards,

Shannon

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**On 3 May 2012, Kim Longinotto wrote:**

Dear Shannon

It would be great if you could talk to Mildred  
She has now left Bobbi Bear and is running an NGO for orphaned children

Her mobile phone number is 00278 3529 6720

I'd be happy to do an emailed interview Or we could talk on Skype if you prefer

my Skype address is kimlonginotto1

very best wishes

kim

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**On 7 May 2012, Shan Milojkovic wrote:**

Thank you so much, Kim, that is fantastic.

If you don't mind, I think an emailed interview would be better since the internet connection here leaves much to be desired. I really appreciate it, thank you.

I cannot wait to meet with Mildred, I will certainly keep you updated as soon as I get myself organised. It will also be easier to contact her directly as I think Eureka is very busy at Bobbi Bear.

Thank you once again, my supervisor is very excited about this too.

Regards,

Shannon

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**On 7 Dec 2012, Shan Milojkovic wrote:**

Hi Kim!

I thought I would fill you in on my delightful meeting with Mildred. Going to Bobby Bear was like stepping to a scene of Rough Aunties, it was wonderful, I felt like I already knew everyone there. Of course Mildred gave me a huge hug on arrival, being in her presence was just so peaceful. In meeting her I did my best to quiz her regarding some of your questions. I asked her what it was like to be in a film, to be filmed and then to see herself on screen. She said, the camera for her wasn't a problem, she said she felt very comfortable since she was a spokesperson for the media already. She said it did become hard when the victim was in front of the camera too, but the children didn't act, it was genuine pain, and they were so brave. She said when she saw herself in the film for the first time, she felt like, ya, that is how it is here, but she said what struck her was that in amongst the business of the day, they do great work, and touch lives. She doesn't always realise this because each day is busy and they are all going about getting things done, but watching Rough Aunties, she felt proud of herself, and proud of the good work she was doing, it was like she could see it from an outsiders perspective.

I'm sure you already know she is very fond of you, she said how you were like a best friend, and that working with you was great, you made them feel comfortable from the start, and followed them into every aspect of life at Bobby Bear. She kept saying also how the film was so true to real life, the kids couldn't act, they were being real, the work was real, and it was a true reflection of their lives. It sounds as if she is quite proud with the final product too, I said I felt like I was meeting and talking to celebrities!

I explained how I came to be in contact with her, and she laughed and with a huge smile said "you tell Kim, if she doesn't reply to me, I'll kill her...she must please reply to my message"

Bobby Bear looks very good at the moment, I think they have had some renovations because everything is very smart. It was lovely to see.

Mildred and I planned to have the interview next year, but from now on we will keep in contact. I hope these short answers have helped you in some way, It was a very short meeting with her, but it seemed like Mildred had some everyday chaos to attend to. Thank you so much again for this opportunity, I can't wait to learn more about the film and Mildred!

Regards,

Shan

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**On 7 Dec 2012, Kim Longinotto wrote:**

What a lovely, lovely email, dear Shan

I shall really treasure it

Thanks so much for taking the time and trouble to write to me

you've cheered me enormously

love

kim x

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**On 3 Jun 2013, at 07:19, Shan Milojkovic wrote:**

Dear Kim,

Finally I can present you with the consent form and this research can begin!

When you have signed it, please may you fax it through to (027)865526749. I think it will be fine if you just fax through the signed pages.

Thank you so much.

Kind regards,

Shannon

<Consent form KIM.docx>

**On 3 Jun 2013, Kim Longinotto wrote:**

Dear Shannon

Thanks for your email - it was great to hear from you and about your filmmaking experiences

I just looked at the questions - I started and then discovered that there's really a lot of them & some of them are quite big questions

I'm wondering if it wouldn't be better to do them on Skype which you could record - then you could use the bits you want -

my Skype address is kimlonginotto1

very best wishes

kim

---

**On 3 Jun 2013, Shan Milojkovic wrote:**

Dear Kim,

Thank you for such a speedy response.

It would be a good idea to use Skype, the only problem is where I am in South Africa has a terrible reception, and I don't really trust that the interview would run smoothly without it cutting us off every so often.

What would you prefer; if you like I can try find a better location for a Skype interview, although I must say this might not be guaranteed as I've had so much trouble with Skype in the past, but I can certainly try, or I can offer you more time to answer the questions by writing out the answers.

Let me know what you think and I will get to work to see what I can do.

Kind regards,

Shannon

**On 25 Jul 2013, at 12:21, Shan Milojkovic wrote:**

Hello Kim!

I hope you are well! I'm sure you are busy at the moment, and I'm sorry to bother you if this is an inconvenient time, but I just wanted to let you know that we are able to conduct the interview via Skype, during a weekend or evening as I will be using an office. We can do this any time you are free, and if you are busy at the moment that is no problem, perhaps you can just let me know in advance when a good time will be for you.

I have invited you on Skype and emailed earlier, but gathered you were tied up, but thank you so much, I'm sure you will be very happy when this is done so that I can get out of your hair, but you have been so helpful, you certainly deserve some peace.

Kind regards

Shannon

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**On 25 Jul 2013, Kim Longinotto wrote:**

Dear Shannon

Yes, it would be fine to talk on Skype - it's no trouble at all

I'm around all weekend so we can fix up a time that's good for you

my Skype is kimlonginotto1

best wishes

kim

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**On 25 Jul 2013, Shan Milojkovic wrote:**

That is great news, thank you!

Ok, shall we say Saturday evening at 6 pm (SA time) so I'm assuming that would be 5 pm your time? Perhaps you can also fax the consent form at the same time? Does this suite you? And of course if you would like to run through the questions beforehand at least you already have a copy, that would not be a problem at all, unprepared or prepared is great either way. It will also be semi-structured and more like a conversation which is at least more comfortable.

Very excited, thank you!

Shannon

---

**On 25 Jul, 2013, Kim Longinotto wrote:**

ok 5pm Saturday is fine

I don't need to see anything at all before

see you then

k

---

**On 12 Aug 2013, at 13:30, Shan Milojkovic wrote:**

Hello Kim!

I hope you are well! It has been so wonderful to tell people of our insightful chat! It is one that I will treasure beyond my research and learn from. I'm sorry to hound you again so soon after the interview, but I was wondering if you had managed to send the consent form through yet, or if you are having trouble as I haven't received it yet.

Also, I know my question time is over, but I just wanted to ask in case you had a moment to help me: In presenting my research thus far someone raised the point of ethics. They asked if there was not some law preventing the screening of the 'perps' without them actually being proven guilty? And how does one get consent from them? She also spoke about the ethics of showing the children- I said this is a time we are trying to fight the silence and shame around rape, therefore the faces should be seen with the children consent, but then she said is it really informed consent if they are children, and is it not rather an issue of them being paraded as victims in the film?

I understand a bit more of your intentions since our interview, and these questions are cynical, so I hope I have not insulted you by asking this, but she disturbed me with these issues and actually, I felt a little insulted on behalf of the film and its intentions and nature, as well as Bobbi Bear and the girls. Are you able to comment on this at all?

I hope this is not a burden to you.

Thank you so much once again.

Shan

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**On 12 Aug 2013, Kim Longinotto wrote:**

sorry, Shan, I completely forgot about the consent form Can you send it to me again I can also put a thing at the bottom of this which is all people normally ask for

I don't agree at all with the "paraded as victims" They're not "paraded" they speak up for themselves with dignity and grace It feels a very patronizing comment to me as if the children don't exist in their own right, as if they have to remain invisible as "victims" rather than proud survivors Mildred was very keen to say in the film that she's experienced rape herself - she'd be very annoyed by these comments - as if she has to hide away and keep silent

We could only portray the perpetrators as they were convicted, their photos appeared in the newspapers also when they were convicted

bye for now

kim

I agree to Shannon using my interview

best wishes, kim

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**On 13 Aug 2013, Shan Milojkovic wrote:**

Thank you so much for your comments Kim, I agree with you and will have happy to mention that in my thesis.

I hope you were not offended; these comments come from someone who is not passionate about documentary or, quite likely, the difficulties of humanity, and is probably more likely to be critical for the sake of it in a presentation environment. Saying that, I am glad I brought this to you because of the clarity of your points, and given the opportunity again, I will certainly put such critics straight. It is annoying!

Thank you once again for your insight and guidance.

All the best,

Shan

---

**On 13 Aug 2013, Kim Longinotto wrote:**

don't worry at all  
I wasn't offended , just a bit irritated!

love

kim x

---

**On 4 Sep 2013, Shan Milojkovic wrote:**

Hi Kim :)

Thank you so much, I have received the consent form so something must have worked, I'm sorry you had trouble, but thank you again for all your efforts :)

All the very best, and as always, I'm looking forward to your future work!

This has been an absolute privilege, and I will certainly keep in touch.

love Shan

---

**On 4 Sep 2013, Kim Longinotto wrote:**

hope it all goes well

k x

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**On 12 June 2014, Shan Milojkovic wrote:**

Hi Kim!

I hope you are well! I'm happy to inform you this thesis is nearly over, I'll be submitting the first week in July. I would really like to send you a copy too, perhaps when I get it back in September, as a thank you for your generosity with communication over the years.

I have been using a wonderful article by Kira Cochrane from The Guardian for your biography as part of the intro, but there are a few questions I would like to run by you for more of the formal aspects.



- 1) Did you get your A-levels as the crammer where you met Nick Broomfield? If not, how did you finish school? From what I've read I understand this was a troublesome and painful time for you, so I hope you don't mind me asking these questions.
- 2) Did you receive a degree at Essex before you went to study film?
- 3) Were you and Dorothea Gazidis students when you made *Pride of Place*?

Thank you so much once again, I will treasure working with you through this investigation, it has been a once in a lifetime experience.

All the best,

Shan

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**On 12 June 2014, Kim Longinotto wrote:**

- 1) Did you get your A-levels as the crammer where you met Nick Broomfield? If not, how did you finish school? From what I've read I understand this was a troublesome and painful time for you, so I hope you don't mind me asking these questions.

I got some A levels at the crammer  
then I went to Paris as an au pair & got French A level

- 2) Did you receive a degree at Essex before you went to study film?

yes I got a 2 1

- 3) Were you and Dorothea Gazidis students when you made *Pride of Place*?

yes she was in the same year as me

Good luck with everything, dear Shan

kim xxx

## Appendix 4

### Signed Consent Forms.



**Dear Ms. Kim Longinotto,**

I am writing this letter as an informed consent form, in order to invite you to be a participant in the research required to obtain my Master of Arts degree, from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. As this research is centered on your work, it would be a privilege, and indeed a necessity, to have your answers forms the findings to this project.

The title of the project is:

**Observation, Structure and Narrative: the documentary films of Kim Longinotto.**

The project aims at defining the observational mode of documentary, and exploring different theories regarding it. It will also investigate how you, Ms. Longinotto, use the observational form, and how, through this method, structure and conflict is created. The structure and conflict will be observed in 5 of your films; however, most of the focus will be on *Rough Aunties*, as a contextualized case study will be done on this film. I also hope to discover how you use mise-en-scene to contribute to structure and conflict, as well as look at the discourses present in the selected films. Finally, I hope to be able to note what other documentarians can learn from you, and your particular methods of representation.

You were identified as a participant as you are the film maker of the films I, the researcher, have great interest in. From watching these films I have developed questions I hope to answer in my thesis, and having the creator of these films aid this process is far more likely to contribute to more accurate findings than researching only through observation and analysis. It would be a great advantage to understand how and why your work was produced in a particular way, to understand your intentions, and difficulties of filming and directing.

What will be required of you is an emailed interview, which will obviously be recorded through written text that may take you up to an hour and a half to answer. However, as this will be an emailed interview, you will have time, about 3 weeks, to consider the questions and answer them at your leisure. Once the data has been analyzed and the thesis is complete, the email will be deleted, however, your answers will be stated in the final thesis. Unfortunately, unlike most participants, confidentiality of your identity cannot be given as your identity as the film maker is hugely important as part of this research and the answers you provide will only make sense in relation to who you are.

By choosing not to participate, the research will be at a great disadvantage; however, of course, you are able to withdraw from participating at any stage and for any reason.

I sincerely hope that you will be able to help me with my research; I look forward to learning more about you and your films. It is very kind of you to give up your time to share some knowledge about documentary film, and this is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Shannon Milojkovic

*Names of Investigators:*

**Name:** Shannon Rae Milojkovic (BA Honours)

**Cell:** +27835969636

**Email:** [bugsy\\_srm@hotmail.com](mailto:bugsy_srm@hotmail.com)

**Postal:** 15 Leighton Street

Pietermaritzburg

3201

South Africa

*Supervisors:*

**Name:** Prof. Anton van der Hoven

**Tel:** 033 260 5304

**Email:** vdHoven@ukzn.ac.za

**Name:** Subeshini Moodley (PhD)

**Tel:** 033 260 5305

**Email:** moodleys64@ukzn.ac.za

*Independent Person:*

**Name:** James Theil

**Cell:** +27836096778

**Tell:** 033 345 7729

**Email:** jtheil644@gmail.com

**If you wish to obtain information on your rights as a participant, please contact Ms Phumelele Ximba, Research Office, UKZN, on 031 360 3587.**

DECLARATION

Kim Longinotto.....(full names of participant)

hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT,

Kim Longinotto

DATE

27th August 2013

**NOTE: Potential subjects should be given time to read, understand and question the information given before giving consent. This should include time out of the presence of the investigator and time to consult friends and/or family.**



**Dear Mildred,**

I am writing this letter as an informed consent form, in order to invite you to be a participant in the research required to obtain my Master of Arts degree, from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. Part of this research is a study of a film, *Rough Aunties*, which you are in, so it would be a privilege to have your answers to some of my questions, and provide some insight into what it is like being part of a documentary.

The title of the project is:

**Observation, Structure and Narrative: the documentary films of Kim Longinotto.**

The project aims at defining the observational mode of documentary, and exploring different theories regarding it. It will also investigate how Ms. Longinotto uses the observational form, and how, through this method, structure and conflict is created. The structure and conflict will be observed in 7 of her films; however, most of the focus will be on *Rough Aunties*, as a contextualized case study will be done on this film. I also hope to discover how Kim Longinotto uses mise-en-scene (which accounts for everything in front of the camera) to contribute to structure and conflict, as well as look at the discourses present in the selected films. Finally, I hope to be able to note what other documentarians can learn from her, and her particular methods of representation.

Mildred, you were identified as a participant as you are a main character in one of my favourite films, done in our own country. From watching this film about Bobbi Bear, I have many questions, some I cannot answer just by watching the film and analyzing it, therefore having your input and sharing your experience with me will help me greatly in answering the questions

in my project. It would be a great advantage to understand how you felt about *Rough Aunties*, and being part of Ms. Longinotto's film.

What will be required of you is an interview, which will be recorded, and may take about 1 hour. Although there will be set questions, this will be a relatively informal interview, so diversion from the set of questions is possible and more comfortable. Once the data has been analyzed and the thesis is complete, the recorded interview will be deleted, however, your answers will be stated in the final thesis. Unfortunately, unlike most participants, confidentiality of your identity cannot be given as your identity as one of the key characters in *Rough Aunties* is hugely important as part of this research and the answers you provide will only make sense because of who you are.

By choosing not to participate, the research will be at a great disadvantage; however, of course, you are able to withdraw from participating at any stage and for any reason. This is completely your choice.

I sincerely hope that you will be able to help me with my research; I look forward to learning more about you and what it was like to work with Kim Longinotto. It is very kind of you to give up your time to share your experience, and this is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Shannon Milojkovic

*Names of Investigators:*

**Name:** Shannon Rae Milojkovic (BA Honours)

**Cell:** +27835969636

**Email:** [bugsy\\_srm@hotmail.com](mailto:bugsy_srm@hotmail.com)

**Postal:** 15 Leighton Street

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3201

South Africa

*Supervisors:*

**Name:** Prof. Anton van der Hoven

**Tel:** 033 260 5304

**Email:** vdHoven@ukzn.ac.za

**Name:** Subeshini Moodley (PhD)

**Tel:** 033 260 5305

**Email:** moodleys64@ukzn.ac.za

*Independent Person:*

**Name:** James Theil

**Cell:** +27836096778

**Tell:** 033 345 7729

**Email:** jtheil644@gmail.com

**If you wish to obtain information on your rights as a participant, please contact Ms Phumelele Ximba, Research Office, UKZN, on 031 360 3587.**



DECLARATION

I, GIBONISILE MUDROO NGWOSO (full names of participant)

hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT



DATE

05/07/18

**NOTE: Potential subjects should be given time to read, understand and question the information given before giving consent. This should include time out of the presence of the investigator and time to consult friends and/or family.**