

The in today's society having an illness



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The American teen drama *Gossip Girl* is a television series created by Stephanie Savage and Josh Schwartz based on the series of books Cecily von Ziegesar wrote. It contains six seasons originally running for "The CW" premiering from September 19, 2007, to December 17, 2012, and is now available for showing on Netflix. Each episode runs about forty-two minutes long and is told by an omniscient narrator, voiced by Kristen Bell, who blogs under the pseudonym "Gossip Girl." The plot consumes the fictional lives of Manhattan's privileged adolescents and their romantic entanglements with various antagonists being rotated in and out. Screenwriter Joshua Safran develops Serena van der Woodsen, also known as the "it girl", and Blair Waldorf, or "queen bee", from childhood best friends at Constance Saint Jude prep school to stunning socialites who occasionally engage in reconciliations as their secrets trigger rivalries. The story also follows the Brooklyn aspiring writer and scholarship student Daniel Humphrey, or "lonely boy"; the "bad boy" womanizing arrogant heir of Manhattan's elite Chuck Bass; and the Vanderbilt descendant and most qualified bachelor Nate Archibald. The supporting actors in the turbulent scenes of Manhattan are Vanessa Abrams, Daniel's friend from childhood; Jenny Humphrey, Daniel's rebellious sister; Rufus Humphrey, Daniel and Jenny's father and former Lincoln Hawk rockstar; and Lily van der Woodsen, an heiress and Serena's mother. Viewers may be too distracted by the flashy, overpriced lives of New York's Upper East side to detect the show's following hidden concepts: stigma, ascribed status, achieved status, conformity, and media framing. These sociological concepts are reinforced and selected in *Gossip Girl* to address specific portrayals of stereotypes, social norms, and values. In today's society having an illness is a stigma. One not only has to deal with

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the symptoms and treatment of the disease, but also the challenge of society's prejudices that can result in the devaluation of the person. Moreover, stigmas may disqualify a person from full social acceptance. In season one of *Gossip Girl*, viewers first meet Serena's brother Eric van der Woodsen when Serena visits him at the Ostroff Treatment Center. Lily van der Woodsen locked Eric away in this mental institution because of his suicide attempt even though the doctors did not mandate his stay. Because of Lily's fear of public accusations and disapproval of her parenting skills, she states that Eric is in Miami visiting his Aunt Carol. Lily was concerned with the stigma that came along with Eric's mental illness, because, unlike a physical illness, the public may perceive Eric as responsible and in control of his decision. Furthermore, society is more likely to degrade Eric labeling him weak and neglected by his family rather than pity him. Wealth and connections are imperative in forming a status in the Upper East Side. The status of these adolescents, either ascribed or achieved, define their social position, relationships, and power attached to them. In *Gossip Girl*, having an ascribed status is a norm. The show revolves around the recipe of trust funds, prep schools, skyline penthouses, luxurious parties, designer clothes, and absentee parents. Their summers are fueled by an appetite for cocktails and romance in the Hamptons with their family's money. The challenge of getting into an elite private school is not one at all; rather, it is surviving to keep up with the latest bag trend and arrive in a limo. Daniel Humphrey, for example, is referenced throughout the show as an "outsider" and struggles to achieve a new status because he is not bothered by these. Being from Brooklyn in this show is a sin and enough to assign someone a master status of a pariah. Chuck Bass and Blair Waldorf are two characters who

ascribed their careers from their parents. Chuck inherited Bartholomy Bass's multi-million dollar construction business called Bass Industries after his father's death; Blair took over her mother's fashion empire Waldorf Designs when her mother retired to marry. Moreover, this birth rite of wealth creates opportunities and unfair advantages, such as when applying for college. A few seasons of the show focus on the stress of Ivy League interviews and acceptance letters. Attending one of these expensive, prestigious institutions is again a norm for Constance Saint Jude prep school students. Because Daniel Humphrey is from Brooklyn and excluded from this premise of privilege, he has trouble getting into a school even though his grades are exceptional. The ideal, effortless world of the Upper East Side is a facade. Some of Gossip Girl's characters do achieve a status through direct effort, merit, and personal choice. However, that achieved status does not always have to be positive. Howard Archibald, Nate's father, achieved the master status of a convict after getting into trouble with drug use and possession. His arrest for fraud and embezzlement makes the front page of the paper, as he was a famous stockbroker prior to the incident. He achieved this status because of competition within the industry and his drive to succeed any means possible. The Upper East Side is mirage-like in its decadence and failure to conform will leave a person labeled as an out cast. Conformity is the change in social behavior due to the group's social behavior influence. Jenny Humphrey is a prime example of an interloper who finds herself looking from the outside in on this lifestyle. Her personality, style, and priorities adjust to match the tone of Blair's minions. Instead of being responsible and studying, Jenny spends her time going on yogurt runs and writing exclusive party invitations because, in reality, if she was not a slave

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to Blair, she would be belittled. She even goes the extra mile of sewing fabrics to make knock off of high end brands to keep up with the trend. In the end, Jenny Humphrey thrust back into the "real world" of Brooklyn coffee shops and public school boyfriends.