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Odd Number – Dissertation Paper

A reflective essay on the filmmaker, Marius van Straaten's practise in *Odd Number*, a documentary about Rashaad Adendorf, with a focus on representation.

by

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DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a reflective essay supporting the documentary film *Odd Number* and aims to clarify and create more depth for the reader around the film's successes and failures in representing Rashaad Adendorf. Rashaad was formerly an assassin for a feared gang but is now a redeemed family man. His life is explored through interviews with him, his victims, his family and his enemies. Re-enactments of his most significant life changing events are used to inform the audience. A film representing Rashaad's life inevitably raises questions around representation and the filmmaker's relationship with Rashaad. The essay concludes that a weakness of *Odd Number* is its lack of self-reflexivity and lack of showing the filmmaker's process and bias. The paper identifies that the key strength of the film is the relationship and friendship between Rashaad and the filmmaker and how that influences the process of making the film. The paper concludes that through *Odd Number*, Rashaad has claimed agency, not only to rebuild or redeem his own life, but to work to improve the lot of the community. The paper argues that this is the best possible legacy *Odd Number* could leave. The film and reflective essay demonstrate that the relationship with the subject is of primary importance and that focussing on the process rather than the outcome can result in a more honest, albeit subjective portrayal of a subject from a different race, class and background to the filmmaker. Ideally the paper should be read after having watched, the documentary *Odd Number*. It is important to note that the author of this paper is also the director of *Odd Number*. This paper is therefore not an analysis of somebody else's work, but a set of reflections by the director on his own work. The paper therefore communicates in the first person, as well as the third person from time to time.

CONCLUSIONS

The reflective essay draws the following conclusions:

1. *Odd Number's* greatest shortcoming in terms of representation is its lack of self-reflexivity and inability to put the filmmaker's process in front of the camera. Thus, *Odd Number* does not quite accomplish the openness towards a plurality of views as well as I had hoped.
2. The strongest mechanism ensuring fair and honest representation is the friendship between Rashaad and the filmmaker, during and beyond the making of the film. From this point of view, *Odd Number* a success. Our friendship and continued collaboration stand out as the film's strongest measure of fair and honest representation.
3. There was a high level of collaboration between Rashaad and myself during the filming of *Odd Number* and continued collaboration after the film as well. This mitigated concerns about the power imbalances that exist between Rashaad and myself.
4. A powerful mechanism that ensured Rashaad retained the power to determine how he was represented was our agreement that he would have the final say and approval over the film's content and how it portrayed him.
5. The making of *Odd Number* enabled Rashaad to have a cathartic experience. The re-enactments brought up strong emotions and Rashaad felt that they helped him get his past out of his system.
6. Rashaad felt that the documentary improved his standing in his community where some people now fear him less. He also felt that his relationship improved with Face, the man he failed to assassinate twelve years ago and subsequently met again during the making of *Odd Number*.
7. In terms of Rashaad's legacy, he felt that the film left a more accurate portrayal of his experiences for his family, the public and especially his children. I believe that the best legacy *Odd Number* left is that Rashaad could claim agency, not only to rebuild or redeem his own life, but to work to improve the lot of the community. After the completion of the film, Rashaad started to visit schools and communities to tell his own story. In that sense *Odd Number* actually managed to open up for a multiplicity of voices.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Cape Flats

The Cape Flats are situated twenty kilometres east of the city of Cape Town in South Africa. Life on the Cape Flats is hard for young people. The youth are faced with a variety of different hardships like street violence, domestic violence, alcohol and drug addiction and a high level of unemployment to list but a few (Samara 2005: 209). Between 1948 and 1994 this flat, sandy area was used by South Africa's apartheid government as a dumping ground for black and coloured people during a period of forced removals and relocations. The aim was to achieve economic dominance and split the country along racial lines by creating racially separate areas and suburbs as part of the government's separate development strategy. Commenting on how the apartheid project of isolating the ghettos and taming its young men by putting them in institutions backfired, Steinberg observes, "[i]f the kids of the new ghettos were stranded in their isolated pockets, the one thing that brought them together, that created allegiances crossing ghetto boundaries, highways and deserted scrublands, was the magical tales and the exotic initiation rites of the reformatories and jails" (2004: 124).

Today over 60 percent of Cape Flats youths between 16 and 30 years of age are unemployed and more children are arrested in the Western Cape than in any other province in South Africa (Samara 2005: 210). Gang violence and crime is rife on the Cape Flats and young men function as the foot soldiers of the gangs. The prison gangs, known as the *Number*, enforce this gang culture. Prisons are seen as the training ground for gang members and "...there are many young men who have sought a prison sentence in order to prepare themselves for life on the streets" (Steinberg 2005: 125).

1.2 International crime in South Africa

After the democratic elections in 1994, South Africa opened up to international criminal trade. In recent years drug cartels, under pressure from their own countries' policing, started looking at South Africa as an emerging market as the United Nations and Interpol were achieving some successes in the fight against international crime syndicates. These successes and South Africa's relative inexperience in dealing with drug and other international syndicates contributed to gangs moving their operations to South Africa (Kynoch 2005: 490). As a result the Western Cape and most of South Africa is dotted with Nigerian cocaine cartels, Chinese triads, Moroccan protection gangs and to a lesser extent, Pakistani textile syndicates. These international organisations partner with local gangs and develop synergies (Kinnes 2000: 209). Thus the Cape Flats gangs are able to accommodate a growing number of the Western Cape's impoverished youth.

1.3 Film overview

The documentary *Odd Number* follows the life trajectory of Rashaad Adendorf. The story is set on the Cape Flats and explores Adendorf's childhood and the forces that drove him to join a gang and ultimately become an assassin for the feared *Americans* gang in the early nineties. The film centres on the events that caused him to turn his life around and move away from gangs and become a plumber. At the time of the documentary Rashaad was 39 years old, still living on the Cape Flats and married with two children.

The documentary's structure is predominantly a narrative with a strong emphasis on character and emotion. Interviews and re-enactments were used to provide background information and links between the sections of the film. The approach of the documentary was a basic narrative structure with a character arch that can be summed up in three simple questions: Where does Rashaad come from, where is he now and where is he going? The documentary aims to take the viewer on an emotional journey to connect the facts and emotions and in turn increase the audience's involvement and engagement. To ensure the audience's empathy and emotional investment, Rashaad is initially portrayed as the likeable man he is today. Interviews are a key device used in the documentary to achieve this and communicate information to the viewer. I consistently found the audiences experienced Rashaad as genuine and sincere.

1.4 Rashaad Adendorf

I first met Rashaad when he was doing plumbing work at my apartment in 2003. He is a tall, wiry man and occasionally, if his overall sleeves lift, you get a glimpse of tattoos. We spent some time together and I eventually got to meet his young wife, Dia, as well as his daughter, Shakira. We became friends. Rashaad lives in a small house in Elsies River and does plumbing to support his family.

As we got to know each other better, Rashaad gradually revealed more about his life. He lived a hard life as a gangster on the Cape Flats, an area rife with drugs and violence and where he was an assassin for a gang called the *Americans*. Late one afternoon in 1991 Rashaad walked into a rival gang's compound armed with two Glock 9mm pistols. His plan was to assassinate Face, the leader of the *Hard Living* gang. At that time the *Americans* and *Hard Living* were sworn enemies. Unknown to Rashaad, someone had betrayed him. The *Hard Livings* knew Rashaad was coming and waited in ambush. During a short and brutal gun fight Rashaad was shot twelve times but managed to crawl into a neighbour's driveway. "I entered life violently and lying there with twelve bullets in me, I realised I don't want to leave violently" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010). The police arrived and arrested Rashaad before the *Hard Living* gang could find and kill him. After a painful four-month recovery in a prison hospital he

spent the next five years awaiting trial in the overcrowded Pollsmoor prison during which time he made repeated court appearances. The reader will note that I refer to Rashaad by his first name in this paper as I found it odd to call him Adendorf in the light of our friendship.

1.5 Marius van Straaten

My name is Marius van Straaten and in South Africa I am seen as a white, male, Afrikaner. I grew up in Pretoria as part of a middle class family and went to the Pretoria Afrikaans High School, a conservative white school. I was fortunate that both my parents were progressive and we grew up in a non-racist and non-sexist environment. My time at school was hard as I stood out with my curly hair in an environment where kids were sensitised to noticing differences in appearance and purity of race. This resulted in me being bullied and ultimately, after twelve years of schooling, I had developed both a mistrust of what was supposed to be my Afrikaner community and a feeling of being an outsider. These experiences contributed to a lifelong sensitivity to discrimination and marginalisation. It also contributed to my creative interests focussing on the underdog. I received my degree from the University of Pretoria and following that I completed a diploma in video and film at the Pretoria Technikon. At both these institutions I belonged to progressive, democratic student organisations of which Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was the most radical of these at the University of Pretoria.

The *Odd Number* documentary was my first attempt at directing. Previously trained as a cinematographer I had experience of the filmmaking process, but not as a director. Six years after becoming friends with Rashaad Adendorf, the main protagonist in the film, I approached him with the idea of making a documentary about his life. The film would then also form part of my master's thesis in media theory and practise. I found his life story fascinating and thought that more people needed to hear the story of Rashaad's change and redemption. I wanted to counteract in some way the stereotype of a black man living on the Cape flats. Stereotyping relates to "the power to represent someone or something in a certain way – within a certain 'regime' or representation" (Hall 1997: 259). This stereotyping would often frame black men as violent, abusive gangsters, preying on the weak and abusing woman and children. Initially reluctant, Rashaad agreed on condition that he would approve the final film and have the right to intervene during the filming and editing process.

1.6 Pollsmoor Prison and the *Number* gangs

Pollsmoor prison is based in the Cape Town suburb of Tokai. Originally built for 3000 prisoners, it now houses more than 7000. For every 100 prisoners, there is one warder. Pollsmoor is located about twenty kilometres from the Cape Flats where the drug wars rage and it houses most of the city's suspected criminals (Steinberg 2004: xvii). Pollsmoor is also

the headquarters of the feared prison *Number* gangs and Steinberg concludes that “[i]t emerged that the 26s, 27s and 28s all originated from bands of outlaws that had plagued late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Johannesburg” (2005: xiv). Nongoloza, a young Zulu migrant worker is credited with the birth and organisation of the first band of outlaws. Each of the three *Number* gangs have developed their own different mythology around Nongoloza and how he started each gang, but they agreed on one point, “[H]e became a bandit because blacks were being disinherited of their land and forced to work like slaves in the mines” (Steinberg 2005: xvi). In the Western Cape the prisons are ruled by the *Number* gangs. Arguably the formation of the *Number* gangs was a direct reaction against the cruel colonial forces that dominated the working class economically and often violently suppressed them during the late-nineteenth century (Steinberg 2005: 39).

In South Africa, the oppressed in jail organised themselves in a military hierarchy resembling the Boer commandoes that fought the English during the South African Anglo-Boer War. Today the *Number* gangs rule the prison population in South Africa. As Steinberg puts it in 2000 when visiting Pollsmoor “The prison was full of 26s, 27s and 28s, and it was clear after lockup time at 4pm, they ran many of the sections” (Steinberg 2005: xvii). Traditionally the 26s accumulate wealth to be shared amongst all three gangs, the 28s fight on behalf of all three gangs for better conditions for the inmates and the 27s keep the peace between the three gangs. When blood is spilled they spill blood in turn. These traditional roles have become less defined in the last decade and conflict has increased between the *Number* gangs (Steinberg 2005: xviii).

1.7 The *Number* today

Steinberg argues that changes that were occurring in prisons and in the criminal underworld in South Africa were not unaffected by national and global developments and that the wider political developments affected the prisons. The demise of the apartheid state coincided with global political changes that culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union in 1989. Before the political changes of the 1980s and the early 1990s, the wall that divided the world of street gangs from that of the prison *Number* gangs was almost unassailable (Steinberg 2005: 72). The ideologically sterile, materialistic street gangs had no desire to share the fiercely ideological and decidedly frugal way of life of the prison *Number* gangs. As Steinberg puts it: “When a *Born Free Kid* [street gang] had finished his sentence, he left the 26s behind in jail, and when he came back to prison he left the *Born Free Kids* on the streets” (2004: 72). Changes in the national and global political and economic environment led to the emergence of wealthy street gangs dealing in drugs, such as the *Americans*, *Hard Living* and the *Firm* in the South Africa. When these gangsters landed in

prison, without their street armies, they were at the mercy of the *Number* gangs who had little respect for them. It became an urgent priority for them to ensure their personal safety, to make prison replicate the streets. Steinberg adds:

“In the early 1990s, something strange began happening on the streets. The *Americans* took scraps and pieces of the ancient 26s ritual recruitment, rank structure and began to emulate it, in a cobbled bastardised fashion. *The Firm* did much the same with the legacy of the 28s” (2005: 73).

In Pollsmoor itself, the relationship between the 26s and the 28s was more and more representative of the war between the *Americans* and the *Hard Living* gang outside the prison (Steinberg 2005: xvii).

In the light of Rashaad’s reputation and the amount of *Hard Living* members he had assassinated whilst outside prison he was approached to become a full time member and enforcer for the opposing 26s prison gang. “I had killed many *Hard Living*’s Ndotas [initiated gangsters] and they would not forget. In jail you had no protection without joining a gang. I was a vuil mpata [uninitiated prisoner] with no protection” (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010). Rashaad resisted recruitment from the 26s, despite it being a logical step to protect him from the 28s seeking revenge for their gang members whom Rashaad had killed. He explains in an interview, “I knew once I joined the 26s I would not leave prison as I would have to commit other crimes ordered by my gang and I would get more years. I resisted as long as I could, but I knew the 28s would come for me” (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010). Rashaad’s failed assassination attempt on the *Hard Living*’s leader, Face, contributed to making him a marked man. In his third month in prison the 28s tried to assassinate Rashaad whilst he was on kitchen duty. After being stabbed in the chest Rashaad retaliated by throwing hot porridge on his attackers and escaping.

Days later, whilst an Imam in the neighbouring cell recited his prayers in the evening, Rashaad started crying listening to the melodies of the Qur’an. The Imam invited him to join in prayer. He later taught Rashaad the prayer positions and the Qur’an prayer recitals for each position. This proved to be a pivotal point for Rashaad as he re-discovered Islam and asked to be put in solitary confinement. “I realised I needed to think about my life and future, without so many distractions around. Prison can be a busy place (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010). This was a dangerous request as informers usually requested solitary confinement to protect themselves

from other inmates. Rashaad noted with a sad smile that the Imam was in jail for child abuse. "Prison is a strange place, people are never what they seem" (Verbatim Notes, 2010).

After a long and protracted trial lasting five years, Rashaad was released from prison and faced life-changing choices. Two factors contributed to Rashaad turning his back on crime after being released from jail. First, the profound emotion of seeing his children grow up behind glass and missing their first words and steps. "Seeing my son Fiki through glass with no physical contact allowed, and him trying to touch my hand through the thick glass broke me. These were going to be my son's first memories of his father, behind bars and thick glass" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010). Secondly, Rashaad discovered Islam after years of neglecting his religion. "I haven't cried since I was five and that evening listening to that man saying his prayers, the tears started streaming down my face, something in me had enough" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010).

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CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH PROCESS AND PREPARATION

2.1 Initial interviews

The initial research for the documentary film was based on interviews with Rashaad Adendorf, Nazim Ashmodien, George Barnado, Rashaad's mother and his ex-mother in law. I also interviewed people that lived on either side of Betty Street in Elsie's River and were affected by the gang wars of the late eighties and early nineties. Betty Street was the street separating the *Americans* and *Hard Living* gang territory. Nazim Ashmodien was Rashaad's nephew and they owned a drinking and drug hall together. George Barnado was in Rashaad's gang and came out of prison in 2009 after serving a 15-year sentence for a double murder. The interviews informed and provided the texture of life on the Cape Flats and the meaning of being part of a gang. As the documentary was a narrative centred on Rashaad's life, I focussed on the people closest to Rashaad and those that could inform his character best. The interviews with Rashaad's family members showed me in great detail the immense impact Rashaad had on the people around him. Rashaad's first wife refused to be interviewed as she had been most traumatised by Rashaad during his gangster days. Most of the people interviewed spoke to me easily. They seemed to trust me and the aim of the documentary to portray Rashaad's life honestly. People who lived along Betty Street at the time and were affected by the gang violence were more difficult to convince to be interviewed, especially when they heard Rashaad's name, but in the end only one man refused to participate.

2.2 Secondary sources

2.2.1 *The Number*

I found Jonny Steinberg's book *The Number* to be the most definitive source out of the books I read (2005). Steinberg's own self reflection on his process contributes powerfully to a subjective, but honest portrayal of Magadien Wentzel's story. The book revealed the milieu Rashaad would have experienced in jail. During the filming of the documentary it was clear that participants were not willing to speak openly about the *Number* gangs as it is ruled by a code of silence and breaking it could be punishable by death. Steinberg's book assisted and informed me about the gang system so that I was able to present some knowledge to the interviewees and so gain more of the trust of the participants. This in turn made for better interviews in front of the camera. Rashaad took great care to explain to me that if the documentary revealed too much of the *Number* gangs he would be killed. "When they take the number back, Marius.... the number lives in your head.... they beat your head to a pulp with padlocks on belts, that's how they take it back" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010). It was at this point that the full responsibility I would carry dawned upon me if I made the documentary.

To protect Rashaad and his family, the documentary had to be about a man redeeming himself and not an exposé on the *Number* gangs in South Africa. *Odd Number* had to focus on Rashaad and his transformation. Any depictions or interview discussions of the *Number* gang's rituals or their way of working could have jeopardised Rashaad's life. If the *Number* gangs felt their secrets were being revealed they would punish the source. This caused me many sleepless nights as I was debating what to show and what to keep out of the documentary.

The Number is the life story of Magadien Wentzel, released from prison in October 2002 after 20 years behind bars. Steinberg interviewed Wentzel for over 50 hours. Wentzel proved to be very articulate and showed real remorse and a willingness to try and correct his misdeeds where possible. "I was frightened of penning a story about hell: I wanted to find a redemptive tale, to write about someone who had journeyed to the heart of the inferno but had come out the other side" (Steinberg 2005: 27). There was clearly a direct parallel between Magadien Wentzel and Rashaad Adendorf as they had both committed unspeakable acts but had also found the inner strength to change their lives. The book assisted me in understanding Rashaad and portraying his life. As Steinberg intended with Wentzel, I did not want to portray a story about hell, but about a man that manages to turn his life around against overwhelming odds. This approach would also assist me in not revealing too much about the *Number's* secrets.

2.2.2 Kinnes's journal

Another valuable source of information was Kinnes's journal article on gangs and crime in the Western Cape. He argues that "despite the recognition that crime-reduction requires meaningful social economic development, pressures on government to "do something" and to "get tough" on crime often translate into simplistic "war on crime" approaches that funnel marginal youth into the criminal justice system and leave more or less untouched deeply rooted social inequalities" (2000: 210). The inability of the South African government to allocate resources to development has resulted in poor youth largely being seen as a problem that needs to be solved. Nowhere as much as in the Western Cape are young people affected by government policy. "More children are now arrested in the Western Cape province than anywhere else in the country" (Kinnes 2000: 211). Although children in the Western Cape only make up 8.5% of children nationally, they represent 25% of those arrested (Kinnes 2000: 212). The article helped to create a clearer picture of the milieu that Rashaad would have grown up in. "The area we grew up in was full of gangsters, daily we saw how they hurt people, in white areas the kids saw successful guys in suits. We saw successful guys with guns and knives" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010).

What I found remarkable when interviewing Rashaad and asking him directly about the effect apartheid and poverty had on his life was that he was convinced that the lack of love from his mother, which resulted in him being given away, was the primary reason for his life of crime and as a gangster. Despite a number of interview questions connecting apartheid's policies to crime, Rashaad did not see the connection between his life of poverty and crime and the policies of apartheid. I got the feeling from some of his answers that he felt some darker force led him to crime and gangs. As Rashaad put it "Life was hard and people tried their best to survive, if I felt more loved I might not have become a gangster" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010).

Rashaad's mother, when asked about the effect of the National Party's apartheid policies, did not seem to realise the connection between apartheid's economic discrimination and her battle to support and keep her children. There was a stoic acceptance of the past and her current circumstances, where she was living in a small wooden garden shed in her daughter's back yard.

2.2.3 Kynoch's study

A third valuable source was an academic study by Gary Kynoch. This study provided a more academic, scientific approach towards understanding the high levels of gang-related crime in post-apartheid South. He points out that there was an escalation of crime since the end of apartheid in 1994 (Kynoch 2005: 497). According to Kynoch, South African social structures started to contribute to the crime problem as far back as 1898 when Johannesburg was a booming mining metropolis. Kynoch argues that while authorities were focussing on bringing the white gang problem under control, due to the influx of poor white foreigners, the black gangsters were allowed to thrive (Kynoch 2005: 498). As mentioned before, this was the period during which Nongoloza, the young Zulu migrant worker, was credited with the birth and organisation of the first band of outlaws (Steinberg 2005: xvi).

The lack of policing in poor areas resulted in gangs preying on poor communities and created a culture of vigilantism or street justice. Due to the neglect of police, poor communities resorted to street justice to try and maintain order. "This intersection of punitive policing, criminal gangs and vigilantism gave rise to the culture of violence that haunts contemporary South Africa" (Kynoch 2005: 498). It is clear that the current gang problem on the Cape Flats has historical roots and agrees with Kinnes that tackling the problem would require an economical and social approach.

2.3 Other films

As part of the research effort and in addition to interviews, books and reports, a number of films were viewed to gain more knowledge. Rob De Mezieres's film, *Shooting Bokkie* (2003), took an interesting approach as it follows the life of a young Cape Flats assassin and records a filmmaker's attempt to get funding to do a film about him. The film took a mockumentary approach, blurring the lines between fact and fiction. Upon further investigation it became clear that the film was more fiction than fact. The visuals were gritty and badly shot on video and film. This cinematic style added to the reality of the portrayal. I felt that the mockumentary style would not be appropriate for *Odd Number* and a similar cinematic style would have detracted from Rashaad's story. As *Odd Number* is based on truth and has a strong narrative it therefore would not require grainy, handheld camerawork to amplify the story. A more direct and classical cinematic approach would be more appropriate for *Odd Number*. This approach meant most shots were filmed using a tripod and without the camera moving around too much. During interviews I did not want to detract from the subject by having a camera frame moving all the time. I did however use re-enactments to highlight some of the most important turning points in Rashaad's life. The re-enactments were based on Rashaad's version of events and in them he acted as his younger self. These sequences were filmed in a similar cinematic style to the rest of the documentary, but with the re-enactments I used slow-motion and stronger manipulation of the sound track than in other parts of the film.

Cliff Bestall's documentary *Killers don't Cry* (2001) looks at a program pioneered by Janny Jansen, the first black head of the maximum security section in Pollsmoor prison. Jansen convinces two leading gang members, Mogamat and Erefaan to participate in a program run by Joanna Thomas from Cape Town's centre for conflict resolution. The program aims through workshops to create an environment where the prisoners can confront themselves and facilitate discussions not possible under normal prison life. One of the gang leaders, Mogamat Benjamin has been in prison for 34 years and cannot remember how many people he has killed. Mogamat is a general of the 28s and states, "I am powerful. I am partly God. No man has a higher rank in Pollsmoor than me. In the camp of 28s a person's life is in my hands" (*Killers don't Cry*, 2001). The film is set only in Pollsmoor and gave me a good idea of the type of people Rashaad would have experienced during his five years in prison. Despite the focus on the workshops, the film highlights the extreme power that the *Number* gangs yield in prison and how that would have come to bear on Rashaad to join a gang, during his imprisonment. The filmmaker takes care to focus on the program and workshops and does not reveal rituals or the gang's secrets. It is important to note that in both *Killers don't Cry* and *Shooting Bokkie*, the filmmakers were white and their subjects black.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Representation

Martin Botha points out that despite “decades of film escapism, racist films and government propaganda, South African cinema produced cinematic jewels” (2012: 195). Nevertheless, despite the recent South African film industry successes of productions like *White Wedding*, *Jerusalema* and *District 9*, gender and racial inequality remain primary concerns. Clarence Hamilton, Head of Production and Development at the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF), has compiled statistics on South African film productions since 1994. Of all the films made between 1994 and 2008, woman directed only 39%. Even more dismally only 32% of South Africa’s total film output has been directed by black filmmakers (Hamilton cited in Botha 2012: 195). Given a South African film industry dominated by white men, it becomes pertinent to view *Odd Number* against a backdrop of painfully slow transformation.

Treffry-Goatley indicates “[t]here is clearly no simple correlation between race or social class of a director and the person/people represented in his/her film” (Treffry-Goatley 2010). Tomaselli adds that a director does not have “the key to a character just because both are black or that a white director or actor cannot portray black realities” (2006: 105). Nichols points out that the filmmaker generally wields greater power simply by having a better understanding of what the filmmaking process involves and understanding the tools available to influence an audience (Nichols 2001: 5-6). This power differential is often far greater in a South African context due to the legacy of apartheid and the difference in resources available to the filmmaker and the subject. It becomes clear that representational issues are very important in the light of the struggle for freedom from racial oppression in South Africa and, as pointed out previously, the very slow rate of transformation in the South African film industry.

3.2 Kristin Pichaske’s representational criteria

Kristen Pichaske’s doctoral study on the process of racial transformation within the South African documentary film industry concludes that due to the legacies of apartheid the barriers to entry for people of colour are considerably higher than for whites (Pichaske 2009: 111). Thus, Botha asserts “black South Africans remain more often the subjects of documentaries than their makers” (Botha 2012: 195). Pichaske’s study is very useful in that it looked at a number of South African documentaries that faced similar dilemmas and challenges to *Odd Number*. In addition Pichaske is also a cinematographer and filmmaker and has worked in South Africa. She understands the conditions, ethical and moral issues one encounters as a filmmaker within the Western Cape’s very poor and disenfranchised communities. Pichaske has for example encountered situations where members of the community were not accepting

of her presence and she had to be aware of how the difference in power and resources influences one's representation and could possibly result in future criticism of her work.

Pichaske created a very useful list of criteria in order to measure accurate and ethical representation in documentaries. I measure *Odd Number* against these in this paper. She also focuses on Francois Verster's documentary entitled *The Mother's House*. This film is similar in a number of ways to *Odd Number*. Both Verster and I were outsiders, white males from advantaged backgrounds. We both spoke Afrikaans and entered a traditionally disadvantaged coloured community for a long period of time. We both developed friendships and had to manage our role as filmmaker and friend carefully. In both cases the filmmakers contributed financially to the subject and their families. Both films employ an observational style as opposed to a reflexive form, although *Odd Number* uses re-enactments as well. The observational style in both films can be criticised for leaving interpretation open to contextual analysis by the viewer. This means that by not revealing the filmmaker's process and decision making rationale to the viewer, the filmmaker runs the risk of the viewer interpreting the film in a context he or she chooses, as the filmmaker has not provided enough of a context to assist the viewer's conclusions. Pichaske's thesis and analysis of *The Mother's House* is therefore appropriate as a guideline in evaluating *Odd Number*. I have to point out that I did not read Pichaske's thesis before I made *Odd Number*. It would have contributed to my approach in that I would have seriously considered a more self-reflexive approach to avoid broad contextual analysis by the viewer.

According to Kristen Pichaske (2009), there are three critical factors to assure accurate and ethical representation, regardless of socio-economic status of the filmmaker in relation to the subject.

3.2.1 The reflective approach

The aim of the reflective or first person approach is to help frame the documentary as subjective, as opposed to a supposedly objective representation. Ruby encourages documentary filmmakers to produce documentaries that are intentionally subjective. Ruby argues that capturing objective truth is not possible or less ethical than being subjective and open about it. "Once it is acknowledged that no one can speak for, or represent a culture but only his or her relationship to it, then a multiplicity of viewpoints is possible and welcome-some from within and others from without and all the marvellously gray areas in between" (1991: 31). Pichaske's reflection on Ruby's statement puts it very well:

“Herein lies, perhaps the most useful lesson for South Africa. Clearly, efforts must be made to rectify the imbalance of voices being heard in the South African media. However this should not be taken to suggest that everyone should represent only himself or herself. Nor does it mean that there is no place for white filmmakers in South Africa anymore, as some have argued” (2009: 250).

3.2.2 Relationship between the subject and filmmaker

Secondly Pichaske believes that it is important to cultivate a relationship beyond the scope of the project with the subject to help “...ensure a sense of responsibility for their long term wellbeing” (Pichaske 2009: iii). By developing a caring relationship with the subject, it could be argued the filmmaker would consider the long-term impact of the project on the subject. For example by not revealing the *Number Gang*’s secrets in *Odd Number*, one would help to minimise future danger to Rashaad.

3.2.3 Collaboration

Thirdly Pichaske states that collaboration between subject and filmmaker contributes to greater agency in determining the construction of the subject’s images. “This strategy helps to mitigate both concerns regarding power imbalances, and inaccuracies that may arise through the practise of outsider storytelling” (Pichaske 2009: iii). By working with the subject on the project and welcoming contribution and input from the subject, the filmmaker is giving the subject the opportunity to co-create what is being represented and how his or her life is being portrayed. This results in a more honest portrayal.

3.3 Bill Nichols’ documentary modes

Bill Nichols’ typology allows for useful criteria to evaluate *Odd Number*’s representation of Rashaad Adendorf. Nichols’ is “the guru of documentary theory, and that his typology is considered the theorist’s bible” (Rabiger 2004:109). Nichols explores the complicated relationship between the documentary, truth and objectivity. He encourages documentary filmmakers to acknowledge their inability to capture the historical world accurately (Nichols 1991: 230-231).

He creates a framework for examining the relative merits of six distinct modes of documentary in terms of authenticity. Nichols’ typology creates a useful set of parameters by which *Odd Number* can be judged in terms of authenticity and fair representation. Pichaske points out that Nichols’ typology “focuses on specific formal strategies and how these help or hinder a film’s ability to represent reality” (2009: 21). These modes are not mutually exclusive and the framework allows for applying more than one mode to a film. The six modes namely expository, observational, participatory, reflexive, performance and the poetic mode assist in

evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches to documentary filmmaking. Not all are relevant to *Odd Number*, so I focus on the observational, participatory and reflexive modes only.

3.3.1 The Observational mode

The Observational mode attempts to observe and avoid intervention and tends to be minimalist and observe life as it happens (Nichols 1991: 38). Capturing the truth with no intervention or influence is not possible. Even if it were, the end result would probably be very tedious. In its purest form, observational filmmaking can be in the form of hidden cameras, where the subjects are unaware that they are being observed. Furthermore, no editing will be possible as editing allows more manipulation and interference by the filmmaker. I believe that a documentary film cannot be 100% objective and should be subjective in reflecting the subject. Frederick Wiseman supports this view and states that he cannot see how “a film can be anything but subjective” (Nelmes 2003: 202). The mode also limits the filmmaker from providing a context in that only the present tense can be shown and past re-enactments that can inform the viewer are not possible.

3.3.2 The Participatory mode

The participatory mode goes further than the observational mode in that the subject is actively engaged to participate and contribute to the information the viewer receives. One of the mechanisms for this participation is the interview. The interview allows the subject to speak to the viewer directly. The subject's voice is more authentic and believable than the use of voice over, which does not allow for subjects to speak for themselves. In this mode the editor would cut from one source to another, constructing a coherent argument. Nichols is critical of the interview and highlights the power imbalance between the interviewer and interviewee. It might appear as dialogue, but the interviewer decides on the questions and which answers to include and exclude (Nichols 1991:47). Despite the participatory mode appearing more democratic, in that the subjects speak more for themselves, it is possible for the subject's voice to be manipulated and edited to suit an overall argument the filmmaker is promoting. In other words editorial control still lies with the filmmaker and therefore control over the message.

3.3.3 The Reflexive mode

The Reflexive mode attempts to remedy the shortcomings of the previous modes by making it easy for viewers to see that documentary films are representations constructed by filmmakers and not the absolute truth (Nichols 1991: 57). The viewer is shown the production process and the inner workings of the process are revealed, often by putting the filmmakers in front of the camera. The filmmaker gives as much importance to the story as to the process of telling that

story. The viewer is made aware of possible bias and the filmmaker's process in order to increase the believability and perspective of what the viewer sees.

CHAPTER 4: THE PROCESS OF MAKING *ODD NUMBER*

In the next section I provide an overview of *Odd Number's* production and shooting process. I discuss problems, solutions and dynamics that were present during the filming. This informs and creates some background and context for the reader when I compare *Odd Number* to Pichaske's representational criteria and Nichols' documentary modes in the following chapters.

4.1 Death by *Number*

In approaching the script and the making of the film, I had to be continually aware that by asking participants to provide facts and details of the *Number* gangs, their lives and Rashaad's life might be endangered. "For generations, the *Number* gangs had been obsessively secretive organisations, their activities strictly confined to prisons" (Steinberg 2004: xvii). The *Number* has a code of silence and if you break it, they break you (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010). The solution was to make it a story of Rashaad's redemption and not a gangster documentary, revealing the *Number* gang's secrets and rituals. The focus had to be on Rashaad's life and transformation, not an exposé of gangsterism in the Western Cape. A context had to be provided so that the viewer understands how gangsterism impacted Rashaad, but not to such an extent that Rashaad or other participants were forced to reveal too much information about the *Number's* secrets thereby endangering their lives. This left me with a serious responsibility, both in the filming and editing processes. Careful consideration had to be taken of what was left in and what was taken out and how that could affect the safety of the film's participants and crew.

An interesting experience occurred when a radio microphone was left on Face, also known as Sydwell Bailey, feared leader of the *Hard Living* gang. Whilst filming another scene, away from Face, Face's radio microphone kept on working and the audio was recorded, unknown to anyone on the camera fifty meters away. Without realising it we recorded Face's telephone conversation that involved the purchase of drugs, "Three, one-kilogram bags of ecstasy pills" (Audio Recording, 2010). The film crew were very keen to use these sound recordings but it did not aid Rashaad's story and the use of it could have endangered Rashaad's life. It proved difficult at times to convey this to team members who were keen to use the recorded audio to show that Face was a true gangster. I felt that his interview portrayed his gangster status well enough. Apart from the safety issue, this incident raised the issue of ethics. We knew Face was a gangster when he took us in and that by making the audio recording available to the police I would be betraying his trust and possibly make Face an enemy of Rashaad and the crew.

4.2 Motivation for re-enactments

Rashaad comes across very well on camera and one struggles to believe that the charming man on camera committed more than ten murders. A cinematic strategy employed to convey the extent of his previous actions was the use of re-enactments. Two re-enactments stand out in portraying Rashaad's previous self. The first re-enactment portrays Rashaad's eight-month pregnant wife trying to shoot him with his own gun while he is sleeping. One can only guess what an eight-month pregnant woman must go through to consider killing the father of her unborn child. As Adendorf commented during an interview in June 2010, "She had become so tired and hard because of all the things I did to her, that she could not continue with me in her life [Adendorf stops speaking, visibly emotional]". The re-enactment is chilling and leaves the viewer with a certain amount of disbelief and horror. The second re-enactment was of Rashaad trying to hack open his mother-in-law's front door with a machete when she would not allow the drunken Adendorf to enter the house to see his wife and children. This is an extremely shocking scene with Rashaad violently hacking at the door and screaming abuse. It stands in stark contrast to the likeable and well-spoken man in the interviews.

4.3 Inexperienced crew

As a trained cinematographer and filmmaker it was both difficult and rewarding for me to work with an inexperienced team. Our group consisted of five people including myself. My fellow students were good masters and honours-level academics but had varied and little practical film making experience. On the first shooting day during an interview with Rashaad, a crew member operating the second camera was gesturing wildly to another member of the crew. As I was focussing on Rashaad, I did not notice anything initially. This was at the same time as Rashaad was recounting the very painful experience of his father's murder by the 28s and how it changed him. The story culminated in his father's killers dancing around his dead body. The crew member was experiencing a technical problem and was completely unaware of the sensitivity of the interview. While we were recording I noticed that Rashaad was being distracted by the gesturing crew member at the second camera. I stopped the interview and when Rashaad went to make some tea, I addressed the issue with the crew member. Unfortunately, the crew member responded negatively and proceeded to keep silent for the rest of the day. At a later point the crew member pointed out that despite my position as director, it was not my place to address her, as she had more academic credit and experience than I had.

To avoid a repetition of the incident, I started to provide more detail than usual on the daily call sheet and verbal briefings. The call sheet is a document that is issued every morning with the day's schedule indicating locations, times and which scenes are to be filmed. I started including notes on sensitive scenes during which the crew should maintain a low-key approach. As basic as this measure might seem it had the desired effect to some extent. Despite this incident the team developed good cohesion and cooperation during the making of the film. At the premier there was a sense of achievement and pride in *Odd Number*. We acknowledged to each other that it was a learning experience for all of us.

4.4 Dia, Rashaad's wife

One of the most challenging experiences during the shoot was managing a dynamic that had developed between Rashaad's wife, Dia and one of the crew members. The crew member had asked Rashaad to repair a plumbing problem she had at her home. Rashaad repaired the leaks and the crew member and Rashaad then spent the afternoon talking about her recent divorce and the impact it had had on her life. After the visit some text messages of support were exchanged via mobile phone between Rashaad and the crew member. Dia, Rashaad's wife read these text messages on Rashaad's phone and came to the conclusion that Rashaad was having an affair. Upon my next visit I realised that Dia Adendorf's attitude towards the film crew had become very negative, and that the entire project was in danger as she no longer wanted the crew in her house or to be filmed with Rashaad or their children. This created a problem as we had no family footage at that point and access to Rashaad's house was essential for the continuation of the film.

The course convenor, Paul Weinberg provided invaluable advice on how to handle the situation. I met with the crew member and asked her to withdraw from the scenes when we were filming with Rashaad present. She could be on set when we did scenes that did not involve him. She was extremely disappointed and I was at pains to explain that she had done nothing wrong but that in future she needed to be more careful managing her parameters as a crew member when interacting with characters in a film. I realised we had to respect Dia's space even if she had incorrectly interpreted events and there was no affair taking place. I then met with Dia and explained that the relevant crew member would no longer be on set. She started crying and then responded positively and allowed us access to her house once again. It was clear that the situation had become very stressful for her.

Although the project was successfully completed and the shoot only delayed for a short time, I often worry and reflect about the effect the filming process had on Dia and how we could have avoided this. I suspect if I had been firmer in communicating to the crew member that it was

not a good idea to use Rashaad's plumbing services, the situation might have been avoided. This event had a lasting effect on our group and some tensions over how I handled the situation sometimes still come to the fore. To add to my confusion about the event Rashaad acknowledged to me recently, "I find it very hard to resist a beautiful woman, and that big house and money did not make it any easier" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes: 2012).

4.5 Limited Budget

As with most university documentaries the budget was small. Each student was allocated R5000 and that meant the total budget for the project was R25 000. This budget would have to suffice from pre-production to post-production. The initial project brief was to make a 24 minute documentary. I got permission to do a 48 minute documentary as I realised the story justified a longer duration. The project was now twice as long, but the budget stayed the same. A number of strategies were employed to manage the costs of the documentary. Re-enactments were filmed at low cost locations, with friends of Rashaad making their homes available for as little as R450 per day. Food was bought from supermarkets the day before and prepared on set by the crew. Take away food was avoided due to the higher cost.

A number of static shots of firearms and shots of the weapons being fired were needed. The team realised that a professional armourer with firearms would be too expensive. We got in touch with the local Western Cape Small Arms Club and fortunately they had their yearly public open day coming up the next weekend. At the open day the team managed to get great shots of weapons being fired. The weapons featured at the open day ranged from 9mm pistols to semi-automatic assault rifles. The weapons were similar to the guns used by the gangsters, which were mostly purchased illegally from the police or army camps in the Western Cape. The shots of weapons firing added greatly to the authenticity of the documentary. Rashaad was able to provide an old, black Volkswagen Golf car door which enabled us to film bullets being fired into it. The colour of this door matched the colour of the car we used in his re-enactment. These shots were very effectively intercut with a drive-by shooting sequence in which Rashaad, a friend and his daughter were fired upon. When the university budget ran out, I self-financed the project and have spent an additional R40 000 on it. This includes marketing and entering the film in festivals.

CHAPTER 5: ODD NUMBER AND PICHASKE'S CRITERIA

In the following section I compare *Odd Number* to Kristen Pichaske three critical factors to improve accurate and ethical representation.

5.1 Reflexivity

Pichaske's first suggestion for more accurate representation is to take a reflective or first person approach to help frame the documentary as subjective as opposed to an objective representation. John Grierson defines documentary as "the creative treatment of actuality" (Rabiger 2004: 4). This broad definition applies well to *Odd Number* as it uses a combination of observational mode, interviews and re-enactments to tell Rashaad's story.

In my opinion *Odd Number's* greatest shortcoming was its lack of reflexivity. In retrospect the film could have been more honest in its portrayal of Rashaad if the filmmaking process and the filmmaker's influence were revealed. By showing the viewer my identity, bias and processes, it would have informed and created context for the viewer. Simply put, the viewer would understand through whose subjective glasses they are watching the film.

The re-enactments do have an element of reflexivity in that Rashaad himself acts as his younger self, portraying events that occurred 15 years earlier. I believe that having Rashaad portray events that affected him contributed to the authenticity of the film. During two intense days of filming the re-enactments of Rashaad getting shot twelve times he turned to me and said "It feels like I am getting it out of my brain all over again, maybe I will have less nightmares now" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010). On more than one occasion Rashaad has reflected on the cathartic nature of the filming of the re-enactments.

On the *Odd Number* DVD, there are special features included that contain a look behind the scenes and the process of making the documentary. To a certain extent the behind the scenes feature contributes to self-reflexivity as the viewer gets to see interviews with the filmmaker and crew, all expressing their view about the process and their observations and conclusions. The behind the scenes also shows the viewer most of the primary locations on the Cape Flats and is intercut and juxtaposed with footage from the documentary which creates further context for the viewer. One is of course not guaranteed that everyone watching the film will watch the behind the scenes special feature on the DVD.

5.2 Relationship between filmmaker and subject

Pichaske's second consideration for honest representation is to cultivate a relationship beyond the scope of the project with the subject and to thereby "...ensure a sense of responsibility for their long-term well-being "(Pichaske 2009: 3). Rashaad and I met when he was repairing a pipe at my apartment. Over the next couple of years a friendship developed between us and we shared some of our more intimate and painful experiences. It was initially surprising for me to learn that this well-spoken, funny guy was at one point a really good assassin for the 26s.

The depth of my friendship with Rashaad allowed me to talk freely to him about my experiences in an Afrikaans school and the bullying I experienced for twelve years due to my very curly hair. In no way am I equating my experience with the institutionalised apartheid Rashaad suffered, but I found it easier to talk to a coloured man of similar age than my traditionally white family about my childhood trauma. Today, as a result of the over-emphasis on my curly hair and continued bullying, I still do not really trust my Afrikaans tribe. I found it interesting that this was the first conversation I had in my life about my experiences at school. I think in retrospect that this sharing contributed to Rashaad seeing me less as an outsider and more as someone that wanted to tell his story.

Our friendship has gone through some transformation and has sometimes been strained as well. During the filming of *Odd Number* we paid Rashaad a daily rate of R350, which is the amount he would have earned working as a plumber. We also regularly bought groceries for his family. For more than a year after we had completed the filming process, Rashaad would ask me to help him to pay the rent as the South African economy was not doing well and he did not have a lot of work. I assisted him for a year but had to then stop due to my own financial situation.

In 2011 I managed to get his daughter, Nadia, a job as receptionist in the building where I worked. She was not ideally suited but the office manager, Gouwah Matthews, a Muslim lady, was willing to give it a try. After four weeks Gouwah replaced Nadia as her English skills were inadequate for a receptionist. Rashaad was extremely upset and came to the building to confront Nadia's replacement for taking his daughter's job. My colleagues knew Rashaad was my friend so we managed to agree on a compromise. I would pay for English classes for Nadia and the office manager would use her for administrative filing duties as and when she was needed. Although stressful at the time, I understood that Rashaad's behaviour stemmed from need and poverty. The documentary is complete but Rashaad is still a struggling plumber. I believe that Pichaske's view of developing a friendship to "...ensure a sense of

responsibility for their long term well-being “is extremely important for filmmakers working in disadvantaged areas, especially where there is often a vast power differential between filmmaker and subject” (2009: 3).

Social documentaries do not sell well and *Odd Number* has not sold either. There has been no income generated from the documentary. To some extent both of us expected the film to generate some sales. I believe it is therefore important that the filmmaker stays involved in the life of their subjects and supports them financially or otherwise, if possible. If financial support is not possible there are many ways in which an educated filmmaker can assist. In December 2011 Rashaad’s landlord started eviction procedures. I am currently assisting him to fight the eviction.

I believe that my relationship with Rashaad is the strongest element contributing to a more accurate and ethical representation of Rashaad in *Odd Number*. Our friendship has developed and matured through the years and had it not been for the trust between us, *Odd Number* would not have been made. Rashaad, more than anyone in the crew, knew of the danger of exposing the *Number’s* secrets and the possible repercussions for him and his family and friends. He needed to know that I would not endanger his life in any way and that if I did he would have the final say in the film’s portrayal and have the power to change it.

The reverse is unfortunately also true and the incident, previously mentioned, where Rashaad’s wife Dia was alienated by texted communications between Rashaad and an inexperienced crew member is an example of where a relationship that developed through the filmmaking process can have a negative impact on the subject’s life.

5.2.1 The Effects of *Odd Number* on Rashaad

For Rashaad the process of making *Odd Number* was cathartic in the same way that for Magadien Wentzel contributing to the book *The Number*, “gave me a chance to unload my baggage, to rectify my mistakes: it helped me to heal” (Steinberg 2004: 202). At the first rough-cut viewing of *Odd Number* Adendorf started crying when the shot of prison bars dissolved over footage of his children. The process of the documentary has affected Adendorf’s life and standing in his community in a real way. He invited fifteen people to the *Odd Number* premiere on 21 November 2010. He told me it was the first opportunity in years for him to be proud of something: “I used to hide away for what I had done, now I can show people with this film that I had changed and that other people believe that too. They can also see where I come from. If I had money I would invite the whole buurt [neighbourhood]” (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010).

Rashaad feels *Odd Number* gave his family a more accurate portrayal of his life story. “I feel if I die tomorrow, my family will know how it was” (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2012). His teenage son, Rafique, is starting to slide into the world of gangs. Rashaad hopes that the documentary will show his son the price he has paid and that it will deter Rafique and other youths from following the same path. Rashaad’s ex-wife, who we see portrayed in a re-enactment, did not agree to be interviewed. Rashaad believes she is the one person he has damaged the most and that explains her reluctance to be interviewed. Rashaad is hopeful that when she sees the documentary, she might believe he has truly changed. Despite Rashaad giving her a copy of *Odd Number*, Rashaad’s ex-wife has not responded to him.

The film also allowed Rashaad to re-establish a relationship with Face, also known as Sydwell Bailey. Face, the leader of the *Hard Living* gang, was responsible for Rashaad’s ambush and wounding in Bellville South. Whilst filming the reunion meeting between Face and Rashaad we inadvertently, during a break, recorded a conversation between Face and his assistant in which the assistant asked Face if he was sure that they did not need to kill Rashaad. Face responded that he could see Rashaad had changed and no one was to harm him. Rashaad appreciated this “inside” knowledge and felt more at ease with Face from this point onwards.

My relationship with the people around Rashaad who contributed to *Odd Number* has continued. Shortly after the completion of the documentary, Face contacted me to buy twenty *Odd Number* DVDs at a good price for his upcoming birthday. He also wanted to know if he could have nicer music in the documentary, when he was featured. I politely declined to change the music and he accepted the discounted DVDs. It is interesting to note that Face was expressing dissatisfaction with his representation by asking for better music with his scenes. He felt that Rashaad was represented more favourably than him in terms of music. Face’s request highlights how representation can be manipulated using music.

5.2.2 *Odd Number* DVD Cover

On the DVD cover there is a photo of Rashaad leaning towards the camera with a large wrench in one hand and a gun in the other hand. I tried to portray his duality, gun in one hand and plumbing wrench in the other. Initially I assumed it would be clear that the big wrench represented his current self as a plumber and the gun his old self as a gangster. The editor, Liani Maasdorp felt the cover design was not appropriate when I showed it to her, “It looks like a gangster b-grade film” (Maasdorp, Verbatim Notes, 2010). The low camera angle is emphasising his dominance over the viewer. In retrospect I realise the photo could promote a violent stereotype, as the plumbing wrench is a weapon too. I also selected the photo in the

hope that it would appeal to a broader audience to watch the film when they see the cover. My conclusion now is that the DVD cover photo is too ambiguous and could create a stereotypical representation of Rashaad. A different photo could have avoided framing Rashaad in a violent way. Some viewers, who have watched the film, realise the underlying message of the DVD cover in retrospect, after the screening, but it would not be reasonable to expect everyone looking at the DVD cover to understand my message.

5.3 Collaboration

Thirdly Pichaske states that collaboration between subject and filmmaker contributes to greater agency in determining the construction of the subject's images. "This strategy helps to mitigate both concerns regarding power imbalances, and inaccuracies that may arise through the practise of outsider storytelling" (Pichaske 2009: 3). Rashaad and I worked together very well. He instinctively understood the filmmaking process and was a natural in front of the camera. "I wanted to be dancer when I was younger, we used to compete and have dance competitions at the dance clubs in Cape Town. I like entertaining people" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010).

One area where Rashaad and I achieved a high level of collaboration was the re-enactments in the film. Rashaad identified key turning points in his life and we portrayed them from his point of view. While we were shooting I relied on Rashaad's direction and memory of how events occurred. Rashaad also portrayed his younger self in the re-enactments. After the good takes Rashaad would view the footage with me and we would decide together if we needed another take or any changes. Our collaboration during the re-enactments was definitely the high point for both of us during the filmmaking process.

Rashaad knew he had final approval of the film, and I think that gave him a sense of control and involvement, but more than that, we trusted each other. In the middle of the filming process I invited him to a rough-cut screening. Rashaad felt it was not necessary for him to see anything yet, "I trust you and Liani, you are my friends" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010). I think the collaboration worked so well because there was a high level of trust, and not necessarily only because Rashaad had final approval.

We continued to collaborate and participated in a number of local film festivals of which the highlight was the Cape Winelands Film Festival and Durban International Film Festival. Rashaad and I flew to Durban and it was the first time he flew in his life. The question-and-answer sessions after the screening of the film were for me always the high light. It allowed mostly well-off people, far removed from gangs, to ask an ex-gangster a variety of questions.

The film crew got very few questions and the audience often ran out of time when asking Rashaad questions. The audience would then queue after the question-and-answer session to wish Rashaad well or ask more questions.

A great combined collaborative effort was when Rashaad came to show *Odd Number* to my master's class at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The viewing was followed by a sixty-minute discussion with Rashaad and I about the film. The editor, Liani Maasdorp managed to arrange an invite to the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). In both instances the universities paid Rashaad for his time. After these engagements, Rashaad started doing motivational speaking at schools on his own. He would first screen the film and then the kids would ask questions. At one screening a teenager asked Rashaad what it feels like to kill someone. Rashaad did not know what to answer initially and then said "It is not like the movies when you kill a man, I am not proud of my past, don't make my mistakes" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2011). At the screening at CPUT, a woman asked him if he really thought he had been punished enough for all the people he killed and hurt. Rashaad hesitantly replied, "God will have the final say" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2011). I could see he was visibly upset. I discovered afterwards that the lady lost a family member to gang violence in the late nineties.

5.4 Objectivity

There is a problem with having a high level of trust and being friends with the subject of a documentary. The friendship can compromise the representation of that subject. On a number of occasions I had to measure whether my reluctance to present the audience with certain information was due to my friendship or if it was simply not needed in the film. A man with Rashaad's background cannot but have skeletons in the cupboard and on occasion something would slip or he would confide in me something he had previously omitted. We were working in a gang area and would on occasion encounter stolen goods, counterfeit cigarettes and illegal guns. These would often be in the possession of Rashaad's friends or acquaintances. What was our responsibility as a crew, do we compromise Rashaad and go to the police? What was important for me was the fact that Rashaad had changed and left the gangs behind. He was no longer participating in illegal activities and we made a decision not to report anything, unless someone's life was in danger. The goal was to tell Rashaad's story as best as possible, despite the grey and sometimes difficult decisions and conflicts we experienced.

CHAPTER 6: *ODD NUMBER* AND NICHOLS' MODES

In the following section I compare *Odd Number* to three of Nichols' modes of documentary filmmaking. I evaluate *Odd Number* in telling Rashaad's story by looking at the strengths and weaknesses of each mode and how it would apply to *Odd Number*.

6.1 The observational mode

Nichols' fly on the wall observational mode does not allow voice over commentary, non-synchronous sound or music, headings, re-enactments or interviews. *Odd Number* does not adhere to a number of these proposed limitations as it has re-enactments, a music score and inter-headings with text and interviews. *Odd Number* breaks with this mode for a number of reasons. This mode prevents the filmmaker from providing a context in that only the present tense can be shown and past re-enactments that can inform the viewer are not possible. That said, in the observational mode the subject would be allowed to speak about the past but re-enactments would not be possible. In the following section, under the participatory mode, I elaborate why re-enactments were an essential part of *Odd Number* and why the observational mode would not have been appropriate for *Odd Number*.

6.2 The participatory mode

As discussed before, Nichols' participatory mode goes further than the observational mode in that the subject is actively encouraged to participate and contribute towards the information the viewer receives. The mechanisms for this participation in *Odd Number* are interviews and re-enactments.

6.2.1 Interviews

The interview allows the subject to speak to the viewer directly. The subject's voice is more authentic and believable than voice-over, which does not allow for subjects to speak for themselves. *Odd Number* uses the interview extensively. Interviews are conducted in the subject's mother tongue (Afrikaans) and then translated for the viewer using English subtitles. Rashaad's English was better than average but I knew that his interactions with his family and friends were always in Afrikaans. It would be odd having him switching from Afrikaans to English and back when, for example, I am filming him talking to his daughter. I also felt that Afrikaans would allow Rashaad the best expression of his views. Another consideration was that Afrikaans is my mother tongue and that made for clear, easy communication between us. Rashaad has an amazing sense of humour and some jokes only work in Afrikaans.

Nichols is critical of the interview and highlights the power imbalance between the interviewer and interviewee, as the interviewer deciding on the questions and which answers to include and exclude (Nichols 1991: 47). Furthermore editorial control lies with the filmmaker and therefore the control over the message. In my opinion these criticisms can be valid, but it depends on the filmmaker's intent and mechanisms in place to avoid the subject's voice getting lost. The agreement with Rashaad was that he would have final approval of the film and that we would discuss and come to an agreement if he did not like anything. This was not a 100% failsafe, but was a good mechanism and reminder to me to portray the subject accurately, as the subject had final approval.

6.2.2 Re-enactments

One of the most powerful forms of Rashaad's participation in *Odd Number* was the process of creating the re-enactments. Pichaske emphasises the importance of collaboration and I discussed this in detail in the previous section. The re-enactments in *Odd Number* were critical to portray key events in Rashaad's life. Rashaad and I chose the re-enactments carefully based on the impact the events had on him and the people around him. A key re-enactment is the scene where Rashaad, his daughter and a friend are being fired on when driving in his black Volkswagen Golf. The 28s mistook Rashaad's friend reaching for a mobile phone as reaching for a gun. This event was the final catalyst in him aligning himself with the opposing 26s.

Another reason for using the re-enactments was that Rashaad came across very well on camera and one struggled to believe that the charming man in front of you has committed many murders. A story telling strategy employed to convey the extent and severity of Rashaad's previous actions was to use re-enactments.

The re-enactment of Rashaad breaking down a door with a machete and another re-enactment when his eight-month pregnant wife trying to kill him, portrays the severity of the impact he was having on the people around him effectively. Rashaad reflected during the filming of *Odd Number* that, "Many people here still fear me, hopefully the film can show them I changed" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010). I cannot help but speculate what an eight month pregnant woman must be feeling, as she attempts to kill the father of her child. As Rashaad put it to me on the *Odd Number* set, "When she tried to kill me, it showed me how tired she was of all my fucking around. She was there for me every time I went to prison, but my actions made her hard in the end. I cannot blame her" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010).

Rashaad's ambush and wounding by Face's men in Bellville South, was a key event in turning his life around. The time spent in hospital recovering and the subsequent five years awaiting trial was key in Rashaad turning his back on crime. Another interesting result of the re-enactments was the cathartic nature on Rashaad of the filming of the re-enactments. "It feels like I am getting it out of my system all over again, maybe I will have less nightmares now" (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010).

During the writing of this thesis *Odd Number* won the jury prize for best documentary at the 2012 Verona African Film Festival in Italy. It is interesting to note that the prize-winning announcement refers specifically to the successful use of re-enactments as a device to amplify the narrative of the film (Colombo, 2012). This was good feedback to receive from a film festival jury and served as confirmation for the use of re-enactments in *Odd Number* as a mechanism to reveal Rashaad to the audience.

6.3 The Reflexive mode

In this mode the filmmaker gives as much importance to the story as to the process of telling that story. The viewer is made aware of possible bias and the process of representation, in order to increase the believability of what the viewer sees. As my research for this thesis progressed and I learnt more, I now believe I should have used more interactive approaches to make *Odd Number* more participatory and transparent. By filming my early meetings with Rashaad, as well as the crew briefs and meetings, I would have allowed the viewer insight into dynamics and motivations not available to them with the film in its current state. I could also have filmed Rashaad watching the editing process develop and captured his comments and feedback.

I have included in the extras feature of the *Odd Number* DVD the behind the scenes feature, as well as unedited scenes. The behind the scenes feature was beyond my control as it was a separate academic project with another director and is not as revealing as I had hoped it would be. Certain constructive conflict between the editor and I would have been useful to film in order for the viewer to gain insight into *Odd Number's* process. That said, the process was affected by limited budget and time, a full-time job and doing the documentary as a project for part-time studies. With more time, resources and the knowledge I have now I would have seriously considered a more participatory approach. As a result of my experience, I have taken a more reflexive approach to my current project filmed in India.

CHAPTER 7: THE RECEPTION OF THE FILM AT ZANZIBAR INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Odd Number was selected and accepted by the 2012 Zanzibar International Film Festival (ZIFF). The festival took place from 7 to 15 July 2012, in Zanzibar on the east coast of Africa. *Odd Number* was one of only a few films by a white filmmaker to be accepted by the festival, which has a predominantly African audience. I attended the festival to represent *Odd Number* and to observe how the audience would respond to Rashaad's story being told by a white filmmaker.

7.1 Audience response

Odd Number had two screenings followed by a question-and-answer session. Most of the questions centred on how I managed to gain such intimate access and why Rashaad and Face were willing to talk so openly to me. Professor William Bissel from Lafayette University asked me to elaborate on the process of gaining such intimate access. In response to these questions I highlighted the duration and quality of my and Rashaad's friendship, as well as the high level of trust we had developed over the years. I pointed out that a contributing factor was that Afrikaans is our shared mother tongue. I also recounted how I came to notice that many coloured people on the Cape Flats assumed a shared political view, based on our shared mother tongue. There was often an immediate solidarity in the light of their perceived marginalisation by the African National Congress (ANC) government. Out of this grew an environment of trust and confidence.

I filmed two video interviews at ZIFF with Professor Ikaweba Bunting and Professor William Bissel, which focussed on representation in general and representation in *Odd Number*.

7.2 Doctor Ikaweba Bunting

Doctor Ikaweba Bunting is an associate professor and ZIFF's festival director. He lectures in African studies at California State University. When asked why he selected *Odd Number* for ZIFF, Professor Ikaweba replied:

"I wanted African films and not just any kind of film; I wanted films that addressed really critical issues of social justice, identity, race, religion and prison. I saw in *Odd Number* that it took on that whole thing. It is made in Africa and is critical in looking at those issues (Bunting, Video Interview, 2012).

When I asked Ikaweba if a white man could tell a black man's story and vice versa he replied, "If you were raised in a white community, I don't think they could tell that same story as a black man. It could be compassionate, it could be understanding, but there is a certain point where there is a disconnect" (Bunting, Video Interview, 2012). Ikaweba then pointed to his own experiences filming the Masai in Kenya and Tanzania and how he knew in certain situations that he was missing something, without sometimes knowing what it was.

When I asked what advice Ikaweba would give a filmmaker making a film about another culture or race he responded, "Before you pick up the camera go live with your subject and try and understand them better and let the community direct your film and follow their cues" (Bunting, Video Interview, 2012). When asked at the end of the interview if he had any last point to make about representation, Ikaweba said:

"As a filmmaker be aware of your power all the time and be motivated by justice. We cannot be driven by the motivation of profit or personal aggrandisement... we have to be driven by that idea of a better and just society, because we have to be as close to the truth" (Bunting, Video Interview, 2012).

7.3 Professor William Bissel

Professor William Bissel is an Associate Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at Lafayette University and has attended eight Zanzibar International Film Festivals. He had studied the festival over a twelve month cycle from planning to execution and has a special interest in film, inequality, colonialism and Africa. When asked if a white man can tell a black man's story Bissel responded, "Probably not in the same way that that other person from African descent would tell the story, but is it better that that story doesn't get told, or is silence a better value?" (Bissel, Video Interview, 2012).

Within a follow up email after the video interview, he raises a deeper issue, in that my interview question presumes a racial economy of opposition between "white" and "black" that is in itself a product from a colonial past and legacy of slavery:

"It takes for granted precisely those categories that deserve to be put in question and risk essentialising [legitimising] these identities. How is whiteness constituted or understood, or blackness? From Tanzania, to South Africa, Brazil or Canada, notions of race shift quite widely, and across the globe" (Bissel, Personal Communication, 2012).

Bissel argues that although we live in a world shaped by the history of race and all the inequality, distinctions, and divisions this implies, we have to acknowledge that race itself is a fiction with no biological or material reality, although we recognise it has had very real effects on people. Part of the question of whether a white man can tell a black man's story should thus acknowledge that the terms "white man" and "black man" are fluid, contested and up for debate (Bissel, Personal Communication, 2012). According to Bissel the relationship between the filmmaker and subject is the fundamental building block for good representation:

"You cannot do good anthropology or filmmaking without entering into a relationship with the people you will be working with and if you do not do that you are just appropriating images or ripping them off. The shallowness of that relationship or its injustice will come through in the images and work" (Bissel, Video Interview, 2012).

Bissel believes that without an ethical relationship that is consensual, negotiated and ongoing, "...that takes the research relationship and puts it in the continuum with friendship, mutuality and something that is unfolding. That is the way the best work comes out" (Bissel, Video Interview, 2012). It is important to note that this confirms Pichaske's view that:

"...it is becoming common-perhaps even expected-that documentary filmmakers should have close personal ties to their subjects. Those ties not only result in a greater depth of understanding of the subject, but also a stronger sense of ethical responsibility toward him or her as a human being" (Pichaske 2009: 67).

When asked what Bissel thought about *Odd Number*, he responded that it was a beautiful work and one of the two best films he had seen so far at ZIFF. He found it fascinating, "Precisely because I teach courses in things like ethnographic method. It really raised a lot of questions for me, about how you were able to establish that kind of rapport and engagement that came through the film" (Bissel, Video Interview, 2012). Bissel was struck by the sadness of Rashaad, "Growing up in that milieu with that kind of rage and the fact that the only way he could express that rage was through increasing violence and destructiveness" (Bissel, Video Interview, 2012). Bissel found it important and noteworthy that Rashaad experienced a profound life transformation, which most people do not have the opportunity to experience.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

8.1 Shortcomings

According to Ruby “Once it is acknowledged that no one can speak for or represent a culture but only his or her relationship to it, then a multiplicity of viewpoints is possible and welcome—some from within and others from without and all the marvellously gray areas in between” (1991: 31). *Odd Number*’s greatest shortcoming is undoubtedly its lack of self-reflexivity and inability to put the filmmaker’s process in front of the camera. Certainly, there is some self-reflexivity when Rashaad portrays his younger self in the re-enactments, and the behind-the-scenes documentary reveals some of the filmmaker’s process. Still, in my view, this is not enough to provide the viewer with a clearer context and an awareness of the filmmaker’s bias and methods of interpretation. Thus, *Odd Number* does not quite accomplish the openness towards a plurality of views as well as I had hoped. That said, the way that Rashaad has made use of the documentary for his own purposes is evidence that the subject of a documentary still carries agency in his or her own life, despite the shortcomings of the director or the film itself.

Pichaske points out that a reflective or first person approach, to help frame the documentary as subjective as opposed to a supposedly objective representation, contributes to fair and accurate representation. Nichols echoes this, arguing that the reflexive mode aims to make it easy for viewers to see that documentary films are representations constructed by filmmakers and not the absolute truth (1991: 57). Had I taken a more self-reflexive approach, *Odd Number* would have been a richer work, more representative of Rashaad’s life. Rashaad and I were born on different sides of the privilege fence under apartheid, and the transition to post-apartheid life has not really changed this power relationship. The legacy of apartheid lingers on, and a more self-reflexive approach to making the film would have acknowledged this.

8.2 Friendship and Collaboration

When comparing *Odd Number* to Pichaske’s three criteria for representative and fair filmmaking, it does well in terms of two of the criteria: having a relationship beyond the scope of the project, and a sustained collaboration with the subject. By developing a caring relationship with the subject, it could be argued that the filmmaker would consider the long-term impact of the project. Collaboration between subject and filmmaker contributes to greater agency in determining the construction of the subject’s images, which “...helps to mitigate both concerns regarding power imbalances, and inaccuracies that may arise through the practise of outsider storytelling” (Pichaske 2009: 3). Bissel’s view is that the relationship with the subject is the most important factor determining authenticity in the portrayal of the subject (Bissel,

Video Interview, 2012). From this point of view, I consider *Odd Number* a success. Our friendship and continued collaboration stands out as the film's strongest measure to ensure fair and honest representation. After all, the relationship between filmmaker and subject is the fundamental building block for good representation. Indeed, the integrity of the film hinges on this:

“You cannot do good anthropology or filmmaking without entering in to a relationship with the people you will be working with and if you do not do that you are just appropriating images or ripping them off. The shallowness of that relationship or its injustice will come through in the images and work” (Bissel, Video Interview, 2012).

As part of our collaboration after the film was completed, we represented *Odd Number* at over ten local festivals together. The biggest of these was the Durban International Film Festival (DIFF). The flight to Durban was Rashaad's first time in an airplane. In addition, Rashaad and I collaborated at a number of film schools and universities where *Odd Number* was shown and the students had the opportunity to discuss the film and ask questions afterwards. Independently of me, he started doing motivational speeches. To date, he has held screenings and spoken at five schools. Rashaad and I often discuss the more difficult questions children ask him at these sessions.

8.3 Agreement and Legacy

Our agreement that Rashaad would have the final say and approval over the film's content was a powerful mechanism to ensure that he retained the power to determine how he was represented. This measure, aimed to equalise some of the relationship between us is in the final analysis, more important than the potential consequences of individual technical and stylistic choices (Winston 1988: 12). This is evident in how the film brought lasting change to Rashaad's life. Apart from the subsequent motivational speaking, making *Odd Number* functioned as catharsis. The re-enactments brought up emotions and Rashaad thought the experience helped him get his past out of his system. In terms of his legacy, he felt that the film left a more accurate portrayal of his experiences for his family and the public (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010). This was important to Rashaad from the beginning, as he feared he would only be remembered for the bad he had done unless he could offer an alternative viewpoint.

Rashaad felt that in some ways the documentary improved his standing in his community, and some people now fear him less. *Odd Number* also allowed Rashaad to make peace with Face, the man he failed to assassinate. Despite the visit to Face's house being a stressful

experience, he felt afterwards that it was good to clear the air and that it would be easier driving through Face's neighbourhood in the future (Adendorf, Verbatim Notes, 2010).

The film's lack of self-reflexivity undoubtedly compromises Rashaad's representation. Still, based on audience responses, I think viewers get a good sense of Rashaad, his crimes and subsequent redemption. Most of the people that speak to Rashaad and I acknowledge the fundamental change he has achieved, and express admiration and respect for his accomplishments. On the whole, I believe *Odd Number* represents Rashaad's life story well, despite the inevitable power dynamics involved in a South African documentary in which the filmmaker is white and the subject black. South African film needs to both acknowledge and rectify wrongs of the past and how these continue into the present. However, in the words of Pichaske, "This should not be taken to suggest that everyone should only represent himself or herself. Such a situation would leave many important stories untold" (2009: 250).

While *Odd Number* has its shortcomings, I believe the way it tells the story of Rashaad's redemption has enabled him to take it a step further. It is not only about him making peace with the past. After the completion of the film, Rashaad started to visit schools to tell his own story. In that sense, *Odd Number* actually managed to open up for a multiplicity of voices. At the very least, it is clear that the director's narrative is not the final word on Rashaad's life. Through *Odd Number*, Rashaad has claimed agency, not only to rebuild or redeem his own life, but to work to improve the lot of the community. This, I believe, is the best possible legacy *Odd Number* could leave.

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