

# The Process of Visual Psychological Anthropology

## 10.1 THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE MAKING OF THE *AFFLICTIONS* SERIES: OUTLINE OF PART 3

How do films like the *Afflictions* (Lemelson 2010–2011) series get made? How might filmmakers work with subjects so that they choose to narrate the emotionally powerful stories of their lives? What are some of the technical issues involved? These are all essentially questions about “how to” make similar films. This final section of the book will answer these types of questions, from a personal, theoretical, and practical perspective.<sup>1</sup> It will diverge into the first person to the extent that some of the lessons learned are drawn from the personal experience of making the *Afflictions* series.

The first chapter in the section (Chap. 10) is organized around foundational film concepts not necessarily familiar to those in psychological anthropology, such as pre-production, production, and post-production. This is the longest chapter in the book, with the production process being described in some detail. This is to help prevent the novice filmmaker from foundering on the many shoals of the production process. If the reader is not interested in the specific technical details, she is encouraged to move on to the next chapter.

Chapter 11 addresses the more intangible but even more important issues one must grapple with when making the kinds of films described in this book, such as incorporating self-reflexivity; navigating the complexity of relationships that develop through filmmaking; and unpacking the ethics of filming, fieldwork, and representation. At the end of this section, the reader

should have a good grasp of the many interlocking practical and theoretical aspects of a visual psychological anthropology.

The final chapter discusses the dissemination of edited films in teaching, public presentations, and the wider digital public sphere as an integral part of the work of visual psychological anthropology. The chapter concludes with some potential directions and prospects for visual psychological anthropology.

## 10.2 PRE-PRODUCTION: THEORETICAL POSITIONS AND PRACTICAL REALITIES

From the moment they are first conceptualized, the production of ethnographic films is both similar to, and different from, that of documentary or commercial films. Perhaps one of the most significant differences stems from the “bottom-up” and emergent approach of ethnography versus a “top-down” approach of these other types of films. All commercial films, and many documentaries, have a script and storyline in place before the shoot, which determines plans and schedules in the field. For example, a Hollywood commercial production can shoot two pages of script per day. One script page equals roughly one screen minute, so scripts are usually 120 pages for a two-hour film and shooting lasts for about three months. The total filming environment is controlled and to a great extent nothing is accidental (even if there are improvisational elements to the production), in a large part to meet budget restrictions.

This detailed pre-planning is less possible in ethnographic filmmaking, which seeks to capture “life as lived” and follows the natural unfolding of events. David MacDougall has called this “exploratory” documentary filmmaking (2003) and has argued for how exciting it can be; what is sacrificed in ease of planning and preparation is made up for in the investigative process as the film ends up reflecting what the anthropologist/filmmaker has learned during filming, some of which is bound to be unexpected, rather than reflecting an original unswerving idea. Instead of the shoot progressing according to a preconceived theme, the themes are emergent through shooting and editing.

One goal for the *Afflictions* films was to build on this exploratory nature of ethnographic film in the field to innovate forms of storytelling about ethnographic material that are more character- and emotion-driven than typical ethnographic film. Ethnographic methodologies were used to

capture emergent events, and the work was inductive from these rather than from a script. The footage was then shaped into narratives that focused on those elements more than some other ethnographic films, which has traditionally emphasized the ethnographic content to the exclusion of a focus on character, emotion, aesthetics, or production values. As discussed throughout this book, visual psychological anthropology focuses as much on emotion, character, and narrative as on the didactic explication of cultural material. To do this requires skills beyond the psychological, anthropological, and linguistic; film production skills, too, are crucial to ending up with footage suitable for such a film.

There is also the need, as is the case in any creative process, to articulate a clear idea and vision for the project; to allow for the aforementioned emergence, this should be a delineation of the overall scope of the research, rather than a specific direction or structure for the film itself. For most, this will be based on the research that the anthropologist is already engaged in. Of course the resulting film may diverge in significant ways from the original research and its objectives, but the linkage will still be there (at least in the mind of the anthropologist, if not fully on-screen). For example, the Elemental Productions' film *40 Years of Silence* (Lemelson 2009) was intended to be an exploration of the role of childhood trauma and its variable outcomes in relation to historical events, specifically the mass killings of 1965 in Indonesia. As such, there was a much more clearly defined vision as to what the final film would look like from the very beginning of the project as compared to the *Afflictions* films. Although the narrative changed over the six years of the project, the basic idea and vision remained the same; from initial conception to final film release, *40 Years* was a factual documentary integrating historical accounts with personal narrative biographies of four families, to illustrate the effects of the violence and trauma on these families and by extension on broader Indonesian society. Elemental Productions' projects made after *Afflictions* (such as *Jathilan* [Lemelson 2011], *Ngaben* [Lemelson 2012], *Bitter Honey* [Lemelson 2015], and *Tajen* [Lemelson 2017]) went further to flesh out the general terms of what the finished film's story and aesthetic would be prior to shooting in the field, which to a significant degree made for a faster and more focused process. However, even with this method, much of the storyline and film trajectory comes from the research foci and the changes in the participants' lives, and therefore is by its very nature unknowable at the outset, and so still fundamentally emergent.

### 10.2.1 *The Practicalities of Planning a Shoot*

Once a film project is underway, several practical issues arise. The first is simply fundraising. Many anthropologists shoot their original material during their fieldwork, so funding brought to the table for original research can cover initial filming. Yet while this initial material may be crucial to begin many ethnographic film projects, it is rarely sufficient to finish them. Typically, one reviews raw footage, works it over in the editing process, and then discovers themes that need to be followed up on and content that needs to be shot, which requires returning to the field—but raising the funds to do so can be quite difficult. For a discussion on raising and managing funds for ethnographic filmmaking, see the website supplement that accompanies this book (see [www.afflictionsbook.com](http://www.afflictionsbook.com)).

That is not to say that films cannot be made entirely on one shoot. For example, to make the Elemental film *Ngaben*, which documented a Balinese funerary practice from the perspective of a grieving son, raw footage was shot over the course of three days in the field and then edited to completion upon return. No other material was needed and the short film that resulted was successful, in that it made its way into numerous film festivals and won some awards. But in terms of the amount of time necessary to make an ethnographic film, it is an outlier.

A second major planning task for any film shoot is discussing which images and scenes should ideally be shot. Such preparation aids in developing a tentative itinerary and gathering equipment. If particular projects are ongoing, then before heading to the field it is helpful to have preliminary discussions about ongoing projects, in consultation with local collaborators on the ground who can provide updates about the subjects' lives. By reviewing the narrative that is evolving in the editing process, the questions that have emerged through these edits, the gaps that have been found in previously gathered footage, any new information that has become apparent, and real-time developments in characters' lives, the needs for the filming can be assessed and a tentative shot list drawn up. This shot list can include anything from topics to be covered in interviews to descriptive or elaborative B-roll needs. From the shot list, a preliminary shooting schedule and trip itinerary can be determined as to where one will go to shoot, how long one will stay in a particular site, and what shots can be gotten at each site.

This schedule of course depends on the available time frame. If one plans on being in the field for one to two years, as is common with dissertation

fieldwork, there is the luxury of shooting more or less continuously for long periods of time, documenting subjects' lived experiences as they naturally occur and recording the numerous unfolding aspects of the research and cultural setting. In many ways, this way of filmmaking is preferable. An extended stay in the field with a regular shooting schedule allows a filmmaker to capture daily life, in all its depth and complexity—but even more importantly, it allows for the capture of events as they spontaneously occur, be these life cycle events such as births, deaths, and weddings; political and historical events; changes in the onset, course, and outcome of illness; and idiosyncratic developments in subjects' lives, to name but a few. The ensuing footage will have the look and feel of “life as lived” rather than “life as told” (Bruner 1984), and one can get, in Heider's framework, more “whole sequences” of events (1976), particularly ones that depend on a longer span of time to unfold. This allows for less reliance on the artificialities of “interviews, cutting away to B-roll” standard to journalism, but problematic for ethnographic film, which strives for realism and authenticity.

In addition to these real-time developments, another benefit of ongoing filming is that subjects may become more inured to the camera's presence, sometimes to the extent that it even ceases to be consciously noticed, thus arguably resulting in material less influenced by the camera's presence.

For a variety of logistical reasons, however, the *Afflictions* shooting schedule has not allowed for a long period in the field. Although still benefitting from a longitudinal approach, the series was predominantly shot during two- to five-week-long “summer shoots.” This temporal limitation, which is common to most anthropologists with university teaching schedules, certainly shapes filmmaking methods, particularly in gathering the stories and narratives from which to build plot lines and character development arcs. However, if one is committed to longer-term film projects, rather than a singular shoot, there can be benefits to “going and returning.” Relationships with participants can be strengthened, as participants begin to expect or even anticipate the anthropologist's return and over time a relationship develops. One can see changes over time in a wide range of domains, which can lead to a deeper understanding of one's material—some changes might be more apparent due to temporary distance from the subjects. Finally, one can follow up on themes that arise in the edit, and fill in missing shots or material on these subsequent shoots.

When returning to the field on the second, third, or fourth shoot, with somewhat more limited time, it is important to develop a solid production

schedule in pre-production. Typically, at this stage one creates interview schedules and domains that need to be covered for the film as well as specific shot lists of the B-roll or “insertion” shots. Of course, all these are flexible in the exigencies of a specific shoot, but these lists do need to be thought through and compiled.

Before departure there are the practical aspects of arranging accommodations, communicating with local colleagues and collaborators, and acquiring any necessary filming visas (the complexity of which should not be underestimated!). It takes at least three to six months before the shoot to get the appropriate filming visas, which are often not included under a more general research visa. This is made all the more important if one is documenting sensitive subjects of a political nature; telling a governmental agency that one is going to do a documentary on a politically sensitive topic often raises red flags and could potentially cause the visa to be denied, shutting down the film project.<sup>2</sup>



**Photo 10.1** Lemelson discusses the shoot with Kereta

#### *10.2.1.1 Equipment Choices*

Another practical preproduction issue is what equipment to bring, and how much. The discussion below uses the history of the *Afflictions* production (and other films) in relation to changes in technology and subsequently to the nature of what can be filmed.

If one has limited resources and is planning to shoot solo, the discussion is straightforward, as equipment will necessarily be limited to a single camera, an onboard mic, the best possible tripod one can afford, an external audio recording device and microphone, and perhaps one or two lights or flexfolds. A more complex shoot requires careful thought about what equipment, in particular camera equipment, to bring. Before leaving on a production shoot, equipment must be organized based on shooting needs. Depending on the staffing and how many shooters are available, two cameras can be dedicated to shooting interview footage, one of which can also be used for additional B-roll, and the other one reserved as a general backup camera. This may seem an obvious point, but in gathering equipment one should always prepare for contingencies, bringing not just extra cameras in case one breaks but backups of crucial equipment.

Technological changes affect shooting and production to the extent that the camera used influences the kinds of shots that can be gathered. Elemental Productions has used different cameras over the last fifteen years, following these technological developments. The first camera was the VX 1000, a Sony camera that was really the first “prosumer” camera. It shot onto mini DV tapes; it was small, durable, and unobtrusive; it was easy to use; and had a good lens. This camera was used through the early 2000s, and then replaced with other, more professional but also larger cameras (the Sony PD 150 and the Sony PD 170); these had greater flexibility in terms of aperture and f-stop settings and thus a better ability to create different depths of field and shoot in lower light settings than the VX 1000 but was still much less bulky and intrusive than tape cameras of that era, which were often large, shoulder mounted, and heavy.

From 2000 to 2006, a 16-mm camera (the Arriflex S) was in frequent use. The Arriflex yielded much more lush, vibrant images than the standard definition video cameras and was configured to shoot time-lapse; these visuals can be seen sprinkled through the *Afflictions* series. A small 8-mm camera was also occasionally used. Its images had a “home movie” feel—quite granular and lacking the clarity of a 16-mm camera—but was still useful to create an atmosphere of intimacy in some *Afflictions* scenes.

With the new availability of powerful high-definition cameras in the mid-2000s, 8 and 16-mm cameras were substituted with modern high-definition cameras, which provided the same look and feel without the expense and hassle of developing film, transferring this film to a video format (telecine), and then digitizing that tape so it could be read by an editing system. Another transition was the introduction of digital single lens

reflex (DSLR) cameras with interchangeable lenses. These cameras are small and unobtrusive, looking no different than the cameras that many tourists in Bali and Java use on a daily basis, and thus tended to feel less intrusive to the participants than larger film cameras. With the advent of cameras such as the Sony CX 100 and CX 300, which combined the power of a traditional video camera with the ease and size of a DSLR, shot quality improved and the ability to shoot in many different light settings increased. All of these cameras are available for rent, so a great quality camera can still be accessible without the expense of purchase.

Recently, Elemental has increased its use of GoPro cameras, which are tiny cameras initially developed for extreme sports now being adapted for use in feature and documentary films. These cameras can be placed or affixed in many different ways and allow the filmmaker access to visual perspectives that were previously unobtainable. We have not yet shot with smart phones, though it would certainly be possible to do so with the latest generation with 12 megapixel or above resolutions and 4 K sizes. Many new options are on the horizon, such as the possibility of using virtual reality cameras that shoot in 360 degrees, which could have profound implications for shooting the “gestalt” of a fieldwork setting.

#### *10.2.1.2 Managing Footage*

Once in the field, each crewmember should have an “objectives list” of shots to be gathered. If there is more than one cameraperson, they may split up and travel to different locations. The organization of footage should start in the field as soon as it is gathered. Each cameraperson should have a logbook which, in addition to containing itineraries, schedules, and so on, should have pages for reporting information about all shots filmed, including date, location, affiliated project, camera used, shot location, and a brief synopsis of the shoot including characters filmed and what happened during the filming, and finally the drives and the folder number to which the footage has been or will be uploaded.

These drives or folders refer to the location to which the footage is then transferred. Every evening in the field, footage should be transferred, or “dumped” off of each individual camera into computers. “Prep folders” should be prepared for each camera, which are pre-made file folders based on the previously established dates and itineraries, and the footage should be offloaded into the folder pre-designated for each specific camera and date. The footage should be offloaded from the cameras onto two “mirror” external hard drives, each containing an exact replica of the totality of



footage gathered, to decrease chances of losing material in the case of equipment loss or damage. All of the file structure, folders, and so on should be created on the computer before one goes to the field to ensure consistency in the process of transferring the footage each day to a hard disk.

With the advent of digital media, it is easier than ever for material to be transferred, which means that it is also easier for data to get mixed up, misplaced, or lost; so these prep folders are an important first step in keeping everything accessible and organized. It cannot be stressed enough how important it is to have a disciplined naming convention and offloading practice in the field. Without these, upon return it will be difficult to manage footage, leading to much wasted time and effort.

In addition, it helps to remember that shooting rarely goes exactly according to plan—sometimes schedules change and desired footage cannot be acquired, and sometimes opportunities arise that lead to excellent but unanticipated footage shot on the spot. Cross-checking with the logbooks, which function as supplements to the digital folders, enables clear record keeping of every shot recorded, even unexpected or serendipitous ones.

### 10.3 PRODUCTION: MULTIPLE ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

After all the extensive theorizing, planning, organizing, and gathering resources, both financial and technological, one can begin the production stage, which is the heart of any film. In one sense, the production process is very technical—getting the right types and amounts of shots, having them well composed and clean, and gathering usable and compelling audio (all of these will be discussed below).

#### *10.3.1 Gaining Multiple Visual Perspectives Through a Range of Shots*

A first goal for any productive shoot is to acquire usable and aesthetic visual material. A number of different types of shots should be considered. “Establishing shots” of any shooting locale are good for initially contextualizing the participant’s experience and providing aspects of the surrounding environment that the audience will be able to identify, from rice paddies to city landmarks. Great landscape and other aesthetic images can lend a film visual appeal when used as establishing shots, but care must be taken not to exoticize or otherwise misrepresent the lived environment of the main subject(s).

Sometimes searching for establishing shots results in extraordinary footage. For example, during one shoot in 2010 in Yogyakarta gathering footage for *Family Victim* (Lemelson 2010b), the famous volcano Mt. Merapi erupted. Mt. Merapi is a visually distinctive feature of the Yogyakarta landscape and a mystical and spiritual landmark believed to be linked to the local Sultan and the well-being of the region. Shots of the volcano's foreboding dark plumes of smoke pouring out into the air were ultimately used to introduce themes of uncontrollable forces and volatility in another Elemental Productions' film about trance possession performance, *Jathilan* (Lemelson 2011b).

In addition to establishing shots, other supporting visual material is necessary to visual psychological anthropology. Some time in the field is always dedicated to shooting "B-roll" in addition to interview and action footage. B-roll is secondary footage that can be edited in to add meaning, texture, elaboration, and a sense of place to the primary interviews and action. This footage can also be intercut into longer interviews to preserve a sense of visual dynamism, illustrate important themes or concepts in the subjects' lives, and it can provide background and insight into those lives by providing an embodied, sensory, and subjective sense of their daily lives and routine. In *Afflictions*, different kinds of B-roll were needed: uniquely Indonesian, Javanese, or Balinese images that would help viewers contextualize or place the characters; footage supporting the narrative development of an ongoing project; and new or emergent footage. Additional B-roll is gathered as new interviews unfold, new participants are brought into a narrative, and subjects and crew enter new situations.

This "non-edit-specific B-roll" develops organically from what interviewees do and say. Even so, the anthropologist's background knowledge is useful. For example, over the course of filming *The Bird Dancer*, two different aspects of Gusti's experience crystallized; first, her isolation from her family and community, and later, her emerging sense of connectedness as a result of both internal changes in her self-concept and external changes in her work circumstances that gave her a sense of belonging and purpose. Sequences illustrating both these aspects of her story were actually filmed in the same shoot. Knowing that there was a bustling and colorful marketplace in Denpasar, about an hour south from Gusti's natal compound, and that the light in late afternoon (i.e. "golden hour") was generally quite good as compared to the frequent overcast skies in the region where Gusti lived, the crew took Gusti there. First she was filmed interacting with Balinese merchants and shoppers to illustrate the latter theme of connectedness, but then

shots were also taken of her standing on a busy street, looking forlornly toward the camera as waves of traffic passed her by, to illustrate her isolation in the midst of a dense social world (perhaps an at the time unconscious visual homage to Edgerton's 1979 *Alone Together* ethnography about Venice beach in Los Angeles). Thus, in the same shoot B-roll was taken that illustrated very different psychological themes explored at different points in the film.

### 10.3.2 *Creative Re-enactments*

Gusti Ayu's role in participating in these "set" shots, where a subject is specifically asked to do something as opposed to more "naturalistic" ones where the subject is simply being documented going about their daily activities, points to a degree of artifice in some ethnographic film shoots. The decision to engage in this artifice has been contested through the history of ethnographic film and visual anthropology. Early anthropologists, such as Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard, emphasized the "normal and spontaneous" nature of their visual documentation and hence the "disciplinary truth" of their images (Banks and Ruby 2011). Other early anthropologists were sure to note whether or not an image was posed, captured during the natural unfolding of events, or recorded in slightly atypical or staged circumstances, for technical reasons such as lighting, for example, or when capturing events of a more delicate or personal nature (Edwards 2011).

Mainstream documentary filmmaking has not been so strict; re-creations have been commonplace and are evident in recent films such as the Oscar-winning *Man on a Wire* (Marsh 2008) about tightrope walker Phillip Petit; Oscar-nominated *The Imposter* (Layton 2012); and *Burma VJ* (Østergaard 2009), an extraordinary film about the 2007–2008 Saffron Revolution where much of the observational material in the film was gathered surreptitiously and at great risk to the shooters, many of whom were later arrested and imprisoned. Other popular documentaries by esteemed contemporary filmmakers, such as Errol Morris, use re-created material extensively. Morris has been criticized because some of the scenes he re-created in his popular films such as *Thin Blue Line* (1988) and *Fog of War* (2003) were done with such professional expertise that they were indistinguishable from actual archival footage (Morris 2008); however, Morris, fascinated with the elusive and contested nature of truth, defends his use of re-enactment to highlight

his interest in the interrogation of character's subjectivities (Jaffe 2005; Morris 2008).

An earlier example of the problematics of re-creations can be seen in the Lois Buñuel satirical and surrealistic film *Las Hurdes* ([Land Without Bread] 1933). During its time, this surrealist masterpiece was considered a model of documentary filmmaking, but some now consider it the first “mockumentary,” in some ways presaging the Sasha Baron Cohen film *Borat* (2006) in its ironic underscoring of the “wretchedness” of the people it claims to be dispassionately observing. Much has been made of the staging of events in *Las Hurdes*—from an image of a dead donkey covered in bees (the donkey was smeared with honey to attract them), to staged shots of people to make them look wretched, to a(n) (in)famous shot of a mountain goat falling off a cliff.

In the first image, at the moment the goat slips in the distance, a puff of smoke appears in the lower right-hand side of the frame. A reverse angle match-on-action shot then shows the animal falling from above. From one image to the next, the camera shifts from one side of the mountain to the other. To fabricate an illusion of continuity, the film crew shot the goat, hauled its carcass up the side of the mountain, and threw it off again. By leaving the traces of this process in the film, however, the director undermines the illusion and exposes the artifice of montage (Ruoff 1998).

When this clip is shown to students, a certain percentage of them take it as an observational shot of a naturally occurring and spontaneously observed event. It is always surprising that, absorbed in the cinematic world, these “digital natives” forget that it would be impossible for the cameras to be so precisely positioned without some setup. Given that Buñuel was almost certainly creating this film in a satirical tone, it is further surprising that eighty years later people are still taken in by this cinematic trickery. Due to expectations of ethnographic film's observational veracity and use as scientific “evidence,” such re-enactment techniques remain uncommon.

Re-enactments/re-creations were used sparingly in *Afflictions*, avoided unless necessary due to the lack of directly observed ethnographic material or to illustrate the more ineffable aspects of subjects' experiences, such as hallucinations or visions. For example, in *Shadows and Illuminations*, Kereta's spirit visitations were represented by shots of several wooden masks of demonic spirits (B.B. *Buta Kala*), which were hung on strings and sticks in a rice paddy, their reflections flickering in the water.

Other sequences that similarly represented perceptions, ideas, or images that did not occur in real life were used in other films; such sequences are only restricted by the production team's creativity. For example, in *Family Victim*, Estu recalls a prescient dream wherein he saw a cocoon floating in a river from which a cricket emerged, became a butterfly, and flew away as his parents looked on. Estu claimed that this dream helped him overcome some of his negative inclinations and started a new chapter in his life. As this was a dream—and therefore entirely internal, and already by its very nature symbolic—it was theoretically and ethically unproblematic to re-create it.

The footage was shot at a rushing stream in Los Angeles using a pod from a wild cucumber plant that stood in for the cocoon; in the film, the pod floats down the stream, then there is a caterpillar crawling across a rock under two shadowy figures standing in for Estu's parents. Building on this naturalistic animal imagery used to underscore Estu's transformation, a subsequent slow motion shot of a bird harks back to an earlier image in the film; while previously the lone bird in the sky had represented his isolation, his desire for freedom, and his longing to overcome his problems, now it represented his success at achieving a life free from strife that the dream seemed to indicate was possible for him. A blue filter was added in the edit to give these shots a more dreamlike appearance.

While certainly venturing outside strict observational ethnography, and to a certain extent “re-creating” the experience of a visual hallucination or a dream, such artistic shots did not involve re-creating entire events from a participant's life.

Should re-enacting a more complex scene seem necessary for a film, there are number of theoretical and related production points to consider. From a theoretical perspective, it is crucial to create a visual distinction between a creative re-enactment and ethnographic footage. It would be intellectually dishonest and ethically problematic if the re-enactment were not easily distinguishable from observed footage. Perhaps counterintuitively, then, a mistake to avoid in shooting re-enactments is trying to make them “true to life.” In other words, and in practical terms, the videographer should use techniques that call attention to the act of filming, such as extreme angles, fragmentary close-ups that obscure the protagonist's identity, or blurred focus. Creating this visually stylized difference between the “constructed” and “observational” footage can alert the viewer that a theatrical re-creation, rather than a direct recording of actual events, is being shown.

A rare example of an *Afflictions* re-enactment comes in an episode that falls about two-thirds of the way through the film *Family Victim*, when Estu

attempts to kill his father. In real life, the research and film team arrived at Estu's house about a half hour after he ran "amok," and heard about the incident from horrified neighbors, Estu's sister Ninik, and his wife Anna. Much time was spent in the edit bay theorizing about how to represent this part of the story, which was a key incident in Estu's life and a key element in the overarching thematic development of the film. After numerous cuts, in which different versions of the story were tried out, a sequence was settled on. It worked well, except it lacked a visual component, since the team had not been physically present for Estu's outburst. This gap was filled in on a later shoot, in a series of re-creations.

In the scene depicting Estu's attempt to attack his father, a number of different visual strategies were employed. This resulted in a series of shots: first, a blurry shot of an actor banging angrily on the door from behind, followed by fragmented close-ups of feet walking out of a Javanese-style house, a shot of a hand holding a knife, and a distance shot of a departing motorcycle. These created a sense of continuity with the story narrated by Ninik and Anna, filled in the missing visuals to this dramatic section of the story, and yet were obviously visually distinct from the rest of the film to purposefully signal that these scenes were re-enacted.

Earlier in the film, a re-enactment was also used to illustrate the dramatic treatment one *dukun* described of bringing Estu to a graveyard; in this scene, a younger, thinner man pleads with an older, larger man, who then strikes him. This scene was shot with actors, seen only in silhouette, and the footage was altered by using a "day for night" effect (which transforms footage shot during the day so that it appears to be shot at night). Each of these techniques (day for night; silhouette) is a visual cue for the viewer that what they are watching is a re-creation.

Perhaps some viewers may still be confused about whether any of these shots were observational footage—much as some viewers are still confused as to whether Buñuel's footage of the goat falling off the cliff from different perspectives at once is directly observational. But unfortunately, one cannot account for all misperceptions raised by the medium of film. Such persistent misunderstanding has occurred when screening *Ritual Burdens*. In this film, the elderly main participant, Ketut Kasih, reflects on her childhood. To bring her memories to life, the film included evocative shots of a child playing and running, manipulated with a filter that made these appear hazy and in slow motion. At one screening, a member of the audience was very impressed that footage of the main participant was obtained from seventy years previously, not realizing that this was new B-roll shot for the research

project. Despite these occasional misunderstandings, with the use of techniques intended to draw attention to the re-enacted shots, such instances of confusion are few and far between.

In summary, if and when re-enactment is used—even those simply depicting dreams, fantasies, and so on that never actually “happened”—it must be cued for the viewer as such by using a visual style distinct from the rest of the film. Creativity is welcome in developing this distinct style beyond the standard techniques discussed above—shooting from extreme angles, shooting partial parts of the body, not shooting the face directly, shooting in profile or from a sufficient distance to obscure the identity of the actor, using silhouette, colored filters, blurry focus, slow motion, and so on. If it is necessary to have actors playing the roles of subjects in the film, as is commonly done in historical re-enactments, the viewer must know that these are re-creations. This signaling is preferably explicitly included in the scene itself, with a title card, voice-over, or distinct filming technique, rather than in the end credits, where viewers might miss it.

Re-enactment is just one of many available storytelling strategies to represent and highlight certain elements of a film subject’s experience. But the heart of a visual psychological anthropology is emotionally meaningful and culturally contextualized first-person testimony—which can most often be achieved by conducting compelling and insightful interviews.

### 10.3.3 *Technical Aspects of Shooting Interviews*

First, there are a few practical aspects of recording interviews. The decisions made about how to shoot an interview—how many cameras to use; at what angles and distances the camera(s) are placed; handheld vs. tripod shooting; and who to focus on—are all extremely important considerations. The discussion below, of course, is not intended to argue for a uniform approach to interviews in visual psychological anthropology. Many shooting and editing decisions will be determined by the ethnographic intentions of the filmmaker—specifically, the kinds of narration, depictions of the interview process, and representations of the anthropologist/subject relationship desired in the final film. How these considerations affected the *Afflictions* shoot can be instructive.

*Afflictions* was originally shot so that all the interviews included participants, either in a single “two shot” (where two or more people are within the frame) or in a pan back and forth between the interviewer and the interviewee. While this was useful for certain types of storytelling, it made it

very difficult to edit the footage to allow for the subjects alone to narrate their own experience on-screen—its very structure meant the anthropologist and local collaborators were included in many of the shots. This problem was more than just technical; it indicated a theoretical frame for the entire film project, making it difficult to privilege the participant's own narration of their subjective experience. As a result of these difficulties that became apparent in the editing process, this two-shot style was later supplemented with a "one shot," with just the main subject in the frame. This provided an image uninterrupted by camera pans, and also allowed for clearer sound, as in this setup the main subject's voice could be recorded with a wired clip mic (lavalier) rather than a boom.

When filming interviews, multiple cameras are desirable if possible. One camera should be focused on the face of the interviewee, with the eye line directed toward the interviewer. One can hypothetically have the interviewee look directly into the camera, but without the use of technology such as Errol Morris' *Interrotron* (a device where the interviewee is talking to an image of the interviewer on a monitor, and the camera is shooting head on) (Leimbacher 2009), this can make for an awkward interview because the interviewee is not talking directly to a person, but to the camera.

Another camera could be dedicated to focusing on the interviewee's body language: how they are sitting, what they are doing with their hands, and so on. This lends an element of visual and sensory interest for the viewer, contains significant information, and allows for cutaways in the edit that capture aspects of the interview beyond simply what is being said. Using multiple cameras also helps because the more angles and distances shot, the more potentially usable footage there is to select from during the editing process.

Some may be surprised to realize that most of the footage shot will not be useful or usable for a particular project. Indeed, before the digital era the ratio of film shot to film used in final film was three to one hundred hours shot per hour of final film. In the digital age, the ratios can go up radically, from hundreds to even thousands of hours shot per hour of edited film, because with digital video there is no processing and associated costs as there were in traditional film, so filmmakers tend to be more liberal about what they shoot. This is one of the downsides of digital technologies—the pull to "shoot everything, all the time." This can generate an enormous amount of wasted footage. One should still maintain a careful perspective and shoot only what is needed, rather than shooting continuously. The



ability to be thoughtfully selective comes with time and practice, as one moves from the shoot to the edit, and back to additional shoots.

In conducting interviews and gathering other types of shots, ethnographic filmmakers can be at a disadvantage when compared to commercial and even some documentary filmmakers. Part of this comes from the fact that the team is shooting on the locations of subjects' everyday lives and "on the fly" in locations as they emerge. As such, the environment of production is unpredictable with regard to lighting and sound. Furthermore, in the case of *Afflictions*, many interiors of Indonesian homes are dimly lit with fluorescent bulbs; but outdoor locations, which are often well lit and aesthetically pleasing, can also be quite noisy due to local fauna, traffic, and the like, and there is no guarantee as to how well lit any particular location will be. To minimize these issues, *Afflictions* was largely shot with available light and used cameras that handle low light well. Later film projects (such as *Bitter Honey* and *Standing on the Edge of a Thorn*) used additional direct and diffused lighting in the form of flat panels, soft boxes, flexfolds, and so on. Poorly lit subjects and settings are generally considered the work of amateur filmmakers, so lighting considerations are truly important.

In addition to these shooting and lighting considerations, getting good audio is crucial. Many documentary professionals state that sound is in fact the *key* technical aspect of filmmaking, overriding even the visual. When starting out, a novice visual ethnographer may accidentally record poor sound. It will help to use a good microphone, as cheap microphones tend to pick up more unwanted ambient sound. However, even with the best equipment, there are often ambient sounds to contend with such as rain, traffic, chickens, or cicadas. Some of this can be manipulated in editing, but a quality-focused recording on location, with a well-rated "shotgun," lavalier, or wireless mic, is key to getting usable audio. A second digital audio recorder is also useful in recording interviews or location sounds, and can provide additional audio sources for sound design. These secondary audio sources can be synched with the video in the edit.

### 10.3.4 *Interviewing Considerations*

While a strictly "talking heads" type of film should be avoided, interviews are key components in visual psychological anthropology. The hallmark method of psychological anthropology is PCE, which involves lengthy interviews on subjects of a personal nature, inquiring into aspects of family life, personal desires, and aspirations. Participants in PCE address sensitive

topics and often put themselves out on a limb and stakes can be high—if they feel their confidence has been betrayed, it can lead to great hurt and controversy (see Scheper-Hughes 2000).

Person-centered interviews have been infrequently filmed in psychological anthropology; this is not only because of available technologies, but because of the very nature of content collected. There is no anonymity—or veneration of anonymity—when being recorded on camera, the way there might be on audiotape or written ethnography. Within a written ethnography, pseudonyms can be used, identifying details removed, composite biographical case studies created, and so on. On camera, the respondent's actual face, voice, and surroundings are immediately apparent. The issues of lack of anonymity in relation to informed consent will be discussed in Chap. 11. But once film participants do provide their informed consent to be filmed, one can move on to the interview process.

Some *Afflictions* participants (Kereta in *Shadows and Illuminations*, Gusti Ayu in *The Bird Dancer*, and Ni Ketut Kasih in *Ritual Burdens*) engaged in PCE to varying degrees with the lead author during his extended initial fieldwork prior to the film project. Others had been research subjects, but not PCE participants. Follow-up PCE with all participants, which was conducted during annual shoots over a number of years, followed a similar process. First, a local collaborator contacted the participants before the crew arrived in the field to discuss how they were doing and to plan the upcoming filming schedule. The local collaborator made an appointment with the participant for an upcoming interview, or, if the plan was to film the person over an extended period, initiated a more detailed discussion about how the days would unfold.

When the film crew arrived in country and at the house or family compound, after greeting the participant and (usually) their families, some time was devoted to the exchange of pleasantries and a renewal of friendship. In general, at this stage in a film project, any in-depth discussion of personal lives and the events therein is to be avoided, as that would cut the feet out from under the interview to come. It is important to refrain from going in depth into material that will likely emerge from the interview itself, as it is better if the filmed narrative is more spontaneous and less rehearsed.

Meanwhile, the small film crew prepared for the interview; from a technical standpoint, they checked the lighting, determined the best background and composition for the shots, and set up equipment. From a more interpersonal standpoint they also strategized about who should be in the interview, who should be on- or off-camera, and who it might be better to

keep from being directly involved. In many cases, it was acceptable to have family present, either actively participating in the interview or simply listening in to facilitate their own greater understanding, empathy, or compassion regarding the participant's experience. However, there were times where material was of such a sensitive nature that it was preferable for certain family or community members to be out of earshot.

As previously discussed in the case study chapters in Part 2 of this book, the specific content of this sensitive material varied. Gusti Ayu's discussion of her brother's abusive treatment would have been practically impossible with her brother present. Estu also wanted to discuss his anger and resentment toward his family. In Bambang's case, caution was necessary because he was initially afraid his neighbors would discover he was a former psychiatric patient and stigmatize him or even fire him from his job as a private English tutor. In this latter case, a cover was created to explain the arrival of a foreign camera crew; inquisitive neighbors were told a documentary on English language instruction in Indonesia was being shot. As the filming progressed, and Bambang became more comfortable in his role as an advocate for people living with mental illness, this need for a cover fell away. Happily, the community responded in kind, supporting Bambang in various ways and embracing him as someone who was mentally ill, but also a valued advocate and teacher. Whatever the particulars, the need for privacy can create particular challenges in cultural context; in Indonesia, most spaces in the home and community are considered public social spaces.

Once all these matters had been attended to, the interview commenced. Person-centered interviewing in general proceeds with an open-ended, semi-structured, participant-led format. This means that while the interviewer generally has specific topics and domains in mind that she wants to explore, the questions are non-directive, at least in the beginning, and the interviewer invites the participant to narrate their own concerns and the issues that are at stake with them in the present, allowing this material to unfold at a natural pace.

Classical person-centered interviewing methodology provides a checklist of open interview topics (Hollan and Wellankamp 1994), useful guideposts for subjects that can be explored. However, because of the *Afflictions* project's main concerns, the person-centered interviewing went beyond these to delve deeply into specific domains about living with mental illness, including topics such as family relations, stigma, phenomenology of illness experience, culturally informed ideas about illness attribution, significant events or stressors related to the onset or course of their affliction, and so

on. Interviews varied according to participants and occasionally strayed from a strictly person-centered format when the participant brought up topics related to the understanding and care of their illness, such as diagnosis and treatment options.

While conducting an interview, it is very important to be as thoughtful a listener as possible, never talking over or interrupting the participant's narration of their experience. This helps build mutual trust and rapport, but pragmatically also ensures material is usable for the film edit. If the interviewer interrupts, talks over, or has a back-and-forth with the participant in such a way that the interviewer cannot be artfully edited out, important material can be rendered unusable for film purposes.

### 10.3.5 *Theorizing, Evoking, and Capturing Emotional Material*

While honest, coherent, and relevant personal narratives are a goal of visual psychological anthropology, without an emotional force to them, they may not be compelling, or even usable, in a film. The great film editor Walter Murch has a “rule of six” in prioritizing an edit. In this list of priorities he says, “If you have to give up something, don’t ever give up emotion before story. Don’t give up story before rhythm” (Jarrett and Murch 2000). The fact that the editor of feature films such as *The Godfather* (1972) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979), so very different in many ways from ethnographic film, makes emotion the number one concern in narrative film construction should signal its importance in making compelling films.

In psychological anthropology there has been an explicit focus on differences in cross-cultural models of emotion (Lutz 1988), personhood, identity, and self (White and Marsella 1984; Kitayama and Markus 1994; Spiro 1993), or in current parlance, subjectivity and phenomenology (Willen and Seaman 2012). There have been similar changes in the approach toward visual or filmic depictions of the emotional self. In the early experiments in ethnographic film, such as *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty 1922) and the Mead and Bateson films (1950, 1952, 1954), there was little room for, or interest in, generating or even documenting emotional display and experience. Certainly the fact that these were silent films made it a bit more difficult to explore the nuances of emotional topics in depth. If emotional topics were explored, they would have to be displayed in exaggerated gestures and facial expressions (think of Charlie Chaplin in *The Gold Rush* [1925]). It was also due to the nature of what these kinds of films were attempting to accomplish—*Nanook* was made in a popular genre of

descriptive documentary, while Mead and Bateson's films were intended to be "scientific documentation."<sup>3</sup>

There were undercurrents of emotion in earlier explorations in ethnographic film, but typically for the time, these were de-emphasized in favor of more descriptive approaches, such as in *Bitter Melons* (Marshall 1971), with its subtle and restrained tragedy, or analytical ones, as in *The Ax Fight* (Asch and Chagnon 1975). Even *Dead Birds* (Gardner 1963), which involves the death of a young child, arguably one of the most devastating experiences there can be, displays a curious lack of emotional engagement because of the dispassionate manner in which Gardner shot, edited, and narrated the film. Similarly, Marshall's early Ju'Hoansi films, such as *The Hunters* (1957), which involves an ongoing struggle to hunt and forage in the harsh environs of the Kalahari Desert, and *Bitter Melons* (1971), which actually ends with a foreshadowing of death by starvation and privation, maintain a dispassionate emotional climate, again due to the use of voice-over narration.

This is not to say that there wasn't emotion expressed in some of these earlier films, such as the depiction of rage and conflict in Timothy Asch's *The Ax Fight*, or the muted sadness that pervades John Marshall's *Bitter Melons*. But what is missing in these earlier films is emotion occurring in personal everyday life, or as evoked in the intersubjective interplay between interviewer and interviewee. Interestingly, Marshall returns to some of these same scenes in his six-hour magnum opus *A Kalahari Family* (Marshall and Ritchie 1951–2002) and, skillfully using the first-person voices and narrations of his participants and a simple but recurring musical *leitmotif*, he evokes a much greater degree of emotional response on the part of the audience with some of the same visual material. Marshall also incorporated footage used in *The Hunters* and the later classic *N!ai* (1980) (as well as a number of his smaller and shorter films); he intercut footage from these earlier films with more journalistic interviews, where Marshall questions his participants directly. This is an effective approach where the filmmaker can combine observational footage gathered over the course of a number of years with a more person-centered, subjectivity-oriented interview material that allows for direct emotional expression. But in large part, ethnographic film has studiously avoided an evocation or even representation of emotion in favor of "objective," dispassionate depiction of whatever aspect of culture the film is focusing on.

Another issue involved in the hesitation or reluctance of anthropologists to cinematically depict topics that may have an emotional component relates to the field's broader disengagement and studied avoidance of depicting

experience-near understandings of subjectivity and emotion in the period of “normative” anthropology (1940–1970s) where the study of “Culture” writ large was of paramount importance in a variety of subfields and sub-disciplines such as British social anthropology, French structuralism, American interpretivism, and symbolic anthropology. Ethnographic films generally followed suit, with few having overt emotional content. This neutral edifice began to fracture with the rise of the anthropology of the 1970s and 1980s, and engagement with “anthropology that will break your heart” (Behar 1997) and the compelling, individualized, and phenomenologically oriented narratives of the 1990s and beyond. These values were also reflected in how ethnographic films were structured, and the material gathered by filmmakers and anthropologists therein was organized with an increasing emphasis on stories that had emotional content (in addition to the sampling of films previously mentioned throughout earlier chapters, see Vannini [2015] for a review of trends in ethnographic films being made in and outside the academy in the past decade or so). The parallels here between theory and practice in anthropology and ethnographic and visual anthropology are not surprising.

Given these shifting norms and values, many people who watch *Afflictions* note how personal some of the discussions are and ask how the interviews were able to achieve such intimacy. The only way to obtain such material is by building long-term relationships between the anthropologist and participants based on trust, understanding, empathy, and mutual respect. These do not develop overnight, and compelling interview material will most likely not emerge during a single shoot or fieldwork excursion, but over an extended period. This is one reason why the *Afflictions* series only coalesced into its final form after over a decade of material gathered in multiple shoots and fieldwork experiences. Also, given the *Afflictions* series’ focus on culture and mental illness, many of the domains addressed explicitly explore phenomenology and subjectivity, which are intricately and continuously interwoven with emotion. By necessity, then, all the films frame, explain, and reference the participant’s emotional lives and much of this emotion came out during interviews.

For example, in *The Bird Dancer* (Lemelson 2010a), the emotional climax comes when Gusti Ayu, who has suffered so greatly from her family and community’s reaction to her TS, meets Dayu, a woman who also has TS but has not been subjected to stigma or exclusion. During a group interview, in a moment of empathy for a stranger, Dayu weeps to witness Gusti’s anguish. In *Memory of My Face* (Lemelson 2011a), the climactic moment

occurs when Bambang admits to feeling isolated and defeated by his illness and social estrangement, while his wife Yatmi says that she copes with her disappointment through surrendering to God's will (B.I. *pasrah*). But the complexities of capturing and evoking emotion in an interview, and the complex ethical and contextual considerations therein, can be seen most clearly in a scene from *Shadows and Illuminations* (Lemelson 2010c).



**Photo 10.2** Bambang's wife Yatmi's strategy for dealing with her husband's illness

#### 10.3.5.1 Afflictions *Example: Participant Subjectivity and the Evocation of Emotional Narratives*

By the time the cut of *Shadows and Illuminations* was shaping up and final interviews planned, the film was rich with biographical information and character development, but rather thin on emotional impact. A key piece of material was still missing, namely, Kereta's emotional response to the difficulties and tragedies in his life. This absence was due in part to the Balinese cultural presentation of self, where displays of sad or troubled emotions are de-emphasized. Balinese people generally seek to manage their emotional expression and maintain a pleasant and bright appearance, even in situations where they may be internally experiencing sadness, strife, or pain. This attempt to remain positive embodies balance and self-control, which are hallmark cultural values in personal demeanor and interpersonal relationships (Bateson and Mead 1942; Geertz 1966) and yet by no means

preclude the internal experience of such negatively valenced emotions and the occasional need to express them (Connor 1995; Wikan 1990; Lemelson 2012).

It might also be argued that Kereta, having some form of psychotic illness, had further difficulty processing and expressing these emotions (Gur et al. 2006; Girard et al. 2016; Lee et al. 2016). For the purpose of accurately depicting Kereta's compelling life concerns, however, it was necessary to show the emotional impact of Kereta's multiple traumas and his isolation and sense of estrangement from the social world.

Long-term PCE with Kereta made it clear that two events had deeply affected him: the death of his second child shortly after her birth, and the temporary separation from his wife, Made Ada, who left him for a year and a half in the early years of their marriage. If questions were posed about these periods of loss and grief, it was likely that an emotional response, which could be crucial in communicating Kereta's experience to viewers, would be forthcoming. But to do this for the film would mean to purposely go against norms of Indonesian etiquette; it was decided that if uncomfortable topics or long awkward silences arose, this discomfort should not be diffused by jokes or idle chatter, as would happen in a typical Balinese social context, but rather allowed to build and, hopefully, elicit more revealing responses. This tactic could be considered a cross-cultural fieldwork application of the "abstinence rule" used in the psychoanalytic process (Killingmo 1997), where the therapist avoids social pleasantries with the idea that minimal interaction allows suppressed emotional material to surface more freely. By engaging in a form of cultural abstinence—by not adopting the Indonesian norm of diffusing strong emotions in polite conversation—the hope was that deeper emotions could be accessed.

Indeed, there were extended silences in the raw interview footage, as Kereta and Made Ada hesitated and struggled to provide their account of grief. But they ultimately shared frank and illuminating recollections of their life together, where they acknowledge separations, compromises, and yet an abiding affection for one another (for transcript of this excerpt, see Lemelson and Tucker 2015). In the edit, portions of the interview were cut to accelerate and smooth out its pace and flow, but the poignant nature of their relationship and life together comes through very clearly, illustrating how the complementary tools of PCE and film editing can communicate the power of more common losses and grief in the life of someone who is mentally ill to create a powerful narrative that illustrates key aspects of his biography and subjectivity. In this interview, PCE was able to make latent



(or at least, undiscussed) emotional content manifest and present. It was film editing, however, that allowed this now manifest content to be emotionally accessible to viewers across cultural norms of affect expression and cinematic timing. Notably, this interview was shot toward the end of a multi-year film process—it was only with longitudinal ethnography that the ethnographer and filmmaker had the sufficient background knowledge of film participants to make this judgment call. Clearly there are benefits to a longitudinal project, but numerous complexities as well.



**Photo 10.3** Kereta and his wife, Made Ada, reflect back on their marriage

### 10.3.6 Longitudinality and *Afflictions* Filming

The longitudinal approach of *Afflictions* was not without precedent. There are notable longitudinal documentary film projects, such as the *Up* series (Apted 1964–present), which follows a cohort of fourteen British citizens, beginning in 1964 when they were all seven years old, and checking in with them every seven years to film and interview them over the course of two days in order to make an additional film about their lives (the most recent being shot when the subjects were all 56). The project was conceived to function in part as commentary on Britain’s class system, but includes much content relevant to psychological anthropology. The participants were interviewed about topics such as their psychological state, including degree

of happiness with their lives and their worries, and thoughts about the future. Of course, it is also a portrait of life-course development, testing the hypothesis that a person's personality and hence to a certain extent, their fate, is determined by the age of seven according to the Jesuit quotation, "Show me the child up to the age of seven and I will show you the man." The film also captures deepening friendships between the project participants and with the filmmaker, Michael Apted. This approach has since been used for films in other societies, such as Russia, Japan, South Africa, and many others ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Up\\_Series](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Up_Series)).

Other well-known longitudinal documentaries are driven by similar concerns, such as *Following Sean* (Arlyck 2005), which traces the life course of a young boy raised in countercultural communities in San Francisco from the age of four, when he was a smart boy allowed to roam wild and smoke marijuana, through his unexpectedly staid and responsible adulthood. *The Children of Goltzow* (Junge 1961–2007) follows members of a small German town, addressing the subjects' personal lives and the implications of German reunification. More recently, *American Promise* (Brewster and Stephenson 2013) explores issues of class and race by following two young African-American boys for thirteen years over the course of their private education at the predominantly white New York prep school, Dalton.

There are relatively few projects that have attempted to do longitudinal visual ethnography. The first and most compelling is John Marshall's work in the Kalahari, discussed previously. Sarah Elder's (Elder and Kamerling 1974) longitudinal work with indigenous peoples of Alaska (since the 1970s) employs a collaborative approach where she and her film subjects determined the themes and events to be recorded, making films on whaling and walrus hunting, ritual and performance, and modernization and the lifestyle and psychological changes it brings. While Elder collaborated with the same communities over time, she has taken a topical approach rather than a psychological one in her films, addressing areas of importance and concern to the community without focusing on biographical or psychological development of individual subjects over time.

The *Afflictions* films were shot over a time frame of six to fourteen years, depending on the individual film in the series, making it one of the longer projects in the annals of ethnographic film. All of the *Afflictions* films incorporate footage shot over the course of multiple years.

A common goal longitudinal projects share with other genres of film is to avoid confusing the viewer. This can be potentially more difficult when doing longitudinal visual ethnography as compared to making a dramatic

film or even a documentary shot over a short period, due to the visual changes that come with passing time. In a written ethnography, such visual and physical changes are invisible by default, and the commonly understood conventions of writing make it easy to combine different scenes or periods from a participant's life, or jump from one interview or observation session to another. A year or more of fieldwork can be compressed into a single volume, with evocative incidents selected to make critical points. With a film, however, one needs to ensure that the viewer will understand that a particular participant is the same person visible in the last shot, even though he or she may have changed their appearance.

In some cases people's appearance change is not much of an issue. For example, in *The Bird Dancer* (Lemelson 2010a), Gusti Ayu's appearance shifts over time: in the earliest shots, she has medium-length hair, and then few years later, on the advice of a healer, she cut her hair extremely short. Her hairstyle and weight continued to vary from year to year, yet she was always recognizably the same person so no adjustments needed to be made in the edit. In other cases, artful visual transitions may be needed to help the viewer recognize a film participant despite changes in appearance or the passage of time. In *Ritual Burdens*, Ketut's appearance changed markedly over eleven years of filming. The film incorporated a visual morph between shots of Ketut in 1997 and in 2008 to clarify that these were of the same person.



**Photo 10.4** Local crew taking notes during a production shoot

### 10.3.6.1 Afflictions *Example: Visual Strategies in Longitudinal Filming*

The visual challenges that come with a longitudinal approach can also yield visual approaches that make strong theoretical points, as illustrated by the visual depiction of Wayan Yoga in *Kites and Monsters*. Wayan and his father were shot in exactly the same configuration during every shoot, over the course of fourteen years. The first interview was conducted with Dr. Panteri, Wayan Sadha, the lead author, and Wayan's entire extended family. Wayan and his father were arranged in a semi-circular configuration on their pavilion (B.B. *bale'*), as seen in the first segment of the film. Upon returning three years later, there was an opportunity to create continuity between the first shoot and the second; and in subsequent shoots when Wayan was aged fourteen and nineteen, he and his father were again placed in the same manner. Adopting an almost theatrical staging, this allowed the various "characters"—the anthropologist, field assistant, subject and father, and various other family members—to be in the same position each time, thus creating a sense of familiarity and continuity over the years. This shot composition mirrored the main theme of the film—that the continuities in Balinese cultural practices provide a supportive scaffolding<sup>4</sup> for Wayan's continued growth in the face of managing a neuropsychiatric disorder.

In addition, on each shoot similar supportive B-roll was gathered—of Wayan dancing, drawing, narrating traditional Balinese mythological and cosmological narratives, kite building and kite flying, playing musical instruments, and cooking. Again, shooting these similar activities over the years made it easy to compose an edit that linked them as continuities over time. Further animated sequences illustrated the stories Wayan was telling and enacted his developmental progression as a creative young artist, as the images progressed from a childlike to more mature drawing style.

Ultimately, no matter the particular visual strategies used, returning year after year builds a rapport, a sense of collaboration and cooperation, and an expectation of enduring relationship that would be difficult to obtain with single shoots, even extended ones. It also yielded multiple storylines, and the range and diversity of subjects can lead to significant insights. Finally, the strengthening of personal bonds between anthropologist and participants yielded progressively deeper and more authentic material.

A number of questions arise when attempting a longitudinal visual ethnography. How long does one have to be in the field and be shooting

for it to be truly longitudinal, and does one have to be continuously there? What is the impact of “leaving and returning”? What is gained by a longitudinal approach and what, if anything, is lost? Or, to put it another way, are there “decreasing returns” in coming back repeatedly to the same material? How does one know when one has “completed” or at least sufficiently explored the possibilities of the domain or subject, leaving little left to uncover in terms of an educational or theory-building perspective? These are questions that should be in the mind and incorporated into the planning of those wanting to do projects in a visual psychological anthropology; each will find their own answers along the way. Other issues that arise in the post-production or editing phase will be discussed below.

## 10.4 POST-PRODUCTION: A STYLISTIC APPROACH TO EDITING AND STORYTELLING

The post-production stage is the stage when the film footage is edited and a narrative is constructed. Scenes build upon scenes to create a complete story, the crafting of which is one of the most creative parts of visual psychological anthropology. This is where theory, creativity, artistry, and even imagination can play major roles. There are both practical and conceptual elements to this process.

### *10.4.1 Some Practical Post-production Steps*

After returning with a range of footage from the field, including interviews, B-roll, and re-enactments, a number of steps need to be taken to ensure the material is workable in an edit.

If the footage is in a foreign language, one of the first tasks is to have the material transcribed and translated. In *Afflictions*, up to four languages (Balinese, Javanese, Indonesian, and/or English) may be used in the footage, so this task is usually given to local Indonesian transcribers or translators. The translations typically consist of one line of transcribed material, with the English translation underneath. Both of these are linked to a time code that notates its position in the recorded material. There are also short descriptors that capture the main idea or focus of the material at hand. An example of an interview with Gusti Ayu is below:

Feels sad when seeing others with illness:

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01:05:54	Gusti Ayu	Iya. Saya juga sedih juga ngeliat orang itu seperti ya. Right. I'm also sad to see people like that, you know?
01:06:01:	Pak Rob	Oh, Gusti merasa sedih waktu melihat itu? Oh, you feel sad when you see that?
01:06:03:	Gusti Ayu	Iya sedih. Malahan saya sendiri tu kadang berdoa, mendoakan dia biar dia bisa diberi, begini mukzizatlah sama Tuhan, diberi kesembuhan. (Pak Rob: Iya. Ehm.) Yes, sad. You know, sometimes I even pray for those people that God give them miracles, that they can recover. (Rob: Okay)

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Having a disciplined workflow around transcribing and translation is very helpful in moving a production forward, as editors are not usually fluent in the language they are editing in and rely on timely and accurate transcriptions and translations.

In addition, when returning from the field, all the footage should be offloaded from the cameras and drives. At this point, the footage is still in various formats based on the camera used to record it (e.g. Canon and Panasonic.) since the file types are different from camera to camera (e.g. AVI and DVC-PRO). While each camera uses its own formats, all footage must be converted into the desired format. Editing systems use different “codecs,” which are data compression programs that allow multiple cameras’ outputs to be read by the same editing program.

It is important to note that each editing program uses a specific video format. For example, Final Cut Pro works best with certain file types, while Avid and Premier require other formats. Regardless of which format the preferred editing software uses, all footage must be in the same format. Many beginning filmmakers are not thinking about post-production at the time of shoot, but these technical aspects of filmmaking may in fact determine whether or not a final film can even be edited together from the footage that was shot. Before shooting begins, ideally filmmakers need to know which program they will be editing on, so that in the field they use a camera that records with suitable file types. They also need to be thinking about the final picture size and frame rate because different frame rates cannot be edited together.

After all of the footage is converted, it can be collected into an editing program project file consisting of all footage from a specific date and camera and then organized. In organizing clips at Elemental Productions, we assign a name or title to every clip in such a file using a specific naming convention

designed to streamline archiving and facilitate easy searching within the archive. A sample title might be “INTV-Gusti-Ricefield\_sunset\_1.” In this system, each file name begins with a specific four-letter code, which is an abbreviation for the content of the footage; in this case, INTV stands for a formal interview, but there are many other codes such as CHAR for footage of main characters that are not shot in a formal interview style, ARCH for archival footage, PORT for portrait shots, SCEN for scenic footage, and so on. The second word in the sequence, which in this example is Gusti, refers to either the character’s name or a description of the shot. The third word or phrase further describes the shot or additional characters in the shot. The goal is to create a description of the shot so anyone can read the name and get a very good idea of what is in the shot without having to view the actual clip. If a longer shot sequence has been broken down into smaller sequences or segments, a number is added at the end of the title to indicate where it stands in the sequence, which in this example is designated by the number “1.” Further descriptive identifiers can be added to clips when being digitally filed, including additional information about the location of the shot, the viewpoint, or angle of the camera used (e.g. from the main character’s perspective, the interviewer’s perspective, or general B-roll), the time of day of the footage, the language spoken, key words regarding content, and so on.

After being so named, the project files should be loaded into an editing program. The process of digitizing and organizing the footage this way is time consuming, but it makes searching for and accessing files much easier and hence makes the editing process much more efficient in the long run. One can find clips using many different identifiers, and can locate specific shots quickly. Furthermore, if certain technical problems were to arise, continuity in the naming, dating, and descriptions of footage means that data could be restored by referring back to the project files, one of the external hard drives, or the prep folders.

While an ethnographic filmmaker just starting out or initially working alone may not see the need for such a rigorous and somewhat time-consuming organizational system, if the research grows into a longitudinal project as it has in the case of the *Afflictions* series and other Elemental Productions projects, the visual data collected ultimately may span a decade or more, encompassing thousands of hours of raw footage, and a rotating crew of people may work with this data for film or other research purposes. At this level, having clear rules for filing and accessing data is crucial. A combination of easily searchable visual clips, organized into clear and

understandable headers, streamlines the editing process. It also quickly becomes evident during the editing process what footage might be missing, pointing toward what should be included on shot lists for future field shoots.<sup>5</sup>

#### 10.4.2 *Editing: Thinking Ahead About Editing and Production Values*

In the early years of ethnographic film, relatively simple editing was the standard, with heavy reliance on the “jump cut” (where one shot is cut back to back with another), such as in *Trance and Dance in Bali* (1952). In *Dead Birds* (1963), however, Gardner cut together several different battle scenes to create a composite. At the time, some critics felt this editing compromised the veracity of film as a medium of documentation. In the decades since, especially with the advent of digital non-linear editing systems, it has become generally accepted that many different types of editing are at the heart of the filmmaking process: Without editing there would be no film (see Vannini (2015) review and Henley (2000) for outline of trends in approaches to shooting and editing in contemporary ethnographic film).

One way to learn the basics of film editing conventions (without going to film school) is to self-educate. A familiarity with some of early pioneers of continuity editing (e.g. D.W. Griffith) or Soviet montage theory (e.g. Sergei Eisenstein), for example, will inform editing choices that make powerful visual statements. The surrealists and other early experimental filmmakers (such as the work of the aforementioned Lois Buñuel and Maya Deren) offer plenty of ideas to explore. But a good way to learn is to watch different ethnographic films that espouse a variety of storytelling techniques. There are ample examples of didactic and expository films in early ethnographic films such as *Dani Houses* (Heider 1974a), *Dani Sweet Potatoes* (Heider 1974b), *At the Time of Whaling* (Elder and Kamerling 1974), any of the Nesilik Eskimo series (1963–1965), and many others that take a descriptive look at the relationship between culture and practice or *habitus*, as seen through subsistence practices and technology. These films are well shot and edited, providing a visual and corporeal richness to the ethnographies.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, which has been framed as the “golden age” of documentary film (Hornaday 2015), there are now also many examples of emotional and character-based narrative documentaries that illustrate a staggering range of editing styles. One of the first decisions to make in an edit is what sort of narrative voice(s) will be used to tell the story.



### 10.4.3 *Narration and Narrative Voices*

In making editing decisions, anthropologists need to take multiple perspectives: that of how the subject experiences their lives and might feel about their portrayal; that of the viewer and what they might think and feel when watching the film; and the analytical perspective of the anthropologist. These must all be integrated in the attempt to say something about culture and the human experience through a coherent and evocative film.

Historically, many ethnographic films have relied on voice-over to express these different perspectives. There are multiple voice-over styles. Many early ethnographic films relied on a continuous stream of narration (the so-called voice of God narrative style) that tells much, or even all, of the visual story—a good example of this is *Trance and Dance in Bali* (Mead and Bateson 1952). An alternative to this is the sporadic voice-over—*Family Victim*, for example, includes only two voice-over segments. An even more restrained use of voice-over is to pose an initial opening question; this option is used in *Ritual Burdens*. These examples assume the voice-over is coming from the perspective of the anthropologist; there is also the participant voice-over, where the narration is given by the film's main participant. Of course, voice-over can also be eschewed completely, letting the story unfold through observational footage and dialogue, interviews, narratives, and so on from a number of different participants' perspectives—and in contemporary sensory ethnography, even such narration or dialogue is limited.

Voice-over has its benefits. It can manage the flow of visual information for the viewer, lending clarity, and reference different bodies of information not immediately apparent to the viewer or not captured on film. In fact, early versions of *Afflictions* films that used more voice-over than the existing versions received positive feedback from colleagues. They felt that the expository voice-over addressing the chronological course of fieldwork, biographical developments over time, and theoretical issues in psychological and medical anthropology was useful for teaching.

However, criticisms of all the different voice-over styles are myriad. At its worst, continuous voice-over can result in a pedantic and plodding film, giving a predigested engagement with the subject matter, as the narrator overloads information where it is neither needed nor appropriate, in effect subjugating the visual or sensory elements of the film to linear narration. Furthermore, in a continuous voice-over the anthropologist and/or filmmaker's standpoint is privileged while the voice of the subject is diminished

or, worse, misrepresented. An infamous example of the shortcomings of voice-over is *Dead Birds* (1985) where Robert Gardner, the anthropologist narrator, speaks in the voice of the subject. While the voice-over is engaging and even poetic, and was used in part as a response to the technical limitations of the time before synched audio, it has been criticized for inauthenticity and worse, making major assumptions about what the main subject is experiencing and feeling rather than including his voice directly.

#### 10.4.3.1 Afflictions *Example: The Narrative Development of The Bird Dancer*

The limitations and theoretical problems with voice-over became significant in the first film to emerge from the *Afflictions* visual research, a film about Gusti Ayu predating *The Bird Dancer*. This film, entitled *Movements and Madness* (Lemelson and Yngvesson 2006), was edited with several different foci in mind. One was a transcultural psychiatric research framework that privileged issues such as cultural models of mental illness, cultural shaping of symptoms, and differential diagnosis. The other was a narrative arc charting the conflicted personal journey of the anthropologist in relation to Gusti, questioning whether he should help Gusti Ayu or intervene in her life, and if so, how. Since this first set of issues is theoretical and abstract, and the second involves a self-reflexive understanding of internal processes, almost constant voice-over narration was relied upon.

One of the influences on *Movements and Madness* was the personal journey film, quite popular in mainstream documentaries of the time (McElwee 1986; Mosso et al. 2013). There are certainly circumstances where a film narrative can be based on how the filmmaker or anthropologist understands, interprets, and reacts to a situation. One is if the anthropologist or filmmaker's story has its own innate drama—films like Greg MacGillivray's *The Alps* (Judson 2007) or *Everest* (MacGillivray et al. 1998), both about mountaineering and the potential life and death struggles therein, or Dennis O'Rourke's *The Good Woman of Bangkok* (O'Rourke 1991), where the documentarian is simultaneously the customer of his sex-worker subject. Another is if the filmmaker is an interesting "character," such as Ross McElwee in *Sherman's March* (McElwee 1986).

However, for this project, the self-conscious voice-over narration was theoretically problematic. Contemporary psychological anthropology ascribes to the tenet that one works inductively from the material and closely follows those issues that have salience for subjects' "lived experience" (Nordstrom 1995). In addition, contemporary psychological

anthropologists are taught to value an “experience near” (Wikan 1991) understanding the world of subjects from an “emic” perspective, that is, “from the natives’ point of view,” which means valuing the ethos, embodied (Csordas 1990) worldview, and personality of one’s subjects. This also includes analyzing and providing a “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of the issues important to them, at least for the purposes of attempting to come to understandings about what motivated them to behave as they did and to make the choices or decisions they made.

It became clear that continuous voice-over focusing on thematic concerns that largely privileged transcultural psychiatry theory and the anthropologist’s experience—to the *exclusion* of the participant’s subjectivity and lived worlds—contributed to neither good filmmaking nor compelling ethnography. As a result, when *Movements and Madness* was reworked into *The Bird Dancer*, most of the voice-over was dropped and the story focused largely on Gusti’s experience, replacing voice-over with Gusti’s voice drawn from person-centered interviews, leaving only a few interspersed segments of voice-over and a guiding question to open the film, a style then applied to all the *Afflictions* films.

What emerged was a shorter but better film, from both ethnographic and cinematic perspectives. This improvement can be somewhat objectively assessed; Documentary Educational Resources (DER), the well-known ethnographic film distributor, rejected *Movements and Madness* for distribution, citing among other things the use of voice-over and the subsequent diminishment of Gusti Ayu’s “voice” and the focus on the anthropologist at the expense of the subject. When the footage was reworked into *The Bird Dancer*, DER picked it up for distribution and the film was nominated (as part of the *Afflictions* series) for a “Best Limited Series” award by the International Documentary Association (IDA).

#### 10.4.4 *Utilizing Diverse Stylistic Devices to Evoke Internal and Cultural Worlds*

Once the type of narrative device is chosen, the types of shots and stylistic devices that will be used to give substance, depth, and emphasis to a film must be considered. Editing often involves a variation of the classic Freudian “condensation” (Freud and Strachey 1954) where symbolic images with multi-layered meanings are packed into a brief but dense audio-visual frame. Thanks to this condensation, camera shots can “speak a thousand words” to quickly illustrate or underscore broader themes in the films, making

theoretical concepts more concrete. For example, a quick shot of Javanese women carrying their goods to market with baskets on their heads passing under a promotional billboard for *Eat Pray Love* (Murphy 2010), such as used in *Memory of My Face*, or of a tattooed Balinese youth in punk bracelets and a spiked Mohawk haircut reverently preparing a ritual offering at a street-corner shrine, such as used in *The Bird Dancer*, may directly capture the daily realities of globalization with a tangibility that academic exegesis can only talk around.

However, when making films about the experience of mental illness, one must go beyond what is externally observable because so much of the experience cannot be seen. The effort to represent the lived realities of mental illness visually—to make subjective states “filmable”—while simultaneously thinking ethnographically has led us to experiment with several strategies, drawn from or suggested by the participant’s own experience, that can successfully represent the more interior, psychological, or autonomous aspects of their experience and illustrate how these are embedded in a cultural context.

#### 10.4.4.1 Afflictions *Examples: Using Distinct Visual Styles to Reflect Individual Subjectivity*

In *Kites and Monsters*, Wayan’s developing sense of self was illustrated both in relation to his TS and to Balinese mythology, as well as symbols and tropes as he grew from a child into a confident young man. The lead author had worked as psychotherapist and was trained in clinical psychology, and in therapeutic sessions frequently encouraged children to draw, both to help relieve the boredom and anxiety of the clinical encounter and to provide interpretative and projective content. Wayan loved to draw, and the themes and interests reflected in his drawings indeed mirrored both common topics in Balinese iconography and the morbid obsessions experienced by some children with certain forms of TS (Grad et al. 1987). His quite skilled original artwork was used in the edit as an organizing device, taking his original drawings and then creating animated representations of the stories he told, drawn in a similar style. Similarly, Wayan loved to improvise Balinese dance for the film team. Capturing his evident joy and pride in these traditional movement forms and his increasing mastery of them as he aged provided another opportunity to represent how culture acted as a stabilizing buffer throughout the course of his development.

A different approach was taken in *Family Victim*. It became clear through the film and research process that one of Estu’s most persistent

concerns was a pervasive feeling of loneliness and alienation. The film visually established these themes with shots of solitary objects, such as trains and kites, alone in a wide visual field. Visual comparisons juxtaposed Estu, alone in his small shop plaintively describing his attempts at reconciliation with his family, with shots of solitary farmers in rice fields and solitary bike riders on deserted roads in rural Java, emphasizing the isolating impact of his behavior.

Another overarching theme in the film was Estu's attempts to free himself from his psychological troubles and the toxic effect they had on his family relationships, to shake off the difficulties of his past and find a new, more satisfying, personal identity. Various evocations of flight were used to evoke this desire, from the opening shot of his graffiti reading "Wild Hearts Fly Free" to symbolic shots of birds.

The visual metaphors and symbols chosen in visual psychological anthropology can and should reflect not just personal imagery but also the multiple cultural and environmental contexts that suffuse any experience of mental illness, leading to some significant contrasts from film to film. For example, the elderly subject of *Ritual Burdens*, Ketut Kasih, lives in rural Bali and her daily life is spent in a traditional agrarian community surrounded by rice fields. She uses this natural imagery to describe her heightening sensations, becoming acutely sensitive to the sound of the wind blowing through trees or sunlight reflected on water, or ominously feeling like her head is filling up with pouring rice; this was mirrored with the natural imagery used in the film.

However, Bambang lives in the sprawling metropolis of Jakarta surrounded by local culture and globalized media, which affected him powerfully during his episodes of mania. In *Memory of My Face*, the way this vertiginous media saturation interacted with his increasingly energetic, grandiose, and agitated internal state was depicted with an animated sequence. This sequence adapted the style of Indonesian shadow puppet theater (*wayang kulit*); with flickering lantern light in the background, images of neurons, mosques, political figures, conflicts in the Middle East, Islamic iconography such as the star and crescent, and more all appear to swirl around at a quickening pace.

*Shadows and Illuminations* presented one of the most complex representational challenges because Kereta's experiences were absorbed in Balinese iconography and cosmology not commonly referenced nor understood outside Bali. His experience was represented with a series of images derived from an extraordinary collection of paintings gathered by

Mead and Bateson during their groundbreaking fieldwork in Bali in the mid-1930s (Geertz 1994, 2016), which depicts many different areas of Balinese cultural life. These were drawn during the same decade Kereta was a child and served as a rich visual reference for the cultural symbols he frequently mentioned in his interviews. Many of the images chosen also seem to directly depict elements of Kereta's biography, such as the evocative images of demons and the narrative painting of difficult labor and stillbirth.

These examples from the *Afflictions* series illustrate a move away from "thin depictions" toward "thick descriptions" (Taylor 1996, 86) and visual "poetry" (Taylor 1996, 88). This approach allows the films to communicate the tone and content of individuals' hallucinations, fantasies, and personal symbolic imagery, while providing a dynamic sensory experience for the viewer, complementing more visually bland interviews and taking the viewer deeper into another's reality by borrowing from cultural iconography and contextualizing individual experience within a particular cultural place with its own visual and auditory landscapes, textures, and styles. These strategies can allow filmmakers to explore their own creativity and innovate original ways of conveying multiple layers of personal, cultural, and clinical information.

#### *10.4.5 The Contested Use of Sound and Music in Ethnographic Films*

While ethnographic film is often also referred to as "visual" anthropology, of course other senses are involved and recruited for meaning-making within the filmmaking and film viewing experience, including hearing. Sound was a significant issue for all early documentary filmmakers because synch sound was not widespread until the early 1960s. Before that, documentarians in the field either worked with a sound recordist or shot footage without sound, forced to re-create most or all sound in post-production. With the advent of high-quality standard definition video recording in the early 1990s, filmmakers enjoyed the ability to capture sound directly, even with portable and lightweight cameras. Quality sound is now commonplace, but the question of how to craft meaningful and effective sound design remains. The discrete soundscape of each *Afflictions* film uses ambient sound, originally composed music, and a curated soundtrack to meet representational needs; each of these elements will be discussed below.

The *Afflictions* films have made ample use of ambient sounds taken from the local environment to enrich, enhance, or ground what is on-screen. Sometimes this requires finessing in post-production if certain ambient

sounds that were present on the scene (and might be expected by a viewer) were not captured in the recording. For example, sounds such as children laughing at a performance, or even something as simple as a creaky door closing, have been easily added to the final sound editing; while manipulated to a certain extent, this play with sound does not significantly detract from the film's veracity but does contribute to a viewer's sense of "reality."

This use of ambient sound, as well as other basic principles of sound design commonplace to trained documentarians, might seem new to ethnographic filmmakers; for example, recording a minute of "room tone," or the sound of the shooting environment when no one is speaking and nothing else is going on, can later be quite helpful in editing scenes to smooth out transitions and fill in spaces where nothing was being said. While in everyday life it may be imagined that one is sitting in "silence," there is in fact constant noise, and the total absence of sound—or the inclusion of the almost subconscious background noises from another locale—is jarring to a viewer if suddenly juxtaposed against natural sound. This is particularly true in Indonesia, where it is rare indeed to find a setting not suffused with a complex ambient soundscape.

Using a musical soundtrack is another way in which psychologically oriented ethnographic films can be distinguished from traditional visual presentations of fieldwork. Of course music will play an integral role in films of live dramatic, ritual, musical, or otherwise artistic performances. But even when not depicting such events, an additive musical soundtrack can convey emotional and cultural information and contribute to an intersubjective engagement with viewers, although this is perhaps more controversial.

Some anthropologists roundly oppose the use of music. Karl Heider, in his seminal book *Ethnographic Film* (1976), holds the opinion that music is a "distraction" best avoided in ethnographic film unless it was recorded as part of a live event being recorded, and hence "appropriate" to the situation. Even folk songs or local music is out of place in Heider's estimation, if these were not co-occurring with and "complementary to" what was happening visually on-screen (Heider 1976). In her defense of immersive observational cinema (Grimshaw 2011; Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009), Anna Grimshaw also opposes the use of soundtracks in favor of a deep sensory awareness of the character's environment and of the acutely attentive relationship between filmmaker and subject.

This resistance is understandable; certainly ethnographic films aim for a veracity in observation, and there are no obvious soundtracks to people's

lives, thus one could argue that the use of soundtracks becomes manipulative and outside of subjects' lived reality. There is something to be said for this argument, and certainly the use of a soundtrack would be anathema to *cinéma vérité* or direct cinema. However, as psychological anthropologists know, individual experience, subjectivity, and phenomenology are difficult to represent only visually, and music may evoke or express many of the more ephemeral aspects of emotional experience. Music is extraordinarily important to people's lives, and to ignore its expressive potential would be to ignore the ongoing (although sometimes subconscious) sensory-emotional dialogue that music provides. Since psychological anthropology is trying to understand, explain, represent, and interrelate the multiple subjective and phenomenological contexts in which people are embedded, it makes sense that one think about the role that music plays in constructing subjective and intersubjective emotional reality.

In this case, eliciting emotion is not manipulative, but rather crucially important in understanding the dilemmas and contexts of participants' lives. Because, as Suzanne Langer has suggested, "the tonal structures we call 'music' bear a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling [...] music is a tonal analogue of emotive life" (Barbash and Taylor 1997, 418); a musical soundtrack can be a powerful way to emphasize and convey emotion in film that might not be immediately apparent or forceful in the images alone. As such, Elemental Productions' film catalog has made an extensive use of soundtrack, moderate use of soundtrack, and no soundtrack at all, all depending on the exigencies of each project, and arguably, the emotional impact of the *Afflictions* films is enhanced by their musical soundtracks.<sup>6</sup>

#### 10.4.5.1 *Afflictions Example: Using Soundtracks and Original Scores to Convey Biographical, Emotional, and Cultural Information*

Within any soundtrack, the judicious and appropriate use of originally composed music can support, highlight, and strengthen the key points of a film, and there are a number of options for sourcing the music for a film soundtrack. One choice is to include pieces of music that the film subjects are listening to or playing during production, or otherwise to use specific pieces or genres of music that may be important to their personal history or symbolic of their mental state. For example, in *Kites and Monsters* Wayan had an active interest in Balinese performing arts. He was recorded playing the Balinese bamboo xylophone, or *rindik*, and this music was placed over a montage of Wayan growing up over the years, serving an aesthetic purpose



of filling in the silence over the still images, but also signifying the protective role local culture had played in guiding him to successful adulthood.

Two different sound sources for the soundtrack of *Memory of My Face* similarly multitasked to enhance the aesthetic, ethnographic, and idiosyncratic themes of the film. First was the inclusion of *dangdut* music. *Dangdut* is a complex and syncretic musical genre, drawing influences from Bollywood, the Middle East, and indigenous musical traditions of Indonesia, while staying in step with changes in Western pop music. It has grown wildly popular over the last several decades in Javanese urban and suburban neighborhoods. The *Afflictions* composer created an original *dangdut* selection to open the film as a nod to the multiple local and globalized influences on Bambang's life and ultimately, his mental illness experience.

Second was the use of musical references and development of a soundtrack score based on a moment of spontaneous song; during an episode of manic disturbance, Bambang, who is deeply interested in and familiar with a variety of Western musical pop modalities, spontaneously sang Phil Collins' *Against All Odds* (1983). This scene was surprisingly poignant; as he interpreted the song's plaintive call to a lover who has gone, seemingly erasing the protagonist's sense of his own identity in the process, Bambang mistakenly sang that he has nothing left but a "memory of my face."<sup>7</sup> This could be taken as a metaphoric commentary on the destabilizing and disruptive force of his illness on Bambang's life. It also could function as a more literal commentary on the radical changes in appearance Bambang experienced over the course of fieldwork due to episodes of mental illness—in particular, when his head was shaved in the hospital and when he lost teeth after getting beaten up by villagers angered by his inappropriate manic behavior. Because of its startling prescience, this variation on the lyric was chosen as the title for the film. In addition, much of the music for the film was based on a 1980s' soft rock genre, as it seemed in synch with Bambang's globalized world and interests.

In contrast, *Ritual Burdens* used a well-known Balinese lullaby, *Putri Cening Ayu*, to underscore Ketut Kasih's perspective on her childhood, which she viewed as carefree and happy, before the onslaught of poverty, illness, and various forms of structural violence. The chord progression of the song was slightly altered to fit within a major Western tonal structure, rather than following a specifically Balinese scalar modality. The result was a beautiful and poignant song that any Balinese viewer would recognize and perhaps feel a deep affinity toward, but was approachable for Western ears.

These uses of music may seem more recognizably ethnographic, in that the pieces selected emerge directly from the participant's lived experience, than the use of an original musical soundtrack designed specifically to enhance the emotional impact of particular testimony or information, which some might interpret as manipulative.

The scores developed for the *Afflictions* series reflect each film's distinct participants and settings; the soundtrack for each film ends up sounding different because the inspiration for it, and the mood and environment it conveys, is drawn directly from the participant's experiences. In composing a soundtrack, there is usually a solo "lead" instrument association with each main participant—Kereta's instrument in *Shadows and Illuminations* is a violin, Gusti's is a flute in *The Bird Dancer*, and so forth. The ethos and perspective of the participant are represented by the genre of music used for the soundtrack score and instrumentation; Kereta and Ketut Kasih espouse more enduring, traditional values, which are reflected in the choice of traditional gamelan in *Shadows and Illuminations* and *Ritual Burdens*. Estu in *Family Victim* and Bambang in *Memory of My Face* come from a younger generation infused with Westernized and globalized values and media, which is reflected in the modern and syncretic scores for those films.

In addition to character perspective and environment, the musical score can also reflect interpersonal dynamics and narrative arcs. For example, a simple melodic string piece parallels the sweetness—and at times *bittersweetness*—of Kereta and Ada's long marriage in *Shadows and Illuminations*. The opening of *The Bird Dancer* establishes a sense of childhood and innocence, but with an undertone of foreboding and perhaps anxiety, by taking a simple, haunting melodic piano (here, the opening of the film *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Mulligan 1962) was an inspiration) and once again shaping instrumentation, tonal progression, and rhythm to fit a Balinese idiom.

With the advice, consultation, and collaboration of composers,<sup>8</sup> musicians, and music lovers, a process for creating such syncretic soundtracks for the films was developed for the *Afflictions* series, both composing original music and seeking out previously composed pieces that call upon musical traditions of Indonesia and the West. For example, a number of contemporary composers that have attempted to integrate Indonesian tonalities, harmonies, scalar progressions, instrumentation, and so on were explored to provide inspiration for the soundtracks. Lou Harrison, a late twentieth-century minimalist composer, created a number of experimental compositions, combining gamelan and Indonesian instrumentation with Western strings, choral works, and piano that influenced the compositions for

*Afflictions*. British composer Colin Bass, who goes by the stage name Sabah Habas Mustapha, works in Bandung and has released a number of syncretic CDs that successfully navigate the complexities of Indonesian instrumentation and tuning with Western tonalities and musical styles. His work was inspirational on how to meld modern, popular music of Indonesia with Western modalities. *Afflictions* drew upon both of these composers for inspiration for the final score. Another piece that provided inspiration was the soundtrack to the film *Legong, Dance of the Virgins* (De la Falaise 1935), played by San Francisco-based Clubfoot Orchestra and Gamelan Sekar Jaya.

Indonesia is one of the most musically diverse societies on the planet.<sup>9</sup> But even within single societies, such as Bali, there are complex musical traditions. Picking specific songs, or even genres, from within these traditions for use in a soundtrack was initially a daunting task, which required the help of a music editor with an encyclopedic knowledge of musical styles and genres. In addition, the score for *Afflictions* was greatly enhanced by the collaboration and contribution of prominent Balinese performers and ethnomusicologists.

When determining the soundtrack for a film, it is useful to remember the role that music might play in facilitating cross-cultural identification. Different pieces and even genres of music are familiar in the United States and Indonesia, and musical conventions will, to a certain extent, determine viewers' interpretation of the emotion or mood expressed. In developing a soundtrack, a filmmaker must strike a balance between including local music that will help layer cultural information and ground the viewer in a cultural place and perhaps more familiar-sounding music that will be able to communicate the intended meaning to a Western or American audience through familiar Western tonalities and melodic structures.

Whether sound or music is an inherent aspect of the context or environment in which filming takes place, is used by participants themselves for specific purposes, or is selected and included after fieldwork during post-production in order to underscore specific subjective and experiential aspects of the stories being told, psychologically oriented ethnographic film provides an opportunity to use sound to make meaning. Sound should therefore be considered an important part of ethnographic filmmaking, and filmmakers should think about having a music and sound approach, concept, or style for each film.

Taking into account the way ethnographic film invites us to think with multiple senses, it certainly can be a creative, aesthetic, and sensory enterprise. What is wonderful about this process is that one has the chance to be

creative with others, collaborating with a film team that brings different skill sets and aesthetic sensibilities to the project. Another aspect of building a powerful film is gaining feedback, in various forms, from one's audiences.

#### 10.4.6 *Using Audience and Film Subject Feedback to Inform Film's Final Version*

The *Afflictions* series has benefitted from holding test screenings of “rough cuts” with an assortment of target audiences. Each film in *Afflictions* was extensively screened for academic audiences. These test screenings were generally attended by faculty, graduate students, and other interested parties. Their feedback was invaluable in ensuring the film's message was clear and intent was realized. If two or more reviewers in these test audiences did not understand a major point, were confused about the characters, or did not understand the progression of the story, then more work remained to be done in the editing room. Such a process of using feedback to improve the clarity of work is not so different from anthropologists presenting their monographs, articles, or book chapters at conferences and seminars, or workshopping them with working groups at various stages of development.

The other key audience to screen for is the participants themselves, and secondarily their communities. Rough cuts are always screened for the main participants in the films and their families. They watch initial raw footage and then versions of the film during the editing process and provide feedback, determine what they feel comfortable sharing, or specify any sections they would like changed or withdrawn; the latter has very rarely occurred, however. After extensive and repeated viewings, most subjects feel satisfied with their representation.

Some participants have been invited to attend public screenings of finished films with their local communities and elsewhere in Indonesia, and engage with audience members through Q&A sessions (Andarningtyas 2012). Some of the participants—Gusti Ayu and Bambang in particular—have come to see this participation as advocacy work.

This process of screening also has been incorporated into the final versions of the films, so audiences would understand the intimate collaborative nature of the filmmaking. In *The Bird Dancer*, a scene is included of a public screening of a rough cut of the film, with several of the main participants in the film, notably Gusti Ayu and Dayu, at the front of the audience taking questions and answers. Beyond the events included in the

films, there have been many screenings over the years, where the participants themselves come and answer questions and are interviewed by the press, and so on. If one looks in the audience in the screening scene of *The Bird Dancer*, one will see the characters of several other *Afflictions* or related films in the audience.

#### 10.4.7 *Filming, Editing, Writing: Ongoing and Interactive Methods of Analysis*

Finally, in addition to these reflexive processes as reflected in the film, it is crucial to integrate the film with written ethnography. The interesting thing about film and video as a medium of *academic* expression, particularly of important social, political, or historical issues, is that films, by their very nature, must express and emphasize fewer ideas; one does not have the luxury, even in feature-length films, of elaborating upon a larger amount of background information, covering all details, addressing all asides, and so on. The medium renders that impossible. As previously described, visual psychological anthropology uses visual methods of “condensation,” but there is not much room for analysis or exegesis within the film; so in some ways, film is more like poetry. However, perhaps paradoxically, because psychological anthropologists making films do not have the luxury of providing detailed citations or nuanced argumentation within the visual work, participants’ perspectives may come across in a somewhat more pointed way on-screen than via the written word, despite attempts to express these with a degree of subtlety and artistry. The medium determines the message to a certain extent, and there are pros and cons to using film. In some ways, film allows for a more direct exploration of core issues at the heart of complicated issues and for the deployment of polyvalent symbolic imagery, but this may come at the expense of contextualization and explanation. By providing an accompanying written ethnography, some of the risks of projection and simplification to the detriment of academic nuance and precision can be minimized, even as new modalities of knowing and understanding are accessed.

Having described, in some detail, the technical, practical, and theoretical considerations involved in producing visual psychological anthropology films, we can move to another set of key issues: the importance of collaboration, the question of intervention, and additional ethical issues that arise throughout the filming process.

## NOTES

1. We have reserved much of the technical information, however, for the supplementary website. See [www.afflictionsbook.com](http://www.afflictionsbook.com)
2. After *40 Years of Silence* was released, several ministries in Indonesia retracted the lead author's filming visa and imposed a non-official blacklist or ban for several years. During this time, local colleagues were able to approach the relevant ministries and the visa was restored, under the condition that there would be no further exploration of the 1965 issue.
3. The ethnic "dramas" of this earlier period, such as *Legong: Dance of the Virgins*, did explore and display emotional scenes in a quite melodramatic way; a young girl, Poutou, falls in love with a handsome gamelan player, Nyoman, in the marketplace. But Nyoman falls in love with Poutou's half-sister when he catches sight of her bathing in a public bath. When Poutou learns of this, she dances her final sacred *Legong* dance, and then commits suicide by throwing herself down a ravine. While obviously simplistic and melodramatic, the film does illustrate a range of emotions on the faces of its characters, thus belying not only contemporary representations of the Balinese as a "simple and carefree people," but also anthropological descriptions, most typically those of Mead and Bateson's "Balinese Character," where the final sentence sums up the overarching view of the relationship between Balinese culture, personality, and emotions: ". . . life is a rhythmic, patterned unreality of pleasant, significant movements centered in one's own body to which all emotion long ago withdrew." It is interesting, particularly in light of the research in Baliology over the ensuing decades, that this early film exploration of a young Balinese woman's deep emotion would really be the only representation of the deeper currents of emotion that underlie experience, particularly women's experience, in Bali until the publication of Unni Wikan's work.
4. Scaffolding is usually used in development psychology to mean the process whereby parents or caregivers provide forms of encouragement, help, and assistance to children and allow them to achieve tasks and make progress in the development of goals in a way that would have not been possible through the children's actions themselves (Wood et al. 1976). This concept could also be utilized in a more general cultural way to illustrate how culture, in this case the musical, artistic, and even mythological and cosmological components embedded in Balinese storytelling and fables, supported and encouraged Wayan's growth even though this growth could have been impacted seriously by his neuropsychiatric disorder.
5. While footage organization is a standard aspect of industry documentary and non-fiction television post-production, and all editors organize their clips and reels according to an easily articulated set of organizing features, the naming and archival system Elemental Productions has developed is in fact quite

unique. Due to the longitudinal nature of the projects, and the shifting focus of different films where similar characters may be used to tell different stories (for example, Kereta being included in both the films *40 Years of Silence* and *Shadows and Illuminations*), the whole body of the archive must remain accessible to different editors working on different films. This is different from industry non-fiction documentaries, where only one project is tackled at a time.

6. Interestingly, a soundtrack can be a useful emotional landmark not just for film viewers but also film editors. During preliminary editing, some editors prefer to edit to “temp,” or “scratch” music—music that will not be in the final soundtrack but matches the general feel of the film or scene one hopes to create. This can be helpful because as one cuts a sequence to music, a natural rhythm and movement develops that makes the assembly flow more organically; it also becomes easier to synch specific elements in the film, particularly points of emphasis such as emotional or high or low points in the film.
7. The original lyrics are “All I can do is watch you leave [. . .] You’re the only one who really knew me at all/ Take a look at me now/ There’s just an empty space/ And there’s nothing left here to remind me/ Just the memory of your face.”
8. Original music in the films was composed by long-time collaborator and composer Malcolm Cross. Despite the challenges of working with both Western and Indonesian musical instruments—such as differently tuned instruments and different rhythmic structures, to name only two—Malcolm has been able to adapt traditional Javanese and Balinese melodies to powerful effect. There are two CDs of original music from the *Afflictions* series, and other films, entitled *Indonesian Post-Modern Volumes 1 and 2*, available on [www.elementalproductions.org](http://www.elementalproductions.org)
9. In a wide-ranging project in the 1990s, ethnomusicologist Phillip Yampolsky traveled across the archipelago recording and documenting musical traditions. His resulting twenty-volume CD set, *The Music of Indonesia (Yampolksy 1991–1999)*, provides a sample of this diversity.

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