

ELEMENTAL PRODUCTIONS

"AFFLICTIONS: CULTURE & MENTAL ILLNESS IN INDONESIA" SERIES

# FAMILY VICTIM

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## FILM GUIDE

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ELEMENTAL PRODUCTIONS presents FAMILY VICTIM a film by ROBERT LEMELSON  
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**ESTU WARDHANI**  
*Understanding Deviance in the Context of Culture*

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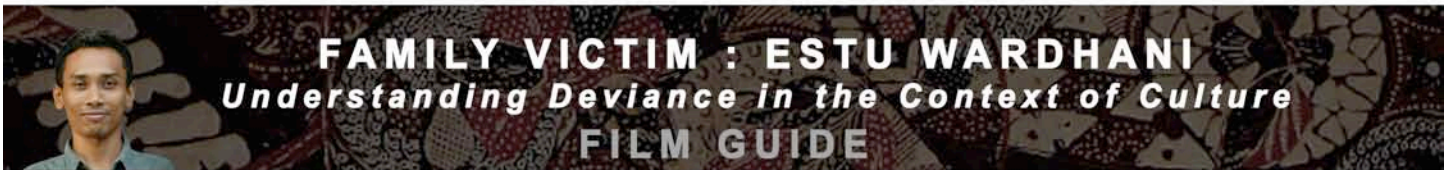
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## INTRODUCTION



Estu Wardhani is a Javanese man in his early thirties living in Gunung Kidul, a rural area on the outskirts of Yogyakarta in Central Java. An intelligent and charismatic person, Estu is married with two young daughters and runs a small business selling mobile phones. Locals greet him on the street with calls of “Halo Boss!” and he is amongst those neighborhood family men invited to participate in village meetings and contribute to ritual celebrations. This stability and social position is a brand new chapter in Estu’s biography, a hard-won if still tenuous success for himself and his family that follows a decade of confusion, false starts, and personal strife.

Estu has been “different” ever since he was a young boy. Over the course of his life, this difference has manifested through behaviors that range from the mildly unusual to the deeply distressing, such as physical tics; chronic restlessness and an inability or unwillingness to carry out daily tasks; a failure to complete his expected educational trajectory or hold a steady job; participation in activities such as gambling, stealing, and substance abuse; and aggressive or at times violent behavior towards friends and family. These disruptive patterns of conduct have stressed his interpersonal relationships and interfered with his ability to follow the path of normative Javanese development into adulthood.

The search relatives and healers carry out to find the root of Estu’s problems and the corresponding treatment mobilizes culturally salient models of deviance, rehabilitation, and culpability. These models are informed by Javanese beliefs about development and maturity, family roles and expectations, communal approaches to health and illness, spiritual practice and power, personal initiative, collective responsibility, and religious faith.



## FAMILY VICTIM : ESTU WARDHANI

*Understanding Deviance in the Context of Culture*

### FILM GUIDE

#### ESTU'S LIFE HISTORY



Estu was born in 1975, the seventh of eight children. Since he was about eight or nine years old he exhibited a series of odd physical tics and occasionally fainted. Despite his evident intellect, he seemed unable to complete even basic chores and rarely helped out around the house. Because his mother felt sorry for him, she refrained from disciplining his misbehavior.

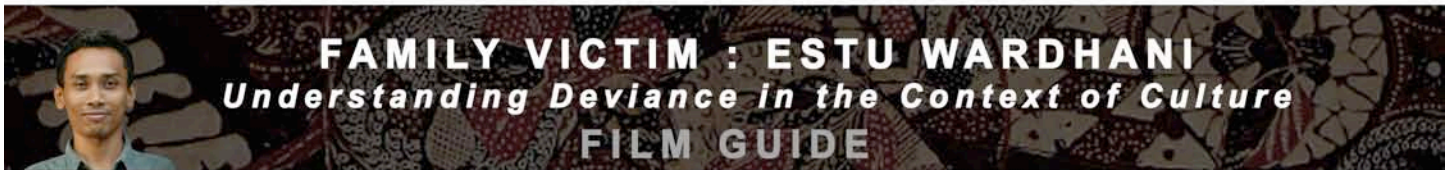
As he got older, however, this misbehavior became more marked. When he was ten, he engaged in petty theft. In Junior High his best friends were *anak jalanan*, or street

kids, and by high school Estu was skipping class, getting drunk, and taking tranquilizers and steroids. These experiments with deviance stood out in stark contrast to the rest of his siblings, who were all driven and focused academic achievers.

At the same time he was making forays into the world of illegal substances, Estu became interested in the spiritual world. Like many young Javanese men he strove to improve his personal power and ability by studying with various *dukuns*, traditional healers who are revered for their mystical prowess. He developed a particularly close relationship with Irah, a *dukun* who ritually adopted Estu as her spiritual son. While friends and family distrusted Irah and suspected her of practicing black magic, Estu felt she was a protective force in his life and was deeply upset when she passed away a number of years into their relationship.

Estu went to college in Yogyakarta and there he fell in love with Ana, the younger sister of a friend who lived nearby. Despite frequent squabbles and different religious backgrounds, with Ana being a Muslim and Estu being Christian, they decided to marry. When Estu consulted with a trusted *dukun* Pak Arjo on the matter, the man predicted hardship because they were “not a good match.” He said,

***“Until a certain point of time your life will always be full of quarrels [...] If you can’t endure it it’ll be like hell... But if you can endure your married life, the time will come for you to live happily.”***



This grim prediction proved accurate. Estu and Ana had frequent violent domestic disputes, usually triggered by Estu's unpredictable behavior and ongoing economic challenges. One of their main struggles was Estu's gambling; his parents and siblings frequently loaned them money to start their own business, but Estu gambled it away. In order to support his habit Estu forged fake lottery tickets to collect rewards, feigned illness to collect charity, and on more than one occasion stole and pawned off other people's motorbikes. He sometimes resorted to direct coercion or threats.



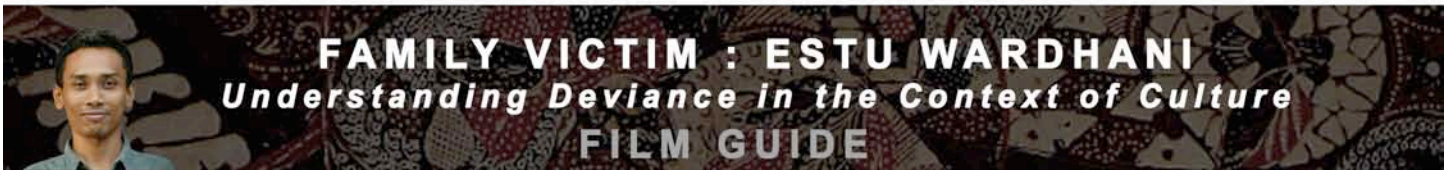
The birth of his daughter, Mega, while bringing joy did little to calm Estu or unite him with his wife. Ana became so depressed and desperate that she would bang her head against the wall while contemplating suicide and fantasizing about leaving Estu.

When reflecting on his fraught marriage and his other problems, Estu says that he is spoiled and gets bored too easily. He also thinks there might be a malevolent being who takes possession of him. When he was around 20, about the time he met Ana, he started hearing voices that would get angry, insult him, and encourage him to do bad things. Certain family members and *dukuns* feel that this other being is actually Irah, working her black magic through him from the afterlife. Estu hates these voices and the things they make him do. He has considered committing suicide if he cannot rid himself of them and free his life from its frustrating cycle of deviant behavior, low self-regard, emotional outbursts, and attempts at rehabilitation.

Estu has been subject to a range of frequent spiritual, behavioral, and pharmaceutical interventions in the face of his actions. On more than one occasion he has been temporarily imprisoned in a local jail, a known recourse for Javanese parents who want to discipline their disruptive children. Additionally, different *dukuns* have tried to entice or enable Estu to live a better life; some have prescribed various religious rituals to right past spiritual errors, while others have counseled Estu on practical matters such as financial management. In one memorable event, Pak Puji, a *dukun* and one of Estu's closest advisors, took Estu to a cemetery at night and knocked him unconscious. When Estu awoke he was prompted to write a letter pledging to live a better life and was forced to sign this pledge in his own blood.

In addition to traditional Javanese healing practices, Estu has been evaluated medically for his troubling condition. He has been diagnosed by his brother-in-law, psychiatrist Dr. Mahar Agusno, with a variety of psychiatric disorders, including attention deficit disorder, dysthymia, Tourette syndrome, and most troubling, anti-social personality disorder, or as Dr. Agusno summed him up, "psychopath." Dr. Mahar prescribed him Haloperidol, a potent antipsychotic, and Fluoxetine, or Prozac, a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor. These medications reportedly made him feel better and more in control, but he did not continue their full course.





Despite all these efforts by 2003 Estu's situation had completely deteriorated. He had scrawled angry graffiti on the walls of his house and business, threatened the lives of his family members, and was no longer welcome at the houses of any of his sibling's. His own parents had moved out of their own home along with all of their belongings to avoid his destructive wrath.

Then in 2004, when it seemed like things couldn't get much worse, something changed. Estu's second daughter was born and he was somehow

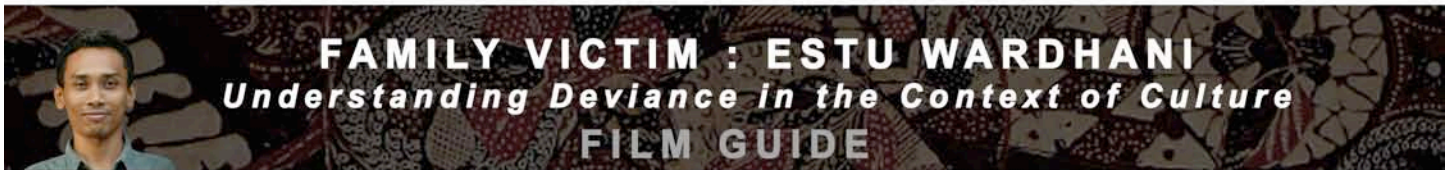
able to adjust to the rhythms of fatherhood in a way he hadn't when Mega was young. At around the same time, his father fell ill with cancer. Estu became his prime caretaker, nursing him and staying with him at his bedside. The two were able to talk about everything that had happened, express their love for each other, and find resolution before Pak Wardani succumbed to his illness and passed away. This experience was profoundly important to Estu, who felt proud that he was able to ease his father's suffering and gratified that this labor was acknowledged and valued.

By 2006, Estu seems to have retained the sense of calm and purpose that caring for his father had given him. While he still wrestles with his own feelings of restlessness and low self worth, he has been able to hold down a steady job as a driver, save money, and start his own cell phone business. The new financial stability has in turn positively affected his relationship with Ana, and their marriage has blossomed. Estu no longer hears voices or has suicidal thoughts. He also claims to have noble aspirations, saying he wants to use his life for the good of others. As Estu seems to be settling in and settling down, his family is hesitantly beginning to consider the fact that he has truly changed; however they also warily acknowledge that this might be just another temporary reprieve.

### JAVANESE FAMILISM AND COLLECTIVISM

Estu's actions, and their disorienting power, cannot be understood outside of the cultural and social context within which they have taken shape nor can they be considered apart from the disruptive and painful effects they have on his family.

Indonesian cultures for the most part are collectivist; in other words, Indonesians often think of themselves as being part of a larger group of people, and in making decisions consider the wellbeing of this group first. Studies have shown that Javanese people tend to express much more interdependent values as compared to many families in the United States or Europe.



In fact, one of the core values of Indonesian communities and the Indonesian nation-state has been *gotong royong*. *Gotong royong* is the principle of mutual co-operation and the practice of working together collectively to get things done without expectation of compensation or personal gain. Historically a fundamental tenet of local *kampung* or village life, *gotong royong* was incorporated into nationalist principles of government such that former President Sukarno said that Indonesia could be considered a “*Gotong Royong State*.”

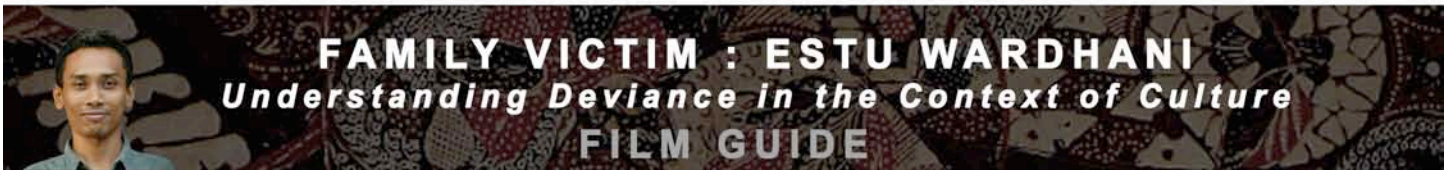
This interdependence begins in the family, with many Indonesians displaying a strong sense of loyalty towards parents as well as high levels of intimacy and mutual assistance among siblings throughout the life span. This translates into enacted strategies of sharing resources and providing economic support; Javanese siblings both expect and offer much higher levels of material help for one another than those in many other countries such as the United States. This cultural precedent may help explain the high levels of distress Estu’s siblings feel, both in Estu’s abuse of their support and also in their own reluctance to leave him to his own devices. Thus, in other cultural circumstances it might be appropriate to disengage financially—indeed, if siblings had been engaged in the first place—but Javanese brothers and sisters may not feel comfortable doing so.

Another Indonesian concept that captures the theory of mutually influential interpersonal relationships is that of the *linkungan*, which can be directly translated as environment, and often refers to the extended kin networks that surround a person throughout his or her life course. The *linkungan* is considered profoundly significant in determining the behavior or outcome of any individual, perhaps so significant that it cannot be disentangled from any individual’s sickness or deviance; if someone falls ill or acts out, responsibility is shared, both in terms of etiology and cure.

***“We people in Java, our lives are not separate from our culture. So [...] if someone is sick in a family, the family will also share the suffering, and then the whole society will also share it, so whatever happens, both family and society will make the medication possible. Because they all feel the effects of the illness.” –Dr. Mahar Agusno***

If the *linkungan* shares responsibility for Estu’s difficulties, so must they share the responsibility of cure. Fittingly, the family has engaged in various practices intended to help Estu; his older brother has begun to study spiritual practices to increase his capacity for healing others; his mother has been prescribed ritual fasts and feasts to perform on Estu’s birthday in order to restore him to





health; and his father has been instructed to reconnect with Estu through additional rituals such as sending one of his belongings to be carried along the river into the south sea, a known location of spiritual power.

Rather than solely pathologizing the individual, or seeking isolated organic aberrance within Estu's person, the Javanese conceptualization of Estu's disorder situates his difficulties within a web of culturally informed socio-economic family relationships.

### DUKUNS: TRADITIONAL JAVANESE HEALERS

*Dukuns* are important figures in Javanese society—experts in Javanese spirituality and ritual, masters of concentration and insight, and wise in the arts of traditional healing. *Dukuns* are considered to have connections to the invisible world and therefore can be consulted for a variety of reasons concerning mysticism, ceremony, magic, healing, and personal power. There are all kinds of *dukuns* who each have their subspecialties, such as midwives, masseurs, spirit mediums, circumcision practitioners, ritual specialists to help ensure successful weddings or feasts, sorcerers, and herbalists. There are also more powerful *dukuns* who have multiple capabilities and can be called on in a number of situations.

One can be predisposed to becoming a *dukun* by having a family member who is a *dukun*; however, regardless of heritage, becoming a *dukun* requires a long process of apprenticeship with a *guru*, studying specific knowledge and mantras, as well as fasting and engaging in other ascetic practices designed to build spiritual potency. While the figure of the *dukun* remains revered in Javanese society, many individual *dukuns* may be looked at alternately with skepticism and belief. An individual may seek out the assistance of more than one *dukun*, sometimes travelling great distances to visit famed healers in other cities.



The film portrays one example of personal *dukun* consultation practice, showing both an eclectic group of men as well as their recommendations. Estu has studied with at least ten different *dukuns* in his search for guidance, mentorship and enhanced potency. They each have their own take on what is wrong with him, and each prescribe different things: powerful mantras to memorize; *raja*, or handkerchiefs with Arabic written on to be used in magical processes; spells to recite; rituals to carry out; practices to engage in; and *ilmu*, or mystical wisdom and knowledge.





Estu has studied many skills from *dukuns* over the years, such as how to avoid injury in a fight by becoming invincible, how to exorcise evil spirits, how to get a girlfriend, and how to increase personal charisma and become more influential.

In the film Estu's family members mention they were disturbed by his intimacy with the *dukun* Irah because she was known to practice black magic, or *ilmu hitam*. Generally, black magic is used to



make people sick or suffer, manipulate others to meet one's own ends, or even to cause others' death. While it is assumed that all powerful *dukuns* are familiar with both white and black magic—and that the knowledge required to manipulate them come from the same source—those who actively use black magic to harm others are feared and looked at with distrust; those suspected of practicing black magic have at times even been the target of suspicion, attack and political reprobation.

Because of the frequent and intense contact with the spirit world, it is considered to require a significant amount of personal strength and resources to be able to become a *dukun*. Insanity is a known risk of engaging in magical practices without having the psychological foundation to cope with such extreme or supernatural situations. This may explain some of Estu's family's fears with regards to his interest in mysticism and the role of the *dukun*.

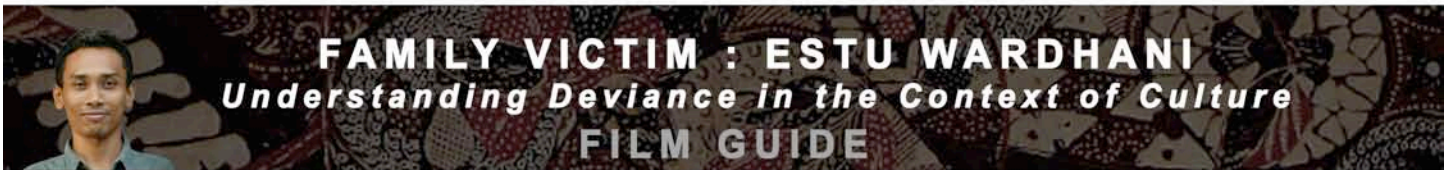
### AGGRESSION IN CULTURAL CONTEXT: SPIRIT POSSESSION

To provide a reason for some of his upsetting behavior, Estu explains

***"It seems that ...there's something alive, which can't accept it if it's treated rudely. They can't accept to get mean treatment, they rebel, [saying], "Don't accept it. Take revenge, when possible."***

***If in fact inside here [points to heart] there is another being that is separate from my self, maybe it is that being who is working."***

Much like the Balinese, many Javanese acknowledge and interact with a roster of supernatural beings and spirits, broadly known as *bangsa halus*. Those most commonly known are *memedi*, or "spooks" which can take the shape of a friend or relative or a whole variety of characters such as skeletons, ghosts, disembodied limbs, shape-shifters, and etc. There are *tujul* and *metek*, child



spirits who can be sent to do your dirty work; *demit*, spirits who inhabit a particular place; *djinns*, who are known to be Islamic spirits; and *lelembuts*, which are known to enter or possess human beings, sometimes causing death.

There are also different kinds of spirit possession, which is a common ritual practice in Java, Indonesia, and broader Southeast Asia used for sacral, healing, and entertainment purposes. The Indonesian classification system clearly differentiates between such spirit possession, spirit channeling, and psychic distress caused by angry spirits. The most common kind of spirit possession is known as *kesurupan*, which does not last long, is fairly easily brought to a close by finding out which spirit is present and what it wants, and is often concluded by the possessed person fainting and then reviving with no memory of the event. Other kinds of possession include *kampel-kampelan*, where the person possessed is not obviously ill or in distress but is behaving slightly differently than usual, *setenan* which is a more extreme case of *kampel-kampelan*, and *kemomong*, which is the case of making a pact with a spirit where it may possess you and in exchange gives you special powers.



In Javanese belief, a state of "emptiness" is a known precursor to spirit possession. People may voluntarily empty themselves with the assistance of a *dukun*, *dalang*, or spiritual guardian, during the course of so-called trance dance performances such as *sintren* or *jathilan*. During these performances, the dancers become "puppets" or vessels for the actions of spirits and ancestors who use their bodies to communicate with the audience. In these cases, the individual is considered to be temporarily evacuated while divine beings inhabit their bodies, affording them skills—from dance proficiency to the ability to eat glass or walk on fire without being harmed—they do not have in everyday life. These performances are often held as part of marriage or circumcision rituals, and they are considered salutary for the communities who stage them. However, emptiness can be considered an undesirable or dangerous state to be in without such protective guardianship or outside of such a ritual context. Emptying oneself unintentionally, such as by daydreaming or spacing out (Ind. *Melamun*, *pikiran kosong*) is warned against as leading to unwanted or uninvited intrusions by spiritual beings, who may be dangerous or malicious.



This context, combined with the above discussion about *dukuns*, may help clarify why in the film Estu's family wonders whether when he acts out it is because he might be possessed by the spirit of his beloved *dukun*, Mak Irah in a *setenan* or *kemomong* type arrangement.



## FAMILY VICTIM : ESTU WARDHANI

### *Understanding Deviance in the Context of Culture*

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#### AGGRESSION IN CULTURAL CONTEXT: NGAMUK



Ana says that when Estu demands her jewelry or other things that she knows he will use to gamble,

***"If I insist on not giving it to him, we will just fight with one another. Well, I'd better give it to him rather than seeing him run him run amok."***

She describes his behavior as explosive at times, as he lashes out physically at the people and things surrounding him, saying,

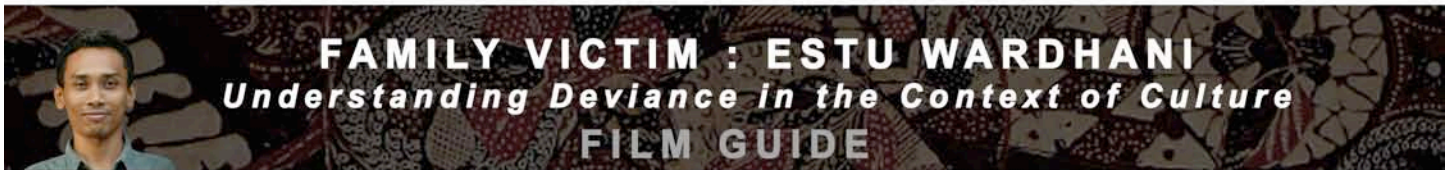
***"He becomes irritated. And when he gets irritated he may curse, ruin things [...] I'd better avoid him. I'm afraid that I'll get I'll get punched or something."***

Amok, or *ngamuk*, is a much-discussed and fabled phenomenon in Indonesia and wider Southeast Asia; it has historically been understood by scholars as an episode of intense rage and violence, denoting an altered state where the person with *ngamuk* at first appears to be brooding, and then suddenly loses all control. In the worst cases the *ngamuk* person may go on a murderous rampage, followed by an amnesiac unawareness of this violent event. The DSM-IV, or the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, which is the standard for psychological and psychiatric diagnosis, now categorizes *ngamuk* as a culture-bound dissociative disorder most prevalent among Southeast Asian males. Other mental health scholars see *ngamuk* as an impulse control disorder that may have a relationship to manic states.

Some contemporary psychological anthropologists suggest that rather than a discrete episode of mental disturbance, *ngamuk* is a common popular idiom of distress that refers to a range of anger reactions and represents various ambiguous categories of aggressive or threatening behavior. From this perspective, *ngamuk* is a particularly Javanese mechanism that gives structure and meaning to a range of deviant behaviors existing within a cultural environment that prizes self-control and a smooth presentation of self as a hallmark of psychological health and social appropriateness.



Vulnerabilities to running *ngamuk* include depression, disappointment or unfulfilled desires, jealousy of others, disturbance by spirits, and a poor relationship with or hostility towards family members. The disturbance thus points to a constellation of pressures which link the physical body, personal or subjective experience, and the socio-cultural demands upon individual and community.



*Ngamuk* is usually a comparatively self-limited experience; a person might have one episode of *ngamuk* in his or her lifetime and then never again. But Estu's problem is disturbingly chronic. The chronic variant of *ngamuk* from which Estu may be suffering is a known strand of mental illness or disturbance in Indonesia that is considered rare or severe enough to require hospitalization.

### KARMA AND COSMIC BALANCE

Estu clearly feels that his dysfunction is the manifestation all that is wrong in his family, and that he has become the scapegoat for their collective worry and misfortune and therefore the sole target for punishment. In positing why he might be suffering economically and personally while the rest of his family members thrive, Estu calls upon a particularly Javanese worldview, wherein his own seeming imbalance could actually be the manifestation of a deeper cosmic balance.



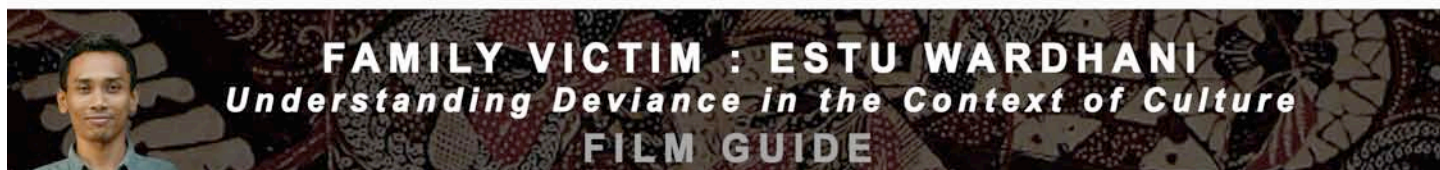
***"In my opinion there are two answers to this. The first The first is to fulfill the law of nature, there is sorrow sorrow and there is happiness, there is day and there there is night. The second is maybe I bear the consequences of my parents' or my grandparents' grandparents' sins in the past. So there must be one be one victim who bears all of that."***

While Estu's family is Christian, this explanation signals other systems of meaning that are active in contemporary Javanese culture, in particular the lasting and pervasive influence of indigenous animist beliefs and the residue of Hinduism. Hinduism came to Java in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries through trade relationships with India, and spread so that in the 14<sup>th</sup> century it was dominant religious belief system in Java. While ultimately the majority of Javanese converted to Islam, many aspects and beliefs of Hinduism survive in Javanist religion, *kejawen* and other forms of religious expression.

In describing the reasons for his behavior, Estu sketches a system of cosmic balance and karmic redistribution. In this cosmological system, which encompasses humoral theories of health and wellness to the spiritual organization of the world, there is a natural presence of opposing forces that must both be acknowledged and brought into balance; in Javanese idiom these forces may be articulated as white and black, light and dark, bitter and sweet, hot and cold, dry or wet, and etc.

Sometimes these forces follow their own logic in order to find balance, playing out their trajectory towards level stasis across the lives of men. Thus in seeking to make sense out of suffering, some Javanese may relate personal experience to the lasting intergenerational influence of their ancestors and the energetic or spiritual forces present in the natural world.





Following this conceptual model, instead of Estu's apparent deficient performance in relation to that of his siblings being the result of personal shortcomings, it is framed as a result of the inherent natural circulation and ultimate leveling of opposing forces. Estu explains,

***“My father liked gambling and he was famous that he often won, that’s my father. Well, the nature law can’t be imbalanced.... [T]he money from gambling has flowed into my family. Now in order to fulfill the natural law the money has to flow out from my family too. You see, maybe it has to flow out through me.”***

In trying to determine the cause and culpability for Estu’s difficulties, his entire family engages discourses of responsibility and destiny that sometimes harmonize with and sometimes contest such philosophies of fate and personal outcome.

### FURTHER RESOURCES

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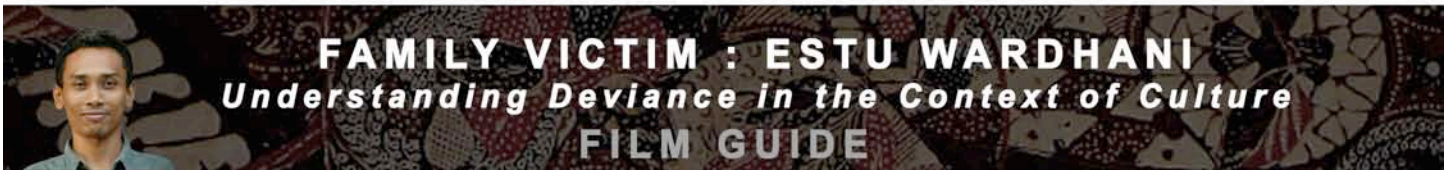
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## DISCUSSION: THEORIZING A CULTURAL-DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY

Estu's history is particularly compelling because it does not fit into any neat category of difference but rather invites multiple and overlapping interpretive frameworks, be they psychological, psychiatric, medical, economic, spiritual, or developmental. This raises the question; when someone is troubled and troublesome to his or her community, what models do we use to understand them? Do we view them as having forms of mental illness and try to change them with therapy and medication? Most likely, if they occurred in the United States, Estu's symptoms might be dealt with through forms of psychotherapy or counseling. But what mechanisms exist in rural Indonesia to label and mend such difficult situations? Should we see them as possessed by spirits, guiding and controlling their behavior? Must we consider their childhood experiences as primary influences on their actions and deeds?

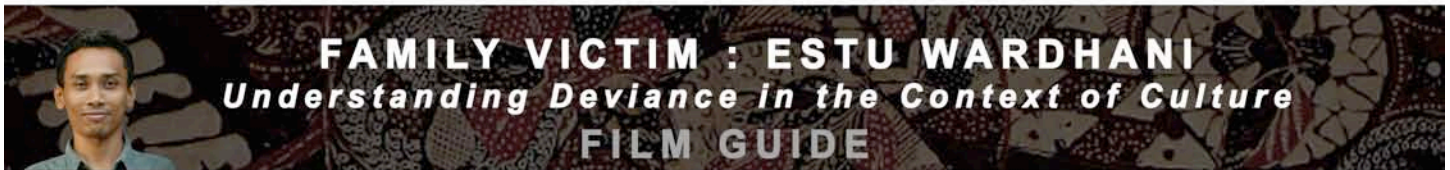
While it may prove difficult, or even impossible, to parse the various influences of biology, culture, and individual personality on Estu's sense and presentation of himself, certain explanatory themes emerge and hypotheses coalesce from the interpretations put forth by family members and healers. Ultimately, it is their answers or their search for answers that must take primacy, since they originate from the cultural context in which Estu's disorders have developed.

All of Estu's symptoms taken together—the lack of responsibility or mastery of fundamental life skills, the emotional outbursts, the quest for some kind of power or sense of self, the emptiness that makes him vulnerable to such forces—seem to suggest a kind of developmental delay.

In an American context, the process of "finding oneself" throughout a late, or even "extended" adolescence and early adulthood makes coherent cultural sense. Feelings of emptiness and restlessness are expected bi-products of normative adolescent development; even experimentation with substance use and transgressive behavior is to a certain extent expected, even somewhat indulged or encouraged. In many communities in the United States, the seeker or the temporary misfit does not challenge the social order; in some ways, he or she re-enforces mainstream American cultural values of independence, creativity, and self-determination. It is expected or understood that young people will seek and try different things to find that life path which truly fits their personality.







However in Estu's case, these same behaviors are exactly what makes him culturally disruptive. From physical presentation to emotional and behavioral expression, Javanese culture encourages a self-aware, self-controlled streamlined self. It may be, as acknowledged by Dr. Mahar and others, that because the range of acceptable deviance is much smaller in Javanese society than that in America, cultural norms cause Estu's behavior to be interpreted as much more upsetting than they might be elsewhere.

We can therefore posit that if Estu is developmentally delayed, he is also culturally delayed, not yet a good "fit" for the culture into which he was born, or as one *dukun* phrased it, "within his own environment, he feels like a stranger." It seems that in his acting out, his false starts, and his failure to settle down, Estu is exhibiting his failure to grow up, but even more importantly his failure to become truly "Javanese." He seems to be suffering from, or exhibiting, a primarily cultural malady.

***"According to a Javanese value system system his morality had broken with the the norm. So according to the value system in the society what he did was was not proper, so that it had to be changed for the better. For example, he he often got angry. Then he ran amok, amok, right? He liked gambling, which, which, according to the social norms, is norms, is not good. When he felt like doing something, he just did it. He liked liked saying improper things. In Javanese there are some inappropriate inappropriate expressions, and he just said them, like that, to the parents.***

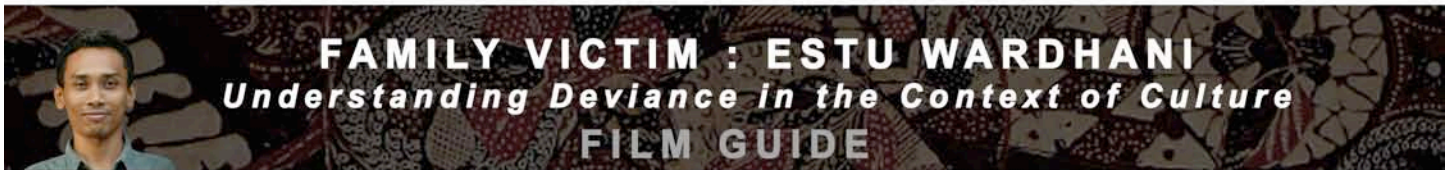
***Absolutely improper, very uncommon. For us Javanese it's not normal."***

**–Dukun Pak Arjo**



The Javanese character has been reified in anthropological texts as the pinnacle of self-control and self-denial. Javanese society famously values a smooth exterior, an awareness of one's class and position in relation to others, and a non-confrontational social style wherein a skilled social practitioner can manifest power and influence others without seeming to do so. Ideally a Javanese person accesses a combination of keen powers of discernment to see things how they really are, combined with a graceful acquiescence towards those aspects of one's situation that cannot be changed.

Certainly, Javanese people exhibit a range of personality types and we cannot gloss or flatten the diversity of Javanese self-expression. However, it does seem that many of the treatments



prescribed by *dukuns* are designed to encourage or instill these quintessentially Javanese qualities in Mas Estu.

For example, one *dukun* suggests that Estu takes a bath so that his nerves loosen and his thoughts become clear and discerning, so that he might understand which of his desires or drives are worth listening to or following through on, and which should be controlled or denied. This ability to endure and move beyond individual desire can be achieved through fasting, another treatment frequently prescribed for Estu. The *dukun* Pak Woto explains,

***“The fasting that I mean is not just him resisting from eating and drinking, but it is more to train or, to control his emotion... For example he has an inside drive to gamble, it has to be fought. This, this is the therapy. “***

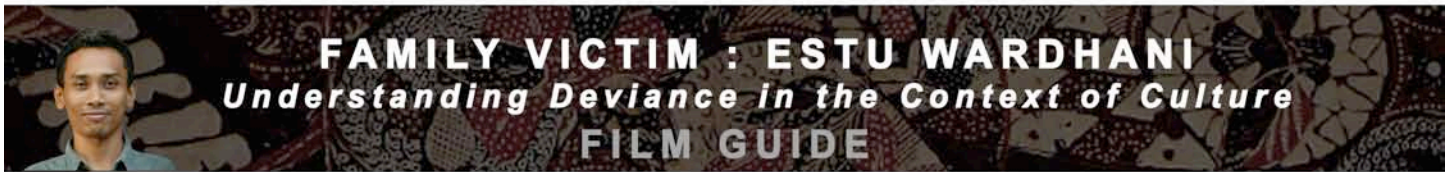
This embodied experience of working and struggling to overcome desire is not limited to only those who exhibit symptoms of deviance or disorder, but remains one of the most popular Javanese techniques of achieving wisdom and clarity. Here, maintaining a calm and lucid demeanor amidst sensory privation or mental exhaustion is the opposite of Estu’s persistently babyish and occasionally *ngamuk* behavior, which though very different are both theoretical opposites of Javanese adulthood.

So can we conclude that engaging in these treatments, Estu gradually was able to become more Javanese? Did these practices mold his behavior so that he ultimately found himself fitting in to his socio-cultural milieu? Throughout Estu’s life, there has been a wide range of models that can explain his problematic behavior. The family felt that his mother spoiled him as a child. Mahar diagnosed him with a mental illness. Many healers invoked complex models of Javanese mysticism and spiritual disturbance.

While all of these remain possible interpretations of Estu’s experiences, it seems that the elements most salient to Estu—and what ended up having the most visible impact on his troublesome behaviors—were his family’s firm refusal of monetary support, the birth of a second child, and perhaps most strikingly, his father’s eventual expression of forgiveness, acceptance and pride for Estu shortly before passing away.







It seemed the realities of losing a parent and becoming a father had finally helped Estu re-evaluate his own life, suggesting that these troubles, and their ultimate (or temporary) resolution, could be significantly related to Estu's cultural and developmental frameworks.

Yet, what exactly allowed Estu to achieve a culturally appropriate maturity? Dr. Mahar believes that Estu finally realized he had to become a Javanese adult after he got married and had kids, in a retrospective recognition that he had achieved a new status.

***"It's different from when we are called Mas or Dik (trans. Little Brother), well, we can do whatever we want. But by being called Pak (trans. Father), if we're called Pak yet we do bad things it shows that the title Pak is not appropriate. Well, maybe it applies in Estu's case. His kids call him Pak, his environment-because he's married- call him Pak [...] in village meetings he's also invited, these things make someone be responsible."***

***—Dr. Mahar Agusno***

In his explanation, Mahar references some of the various status symbols that are associated with Javanese adulthood, including new titles, new responsibilities, and new recognition. Perhaps the fact that Estu's father passed away further underscored the new gravity of his social situation or responsibility, triggering a retroactive earning of a status he had already been at least partially afforded.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

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