

High Schooler Identity: Re-examining Power Relations of Self-Image Construction and Rangga's Alienation Amidst Mass Teen Culture Based on Film *Rangga dan Cinta* 2025

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Abstract

This study investigates the construction of adolescent identity and power relations in the film *Rangga dan Cinta* (2025) by employing French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power within a post-structuralist discourse analysis framework. Addressing the limited discussion of power dynamics in Indonesian teen cinema, this research conceptualizes adolescent identity not as a fixed psychological attribute but as a discursively constructed and socially negotiated process. Using a qualitative case study approach, selected scenes, dialogues, and character interactions are analyzed to examine how different bases of power operate within peer relationships. The findings reveal that dominant peer groups exercise referent, reward, coercive, and legitimate power to normalize conformity, sociability, and visibility as ideal identity standards, thereby regulating mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. In contrast, Rangga constructs a counter-hegemonic identity through expert and informational power grounded in intellectual autonomy, linguistic control, and reflective silence. However, this resistance simultaneously produces alienation as a structural consequence of non-conformity. The study concludes that adolescent identity in the film emerges as a dynamic and contested process shaped by unequal power relations, contributing to cultural and film studies by highlighting how Indonesian teen cinema represents identity formation as a power-laden social practice.

Keywords: *Identity, Power relation, coercive, legitimate, reward, expert, referent*

Introduction

The construction of adolescent identity is shaped by continuous negotiation between personal agency and social structures that define what it means to "belong" within a peer environment. In the context of high school culture, identity emerges not as an inherent truth but as a dynamic response to social expectations, group norms, and systems of power that regulate self-expression. The film *Rangga dan Cinta* (2025) illustrates this process vividly through the figure of Rangga, a student who positions himself outside the dominant teen community. His self-image formed through silence,

intellectual withdrawal, and emotional restraint stands in contrast to the collective identity shaped by popularity, conformity, and group cohesion embodied by Cinta and her friends. Adolescence, as shown in the film, becomes a critical arena in which identity is constructed through interaction, resistance, and social pressure.

Within this environment, power plays a fundamental role in shaping how individuals see themselves and how they are positioned by others. To understand these dynamics, this study draws on French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power, which identifies six bases of power: Legitimate Power, Reward Power, Coercive Power, Expert Power, Referent Power, and Informational Power. These forms of power operate within interpersonal relationships and social groups, influencing behavior, identity, and self-perception. In the film, Cinta and her peer group exercise referent power (influence through popularity), reward power (social acceptance), and coercive power (exclusion or disapproval), shaping the hierarchy of the school's teen culture. Conversely, Rangga demonstrates expert power through intellectual depth and informational power through his knowledge and alternative worldview, positioning him outside yet simultaneously in opposition to mainstream norms.

Rangga's alienation therefore cannot be understood merely as a personal trait or emotional tendency; it is a structural position produced through unequal access to power and recognition within mass teen culture. French and Raven's framework helps reveal how peer groups dictate standards of desirability, social value, and legitimacy standards that Rangga refuses to embrace, resulting in tension between individual autonomy and collective expectation. His refusal to conform is interpreted by the group as deviance, thereby reinforcing their authority to define who belongs and who does not. This alienation becomes both a form of resistance and a consequence of the social system that privileges conformity, visibility, and emotional expressiveness as markers of acceptable identity.

At the same time, the relationship between Rangga and Cinta complicates the power dynamics of high school identity formation. Cinta's attraction toward Rangga signals her internal conflict between the dominant discourse of teen culture and the emerging recognition of alternative values represented by Rangga. It is through their interactions that the film exposes how identity is never fixed but negotiated through shifting power relations: between individuality and collectivity, silence and expression, resistance and acceptance. By re-examining these dynamics through French and Raven's theory of power, this study aims to uncover how self-image is constructed within the tension between domination and marginality, ultimately revealing adolescent identity as a site of contestation rather than certainty.

1. Power Relations and the Bases of Social Power (French & Raven, 1959)

French and Raven's seminal framework on social power offers an essential foundation for understanding interpersonal influence and identity formation within adolescent groups. Their theory outlines six bases of power: legitimate, reward, coercive, referent, expert, and informational power, which shape how individuals negotiate authority and social position. In school-based peer culture, these forms of power determine who is included, who is marginalized, and how self-image is constructed through approval or exclusion. Referent power (popularity and admiration) and reward power (acceptance or validation) dominate youth culture, while coercive power reinforces conformity through the threat of social isolation. Conversely, characters like Rangga exercise expert and informational power, allowing him to resist mainstream norms while simultaneously positioning him as an outsider. This framework is essential

for interpreting how power circulates within the interactions that constitute Rangga's alienation and self-representation.

2. Adolescent Identity Construction and Self-Image Formation

Identity during adolescence is shaped by both psychological development and social negotiation. Classical theories such as Erikson's identity versus role confusion and Marcia's identity status emphasize exploration, commitment, and the tension between autonomy and social expectation. However, contemporary scholars (e.g., Giddens, Hall) highlight that identity is no longer viewed as a stable internal structure but as a performative and discursively constructed phenomenon. In filmic narratives like *Rangga dan Cinta (2025)*, Rangga embodies the adolescent struggle to construct a coherent self in the face of group norms, symbolic expectations, and socio-cultural pressures. His self-image rooted intellectualism, detachment, and introversion functions as a counter-narrative to collective high school identity, which prioritizes visibility, sociability, and conformity. Literature on identity formation stresses that such tensions reflect broader social mechanisms that define "acceptable" forms of youth identity.

3. Mass Teen Culture, Discourse, and the Production of Alienation

Youth culture is widely understood as a site where meaning, identity, and power intersect through the influence of media, consumption, and peer dynamics. Scholars such as Stuart Hall and Dick Hebdige argue that cultural identity is produced through representation, shaped by dominant narratives and re-inscribed through everyday practices of the youth community. Teen culture operates as a mass system that circulates symbols of popularity, lifestyle, and belonging often enforcing uniformity while marginalizing alternative expressions. Post-structuralist perspectives, including Derrida's deconstruction and Foucault's discourse theory, further assert that identity is formed within power-laden structures that regulate how individuals are understood. In this context, Rangga's alienation emerges as a discursive effect of dominant cultural expectations that classify him as "other." By situating his character within these theoretical discussions, the literature shows how power, discourse, and youth culture converge to construct both identity and exclusion simultaneously.

Adolescent identity construction is shaped by continuous negotiation between personal agency and social power. This study examines the film *Rangga dan Cinta (2025)* to understand how power bases influence self-image and alienation within youth culture. Prior studies have explored identity in film, but limited attention has been given to how French and Raven's power theory specifically operates in Indonesian teen film narratives. Therefore, this study addresses a research gap in examining identity as a discursive product of power relations.

Research Questions:

1. How are social power bases exercised in peer interaction in *Rangga dan Cinta (2025)*?
2. How is Rangga's identity constructed through resistance to dominant cultural norms?
3. How do interactions between Rangga and Cinta demonstrate negotiation of identity?

Methodology

1. Research Design and Approach

This study employs a qualitative research design using an interpretive and descriptive approach to analyze how identity and power relations shape the character of

Rangga in the film *Rangga dan Cinta (2025)*. The qualitative design allows the researcher to capture symbolic, discursive, and psychological elements that cannot be measured through numerical data. Given the focus on meaning-making, social influence, and identity construction, the study adopts a discourse-analytic approach supported by post-structuralist principles. This approach enables the researcher to examine how language, social interaction, and cultural narratives construct the self-image of adolescents within mass teen culture.

2. Case Study Method

A single-case study method is used, focusing on the representation of Rangga as a central phenomenon. The case study approach is appropriate because it allows for an in-depth analysis of a specific character whose identity and alienation reflect broader socio-cultural dynamics. By using Rangga as an illustrative case, the study investigates how power, discourse, and youth culture intersect, making his character a productive site for analyzing resistance, marginalization, and identity formation. The case is bounded by the scenes, dialogues, and interactions portrayed in the film, which collectively form the analytical corpus.

3. Data and Sources of Data

The primary data consist of *scenes, dialogues, monologues, character expressions, and narrative elements* from the film *Rangga dan Cinta (2025)*. These data are chosen because they directly illustrate the construction of Rangga's identity and his relationship with the dominant teen culture. The secondary data sources include academic books, journal articles, theoretical frameworks (French & Raven's power theory, Erikson's identity theory, post-structuralist discourse theory, and cultural studies by Hall & Hebdige), as well as studies related to adolescent identity and film analysis. These sources support the interpretation of the primary data and situate the study within established scholarly discourse.

4. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through close reading and repeated film viewing, accompanied by systematic note-taking to identify key scenes and linguistic markers related to power, identity, and alienation. The researcher documented conversational patterns, symbolic gestures, narrative tension, and visual cues relevant to the construction of meaning. Transcription of selected dialogues was conducted to ensure accuracy during analysis. All relevant moments—such as confrontations, group interactions, and intimate exchanges between Rangga and Cinta were categorized thematically. To ensure transparency in the analysis process, the film was watched three times and relevant scenes were transcribed manually. Researchers identified 15 key scenes depicting power interactions, exclusion, and identity negotiations. The coding process was carried out using an analytical table containing French & Raven's six categories of power bases.

5. Research Instrument

Given the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher acts as the primary instrument. Interpretation is guided by established theoretical frameworks, which serve as analytical tools for identifying structures of power and discursive patterns. The researcher also uses a coding sheet or analytical table to classify forms of power (e.g., reward, coercive, referent, expert, informational), identity markers, and discursive elements found in the text. This instrument ensures systematic and traceable analysis.

6. Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility of the findings, this research applied methodological triangulation by :

- a. Repeatedly reviewing selected scenes.
- b. Cross-checking coding categories twice to maintain consistency.
- c. Comparing interpretive results with theoretical constructs from French & Raven and post-structuralist discourse theories.

Thick descriptions of dialogue excerpts were also used to ensure confirmability, allowing readers to trace how interpretations were generated from the data.

7. Data Analysis Procedure

Data were analyzed through an integrative method combining discourse analysis and French & Raven's power relation analysis. The analysis was conducted in three stages:

- a. Textual Identification, locating dialogues, scenes, and narrative events that illustrate identity formation, social interaction, and power relations.
- b. Power Categorization, applying French & Raven's six bases of power to classify how peer groups exert influence and how Rangga positions himself through alternative forms of power.
- c. Interpretive Discourse Analysis, using post-structuralist perspectives (Derrida, Foucault) to interpret how meaning, identity, and alienation are produced through language, representation, and social norms.

This analytic process reveals how Rangga's self-image is shaped not only by internal psychological struggles but also by discourse, representation, and shifting power dynamics within mass teen culture.

Finding and Discussion

The Power Bases of French and raven 1959

The phenomenon of power within social interactions often manifests not through physical coercion, but through subtle and structured mechanisms of influence. In Riri Riza's latest cinematic work, *Rangga & Cinta* (2025), this dynamic serves as the nexus of plot development and character transformation. Although framed as a teen musical drama, the film radiates a profound contestation of influence between collective social dominance (Cinta's peer group) and individual intellectual resistance (Rangga).

To comprehensively dissect these mechanisms of influence, this study employs the theoretical framework of The Bases of Social Power developed by John French and Bertram Raven (1959). French and Raven posit that the capacity to influence others originates from five primary pillars: *legitimate*, *reward*, *coercive*, *expert*, and *referent power*. Through a qualitative-descriptive approach, this journal maps the manifestations of each power base within pivotal scenes to understand how social influence is constructed and deconstructed among adolescents within the narrative of *Rangga & Cinta* (2025)."

1. Legitimate Power

Within the theoretical framework of French and Raven (1959), Legitimate Power is defined as authority derived from a formal position or legally recognized status within a structural hierarchy. In the cinematic universe of *Rangga & Cinta* (2025), this

power serves as the primary foundation governing social order within the high school environment.

Data:

"In this gallery, I am the curator. I know exactly which corner is best suited for your poem so that people can truly 'read' it, not just look at it. Please, follow my layout."

The dialogue above exemplifies the manifestation of Legitimate Power, where Cinta's authority is rooted in her formal designation as a curator. Rangga's compliance signifies a recognition of professional boundaries, illustrating a construction of high-schooler identity based on institutionalized roles. Cinta's identity is "validated" by the labels granted by the educational institution, which bestows upon her the right to dictate "aesthetic order."

From a linguistic perspective, the clause "I know exactly which corner is best..." utilizes the mental verb "know," which functions as an epistemic modality expressing certainty of knowledge. Cinta does not merely exercise control over the physical spatiality (the layout); she attempts to govern the interpretative framework (the meaning) of Rangga's work.

This interaction highlights the underlying Power Relations prevalent in the narrative. Mass teen culture often dictates the "proper" consumption of art and lifestyle. Cinta, acting as a representative of the established system, feels she possesses the legitimacy to define the boundary between "correct" and "incorrect" interpretation. Thus, the construction of self-image in this context is inextricably linked to the possession of formal authority and the control of discursive meaning.

2. Reward Power

According to the Bases of Power theory proposed by French and Raven, Reward Power is defined as an individual's capacity to influence the behavior of others through the provision of incentives or valued positive outcomes. In the cinematic context of *Rangga & Cinta* (2025), this power transcends material or financial dimensions, manifesting instead as social validation, peer-group acceptance, and access to systemic popularity. The manifestation of Reward Power is explicitly observed in scenes where Cinta bestows warm praise and physical affection upon Milly or Maura following the successful execution of a collective task (e.g., persuading other students to participate in a poetry competition). Cinta reinforces this behavior by stating:

Data :

"You're the best! Nanti sore kita ke mall bareng, aku yang traktir." (You're the best! Let's go to the mall this afternoon; it's on me.)

In this interaction, Cinta employs a dual-layered reward system: material (the treat/shopping) and socio-affirmative (praise). This dynamic reinforces the motivation of her peers to remain compliant and subservient to her expectations in exchange for emotional proximity and group recognition. From a linguistic perspective, the phrase "You're the best" functions as a positive politeness strategy. Beyond mere compliment, Cinta is effectively establishing a "standard of identity." Peers such as Milly and Maura internalize the notion that the "ideal" or "best" identity is attainable only through strict adherence to Cinta's social agenda. Within this framework, language ceases

to be a mere communicative tool and becomes a commodity an exchange medium used to purchase social validation.

Furthermore, the phrases "kita ke mall bareng" (let's go to the mall together) and "aku yang traktir" (it's on me) illustrate how Reward Power constrains the boundaries of adolescent identity construction. The lexical choices of "Mall" and "Traktir" (treat) construct a discourse wherein the "accepted" teenage identity is inextricably linked to mass consumerism. Linguistically, this reinforces a power structure where Cinta acts as the primary holder of capital (resource power), while her peers are rendered subjects whose identities are shaped through economic and social dependency.

3. Coercive Power

In the perspective of French and Raven (1959), Coercive Power is a form of authority predicated on the agent's capacity to administer punishment, threats, or negative consequences to ensure compliance. While Reward Power attracts through "benevolent incentives," Coercive Power compels through "fear." In the film *Rangga & Cinta (2025)*, coercive power manifests through social pressure and the threat of ostracization. In a peer-environment where reputation is paramount, the threat of social exclusion or public humiliation serves as a potent coercive instrument to maintain behavioral uniformity within the group.

Data :

Character such as Karmen, or other members of the dominant clique, employ "piercing stares" or caustic satire against students who dare to approach Rangga or breach the group's established norms. When Karmen utilizes "caustic satire," she deliberately violates negative politeness strategies to perform Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) intended to degrade the social standing of others. Linguistically, these satires function as social boundary markers, establishing a dichotomy between "In-Group Language" (the elite) and "Out-Group Language" (the alienated/Rangga).

Furthermore, the gazes and kinesic gestures in this film function as indexical signs; these non-verbal cues index a "high social status." Consequently, Rangga's alienation occurs because he refuses to engage in the same encoding process as the masses. Rangga employs a linguistic register that is more poetic or formal (often mediated through his literature), which in the 2025 adolescent ecosystem is perceived as "noise" or an invalid code. These non-verbal threats constitute a form of psychological coercion, designed to induce social discomfort or insecurity in those who fail to comply.

Ultimately, adolescent identity can be understood as a discursively mediated process that is shaped through linguistic performativity and reinforced by coercive power relations. The threat of exclusion represents more than physical punishment it is a symbolic penalty where the individual suffers a "silencing" or the loss of their communicative agency within the community. Thus, Rangga's alienation can be interpreted as a form of symbolic resistance within the dominant cultural framework against the standardization of identity imposed by mass culture.

4. Expert Power

"In the film's narrative, Expert Power undergoes a paradigm shift, transitioning from mere academic aptitude toward a profound depth of literacy and linguistic sophistication. Rangga personifies this power not through formal hierarchy, but through

his mastery of diction and metaphorical nuances in poetry intellectual realms that remain inaccessible to his peers.

From a linguistic perspective, Rangga employs a strategy of 'Silent Authority. He eschews loquacity; however, when he does speak, his precise lexical choices exert a form of intellectual intimidation. This challenges the Legitimate Power inherent in Cinta's social status, compelling her to concede that within the literary domain, Rangga occupies the supreme position of authority." In the analyzed encounter, Rangga exhibits a notable absence of emotional reactivity. His non-verbal cues deliberately turning the page of a book and maintaining a composed gaze function as a prelude to his trenchant critique of Cinta's poetic structure.

Data :

Cinta: *"Why is your poetry so inaccessible? Are you intentionally trying to look brilliant?"*

Rangga: *"Poetry is not about the perception of brilliance, Cinta. Poetry is condensed honesty. If you are still writing merely to solicit applause, you aren't writing poetry. You are merely writing slogans."*

Rangga employs authoritative declarative statements to assert his position. Through the use of the metaphor "condensed honesty," he demonstrates a profound epistemic dominance that induces a state of cognitive dissonance in Cinta, leading her to interrogate her own creative competence.

From a pragmatic perspective, Rangga utilizes a strategy of Silent Authority. In linguistic theory, Rangga's silence and economy of speech do not signify a communicative void; rather, they constitute a deliberate communicative act signaling high levels of self-regulation and psychological control. When Rangga asserts that "Poetry is condensed honesty," he is not merely offering a subjective opinion but is constructing an absolute propositional definition.

The juxtaposition of his dense, philosophical discourse against the backdrop of a peer environment dominated by "slang" or "slogans" facilitates a state of Self-imposed Alienation. This serves a dual purpose: it functions as a psychological defense mechanism while simultaneously acting as a tool to destabilize Cinta's established social hegemony.

5. Informational Power

Within French and Raven's (1959) framework, Informational Power refers to influence derived from the control, interpretation, and framing of information that shapes how reality is understood by others. Unlike expert power, which is grounded in perceived competence, informational power operates through the ability to define meaning, truth, and relevance within a exercised by Rangga through his selective disclosure of ideas, reflective silence, and reframing of dominant social narratives.

Rangga's informational power is evident in moments where he refuses to provide socially expected explanations for his behavior or emotions. By withholding immediate clarification and instead offering carefully constructed responses, Rangga controls the flow of meaning within interactions. This strategic minimalism disrupts the communicative norms of mass teen culture, which prioritize emotional transparency, performative sociability, and rapid verbal exchange. His restraint functions as an alternative epistemic stance, positioning information not as a commodity to gain popularity but as a reflective tool to challenge superficial consensus.

From a discourse-analytic perspective, Rangga's informational power allows him to reframe dominant assumptions imposed by his peers. When confronted with labels such as "weird" or "antisocial," Rangga does not directly refute them; instead, he redirects the interpretative focus toward the collective itself, questioning the logic of conformity. Through this reframing, Rangga destabilizes the taken-for-granted meanings upheld by mass teen culture and exposes their contingent nature. In this sense, informational power becomes a mechanism of subtle resistance that undermines dominant discourse without direct confrontation.

However, this control over meaning simultaneously intensifies Rangga's alienation. By refusing to participate in the shared informational codes of his peer group, Rangga positions himself outside the dominant communicative system. His informational autonomy is therefore double-edged: it enables resistance while reinforcing his marginal position. This finding confirms that informational power in adolescent contexts can function both as a tool of self-definition and as a structural source of exclusion within hegemonic youth culture.

6. Referent Power

From the perspectives of linguistics and social psychology, Referent Power constitutes the most subtle yet potent form of authority. This power does not emanate from coercive threats or formal positions; rather, it is rooted in self-identification. An individual aligns with another based on admiration, respect, or the aspirational desire to emulate that person. In the film *Rangga & Cinta (2025)*, Referent Power is manifested through interpersonal attraction and charisma. Cinta wields this power through her social status, which positions her as a prevailing role model. Conversely, Rangga exerts influence through a 'mystique' and artistic integrity an aura that compels others, most notably Cinta, to gravitate toward and engage with his internal world."

Data :

The dialogue between Cinta and Rangga serves as a microcosm of the tension between Social Normativity and Individual Autonomy. Cinta's inquiry "Why are you so comfortable being alone here? Aren't you afraid of being considered 'weird' utilizes a lexicon rooted in social surveillance. Terms such as "weird" (aneh) and "considered" (dianggap) indicate that her identity is constructed upon the gaze of the Mass Teen Culture. In this framework, "truth" is a collective consensus rather than an individual conviction.

Conversely, Rangga employs a linguistic subversion through the technique of Reframing. By deconstructing the signifier "weird" and redirecting it toward the crowd "Which is weirder? Being alone with your own thoughts, or being in a crowd but only following the thoughts of others?" he dismantles the dominant social definitions. Linguistically, Rangga refuses to remain an "object" to be defined by the collective and instead asserts himself as a "subject" who defines reality.

From the perspective of Politeness Theory, Rangga's rhetorical counter-question functions as a Negative Politeness Strategy. He avoids a direct face-threatening act toward Cinta, yet effectively constrains her argumentative space. This creates a shift in Referent Power; Cinta experiences a form of "Linguistic Disorientation." Her social dominance is neutralized by Rangga's immunity to verbal social pressure. Within this framework, Rangga's alienation is transformed from a social deficit into a form of Intellectual

Charisma, where his "outsider" status becomes the very source of his interpersonal attraction.

Theoretical and Scholarly Contribution

This study contributes to cultural, film, and youth studies in three significant ways. First, it extends French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power by demonstrating how power bases operate not only in organizational or interpersonal settings but also within cinematic representations of adolescent peer culture. Second, the study offers a critical reading of Indonesian teen cinema by positioning *Rangga dan Cinta* (2025) as a cultural text that reflects broader mechanisms of social control, resistance, and identity negotiation among youth. Third, by employing post-structuralist discourse analysis, this research highlights how adolescent identity and alienation are produced through language, silence, and symbolic interaction, thereby reinforcing the view of identity as a contested and power-laden social process rather than a fixed psychological condition.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that adolescent identity in *Rangga dan Cinta* (2025) is not a stable or inherent psychological condition but a socially constructed and discursively negotiated process shaped by unequal power relations within mass teen culture. By applying French and Raven's (1959) theory of social power through a post-structuralist discourse analysis, the findings reveal how dominant peer groups employ legitimate, reward, coercive, and referent power to normalize conformity, sociability, and visibility as ideal identity standards. These mechanisms function to regulate behavior while simultaneously defining boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in the adolescent social environment.

In contrast, the character Rangga constructs a counter-hegemonic identity through expert and informational power grounded in intellectual autonomy, linguistic control, and reflective silence. While this alternative mode of self-representation enables resistance against dominant cultural expectations, it also produces alienation as a structural and discursive consequence of non-conformity. This study confirms that Rangga's marginal position should not be interpreted as an individual deficiency, but as an outcome of power relations that privilege sameness and marginalize difference.

Furthermore, the interaction between Rangga and Cinta illustrates that adolescent identity remains fluid and contested, continuously renegotiated through tensions between individual agency and collective norms. Ultimately, *Rangga dan Cinta* (2025) portrays adolescent identity as a dynamic and power-laden social process rather than a fixed personal essence. This study contributes to cultural and film studies by highlighting how Indonesian teen cinema reflects broader mechanisms of social control, resistance, and identity negotiation, positioning adolescent identity as a site of ongoing power struggle within contemporary youth culture.

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