Indians on TV: Challenging Hollywood’s characterization of South Asian (American) men and lack of diversity through comedy
Comedy as social commentary

Master of None: Season 1, Episode 4: Indians on TV (2015)
[The episode] begins with a montage of young Dev watching portrayals of Indians in movies and shows, starting with the scene with the Indian character in the movie Short Circuit 2 that was actually played by white actor Fisher Stevens...The episode soon moves to Dev’s own issues as an aspiring actor in New York: he and his friend and fellow actor Ravi are both auditioning for “Unnamed Cab Driver” on a crime procedural, and Dev gets told outright by the casting director he won’t be getting a callback because he won’t do an accent. “Ben Kingsley did an accent for Gandhi,” is the justification the casting director offers Dev. (Mehta 2015)

Research Questions and Topics
Questions:
- How are South Asian/-American men characterized in Hollywood?
- How is Hollywood’s lack of diversity and characterization of South Asian (American) men being approached/addressed?
- How does comedy make sensitive topics, such as race, approachable?
- How does comedy inspire social discourse?
- What is the relevance of comedy, diversity, and the role of South Asian/-American men in Hollywood?

Topics:
- Hollywood’s lack of diversity
- Brown face, brown voice
- The relationship between comedy and social commentary

Methodology
Qualitative research
- Drawing a comparison between and analysis of “Indians on TV” Master of None Episode and Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle (2004)
- Outlining the connection between comedy and social discourse
- Indian Accents: Brown Voice and Racial Performance in American Television and Film will be used as a primary source.

Elena Ashly Dudel • IAAW WS 2015/2016 • Poster zum Forschungsseminar: Familien und Geschlechterrollen in Südasien im Wandel • Dozentin: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle (2004)
Because the film is a stoner comedy, it is not readily recognizable as an Asian American story. However, within the genre of stoner comedy, these films create a narrative that normalizes Asian Americans and South Asian Americans as a central part of American culture and in the process redefines the boundaries of American regional, cultural, and national identities. (Davé 2013, S.17)

Sources