

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the writer will analyze the characters in the novel and their relationship with consuming branded products as the symbol of lifestyle. The analysis will be focused on the characterization in the novel. The main focus on the characters that will be analyzed is the characters who join the group called 'Pretty Committee'. First, it will describe each of their characterization, especially their lifestyle related to consumerism. Not only because these characters are the main characters in the story, but they also serve as perfect portraits of American teenagers. This study also hopes to find the effects of consumerism in their daily life, and its relation with their lifestyle. After explaining the characterization of the characters one by one, the girls who join the 'Pretty Committee' will be examined as the whole subject to analyze.

This study divides the analysis of the novel into two discussions. First discussion is about the characterization of the four girls who join the 'Pretty Committee' and their lifestyle. Second discussion is about the effects of consumerism to the characters' lifestyle.

3.1 The Portrait of the American teenagers in The Novel

The characters in this novel give a portrait of the situation that has been around for many people in America. In America, a prestigious country, being stylish is one of many requisites to blend in society. To be viewed as a high class

person in front of the public is not easy, but being glamorous with appearance seems to be the easiest way to get attention from surroundings. *The Clique* intends to make another point of view of teenagers' obsession by wearing right clothes in order to fit in.

3.1.1 Massie Block's Consumerist Lifestyle as a Popular Teenager

The four teenagers who join 'Pretty Committee' have a very strong influence to the surrounding environment, and vice versa. The group has affected the environment around them as well as the environment has affected them. Both are very tangled and it is a chain reaction. As a popular group, every member who join 'Pretty Committee' has its own interesting story to be deeper discussed, especially their habit in consuming some products at a very young age, which is 'excessive'. Furthermore, the study finally uncovers each character, the lifestyle of their daily lives, habits, and also their dependence on the products.

The four girls that join the 'Pretty Committee' are very close friends. Practically, for over three years, they became sisters. "She missed how reassured she felt with Alicia, Kristen, and Dylan. Over the last three years they had become her sisters." (164) They are all attending the same school, go for a shopping together, and spending most of their time together. Even each character has their own personality, but they do agree in many things.

"I'd definitely pick friendless loser." Alicia flipped her hair. "I wouldn't want to live a lie."

"Same with me," Kristen agreed.

“Ditto,” Dylan said. “What about you, Massie?”

“Friendless loser, of course.” Massie added an eye roll for believability (99).

Massie Block is the leader of the ‘Pretty Committee’. Massie is a portrait of a ‘perfect’ teenager. With her shiny hair and perfect teeth, Massie is an unmatched leader in the clique that called themselves ‘Pretty Committee’. Massie is also a trendsetter in her school social life, Octavian Country Day or commonly known as OCD. Massie’s parents also always hold an annual charity auction for her school in their house. This auction always becomes a hot issue every year. No one can throw a party like Massie’s family, and everyone in Westchester, New York, could come to the party. That is why everyone in town seems to be attracted with that party. “The place is set up like five-star food court. They have chefs serving every type of dish you could ever imagine.” (197)

Massie's life as a teenage girl is perfect because she always get whatever she wants. Massie is also undefeated in ‘popularity contest’ in her school. Almost all teenage girls in her school want to be like her or at least get closer to Massie. Automatically, she has a big ‘authority’ to control her friends and can easily rule the people around her. Practically, her latest appearance always becomes a trend in her school. She gets this advantage because her parents are successful business people and wealthy, plus she is the only child, which allows her parents to give all that she wants and spoil her. Massie know exactly that every teenage girl who sees her would give anything to be like her. “Why don't you just make your own friends and worship me from a far like everyone else?” (55)

Massie also loves reading magazines, especially those about fashion. This is one of Massie's efforts to keep updated about the latest trends of fashion and follow the trend. Massie tries to follow everything that is written in the magazine she read, as guidance about how she acts in front of the public and how to become a trendsetter. "She'd once read in *Teen Vogue* "Always try to look your best because you never know who you'll run into."" (20)

Massie is a unique character because not many teenage girls have mannequin in their room. Massie uses her mannequin to plan her outfits for the next day. Massie gets a new mannequin every year from her parents because of the changes in her body every year, and she must have the same size mannequin with her body. "Massie gestured to the outfit of her mannequin." (22) However, Massie does all of those things to maintain her position as 'Miss Perfect' and she absolutely does not want to lose it. Massie will do anything for preening in front of the public. She does not want to lose prestige in front of them.

Because Massie concerns about her look very much, she has a special day for shopping for products with the latest trends and stay updated with her friends in 'Pretty Committee', which apparently have the same habit and lifestyle with Massie. "If she had been allowed to go on the Labor Day shopping trip, she would have had a much wider shoe selection to choose from." (201) Of course, as the leader in 'Pretty Committee', Massie does not want to lose out to her friends on shopping and spending money. She always wants to look more interesting than her friends do. In addition, Massie also always tries to make the others look

foolish by intimidating them. “Trust me, I'm not the one who's going to feel stupid.’ Massie rolled her eyes.” (147)

Massie’s addiction in consuming branded products is not much different from her good friends in 'Pretty Committee'. Four of them really enjoy pleasing themselves by wearing expensive and branded products. “Jimmy Choo high-heel mules, Miu Miu wedges, Calvin flats, Jimmy Choo sandals, DKNY stiletto boots, or the Marc Jacobs pumps?” (201) Massie also likes to dress more mature than her own age. “If the rest of the girls acted as grown up as Massie, Claire knew they'd think The Powerpuff girls were K through sixth, *not* seventh.” (31) To be a center of attention because of her good outward appearance is a major point because she thinks it can make someone be rewarded by society. “Even though it was supposed to be seventy-eight degrees tomorrow, her denim blazer was a must.” (22)

Of course, she does not want the privilege of being popular is taken over by the others. Massie will do anything to get what she wants. “Wow, she thought, what Massie wants, Massie gets.” (65) However, because Massie gets whatever she wants, she became less introspective. Massie is someone whom people used to called as 'sneaky', because she always wants to look impeccable in front of others. She always exploits and uses others for her own interests, even her own best friends. That way makes her look good and 'innocent' in front of others. “She knew her friends would do most of the dirty work, which was exactly what she wanted. That way she'd be innocent when her mother and her conscience caught up with her for what they were about to do.” (56) Since Massie is a cruel person,

many people do not want to argue with her because they were too afraid of her, even her own best friends. "The girls chose to believe her because it was a lot safer than calling her (Massie) bluff. One by one they stepped out of the pool, hugged her, and told her how happy they were that she was alive." (137)

Massie also loves her friends and does not want to lose them. "Massie felt an unexpected wave of warmth roll through her stomach. She called it 'the feeling'. It happened whenever she had a genuine 'I love these people' sensation. It didn't come around too often, but when it did, it was so powerful it could actually make her tear up" (195). Her best friends in 'Pretty Committee' can make Massie become herself. In addition, Massie is also very afraid of being left by her friends because she hates to feel alone. "She would pick [b] no question -- in both scenarios she'd have no friends, but at least in the second scenario she wouldn't be alone." (99)

However, for her age, it is very common if Massie is actually very vulnerable. She is a popular teenager, a trendsetter in her school, and many other teenage girls want to be like her, but actually, she did not have many friends. "Okay, I admit it, I was a total Massie wannabe for a few weeks." (187) Massie does not have many friends because her friends in 'Pretty Committee' are the only ones who can understand her and will not make her feel inferior. Only her closest friends can make her feel 'warm' just by being around them.

However, Massie has always been a consumptive person because she always buys products of well-known brand and expensive to maintain the prestige of her appearance. Massie will not be reluctant to spend much money. "How can a

top be thinner than toilet paper be that expensive? It said seven hundred and eighty dollars. \$780.00!!!” (42) Massie always tries to look perfect in front of the public, but actually, she is very afraid if the people around her hate her or think that she has a low taste, even for small things though. She is doing it to keep the image that she has as a trendsetter. “Did Aimee think my music was cheesy? Did Saylene think I should have picked the table by the wall instead of the one by the window? Does Suzy think my laugh sounds nasal?” (164) However, the only reason why she looks so cruel to others is that she is very afraid of losing what she has. Everytime she feels that there would be someone or something that threatens her social life or try to enter her life and 'steal' what she has, Massie will do whatever she can to preserve her pride.

3.1.2 Dylan Marvil’s Obsession to Diet as a Part of Her Lifestyle

The second member of 'Pretty Committee' is Dylan Marvil. Dylan is Massie's second command and a bootlicker of Massie. Dylan Marvil has slightly different appearance because she is a little bigger and taller than the other members of the 'Pretty Committee'. Dylan is the daughter of a famous actress in America. Her mother is a very popular morning talk show host. “My mom is interviewing cute coma guy from the *Young and the Restless* today.” (43) Dylan is a little excited about food because she cannot stop eating. “A glass bowl filled with butter-flavored soy crisp and Junior Mints--the ultimate combo--was on Dylan's lap.” (98)

On the other hand, Dylan is also obsessed with diet and weight loss. Dylan always tries to arrange her weight by undergoing all sorts of diets. Like any other members, she wants to look better than the others do. She goes for a diet to look good to 'face' the society. "Today, my mom and my sisters are doing it too. We all want to lose fifteen pounds by Halloween." (39) Dylan Marvil is very concerned with her appearance. Dylan is very sensitive about her weight, and became very angry when someone mention her weight because she is trying to look good and 'as thin as possible' although she can not break away from food. "Wait, do you think I have fat legs?????????" (153)

As a member of 'Pretty Committee' like the others, she also loves to spoil herself by wearing expensive and branded stuff. Dylan is a kind of girl who keeps up with appearances in a little more complicated way than the other teenage girl because she is 'bigger' than the others. Because his mother is a famous actress, of course, Dylan is used to glamorous life and something relating with many people like television. "'Where are the pictures of *us*, Mom?' Dylan asked the TV." (194)

Obviously, becoming a child of a famous actress has its own pride and its own pressure. Besides maintaining her appearance with diet, wearing an appropriate outfit is also considered very helpful for Dylan, who is less confident with her body. "I already look like a pig, so I might as well just go with it." (98) As a teenager who is highlighted by the media, Dylan must maintain her appearance as good as possible. Keep up the appearances as good as possible is what makes Dylan becomes so consumptive, beside her interaction with her friends and her mother who becomes a public figure.

The outfit that makes her body look even thinner is always attractive to Dylan, no matter how expensive the price of the clothes, and though she does not like the clothes. As long as the clothes make her look thinner, she would buy it. “Not much. Just three pairs of jeans, a cashmere sweater I’m *not even sure I like*, and a couple of Calvin dresses for bar mitzvah season.” (38) Surely, she also always hates the clothes that make her look fat, even though she just buys it.

“‘Why are you getting rid of *that*?’ Massie asked Dylan. ‘You just bought it on Labor Day.’

‘It makes me look fat!’ Dylan held the thick white cashmere sweater in her arms so she could see it from distance. The price dangled off the sleeve. ‘What was I thinking, buying white?’” (93)

Dylan likes to be the center of attention as well as her mother who becomes a public figure. Of course, the more money she spends, the more attention will be devoted to her. Dylan will do as much as possible to attract public’s attention to her, no matter how much money she will spend. “Claire, here’s an invitation to my birthday party next week. It’s in Manhattan, at the Four Seasons Hotel. There will be a few celebrities there and tons of paparazzi, so we’re going shopping this weekend if you want to come.” (147) Same as Massie, Dylan does not like when someone becomes the center of attention more than her, although Dylan is not as mean as Massie in competing with her ‘enemy’. “Massie knew Dylan thought her mother gave Alicia way too many compliments on her looks. At least triple what she gave her own daughter.” (195)

3.1.3 Alicia Rivera's Addiction in Overspending Money

The third member of 'Pretty Committee' is Alicia Rivera. People could say Alicia is the most perfect member of 'Pretty Committee'. Alicia is the prettiest member of 'Pretty Committee' than any other members. "Alicia was the most beautiful girl she'd ever seen. The kind no one ever gets mad at because they don't want her looking unhappy. Her dark brown eyes sparkled brightly against her perfectly even tan, and her lips were full and cherry red." (35) Alicia is also the wealthiest member of the 'Pretty Committee'. "Quiet down, you'll wake the neighbors," Alicia said. It was a joke, of course – the Riveras had so much land, the nearest neighbors were at least a quarter mile away." (176)

It can be said that Alicia has everything that all teenage girls dream about: a beautiful face, a wealthy family, and popular. Unfortunately, being pretty, rich, and popular sometime are not enough. The author of *The Clique* makes Alicia seems wants to take over the 'power' that Massie has as the leader of 'Pretty Committee'. In a different way, it turns out that Alicia is also sneaky because she wants to take what Massie has as a leader in their group. "As sneaky as she is beautiful, Alicia would love to take Massie's throne one day. Just might." (Back cover)

Alicia also likes being a center of attention just like her friends. She knows, because of her beauty, all she wears will be the center of attention. "Her outfit was ridiculous, but in true Alicia fashion, she still looked beautiful." (146) Therefore, to keep her appearance attractive, Alicia spends much money. One could even say that Alicia is the member of 'Pretty Committee' that uses the most

money to spend for shopping. Alicia is the most extravagant member. Her luxury lifestyle always makes other people envious. It can be said that Alicia's hobby is shopping for luxury products. She spends more money than her other friends, because Alicia can not spend her day without shopping. "Bout to shop online. Wanna do it 2gether?" (143) The fact that she spends a lot of money is not too surprising for characters like Alicia, because at a very young age, she is given a lot of convenience by her parents to buy many luxurious products. In her 13 years age, Alicia already holds five credit cards that she gets from her parents. "She took out five different credit cards and held them like a winning hand of poker." (169)

The most interesting thing to discuss more about Alicia is that she is very 'generous' toward her best friends. She does not mind paying all the expensive items bills that her friends buy, or handing over her products without thinking further. "Alicia fished around the inside of her Louis Vuitton Cherry Blossom bag and pulled out a cell phone. 'It's my dad's old cell phone. It works perfectly.'" (147) She is never objected to pay all of her friends' expenses when they are shopping with her. Sometimes, Alicia offers herself to pay all of her friends' bills expensive things. "No prob. I'll pay,' Alicia said." (169)

Alicia is enjoys going shopping to update her stuff. While all teenage girl in her age are still busy playing with their doll, Alicia has already busy to keep abreast of latest fashion season. "Well, of course we are. All of this is *last* season,' Alicia said. After we're done, we go on a shopping spree to replace it all with brand-new stuff." (94) Alicia often spends the money that should not be used

to buy products. Alicia knows for certain that her parents will not feel lost a 'little amount' of money, or scold her for spending too much money on the products she buy "“Puh-lease! My dad’s company pays. They won’t even notice,” Alicia said.” (147)

However, just like other members, she does not want to look amateur about her appearance, whether she is in front of the public or just hanging out with her friends. Shopping and spending money on branded stuffs are no longer a requirement for Alicia, but it is already become a habit and lifestyle for her. She will use even the slightest chance to spend money and shopping. “I called to see if you wanted to go shopping for something to wear to Dylan’s party. I feel like spending.” (151) For Alicia, theoretically, it is hard for her to recognize that each dollar came as the result of a drop of sweat. Craig Ford on his online journal wrote, “It seems like money invisibly multiplies in bank accounts and is always available when needed or wanted.”

3.1.4 Kristen Gregory’s Efforts to Maintain Her Image

The fourth member of 'Pretty Committee' is Kristen Gregory. Kristen is one unique character to be further examined. Unlike her friends, Kristen is not quite interested to spend money on shopping. Like her friends in 'Pretty Committee', Kristen loves to wear branded clothing, but she looks much simpler than the others do. "Like the others, she was dressed head to toe in designer wear. However, her choices were pure comfort food. Orange Puma sneakers and chocolate brown velour sweats and a matching hoodie with the sleeves pushed

up.” (40) This is because Kristen prefers to think about school grade than fashion or diet like her friends.

Kristen Gregory also comes from a very wealthy family. Her father is a wealthy and successful art dealer who generates more than enough to feed his family. Until one day, his father was deceived by his own friend and went bankrupt. Unfortunately, Kristen never tells her friends about this ‘incident’. The consequences that she should face because she never tells her friends that her parents have gone bankrupt is that she must continue to struggle for being ‘expensive’ in front of her friends and surrounding. The thing that influences Kristen Gregory’s thought, which makes her struggles to retain her old lifestyles like when she was still a rich girl, is exciting to be reviewed further.

Kristen Gregory is a smart teenage girl, she always gets a good grade among her friends. She is an outstanding student, hard worker, and in fact, is a friendly and pleasant person. However, her interaction with her friends in ‘Pretty Committee’ makes her ‘reluctant’ to reveals her true personality. In fact, Kristen can be regarded as the most friendly members ‘Pretty Committee’. ”Sorry for the virtual handshake, but I can’t reach you all the way back there. I’m Kristen.” (41) This statement proves that Kristen is more friendly than her friends are. She is the only one who would like an introduction when she and her friends meet new people. Slightly different from her friends, Kristen is not too crazy about shopping and more concerned about her future and is always uneasy with her grades in school. ”’We ended up getting this major assignment in Women in the workforce and I couldn’t just leave,’ Kristen said.” (81) This thing happens because she got a

scholarship in one of the most prestigious school in New York City, and she cannot loss her scholarship.

In quick overview, Kristen's life is perfect. On what people see, she comes from a wealthy family, has popular friends, and always accomplished everything. Everyone admires her and she knows that the other teenagers would give anything to be like her. 'Pretty Committee' is admired by other teenage girls, and of course becomes a trendsetter for the environment around them. Whatever they wear, there is no doubt that the next day, everyone will wear what they wear. "Ever since that day, bright-colored tights began popping up on legs around school." (150) This kind of power is what makes Kristen reluctant to put away her membership from 'Pretty Committee', even though she is not able to keep abreast of fashion as her friends did. Kristen is afraid that the truth will make her position in 'Pretty Committee' in danger. Even though she is not sure about that, she will not take the risk.

Kristen is a member of 'Pretty Committee' who does not consort with the other members. "Everyone had made it as planned except Kristen, who had yet to show." (79) Because Kristen also has strict parents, she is not allowed to come home late from school, or receives a phone call from her friends just to chat. "'I know, Mom, I was just hanging up,' Kristen called. "Okay, well, thanks for helping me with that homework question. I get it now. Talk to you later, bye." She always did that when her mother caught her talking on the phone any longer than her five-minute allowance." (116)

Kristen is also a member with the least attention to her appearance, unlike three other members of 'Pretty Committee'. "Her long dirty blond hair covered her face." (39) She is also a member of 'Pretty Committee' who is most afraid to Massie, the leader of the group. Kristen also tends to do whatever Massie ordered, although Kristen might not really like doing it. "Massie pointed to Kristen, who forced a smile." (54) However, just like her other friends, although she is a friendly person, on the other hand she can also become a cruel girl who does not care about others' feelings. Kristen 'transforms' into a cruel girl because she always does what Massie ordered. "Kristen grabbed the crystal saltshaker off the table and walked over to Claire, who was lying facedown on her towel. She stood above Claire and started dumping salt on her." (138) However, Kristen also complements the diversity of 'Pretty Committee' members. Without the presence of Kristen, *The Clique* will never be the same.

'Pretty Committee' consists of Massie Block, the popular young lady who feels scared to lose her friends and her popularity; Dylan Marvil, daughter of a famous actress who is obsessed with dieting; Alicia Rivera, the most beautiful and richest among the other members of the clique and obsessed with shopping; and the last is Kristen Gregory, teenage girl who is cruelly intelligent. No one could join this group no matter how hard other teenagers try. "My friends and I have our own thing going and you'll probably feel weird if you try to join in. you know, because we've known each other for so long." (13) When someone tries to join their group, she would firmly reject because she knows that the four teenagers who join this group are the 'reflection' of a perfect image on being a teenage girl

and Massie refuses when someone wants to ruin this perfect image. Beside, she does not want to lose her best friends.

The characters in the novel describe the 'situation of life' on being a teenager; in this case, being a center of attention in any situation. The way they attract surroundings with expensive clothes and perfect appearance, shows to the reader that being attractive can only be done by what you wear. 'I am what I wear' gives prove on how much people's thought about expensive and branded stuff will give big effect to their existence in society, and is still dominating their daily life. Being glamorous with appearance seems to be the easiest way to get attention from surroundings. *The Clique* intends to make another point of view of teenagers' obsession by wearing right clothes in order to fit in among the society.

3.2 The Effects of Consuming Branded Products shown by the Characters' Lifestyle

Although every character joining 'Pretty Committee' has her own interesting characterization, whether it is their attitude or even their behavior, in broad outline, they have one fundamental similarity. Their main similarity is their dependence on luxurious life on what usually referred as consumerism, to analyzed the characters' social condition toward their daily environment, and explain how consumerism is able to give causes and effects on consuming branded products in excessive way. In broad outline, the explanation in this chapter is using the concept of consumerism mainly stated by Steven Miles, and other experts that has similar thought with Miles. Nevertheless, in order to clarify

the concept of consumerism, and sharpen the analysis, other sources that stated by other experts, will also be used by the writer.

The author of *The Clique* tries to explain the reality that happens in teenager's life, especially their dependence in consumerism through the novel. Since consumptive lifestyle became a global issue in many countries, many experts try to reveal what is causing this kind of lifestyle and its effects. "Consumerism has become a way of life - the basis of our culture." (Miles 2) Consumerism in this novel also prepares each person to fight against themselves in a very long journey for the achievement of material things, or the imaginary world that incorrectly appears and makes something possible by things yet to be purchased.

In this sub-chapter, the main analysis will focused on analyzing the characters' dependence on a luxurious lifestyle and the efforts made by the characters to keep their position as trendsetters and center of attention, as part of the discussion about the effects of consumerism that affects the characters in the novel. First, the analysis will look further about the peer pressure that happens in the novel among the characters, and their environment as the main subject that causes peer pressure. Moreover, the second analysis will discuss about mind branded based on the characters. This study will also discuss about how the characters in *The Clique*, reflect the relation between the real American teenagers and branded products.

3.2.1 Peer Pressure among the 'Pretty Committee' Environment

The four characters who join 'Pretty Committee' attend the same school, Octavian Country Day, or well known as OCD. OCD is one the best private schools in Westchester, New York, the city where the characters live. OCD is one of the most prestigious and expensive private schools in New York. "The parking lot was filled with Mercedes, Jaguars, Lexus SUV's BMW convertibles, and even a few limos." (47) However, joining and becoming part of OCD are not easy, since OCD is a prestigious private school. It is a high grade school with a fine quality of education, many excellent achievements, and produces some high-qualified graduates. Even though many scholarships have been offered to attend OCD, no particular people can get the scholarship. Only few who have a special 'capability' can get into OCD. These people should be smart, intelligent, and agile. In addition, even if they already get the scholarship, they should maintain their good school grades more than any other students must.

Nevertheless, the most specific characteristic is OCD's support on fashion and the impression of outward appearance. It is deemed good for its students because its students can express themselves through their appearance. "Young people without a doubt are creative and productive in creating their own lifestyle. Life has become an 'aesthetic project' where there is a need for personal enjoyment in the pursuit of new tastes, sounds and sensations." (Featherstone, 65-66) OCD believes that teenagers should be imaginative and innovative in making a representation of their routine lifestyle and image. Through fashion, the teenage girls who attend OCD are expected to express their identity through appearance. "*Fashion is a fine art and a true form of self expression...which is why OCD*

prides itself on being an anti uniform private school. It is a given that all students will take matters of personal style and grooming very seriously.” (26)

The amount of 'pressure' felt by the characters in this novel is about how their personalities in school shows who they really are and their identity, making every 'Pretty Committee' members in the novel competes to become the most noticeable among the others. Because 'Pretty Committee' is familiar with all the luxurious life, a group of rich girls and popular, the pressure to maintain an attractive appearance and expensive things is necessary, to show that they deserve to be in the group and become a trendsetter. In general, a teenager faces a world in which “their life experiences — in terms of family structure, educational opportunities, and routes to employment – seemed to be increasingly tenuous.” (Osgerby 143) This insistence indirectly makes the members of 'Pretty Committee' feel the pressure among the others. This is commonly called as a peer pressure.

Teenagers are especially vulnerable to peer pressure. Fitting in and being accepted often dominating every priority for a teenager. Thus, teenager's spending is not about quality anymore, but this is about popularity and even prestige. However, nowadays fashion and mode are considered as the art of appearance. “The flow of images and signs saturate fabric of contemporary society, where we are witnessing a collapse between *art* and *everyday life*.” (Featherstone, 65-66) Understanding the aesthetic life, art, and self-expression in OCD, is what causing peer pressure among the members of 'Pretty Committee', which makes them remain competitive to have an attractive appearance, and prove

everyone that they deserve to be regarded as a popular group. "When people have lost their authentic personal taste, they lose their personality and become instruments of other people's wills" (Consumerism and Society online) So gradually, for the members of 'Pretty Committee', fashion is no longer the way they express themselves, but maintain their prestige as the most popular groups.

In addition, the characters in this novel have the same hobby, which are shopping and spending money to maintain their prestige, their expensive and attractive looking. Consuming is a daily part of life for members of 'Pretty Committee' and is regarded as a necessity. Appropriate with the Featherstone description, as stated, the development of consumer culture is reaching a new phase. The development of consumer culture is in part due to, what Featherstone calls, the 'aestheticization' of everyday life. Aestheticization of the consumer culture can also be called as the 'art' of consuming of everyday life. This statement bears out the truth that fashion becomes a serious issue for the characters in this novel to be acceptable by surroundings. It can happen everywhere, even when they are going to the place where they study, school.

Habits and lifestyles of the characters in this novel are mostly influenced by the surrounding environment.

On the one hand, they are instantly recognizable as global commodities, which connect with common stylistic and aesthetic preferences of individuals throughout the world, while on the other hand, their precise meanings become bound up with local scenarios

within which they are appropriated and the local circumstances which they are used to negotiate (Bennett, 27)

Bennett's statement above demonstrates that teenagers' structures of importance have been mostly influenced by local situations, in this case, their social environment. The characters' life in the novel portrays Bennett's statement above. The characters are mostly influenced by their social environment, in this case their own close friends. When they saw someone in their group wearing an expensive and the newest season outfit, their sense to compete would be triggered. Furthermore, they are quietly competing with each other in their group to prove that they are the best than the others.

The member of 'Pretty Committee', who gives a clear example about peer pressure, is Kristen Gregory. Just like her other friends, she also comes from a wealthy family. His father was a successful art dealer, until he was deceived by his own friend and became bankrupt. No one knows that Kristen has serious dilemma. When her parents become bankrupt, she decides to maintain her status as a teenage girl who comes from a rich family like her best friends. This is because she figures out that it is "better to be a liar than a loser." (74) Therefore, she has to be good in maintaining 'double life' she has. It is not easy because Kristen parents are discipline and perfectionist. This means that she has to work twice harder to hide the social life she has in school from their parents. On the other hand, she has to be smart to hide on the subject of the condition of her family in front of her friends. "Puh-lease, I stopped asking that question years ago. At this point it's much easier for me to live a *double life*." (40) Kristen's words

above also contains ambiguity because it also signals that she should be perfect in front of her friends, while in front of her family, she should turn into a regular teenager. Besides, because of the pressure of her 'fake' life, Kristen is stressed of herself in facing her friends. She is always nervous because she gets 'haunted' by her own lie. "What's up?" Kristen asked. She sounded nervous, like she was about to get blamed for something she didn't do." (5)

Being a member of the most popular group in school is one of Kristen's strength to create a strong image in her surrounding environment. Of course, Kristen will do anything to maintain the image that she has as a 'perfect' teenage girl. Besides, there is some kind of denial in Kristen that she has to live in a 'poor' way because she gets used to live with all the stunning lifestyle that her parents usually gives to her. Kristen thinks that if she tells her friends about her real condition, her best friends will leave her alone, because all of her best friends are rich and trendy. Since Kristen has had her best friends, Kristen worries that she will not get new friends who accept her because of her personality, not her richness. Kristen would also be placed in the background as an ordinary individual, not as an individual that viewed because of her personality or ability.

Having very wealthy and popular friends, of course, affects Kristen's lifestyle. Kristen surely can follow her friends' lifestyle when she was very rich, but when her parents become bankrupt, of course, she has to find a way to follow her friends' lifestyle. "She figured Kristen had snuck back in to swipe a few things out the box, just like she'd done the year before, and she wanted to catch her in

the act.” (96) Kristen will do anything to follow her friends’ lifestyle, even by stealing. This is what we usually call as peer pressure.

However, consumerism dares to offer another option for the characters further than the ordinariness of their everyday life, also from school and family, so they will feel unique and different from others. The characters in the novel use consumerism as their ‘shield’ to avoid boringness in their daily life. Besides, they already make consuming and shopping as their ‘hobby’, which strengthen the values of consumerism.

3.2.2 Brand Minded on the Characters

One of the most significant things in consumerism, which is obtained by the characters, is brand. The members of 'Pretty Committee', all come from modern and very wealthy families. Because of money they have, and lifestyle that their parents provide, the members of 'Pretty Committee' are accustomed to consuming and using expensive products and, of course, the branded ones. Unfortunately, they bring this habit until they become teenagers. They try to attract the attention of people around them by using branded clothing outfits. "I am what I wear" has influenced the members of 'Pretty Committee', so that they thought that the only way to become popular in their environment is from their appearance.

Of course, this kind of exact thought works until they are teenagers. Their minds and appearance are full of expensive fashion and branded products. In *The Clique*, the characters of the novel are wearing some branded products that are not

supposed to be worn by any other teenagers, such as Marc Jacobs and Ralph Lauren. According to Sharon Lamb and Lyn Mikel Brown, the authors of *Packaging Girlhood* on their online journal, at an age when girls “could be developing skills, talents, and interests that will serve them well in their whole life, they are being enticed into a dream of special-ness through pop stardom and sexual objectivity”. The descriptions of teenage girls as being popular, sexy, diva, and boy-crazy shoppers can be quite damaging for their self-development. The girls in ‘Pretty Committee’ believe that at their age, it is so important to show who they really are through their appearance. For them, being a teenager means having fun, and does the best to be popular and recognizable.

Using branded products is the easiest way to show people that they were ‘happy’. They come from a wealthy family and popular. To maintain their prestige, they must use branded products. The prices of branded products are very expensive and of course, they cannot afford all of those products unless they get them from their parents or someone who gives them. “How else would she have been able to buy the Swiss-dot silk DKNY dress (\$248), the Marc by Marc Jacobs leather kitten heels (\$265), the BCBG beaded clutch (\$108), and the hair clip (\$32)?” (169) For the girls who join ‘Pretty Committee’, they always have disposable income available to them, which make the money become ‘less valuable’ for these girls since they never experience the effort of making money.

The characters’ anxiety on branded products is the portrait of the real American teenagers. Appropriate with the characters’ dependence on branded products, Alissa Quart, in her book "Branded, the Buying and Selling of

Teenagers", uses her clever and amusing words to expose the sneaky way of marketing and its manipulative 'art' towards America's young teenagers. Marketers use it to create a center of attention in America's young teenagers so they will stuck in personal persuade of consumerism, and eventually, it will be all easy to manipulate them in. Alissa Quart also tells us that being an American teenager today requires someone to have the 'best' of everything. Shoes and bags determine teenagers' social class in America, according to *The Clique*, what kind of car their family has, even getting into the 'brand name' school of them or their parent's choice. If someone does not rich enough to buy all these branded products, then someone has to find difficult ways to get friends. Media and advertisements are carefully filled with images to catch young teenager's attention, to "Peer to Peer Advertising" and Teenage "Trend-spotters". Because "Youth is an embattled market," Quart says. The experts argue that, "advertisements threaten and even destroy childhood." (Willett, 50) The experts believe that the dependence of teenagers on branded products, that they should not have, will force them to grow up faster than they should be.

According to the Economist, Linda Simpson, "Without any doubt, the teenagers, in this case, are children between the ages of 12 to 14, are concerned to the prestige they believe brand-name clothing provides them." (131) The attraction to prestige brands develops in teenager's years because it is a time when peer pressure and fitting in are very important, she notes. The statement that Simpson mentioned above is the portrait of *The Clique*. First impression is very important to fit in among their society. Using branded stuff is one of many ways

to get a respect from surroundings. This kind of 'epidemic' lifestyle has its own issue.

For 'Pretty Committee', to wear some branded outfit has already become a 'trend', especially to get a public attention. Brands are the central dissemination of signs as brands link consumers to particular images, both rhetorically and visually (Danesi, 13) Brand has already become the characters' identity among their environment. It has its own way of replacing teenagers' normal desire to fully provide their daily life's necessities, school and education, and their social environment, with a fake ongoing and unsatisfied feeling for things and money to buy them with small regard for the true usefulness of what is bought. This kind of things usually happens because of the lack of self-defense or a constant change in fashion. As such, brands not only refer to a specific product, but also to the social image that the business wants consumers to associate with itself and its products (Danesi, 15) The description that Danesi mentioned above is a reflection of 'Pretty Committee' members' thought. "She's in vintage Ralph Lauren and has the new Prada messenger bag." (35) The girls in 'Pretty Committee' are creating their image by using branded outfit, they find that it is a classy way to make an impression among surroundings. It also gives a description on how someone always judges other people from what other people wear to create a good social image in their environment. By creating a good social image, they will have the respect of others. It seems like being a center of attention by consuming more is one thing that these teenagers should fight for. The 'real' beauty of someone is judged by their appearance into the public. Being stylist and 'expensive' are

considered as an important rule in order to fit in and being popular. It was a brands' 'job' to make customer feel better and keep up appearance with their newly-released products.

“Brands are mental constructs” (Danesi, 21). Brands are no longer prestige, but it becomes a part of life and lifestyle. The characters start to believe that they need branded products in order to fit in among society. However, it changes the way the characters sees about the importance of brands to identity and image, and it has changed the way they socialize with each other, interact with adults and see themselves and their environment. "The most important assets are brands. Buildings age and become dilapidated. Machines wear out. Cars rust. People die. But what lives on are the brands” (Consumerism and Society online).

In such a way, “Brands do not only stand for the ‘identification function’ but also the ‘cultural function’” (Danesi 13). It means that products are not only used by its function, but also for prestige. For example, shoes in the beginning only stand for the object that commonly used to protect our foot (identification function). Nowadays, Prada (one of the most expensive and popular brands) does not only stand for shoes as identification function, but also elegance (cultural function). “No way! The Alberta Ferretti halter I saw in *Lucky!*” Massie said.” (42) For the girls in ‘Pretty Committee’, wearing a branded outfit as cultural function is more important than the identification function, and the value added when the outfit is ‘famous’. The concept of brands has become part of the changing marketplace where businesses are becoming “increasingly aware of the power of symbolism in human psychology” (Danesi 14). The girls who join

'Pretty Committee' has already affected with this kind of exact thought. Brands are no longer prestige, but it becomes a part of their lifestyle. The characters believe that they need brands in order to fit in among society, especially if they want to be a center of attention. Brands also become a 'symbol' of status in their environment. "Products are made in the factory, but brands are created in the mind." (Consumerism and Society Online)

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION