

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Social dominance has become central in society. It happens when distinct approaches highlight different aspects of the problem, including how biases and prejudicial treatment act as an emotional drive and how a person's surroundings and social order create acts of discrimination (Sidanius, Jim., 1999). Social dominance has become central in numerous television series in America. *Gossip Girl* is one of the shows that captivated social dominance because it portrays several fundamental American values such as class control and dominance, social hierarchy, and class divide.

Josh Schwartz's television series, *Gossip Girl*, serves as a focal point for examining the nuances of youth culture, privilege, and identity—particularly in the affluent Upper East Side area of Manhattan. Social structures and class dominance largely shape the plot and character relationships. The show tells the stories of affluent students who grow up in affluent social circles where interactions and aspirations are shaped by wealth and position. It also clearly distinguishes between the lower class, represented by Dan Humphrey, and the elite, represented by Blair Waldorf. Within this fictional world, Blair Waldorf and Dan Humphrey represent disparate social backgrounds, in which the difference between these two characters will be analysed through the class dominance.

In the *Gossip Girl* series, the characters are always navigating their roles in the social world, bringing the theme of class dominance. The show poses important queries regarding how social class affects one's identity, relationships, and opportunities. This analysis aims to contribute to the larger discussion on how social dominance is portrayed in contemporary media, particularly in narratives meant for younger audiences, by examining how class inequalities are portrayed and how they affect the characters.

This study investigates how social dominance impacts class roles based on Henri Tajfel's theory about social identity. This thesis analyses the social settings by contrasting these two characters. The conflict between Blair's need for control and Dan's struggle to fit in shows the significant effects of class on personal identity and social ladder. *Gossip Girl* shows how a person's social standing affects their inner and outer life throughout the season.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

- 1) How are in-group and out-group identities portrayed through the social interactions between Blair Waldorf and Dan Humphrey characters in *Gossip Girl* season 1?
- 2) How does the in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination serve to reinforce class-based stratification in the narrative of *Gossip Girl* season 1?
- 3) How do Blair Waldorf psychologically reinforce her social superiority to maintain her identity boundaries in *Gossip Girl* season 1?

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

- 1) To examine the in-group and out-group identities between Blair Waldorf and Dan Humphrey in *Gossip Girl* season 1.
- 2) To analyze the in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination serve to reinforce class-based stratification in *Gossip Girl* season 1.
- 3) To explore how Blair Waldorf's psychologically reinforce her social superiority to maintain her identity boundaries in *Gossip Girl* season 1.

### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This study explores how social dominance is portrayed through the characters of Blair Waldorf and Dan Humphrey in the *Gossip Girl* series. The scope of the thesis will focus more on the intrinsic elements, such as theme, character, and characterizations, setting, cinematography, and extrinsic elements, which are discussed in the social identity theory by Henri Tajfel.

### **1.5 Previous Studies**

The author has thoroughly analysed pertinent thesis and academic journals along the thesis. Here are some of the earlier studies to help you begin to understand the topics better.

The first one is according to Sinatrya (2011), from the studies with the title "Hedonistic Lifestyle and Its Effects on the Characters of *Gossip Girl* the Series," the hedonistic life is reflected in the way Blair Waldorf, Serena Van Der Woodsen, Nate Archibald, and Chuck Bass, the primary characters of *Gossip Girl*, interact with their peers and disdain those from lower social classes. Also, this study covers

the life of upper-class teenagers in New York, which is filled with luxuries and sprees that distinguish them from the commoners. Additionally, this study examines the opulent and extravagant lifestyles of New York's upper class, which set them apart from the general populace.

The second study by Risti (2010) explores how The United States of America's societies can teach us that everybody can have an effect on someone else. Based on this study, a person's way of life, lifestyle, and even a trait can be influenced by the major community in the society. According to Risti, "The Influence of Hedonism in Socialite Community toward the Main Character Jenny Humphrey in Cecily von Ziegsar's *Gossip Girl*" covers how elite society truly lives in the United States of America, as well as the way Jenny Humphrey, who does not come from an elite is impacted by them.

Following that, the study by Oktaviana, *et al.*, (2021) discusses the contemporary hedonistic of Manhattan Elite's Upper East Side as a consequence of their social and environmental circumstances. These days, hedonism is the most striking motif to describe New Yorkers. In Oktaviana's study with the title "Hedonism of Upper East Side Teenagers in Manhattan Elite as Described in *Gossip Girl* TV Series Season 1" " the rich and powerful viewed human existence as extravagant. Teenagers are also impacted by the lifestyle, as evidenced by the *Gossip Girl* series.

In addition, by focusing on how class dominance is upheld through both in-group and out-group behavior, Peirce (2011) examines how the character is portrayed in the study “Sexual Representations in *Gossip Girl* and *One Tree Hill*; A Textual Analysis.” It specifically addresses how these portrayals relate to social exclusion and class domination. The study also adds something special by examining how elite group power dynamics uphold class control, how in-group members profit from exclusivity and privilege, and how out-group members are routinely marginalized.

Furthermore, earlier research by Gurocak (2023), titled "The Representations of Lifestyle and Consumption Culture in Television Dramas: *Gossip Girl* Series," analyses the series' depictions of consumer culture and demonstrates how material riches and lifestyle decisions are significant determinants of social standing. Since consumerism is frequently utilized to set the elite apart from the lower social groupings and reinforce the exclusion of out-group members, this lends credence to the author's findings on class supremacy.

The five previous studies mentioned above mainly discussed about a lifestyle that leans towards prejudice, hedonism, and consumerism of the characters in *Gossip Girl*. Although it has explicit similarities regarding social class and prejudice, this research has a big difference because it focuses more on social dominance that occurs in the character of Blair Waldorf to the character of Dan Humphrey. The focus of this study is to compare the two characters in relation to the social identity theory by Tajfel and Turner, which has never been studied before.

## **1.6 Method of the Study**

### **1.6.1 Method of Research**

This study uses a qualitative approach which gather the data through library research such as book, journal, and scholarly article related to social dominance and cultural studies. A comparative study of Blair Waldorf and Dan Humphrey is the main emphasis of the original data, which is taken from the *Gossip Girl* television series (2000).

### **1.6.2 Method of Approach**

In order to investigate how social class and identity interact in a literary setting, this study uses a sociological lens based on Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory. Instead of considering literature as art, the study views it as a mirror reflecting the complex dynamics of social classification, self-perception, and group action. Through a comparative analysis of two main characters, Blair Waldorf and Dan Humphrey, whose disparate socioeconomic backgrounds influence their roles and relationships, this study investigates how class differences affect group relations and individual identity. Through their interactions, the narrative reveals not only the privileges and limitations tied to their social standing, but also how the sense of belonging—or exclusion—manifests in behavioral patterns, biases, and power relations within the story's upper-class society. By applying Tajfel's theory, this research highlights the subtle mechanisms through which social identities are formed, maintained, and contested in a socially stratified environment.

## **1.7 Organization of the Writing**

In this thesis, the writer has arranged the writing chapter which consists of:

### CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In introduction chapter, the writer has arranged sub-chapter such as background of the study, research questions, aim of the study, methods of the study, scope of the study, previous studies, and organization of the writing.

### CHAPTER II: INTRINSIC THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

In chapter 2, the writer will write about the intrinsic elements which covers about the narratives, theme, plot, character and characterizations, setting, conflict, and cinematography of the *Gossip Girl* series season 1.

### CHAPTER III: EXTRINSIC THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

In extrinsic theoretical framework chapter, the writer will be discussed about the basis theory of this thesis which includes the theory of Social Identity Theory by Henri Tajfel.

### CHAPTER IV: RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The primary aim of the Discussion section is to provide a thorough and coherent interpretation about the series of *Gossip Girl* season 1.

### CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

The author will summarize and generate the major discoveries of the study in the conclusion, which also provides closure and a last analysis of the thesis.