



# Analysis of Women's Body Power in Consumer Culture: Study of Javanese Sinden Manifestations in Facing Gender Exclusion

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**Abstract.** The contradictory values about sinden's bodies are still experiencing a pejorative meaning. Sinden's bodies are often conceptualized with the commodity and power of sexuality. Negative stereotype inherent in his profession, have made the existence of his body as a commercial object. This article aims to prove the power of the dominant party in exploiting the appearance of sinden. This paper also describes the correlation of sinden body mastery and its relation to the view of intersectionality. Descriptive qualitative was used to explore the data for depth. This article used to Miles & Huberman Models for analyze all data in the field. Sinden's performance in cultural performances has a close relationship between structure and power which allows the dominant party to exercise power over the sinden body. This forms the manifestation of gender construction that leads to the formation of consumer culture in the show. Sinden identity is formed performatively from a series of cultural performances held in society.

**Keywords:** body power · consumer culture · sinden

## 1 Introduction

Sinden continues to experience pejorative meaning. Sinden who culturally plays an important role in cultural preservation until now continues to face negative stereotypes that do not stop. Sinden is a maestro in the field of art whose existence is still known to the public. In an art such as wayang kulit or ludruk, sinden has an important role in the performance. According to K. S Kostaman in Weintraub (2004), This case stems from the sinden crisis that coincided with Soekarno's Guided Democracy (1959–65). At the same time, sinden has become a public concern as a singer who is chaotic and sometimes shows elements of violence.

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Another reality that contributed to the emergence of a negative view of the sinden profession was when sinden appeared in wayang golek performances in the late 1950s and early 1960s. At that time, the popularity of sinden among the audience surpassed the popularity of the dalang in the show. As the saying goes that "sinden does not accompany the dalang, but the dalang is accompanied by sinden". As sinden gained such high popularity, they were eventually asked to go up on stage so the audience could see their bodies and facial expressions. This situation has diverted the viewer's eyes. The audience is no longer focused on the puppets played by the dalang, but focuses on the curves of the sinden's body who appear on the stage made of arranged tables. Sinden not only sang Javanese songs or popular songs at the time, they also moved their bodies and danced in ways that men found very sexually provocative (Weintraub, 2004).

Sinden's sensuality, which is inherent in the public's view, has obscured the position of sinden in culture. In the results of research conducted by (Supriyanto, 2006), the attractiveness of sinden often creates an unfavorable "image" in society, especially in a religious environment. The view that is still inherent in society about the prohibition of women going out at night is of course very different from the work of sinden who works at night until the morning. The representation of the sinden body in the show is also not free from debate. The appearance of sinden is often associated with the construction of beauty and sexual desire in the view of the audience as well as placing the position of sinden as second sex. Sinden in this position is almost no longer seen as a subject, but as an object that continues to be defined (Ardiani, 2019). Women are always defined and associated with nature, conceptually, symbolically, linguistically and of course this is closely related to patriarchy, gender to feminism issues. This complexity is the result of the formation of the value system, socialization to patriarchal performance which always justifies the subordination of men to women (Susilo & Kodir, 2016). Men who have a lot of money seem to have more power over women through the 'sawer' actions they take. The debate regarding this view has also been raised by Chapkis (in Khan, 2019) that there are two views to see this reality. On the one hand, 'radical feminists' consider these acts as a form of heteropatriarchy, pornography, and other forms of sexual work that exploitatively demean women. While on the other hand, 'feminist sex radicals' see it as a potential performance that encourages women to become financially independent figures. Besides these two considerations, the position of sinden as an object for society always views that everything that happens is sinden's fault, which strengthens the negative stereotype of sinden. The connection between sinden and his sensuality has triggered a lot of abuse experienced by sinden. This harassment is done verbally (abusive words) or non-verbal (touching the body without permission).

However, this immoral act is considered natural and is used by some to take advantage. Those who have power in the performance, such as the Dalang or the organizer of the show, can freely exploit the sinden body. The performance of the sinden is determined by the amount of the performance fee and the request from the organizer of the show. In this context, power relations play a role in it. Foucault sees a fundamental relationship between power, knowledge and sexuality. The meaning of sexuality begins with social constructions that appear in society regarding knowledge, norms, behavior, subjectivity to the knowledge power system. Dzuhayatin in Rohmaniyah (2017) interprets sexuality not only about sex but also about gender issues and power relations. Sexuality, sex and

gender are different things. This difference lies in the material object. If sex is related to biological or physical aspects, gender is related to social construction and sexuality is the complexity of the two. In this paper, Foucault's power relation is used as an analytical tool to explore the two topics studied. First, this paper proves the power of the dominant party in exploiting the appearance of sinden. This paper also describes the correlation of sinden body mastery and its relation to the view of intersectionality.

## 2 Method

This study uses a qualitative approach to explain the phenomenon of the deconstruction of the listener's discourse in dealing with negative stereotypes holistically and the results are examined using scientific literature. Furthermore, from the results of the research, an interesting thing was found, namely about sinden, which finally made me interested in exploring it more. Data collection is done by means of observation, interviews and documentation. Therefore, in the process of selecting informants in this study, purposive sampling was used by determining in advance the characteristics of the informants who wanted to be studied. The criteria for the informants of this research are: a) Sinden in the wayang kulit group. This selection is based on the fact that the concept of sinden is very broad, for example there is sinden in ludruk, jaipong, or sinden in other arts. So that the research on sinden is clearer, a limitation is given that the sinden in this study is a member of the Wayang Kulit art. b) Sinden of various ages. Some of the sinden who were used as informants were under 30 years old, and some were over 30 years old. This criterion was set because I wanted to know the comparison of the views of the two age differences in dealing with the negative stereotypes experienced. c) Sinden in this study came from East Java. This is because the term sinden in various regions is different, so to clarify the research, the sinden of East Java is designated as a research informant. From these considerations, 7 sinden informants were obtained with the criteria of 3 sinden under 30 years old, while the other 4 sinden were above 30 years old. 2 young singers and 2 middle-aged singers were taken from the Ki Dalang Roman shadow puppet group. Meanwhile, the other 4 sinden were chosen randomly from other shadow puppet groups based on the willingness of the sinden. (Accidental Sampling). Random selection is done by searching the Malang sinden group on Facebook and then sending random messengers. For those who are willing, then I will schedule a time to meet for an interview. This research was conducted in various time durations according to the willingness of the sinden. Miles and Huberman's data analysis technique was used starting from the initial process until after the data had been collected. The consideration of using this technique is that if insufficient data is found, continuous analysis will be carried out until the existing data can be considered credible.

## 3 Discussion

### **Dominant Party Power Relations in Exploiting Sinden**

Starting from negative views in the past, it gives rise to views that have taken root in society. Negative views or stereotypes are always closely related to human judgment.

In view of social cognitive theory, most researchers find that there are stereotypes that develop in society both experienced by men and women which are then linked back to general behavior (Bem, 1981; Del Boca & Ashmore, 1980 in Luoh, H.- F., & Tsaur, S.-H. (2007) Negative stereotypes experienced by women who work as *sinden* cannot be separated from the objectification of the *sinden* body. Get catcalls and even excessive actions such as pokes from male audiences. This is said to be objectification because it is in line with Syarifah's view (2006:153) that objectification of women is often carried out by men against women.

This objectification is characterized by demeaning behavior, making women as commodities, degrading their status by buying and selling women's bodies can even be made a sexual object. Fausto-Sterling defines sex as a person who is labeled as either male, female, transgender, intersex, and refers more to sex-related body features that are biological, physical, and/or inherited evolutionary (e.g. penis, vulva, breasts, body shape) body) (van Anders, 2015, p. 1181, Anne Fausto-Sterling, 2019). *Sinden* clothes that tend to be tight and the profession that is inherent in him are often the center of exciting attention for men. However, most men do not understand it and consider the action taken as a natural thing. Baran and Dabis in Handayani (2017) according to Psychoanalytic theory explains that humans think and take action driven by emotional and psychological feelings of self that are beyond their control or without awareness. If any part of the female body is visible, then sexual and emotional feelings have preceded it. When the emotional desire to watch the show is not restrained, not a few male audiences actually take advantage of the situation to be able to sing along with the *sinden*. Men who have money have the freedom to duet with *sinden* on stage.

The commercialization of women's bodies is increasingly unstoppable. In the performance when *sinden* performs as a sign, there are 4–6 *sinden* who appear on stage. Two young *sinden* and four middle aged *sinden*. Men are free to invite several *sinden* duets. As a result, young *sinden* earns much more money from *saweran* than middle-aged *sinden*. The commercialization of women's bodies is becoming increasingly unstoppable. Susilo & Kodir (2016) examine the issue of women's body politics, the results of which can be used to analyze the commercialization of *sinden* bodies in the 'sawer' act by men. In his research. Susilo & Kodir (2016) have the view that the politicization of women's bodies is increasingly closely related to nature. A post-structuralist philosopher, Foucault, views the female body as a means of production (Jones 2009, in Susilo & Kodir, 2016). The circulation of existing discourses in society regarding women's bodies, triggers that women can meet the criteria standardized by society (Sarup 2008, 102). Body, so that when men look at it, it is not far from the production system. Assuming it is a form of 'fairness' for men to give a certain amount of 'sawer' money during a duet together, of course it lowers the degree of *sinden* and the dignity of *sinden* in life.

Unfortunately, other forms of stereotypes experienced by *sinden* are mostly given by other women. The view of women is in fact still inherent in life. There is a public perception of women who are supposed to be gentle, have restrictions on association with the opposite sex, to dress modestly, and don't go out of the house at night. The *sinden*'s activities, contrary to public perception in general, have encouraged the construction of new negative discourses to emerge. DT as one of the informants often felt ashamed of his profession when asked by other people. According to him, many people view

his profession as one eye and even thick with deviations. The emergence of the label 'seductive woman' is also not infrequently attached to sinden. Jealousy because she felt her husband was in a duet together, made other women feel disapproved. Thus, the effort to bring it down is to strengthen existing stereotypes so that they are considered as truth by other people.

Because most of the views are directed by women themselves, gender stereotypes have been rejected by many women, but it is precisely from women that gender stereotypes emerge. Subono ed., 2000: 13–15 in Subtandari (2013), cites Jacques Lacan's theory which examines "symbolic rules". Lacan revealed that society has been regulated by signs (symbols) that are attached and interconnected which produce roles and rituals in society. This "symbolic rule" finally regulates society so that it is internalized in rules related to gender roles. As a result, society continues to produce the rules of the game in society, especially for women. The social construction that is formed as a result of patriarchy causes women to be underestimated and their rights are subordinated (Saptandari, 2013). Other women have formed symbols of the sinden profession. This negative discourse in turn also affects the thoughts of other women and negative views about sinden are increasingly perpetuated.

The normalization of society towards negative discourses on sinden has been used by the dalang for profit. Based on the results of an interview with one of the research informants who works as a puppeteer, the amount of tariffs affects the selection of sinden. The higher the fee paid to the dalang, the better the voice and sexy body of the sinden selected will be. This means that the dalang who has a dominant position in the show has also used his power to regulate how sinden performs on stage. The statement that "if you are on stage, you belong to the public, while outside the stage your body belongs to your husband", a kind of thing that is legitimized by the dalang to sinden. The actions taken by the dalang against sinden are seen by Foucault as a form of power. Unlike other Marxisms, for Foucault power is not always about violence, oppression or radical things. However, power can also be seen from the resistance of those who receive treatment. In general, power is defined as the capacity of a person to force the will of a powerless person to comply with his wishes. In other words, forcing other people to do things they don't want to do. Foucault has distinguished power based on his views with the general view. Power according to Foucault is not something that can be owned, but something that acts and is manifested in a certain way and refers to strategy rather than ownership. This power is exercised through organizations or networks (Balan, 2010).

In wayang kulit performances, the dalang has a very important position. In addition to determining the date of the performance, to determining the payment rate for each performance, the dalang also plays a role in choosing the sinden who will be invited to the performance. Research informants stated that there were 8 sinden in one show. Of these eight sinden, there are permanent sinden (member of the group) and sinden from outside the group. If the show organizer asks for a beautiful and sexy sinden, usually the dalang will choose a sinden from outside the group who has a lot of experience and is sexy. In line with the concept of power presented by Foucault, that power is not always about violence or coercion of the will. Power in this reality is seen that there is 'ownership' attached to sinden. Whatever is in sinden depends on the request of the 'group'. This has led the sinden to think that the group is the place, and the wayang kulit

group is his. Indirectly, the act of power is also involved in it. Sinden followed whatever was asked, because of the feeling of belonging that had taken root in his soul.

### **The Correlation of Sinden Body Mastery and Its Relation to the View of Intersectionality**

The number of negative views that have sprung up, does not allow sinden as the object of labeling recipients to remain in silence. Attempts to 'uncover' negative discourse are often carried out. The results showed that some sinden did not care about the prevailing stereotypes and felt that the negative view was a form of fairness and a consequence of the work they did, but several other sinden indicated that the negative view given to them was a wrong perception. The self-restriction of men when they are on stage and even the prohibition of a duet with sinden is used as an effort to prove that society's negative view of sinden so far is not true. However, there are other sinden who still accept saweran and allow male audiences to duet with him on condition that they do not 'hold' the sensitive parts of his body. This reality is in line with the concept of stereotype according to Burkley & Blanton (2008) that there are two forms of internalization of stereotypes, namely chronic and functional.

Sinden who internalizes the negative views of others to the extent that it affects his anxiety and worries about his work, is included in the chronic stereotype section. This type of sinden, will not allow male audience members to duet or 'make' himself in order to avoid negative views from other people. Meanwhile, sinden who sometimes refuses not to let men duet with him, and sometimes accepts because of economic demands, is included in the functional stereotype. This means that this approach reinforces that stigmatized targets can accept negative stereotypes when they fulfill needs and reject them when they do not (Burkley & Blanton, 2008). Rejection is often done by young sinden, while middle-aged sinden feels that needs are more important, so if he doesn't go too far in his attitude, he will feel that it is something normal. For singers, facing negative stereotypes from society does not prevent them from continuing their profession. In addition to the need and economic factors, the happiness factor when he became a sinden was also an important thing for him. His passion for the arts as a sinden is greater than the negative views that other people give him.

Many of the informants stated that breaking other people's negative discourses was just a waste of time, because negative views of their profession were inherent in the general public. This reality is directly proportional to the study of structuralist schools, that humans are not free creatures but creatures bound by structures, so that every behavior is regulated by structures and systems that control them (Lubis in Siregar, 2019). The sinden's actions tend to think that the effort to break into is just a futile thing, probably because there is a structure that has bound him. This was revealed by the PN as an informant, that if a sinden is too refusing or challenging negative discourses from other communities, there is a concern that he will no longer be invited to perform, so this will affect his income. So, the solution that he considers important is to follow the existing negative discourse.

## 4 Conclusion

Sinden experiences many negative stereotypes that must be accepted. The dalang as the dominant party has taken advantage of this power which is normalized by the community and even the sinden himself. Post-modernists examine the reality experienced by sinden as 'doing gender'. The ideas of 'doing' and 'performance' give meaning to how gender is produced in everyday life. In another study, that the category of 'women' arises from a process of gender production called 'performativeness'. Gender exclusion is seen in the isolation carried out by the community towards sinden, both when sinden is on stage and in everyday life. In fact, many people, especially women, view the sinden profession as a threat. Further research can deepen the discussion of sinden from the point of view of structuralism to see the relationship of structure in the formation of power, or about the deconstruction carried out by sinden in the midst of gender exclusion.

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