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Stereotypes in *Everybody Hates Chris*

Everybody hates Chris is centered on the hardships of a teenage boy growing up in the Bed-Stuy area of Brooklyn, New York. The show is set in the 1980s, despite its original airing being in 2005. The series depicts what many have come to expect for the story of a low-class African-American family. Chris’ father is very hard-working, blue collar, and tight about how he handles his money. His mom is very loud, strict, and easily annoyed by the actions of those around her. Chris’ younger sister is an annoying, unpredictable, and loving young girl that stresses Chris out on the daily. Chris’ younger brother is an innocent, charming, young boy who seems to avoid any trouble that may come his way, while Chris seems to catch all of the trouble. His neighborhood is deeply plagued by gang members, drugs, drug addicts, and con artists. At school, Chris has to deal with those around him bullying him and being prejudice towards him, despite his only friend being white. There are African-American based shows that have been centered on an African-American family living somewhat above the norm, but this show fails to follow this format. It only shows one side of the spectrum for this family. They never seem to escape their living situation, as the show doesn’t necessarily focus on trying to accomplish this goal. The show is more focused on depicting protagonist Chris’ struggles throughout his teen years. A better ending to the show would be a situation in which Chris and his family are able to make a better situation for themselves and escape the hardships of Brooklyn. Instead, bad fortunes continue to follow him and his family throughout the duration of the show.

*Everybody Hates Chris* can be meant to target two separate audiences. The first audience this show could be meant to target is an audience of those who directly relate to the characters in this show. This audience would be low-class African-American families who struggle to make it in some of the harsher areas of big cities. It’s a secret to none that there are families who are living in dangerous, drug filled areas, trying their hardest to create better situations for themselves. The show can be possibly trying to show people in these situations that they aren’t the only ones suffering. Showing people that others are going through situations similar to theirs can help them find ways to cope through them. The second audience that this show could possibly be aimed at is an audience filled with those who don’t know about a life of low-class living and struggling. From the outside looking in, some may not know what it’s like to be from bad areas and live a poverty-stricken life. Though fictionalized, a TV show can be a great depiction to give these people glimpses and ideas of the struggle to survive for those who may be less fortunate. For instance, Chris’ best friend on the show, Greg, happens to actually be white. Along with being Chris’ best friend, he is his only friend. Just as Greg found it in himself to understand the different world Chris came from, this could teach others to embrace those from different cultures and backgrounds. Having Chris’ best friend as a white character was a brilliant move, and proved to be pivotal in drawing a wide range of people to the show. If Chris’ best friend was the same as him, it’d be too predictable. It wouldn’t be as interesting to see him grow around someone with the same background as him, as opposed to having life experiences with someone completely different than whom he was.

Overall, racial stereotypes are not very shied away from throughout the series. Most black stereotypes usually aren’t considered bad things by African-Americans. African-Americans typically only become offended by racial stereotypes that offend their social status or expectations, and Chris seems to come into contact with a lot of these stereotypes on a daily basis. Chris is constantly judged by those around him. No one trusts him, no one gets along with him, and he struggles to embrace his surroundings. Chris struggles even to build intelligent relationships with the ones he lives with. Both of his parents seem to be constantly frustrated with the ways in which he chooses to do things. His younger brother and sister are usually favored over him, and he usually gets the unfortunate end of everything. Drug dealers and drug addicts are both present throughout the duration of the show, and try to force their negative impacts on Chris every chance they get. Through all of these outside distractions, Chris never seems to fold completely. Though it always seems as if nothing more could go wrong for Chris, a new obstacle always seems to come his way. Some would call him a good kid growing up in a bad city. Racial stereotypes come into play again here. Many people view young African-American teens growing up in inner-city areas as having one of two lives: being a well-rounded teen who grows up watching the hardships, and dealing with those around you trying to lure you into the life, or being a young teen who just so happens to be a part of the problem. Luckily, Chris is depicted as the former, and never allows the outside distractions to sway him away from his goals and aspirations.

The effect of these stereotypes is actually a positive one, as others can view the stereotypes and learn how to better approach them in their own lives. Someone may be on the fence between the two previously mentioned stereotypes for an inner-city teen, or someone may be a non-inner-city teen who watches from afar and is just simply interested in learning about the situations and what they may bring. Viewers have a lot of controversial topics to think about and tackle, and the show leaves open discussion for viewers to take what they want from the show and openly express their opinions about what the show’s purpose is and how it makes them feel. The great thing about the show is that it can reach a large multitude of people and can leave everlasting effects on those who watch. The key to helping eliminate racial stereotypes is to create discussions about them through different platforms. If people aren’t given a forum to discuss their opinions, problems will never be solved. This show is only one example of racial stereotypes that are depicted in a public light. Some may take them as a negative thing, and some may take them as positive, but being able to tackle these topics is bright in itself. If we are being completely honest, low-class living and gang activity are going nowhere for a very long time. To be more honest, both will more than likely be around forever, as they heavily tie into each other. In accepting that they will be around forever, it is important to condense the damage that can be done as a result of them. If it takes releasing more sitcoms that depict low-class families and inner-city troubles, then so be it. It could be a possibility that depicting a high class family wouldn’t be the greatest idea because it’d be harder for people to relate to and talk about. The answer may not even be through the sitcom platform. Nonetheless, anything is worth trying that will help dissolve the issues of racial stereotypes in America.