

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

Theory is very important in helping the writer analyzing a literary text. The novel that the writer is going to analyze is *The Clique*. It tells about a friendship among teenage girls, the way they live, their social life and their habit in spending money for buying branded products. The writer wants to analyze the lifestyles of the teenage girls who join 'Pretty Committee' and the effects because of their addiction on spending money. On the way to look deeper on their lifestyles and its effects, this study will use stepwise approach to analyze one by one on these girls' daily life. The description on the analysis will be based on these girls' activities, especially their action and speech. After the characterization in the novel reveals, the lifestyle of American teenagers' overspending money in branded products that portray the characters' lifestyle in the novel, will be discussed further. The facts and researches about American teenagers' lifestyle will be revealed since the characters' lifestyle which affected by consumerism become the main analysis of this study. The character's behavior in using credit cards, and overspending money in branded products, will be the main concern of this analysis.

The study will use the concept of consumerism to support the analysis of the characters toward their luxurious life. Consumerism will be applied to analyze the characters' social condition, including the lifestyles concept of the main

characters, and also how consumerism is able to affect the characters' daily life in the novel. The concept of consumerism, in this case, is stated mainly by Steven Miles. However, other sources of consumerism stated by other experts will also be used in order to clarify the concept of consumerism, and sharpen the analysis.

### **2.1.1 Teenagers' Behavior on Spending Money in General**

Teenagers are always been an active consumers, in terms of the money they spend, as well as in the power they have in their environment and especially on their societal trends. One of American magazines that discuss about teen market profile, *Magazine Publisher of America*, wrote that "Despite being raised in a period of rapid change, they display a remarkable self-confidence in their judgment. Teenagers do their research prior to making large purchases because they want to make informed decisions and are particular about what they buy" (MPA 16). This is become one of many reasons why teenagers are very vulnerable about the exact thought that appearance is their "shield" in facing a society, and the goods that they but show their power and personality among their environment.

In 2004, a survey has been done about teenagers' behavior on spending money, especially on the items they bought and the uses of credit cards. According to Roper Youth Report from NOP World (as cited in *Magazine Publisher of America*), most teenagers spend their money mostly on clothing, entertainment, and music purchases. And their parents are more likely to pay for those items. The survey also shows that 12 percents of teenagers think that "credit

cards are the greatest think ever”. In a journal that written by Timothy Clydesdale, in broad outline, he wrote that most American teenagers view work as a necessary irritation, money as a lifestyle essential, and leisure as a purchased commodity. He also said that most American teenagers are blinded to their conformity to these American patterns of consumption, and also the fact that American teens have learned these patterns from their families, their religious communities, and their local communities, not because these communities send these messages explicitly, but do so implicitly as they pattern their own behaviors along these lines.

However, consumerist lifestyle maybe influences more on teenage girls because teenage girls put more attention on their appearance than teenage boys. According to psychologist Susan Linn, “Encouraged to look outside of themselves for comfort, values and direction, girls become easy prey to addictive behaviors and unrealistic images that ads promote,” she says. “The diet, tobacco and alcohol industries target girls, capitalizing on the body image, weight concerns and beauty ideals that make them most vulnerable” (Linn 23). All of the facts and researches about teenagers’ behavior in spending money, especially girls, are appropriate with the characters in *The Clique* novel. Teenagers’ attitudes toward overspending money and consumerist lifestyle are really related to each other, which make this study comprehensible.

### **2.1.3 Consumerism and its Development in Modern Society**

To support the analysis on the issue arisen in the novel, this study will focus on the concept of consumerism stated by Steven Miles. However, other

sources on consumerism will also be used to support the analysis of *The Clique*. In order to make a clear explanation of consumerism, explained alternately, about what consumerism is in general and why the issue of consumerism is important, not only in the novel, but also in American teenagers' life. While second explanation, will be focused on consumerism stated by Steven Miles itself. Furthermore, for the last explanation, the concept of consumerism stated by other experts in order to make an explicit explanation of consumerism is needed to strengthen the concept of consumerism.

Not many people notice that the word 'consumerism' comes from Latin language. Consumerism is derived from the word consumer or consume, or in Latin language, the word is 'sumpsi' or 'sumptum', which means the spending, wearing it down, waste, squander, gnaw it off (bible-history.com). The word consumer or consume creates many other senses. First is consumer, the user, it represents the subject or people who spend. Second is consumption, that means something that is eaten away. Consumption represents the object or the things that consumer has to consume. Third, is consumerism, which means the idea or mentality of consuming. Consumerism represents the 'ideology' in consumer's mind. In this case, consumerism is an ideology where someone or group who perform or execute the process of consumption or the use of the products, in excessive or inappropriate way, unconsciously and incessantly.

However, there are several explanations about what consumerism is, according to different experts, summarized from multiple sources that exist. According to de Souza in the text that he wrote in 2004, in broad outline, he said

that consumerism is the way of human life. At least in practice, making the products become the object of their hearts, which making these objects into the source of their identity and purpose to be achieved in their lives. Meanwhile, according to another expert, Neahaus, in his book, in broad outline, he described that consumerism is spending life because of things that they consume. It is living in a manner that is measured by 'having' rather than 'being'. Meanwhile, according to Miles in his book in 1998, in general consumerism is a way of thinking and action, where people buy not because they need the products, but because the act itself gives the satisfaction.

There are several kinds of consumerism, but this study will converge the outline of consumerism in general, into four types. The book pages in the explanation of types in consumerism would not included since the writer try to explain the types of consumerism in broad outline from the whole books. (1) Consumerism, consumerism in this type has been previously described above. (2) Green Consumerism is consumerism that will happen if people want to replace the products and services that exist on this earth with a more eco-friendly and less dangerous. They will try to replace the products and services that are not environmentally friendly with the products of environmentally friendly (Makeower, Elkington, Hailes). (3) Ethical Consumerism has a wider scope than green consumerism, which is only concerned with the product. This kind of consumerism also concerns about whether the product manufacturer invest their money in a right business. By comprehensive monitoring on the behavior of modern business, consumerism aims to make trade responsible as much as

possible to the existing economic system (Harrison, Newholm, Shaw). (4) Anticonsumerism is a movement that actually tries to answer the core problem of the reasons why people make purchases of products and services. They really want to make life easier on this earth by correcting the things that should exist in one's self. The problem lies in the consumptive lifestyle that is owned by the people in general (Humphery).

Consumerism is an interesting topic to discuss because consumerism has already become a global issue. Consumerism is a huge topic where many issues have to be discussed to present it adequately. Consumerism seems to have already entered every aspect of modern life. Consumerism is becoming increasingly important in many cultures, and has 'attacked' many people. Even the areas of life that were not affected by the marketplace in previous time, have to adapt to the new reality, where consumer is in control. However, several people are more vulnerable than other, which make them easier to get attacked. Nevertheless, based on *The Clique*, the study will focus on teenagers' life, especially in America. According to Willett, the expert in teenagers' market, in 2006, the estimation of spending power US\$153 billion spent only by young teenagers in the United States. Steven Miles even said that consumerism has become "the religion of the late twentieth century" (Miles 1).

Consumerism is becoming increasingly important. Consuming means using things up with many ways, like wearing and using products to satisfy someone's needs and desires. Consumerism becomes a phenomenon that always exists relatively in the developed society, where usually people buy products and

consume more than what they need. "Consumerism is an important topic for social scientists precisely because it appears, at a common-sense level, to be somewhat inconsequential. Because we accept the routine of the consuming experience as legitimate, powerful ideological elements of that experience go largely unnoticed." (Miles 5)

Many experts try to explain consumerism and its relationship with people or society, especially in Western culture and society. Miller (as cited in Miles 2) explains that the factor behind consumerism is people's relationship to production. This relationship becomes a serial trend that leads to an overwhelming concentration on the area of production, as the key generative area for the appearance of the dominant social relations in modern society. Moreover, a relative neglect of consumption, along with a concomitant failure to observe the actual changes, have taken place over the last century in the balance between these two forms of interactions with products. However, Bocoock (as cited in Miles 4), when speaking about consumption, said that it is a set of social, cultural and economic practices, together with the associated ideology of consumerism, has served to legitimate capitalism in the eyes of millions of ordinary people. While McCracken (as cited in Miles 3), thinks that in Western developed societies, culture is deeply connected to and dependant upon consumption. Without consumer products, modern developed society culture will loose 'key instruments' for the reproduction, representation, and manipulation of their culture. He also suggests that the meaning of consumer products and the meaning creation accomplished by consumer processes are important parts of the scaffolding of our

present realities. Without consumer products, certain acts of self-definition and collective definition in this culture would be impossible.

Miles looks at different ways in which consumption creates an illusion of choice for everyone, something that is important to make sure that the poor do not feel cheated by the system. It is just the same when Miles wants consumption to be equal for all, and it is not coming between the rich and the poor. He argues, "Consumerism cannot be all things to all men and women. Rather, it protects those with resources from those without." (Miles, 149). Recent critics have argued upon the benefits of consumerism. "Many writers doubt that the consumer society results in the empowering of consumers and argue that it simply divides the rich from the poor" (Abercrombie, 84). It is true that consumption does divide the rich from the poor.

Steven Miles also makes differences between 'consumerism' and 'consumption'. Miles argues that the important consumption is as simply for the sale and purchase of products and services focuses, not only just on the economic side of consumption and ignores the cultural characteristics of consuming. Miles notes that while consumption is an act, consumerism is a way of life. However, according to Miles, "notion of consumerism can be said to be of more sociological interest than consumption."

As reported by National Geographic News, almost 1.7 billion people worldwide are now part of the 'consumer class' (National Geographic refers to them as "the group of people characterized by diets of highly processed food, desire for bigger houses, more and bigger cars, higher levels of debt, and lifestyles

devoted to the accumulation of non-essential products”). In addition, the disturbing fact is that this number grows. “The impact of consumerism in the locality was investigated through a series of focus groups held with key constituencies – mothers, children, older people and teenagers.” (Manktelow and Hegarty, 7) In extreme cases, just like people who addicted to gambling and betting, or even a drug addict, people who addicted to consumerism becomes all encompassing. Loosely defined, “Consumerism is a set of beliefs and values, perhaps even a way of life that places the obtaining of material possessions, and the actual process of obtaining them, at the top of the list of priorities for those who believe in the concept.” (Sussman, 211).

In the past, the state or government has controlled all important sectors. Recently, private companies slowly take these sectors (in this case is education or school), so people have more choices and can be identified through their consumption. “We've moved from a work-based to consumer-based society.” (Bauman 36) People are judged and identified from their capability to consume rather than their ability as a person. In general, consumerism is economically noticeable in the continuity of buying new products and services, with a small attention to their real necessity, capability, product origin of the needed or the environmental consequences of making and destroying.

Consumption, then, is not understood through its usefulness, but more as the consumption of signs (Featherstone, 83). Symbols include two parts, the signifier and signified. Adding up, the signifiers (forms that people can see/touch/hear) and signified (the idea or mental construct of a thing) signs have

two levels of meaning. The second level that links the signifiers to a better cultural background as implication is the signified. At the connotation level, signs are interpreted based on the “Wider realms of social ideology -- the general beliefs, conceptual frameworks, and value systems of society” (Hall, 38-39). Shoes, for example, basically, have simple function of protecting feet; the shoes themselves are signifiers. However, shoes also relate to particular cultural concepts like formality, casualness, etc, these cultural concepts are signified.

## 2.2 Reviews on Related Studies

Not many criticisms and writings, especially academic writing have been made relating to *The Clique*. However, the writer decides to use several writings and criticism in the forms of articles described in this sub chapter. Most of the criticisms lead to one similar conclusion: that this novel offers another angle of American teenagers in its relation to consumerism. Mostly, the criticisms are discussing about the negative effects of consumerism in young teenager’s life, and the clique among teenagers based on consumerism. One of the most famous people on earth, Oprah Winfrey on her official website, also gave opinion related to this novel. Indirectly, Oprah has agreed with the content of this novel by saying that people must read this novel to realize about the real situation in teenagers’ life, and starts to think about how consumerism has already become an obsession for everyone. The only differences is that Oprah emphasize more to the clique itself. She warns parents to be more careful about their children’s social gathering, especially in school.

The second review comes from Sandra Calhoun, a Resident Scholar. In a website called [allreaders.com](http://allreaders.com), she wrote "Review Analysis of *The Clique*". However, Sandra focuses on the plot of the novel, and gives a clear explanation about the details in the novel. Sandra also explains about the main characters, main adversary, setting and style. However, there is no further explanation, discussion, or analysis about the issues that happened in the novel.

The third review comes from Elizabeth McLaughlin, a teenage girl who plays a role in *The Clique* movie as Massie. In her official website, [elizabethmclaughlin.com](http://elizabethmclaughlin.com), she gives a brief explanation of what *The Clique* is all about. However, her explanation on the novel is not too accurate, because she acts as Massie in *The Clique* movie, not the novel. Since she acts as Massie in the movie, she especially explains on Massie's characterization. She talks about the way Massie lives and how she should adapt and get into Massie's life. Elizabeth also talks about the 'Pretty Committee', about how 'Pretty Committee' reflects teenage girls' clique in real life. Last thing, she talks about the movie itself and the characterization in the movie.

# CHAPTER 3

## ANALYSIS

