Journal of Popular Romance Studies
published in partnership with the International Association for the Study of Popular Romance

"I'd really, really like a boyfriend": A Narratological Examination of Adolescence, Ideology, and Subjectivity in Indian and Indian American YA Netflix Romances

Tharini Viswanath and Nithya Sivashankar

Published online: December 2025
http://www.jprstudies.org
https://doi.org/10.70138/YRRP4607

Abstract: Adolescence as a process of becoming is often reiterated in television shows; few studies, however, examine the onscreen portrayal of and relationship between adolescence and romance. In this essay, we identify how Indian and diasporic young adult romance television shows convey ideologies related to love, romance, and adolescence through the use of four implicit and explicit narrative devices: love triangles, Bollywood song and dance, weddings and romances of older generations, and narrators and voice-overs. More specifically, we perform a close reading of *Never Have I Ever* and *Mismatched*—both young adult romance series featuring Indian and Indian American characters on Netflix—to better understand how these narrative devices are used to convey ideologies relating to adolescence and love to young adult and adult audiences. Further, we draw on theories of adolescent identity, subjectivity, femininity, and double-voiced discourse to examine how ideologies pertaining to Indian and diasporic adolescence coalesce with those relevant to romance, as well as how these ultimately play out in the two series.

About the Author: Dr. Tharini Viswanath is an assistant professor of children's and young adult literature at the University of South Carolina. Her work on gender, sexuality, and characters' corporealities in children's and young adult literature has been published in a number of journals, including *Papers*, *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, *Jeunesse*, *The ALAN Review*, and *South Asia*. Viswanath is currently working on a scholarly monograph that examines how feminine adolescent characters' access to voice and acceptance of their own unique embodiments give them agency in speculative young adult fiction.

Dr. Nithya Sivashankar is an assistant professor of children's and young adult literature at Texas State University. Her research on South Asian, Asian American, African, and African American children's and young adult literature has been published in *Children's Literature in Education*, *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature*, *Bookbird*, *The ALAN Review*, and *Journal of Children's Literature*, as well as in several edited collections.

Keywords: Bollywood, identity and subjectivity, Indian adolescent Netflix series, love triangles, Mismatched, narrative devices, Never Have I Ever

Introduction

Media viewing practices have changed drastically in the last two decades with audiences no longer having to wait for television episodes to be aired. Instead, viewers can watch their favorite shows wherever, whenever, and however much they please due to the influx of various over-the-top (OTT) streaming platforms. Netflix, in particular, cornered the market on coming-of-age shows in 2018 to appeal to those whom Sidneyeve Matrix refers to as "screenagers" (120). As entertainment editor Kaitlyn Thomas observes, "[t]he streaming service, once known for adult-oriented series…has quietly pivoted to focus more on young adult programming—or rather, programming giving voices to young adults by focusing on the universal themes and struggles of youth." Since OTT platforms like Netflix enable content to reach global audiences regardless of where they have been originally produced, there has been a rise in shows and films featuring protagonists from marginalized backgrounds, including but not restricted to race, ethnicity, ability, gender, sexuality, religion, and socioeconomic class. Responding to Dalila Forni's call to "investigat[e] those narratives proposed by Netflix to a young audience in order to understand how they indirectly but constantly affect young adults' social and cultural perception," we analyze two contemporary, realistic young adult romances on Netflix featuring Indian American and Indian protagonists to better understand the shows' ideologies about adolescence, love, and romance (310).[1]

As we research and write this article in 2025, Netflix has only a handful of young adult shows that feature characters who are of Indian heritage, be they Indian or diasporic. Shows that do feature Indian or diasporic leads for a global audience sometimes do not even articulate the protagonists' Indian cultural background beyond their mere physical appearance. For example, in *Heartbreak High* (2022)—a teenage drama series from Australia—protagonist Amerie Wadia is of Indian descent, as inferred from her last name, but the show does not discuss any aspect of her Indian identity. Series featuring teen Indian characters marketed to young adults are also few and far between. In fact, *Never Have I Ever* (henceforth *NHIE*; 2020–2023) and *Mismatched* (2020–present) are the only two shows on Netflix that fall within the platform's categories of "Indian" and "teen TV shows." Herein, we perform a close reading of these two contemporary, realistic young adult romances to examine the narrative devices that both shows use to signify specific ideologies of adolescence, love, and romance. We contend that such narrative devices offer characters different ways of talking about subjects related to grief, mental health, and female sexuality and desire that are considered taboo in mainstream Indian media.

Set in Los Angeles, *Never Have I Ever* features second-generation Indian American high-schooler Devi Vishwakumar, who navigates love, friendship, family, and grief over the course of four seasons. Other notable secondary characters include Devi's Indian immigrant mother, Nalini; her Indian cousin, Kamala, who is a PhD student in the US; and her grandmother, Nirmala Paati, who travels from India to support the family. The series is

predominantly in English, with the characters in Devi's family occasionally peppering their dialogue with words in their mother tongue, Tamil. *Mismatched,* on the other hand, is set in the Indian city of Jaipur and is a Hindi-language adaptation of Sandhya Menon's Indian American novel *When Dimple Met Rishi* (2017).[2] Recent high school graduates Dimple Ahuja and Rishi Singh Shekhawat meet at a summer coding camp, which Dimple attends to further her career. Rishi, on the other hand, has been set up to meet Dimple, his "future wife" ("When Dimple" 00:04:25). During the course of the camp, the protagonists deal with familial and peer pressures and experience attraction and romance. Although the novel and the TV show start with the same premise, *Mismatched* veers off in a different direction with the introduction of multiple secondary characters, most of whom aren't part of the novel. Despite their obvious differences, *NHIE* and *Mismatched* highlight their protagonists' coming-of-age experiences and their respective journeys to find romance and love. Herein, we identify and examine tropes that we establish function as narrative devices the shows employ to simultaneously reaffirm and subvert ideologies relating to love and romance. We contend that some of these tropes are unique to South Asian and diasporic media. Some motifs—love triangles, Bollywood[3] song and dance, weddings, and narrators or voice-overs—are intrinsic to the plot. At other times, they take paratextual forms, including but not limited to interviews, publicity stunts on social media, and music videos.

Drawing on Robyn McCallum's work on ideology, adolescent identity, and subjectivity, we examine how ideologies pertaining to Indian and diasporic adolescence coalesce with those relevant to romance, and how they ultimately play out in the two series. McCallum explains that "identity is formed in dialogue with the social discourses, practices and ideologies constituting the culture which an individual inhabits" (*Ideologies* 4). In a recent essay, McCallum relies on Bakhtin's understanding of the self as "intrinsically intersubjective, encapsulating the idea of 'self-in-relationship-with others' which would seem to lie also at the heart of concepts of Eastern subjectivity" ("Scrivener's Progeny" 217). Herein, McCallum explains that in Bakhtin's view, intersubjectivity is inherently fluid, and that the self is in a constant state of becoming ("Scrivener's Progeny" 217). Since adolescence is a transient stage between childhood and adulthood, it is "thought of as a process of becoming" (McCallum, "Scrivener's Progeny" 217). Adolescence as a process of becoming is often reiterated in television shows in part because of the appeal of these shows to transnational audiences, many of whom share similar understandings of coming of age, even if their conceptualizations of adolescence might differ. We further contend that televised representations of young adults such as *NHIE* and *Mismatched* illustrate how love and romance are instrumental in a young person's process of maturation into adulthood.

Forni's essay on "teen drama and some of its narrative strands" is one of the few studies on adolescent shows on streaming platforms. While she includes an overview of teen thrillers, educational series, the supernatural, and revivals, she does not discuss the genre of teen romance.[4] Additionally, there is clearly a dearth of material discussing narrative devices in young adult romance fiction.[5] While watching *NHIE* and *Mismatched*, we were struck by the number of similarities between the two shows. Upon scrutinizing the patterns we observed, we realized that the shows use similar narrative devices in order to convey ideologies of love, romance, and adolescence to the viewer. Considering the gap in the scholarship of Indian and Indian American TV shows for adolescents, we present an examination of narrative devices that will enable viewers of these shows to better

understand the unique features employed by both shows in their efforts to reach Indian, diasporic, and global audiences.

Here are some of the questions we asked to help guide our study: what kind of narrative devices are being used in these shows to convey ideologies regarding love and adolescence to the viewer? How do these narrative devices aid in the establishment of the primary characters' successful love stories, and how do they help portray the relationships of secondary characters? And how do these narrative devices convey Indian and diasporic adolescent experiences and subjectivities to the viewer? Drawing on McCallum's "Scrivener's Progeny: Writing the Subject" and Amy Noelle Parks's "The Feminist Possibilities of Heteroglossic Spaces," we propose the following elements that function as narrative devices that enable the characters to better understand love and romance: love and love triangles; allusions to Bollywood; weddings and romances of older generations; and external narrators and voice-overs. The following sections will explore these narrative devices in detail.

Love Triangles: Female Desire and Mass-Mediated Experiences

According to the famous triangular desire model put forth by Rene Girard, "the [love] triangle consists of the 'subject' who enacts the desire, the 'object' who receives the desire, and the 'mediator' who influences the desire" (qtd. in Lyttle). Young adult literature scholars like Stephanie Lyttle critique Girard's triangular desire model for being "driven by masculine desire and 'eclip[sing] the role of women.'" Focusing on Netflix shows for teens more specifically, Diana Leon-Boys and Claudia Bucciferro note that love triangles serve to "advance the narrative in a way that revolves around boys and traditional romance narratives" (97). Drawing from Laura Mulvey and Karen Ross, they argue that "[i]nsofar the narrative is centered around the girl-seeking-boy element, it involves a male-centered perspective, even if it features a female lead character" (Leon-Boys and Bucciferro 97).

Parks, in her analysis of narrative techniques used by romance authors in young adult novels, states that although love triangles are criticized, credible ones can "do the critical feminist work of inviting readers to ask questions about what they desire and value in romantic partners." She goes on to apply a dialogic feminist reading to the concept of love triangles to argue that "even in cases where protagonists make questionable choices, the potential for self-questioning still allows readers to have a feminist experience by examining their own desires, beliefs about romance, and construction of gender roles" (Parks). We build on this understanding of narratives performing critical feminist work in *Mismatched* and *NHIE* since they both feature love triangles largely driven by adolescent, feminine desire.

The first episode of *Mismatched* sets the scene for Dimple and Rishi's meeting: Rishi joins a summer course in app development just to get to know Dimple. His attendance at the camp is influenced by his grandmother and by Dimple's parents to ensure that Dimple and Rishi become a couple; Rishi, too, hopes that their first interaction on the school campus "might just be the start of [their] happily ever after" ("When Dimple" 00:25:38–40). Rishi is so sure of arranged marriage that he addresses Dimple as his "future wife" the very first time they meet (00:04:25). Rishi and Dimple date, but their relationship is short-lived. In season 2, Dimple dates her Indian American project-mate, Harsh. Meanwhile, Rishi becomes the "object" of a wedding photographer, Sanskriti's desire, and he gives in because he is unhappy to see Dimple moving on with Harsh. Towards the end of season 2, Harsh and Sanskriti play

the roles of "mediators" by helping Dimple and Rishi, respectively, and they come to the painful realization that the leads are meant to be with each other.[6]

While all the love triangles in *Mismatched* are driven by feminine desire, the one that would be considered most "credible," to borrow Parks's language, is the one involving the queer characters. For instance, Dimple's roommate, Celina, and Rishi's best friend, Namrata, are attracted to each other, and they share a couple of brief, intimate moments in season 1. Meanwhile, Celina questions her sexual identity and also deals with issues relating to her lower socioeconomic class. When Celina's social standing is threatened, she lashes out at Namrata and outs her as a lesbian in front of their classmates. Season 2 deals with Namrata's pain of being outed and explores Celina's struggles with her sexuality. Amid this drama, Namrata meets Ayesha, a queer mentor at the summer course, and they fall for each other. Namrata's parents reject her lesbian identity, and she leaves home to be with Ayesha. At the end of season 2, Celina helps Namrata escape from her home. She comes out to Namrata, stating that she is "eighty percent sure [she is] bisexual," and finally tells Namrata, the "object" of her desire, that she is "one hundred percent sure that [she is] in love with [her]" ("I Love You More" 00:28:21–35). This pivotal scene illustrates Parks's point about the role of credible, critical love triangles in that it "[p]resent[s] readers with multiple compelling love interests [thus] creat[ing] the possibility for this sort of self-examination." Although Celina herself does not have multiple love interests, Ayesha's presence in Namrata's life and their budding relationship fuels Celina to figure out her sexuality and identity. Further, Namrata sensitively rejects Celina's proposal: "Celina, it took me years to understand my sexuality and accept it. You can't decide this in three, four weeks. You need to give yourself some time. But I don't have time anymore" ("I Love You More" 00:28:52–29:22). We use Parks's framework to argue that having Namrata make this intentional choice in the love triangle encourages viewers "to unearth their implicit beliefs for more careful examination, so they can make intentional choices about the kinds of intimacy and autonomy they want in their own relationships" (9).

The question of intentional choices with regard to intimacy and autonomy comes into play in *NHIE* as well. Starting at the end of season 1, protagonist Devi has to constantly choose between two young men. Devi sees losing her virginity as a milestone to get over and done with, and she considers having a boyfriend to be social currency. At the beginning of the series, Devi pursues Paxton Hall-Yoshida, the hottest boy in her school, to elevate her social standing among her peers. Later in the season, she grudgingly befriends her archrival, Ben Gross. Predictably, a love triangle ensues. Ben, who initially makes Devi cry by calling her an "unfuckable nerd," soon becomes one of the main contestants for Devi's affections ("Pilot" 00:12:24). In the seasons that follow, Ben is always a point in the love triangle, and to borrow Girard's terminology, he is often either the "object" or "mediator" with regard to Devi's love life. The other young men who fulfill the role of "object" (and "mediator," interchangeably) in Devi's love triangle are Paxton, Nirdesh ("Des"), and Ethan.

Lyttle, in her work on young adult fantasy, contends that "the love triangle protagonist functions as a vessel for the reader to do this self-replication work, being simultaneously familiar and aspirational." The choices in Ben's and Devi's respective love triangles represent self development. Soon after scattering her father's ashes and acknowledging her grief, for instance, Devi decides that it would be easier to date both Ben and Paxton rather than choose one of them. Although Devi's grief is not always directly linked to her poor decision-making, viewers are given to understand that there is a link between

the two. The external narrator notes that the decision "was a way out of her predicament that required no introspection or mature decision-making, two things that Devi hated" (". . . Been a Playa" 00:25:50–57). Predictably, Devi ends up hurting both young men and experiences personal growth as a direct result of her bad choices. Even though she makes mistakes along the way, she learns not to use romance and sex as distractions from her grief and begins to have mature conversations and relationships with her peers, including Ben and Paxton. The same formula is evident in the other triangles as well: following Devi's infidelity in season 2, Ben begins to date a new Indian girl, Aneesa, although Devi and Ben continue to have feelings for each other. The complexity of these relationships and realizing what each of them means aids in Ben's emotional maturation.

With the possible exception of the first few episodes in season 1, Ben is Devi's champion throughout the series. He holds her accountable for her actions, supports and encourages her, constantly pushes her to be her best self, and functions as an anchor when she feels unmoored. It seems as if Ben and Devi mature emotionally to be worthy of the other over the course of four seasons. McCallum has argued that "subjectivity is not fixed but always shifting, subject to change as relationships shift and change" ("Scrivener's Progeny" 217). In this context, Devi's and Ben's shifts in their respective subject positions come as a result of them having been in other relationships, which leads them to discover their ideal selves for each other.

Ben is an interesting character in this regard because he is set up as Devi's one true love for a large part of the narrative, though the term "true love" itself is never used. Starting with an enemies-to-lovers trope and then moving on to that of friends-to-lovers, Ben and Devi very obviously compliment each other and are portrayed as being ideal for each other even when they are with other people. Although they do not share much screen time as a couple and are often only part of love triangles, the creators of *NHIE* draw on the "rhetoric of the permanence of first love" in order to indicate throughout the series that Ben and Devi are clearly meant to be with one another (Day 157). Sara K. Day defines the rhetoric of permanence of first love thus: "Even when characters do not officially become engaged or married . . . [the novels] sugges[t] or asser[t] that the romances they present will—and should—last forever" (157). Keeping in line with this idea, the series concludes by showing these bright, competitive, and nerdy adolescents who decide to stay together in a long distance relationship as they pursue careers at their respective colleges. Here, the couple's emotional growth and foray into adulthood (represented by the scene in Devi's college dorm in the series finale, which we discuss below) and their entrance into what seems to be a long-term relationship makes the connection between adolescent subjectivity and love—with an emphasis on permanence—visible.

In her discussion of YA fantasy literature, Lyttle contends that "[p]ublishers have a vested interest in converting first time readers into engaged readers who drive book sales . . . and as it is near impossible to read about a love triangle without forming an opinion over the outcome, the triangle is a straightforward way to create these engaged readers." She adds that the love triangle is one way of getting an audience to mull over which choice would be the "better" one, thereby keeping the text in readers' memories (Lyttle). We contend that the same holds true for realistic teen television shows as well, where love triangles are used to garner and sustain viewers' interest in the plot. Since the "technological shift [to streaming services]" can "bond people through shared, mass-mediated experiences," as Matrix notes,

we suggest that love triangles function as one of these "mass-mediated experiences" created to promote and market television series (120).

For instance, public forums like Reddit—where fans can post comments and vote on their choices—further fans' involvement in the show. Over two hundred people have commented on user U/windupbird__'s post asking "After finishing S2, which team are you on? Ben or Paxton?" The responses, which vary from one-liners to several paragraphs, engage in depth with the plot of the show, viewers' feelings while watching the series, and viewers' own "IRL" (or "in real life") moments that influence their decisions to support one character over the other. The love triangle invites audience participation as viewers root for one character or the other; in the process, as Lyttle notes, "the overwhelming, difficult-to-define concept of first love and its attendant emotions are simplified into a binary choice between two suitors, and, powerfully, the reader vicariously experiences making this emotional choice for herself." Several responses also ask variations of the question "Maybe that's what S3 is going to be about?" demonstrating the power of love triangles to hook viewers to the show. Similarly, NetflixIndiaShorts on YouTube invites *Mismatched* viewers to choose the best match for Dimple in "Harsh or Rishi? Who's the Better Boyfriend?" by juxtaposing parallel moments in Dimple's relationship with both characters from the show. This short has over twelve thousand views and 197 comments. Fans—who mostly read as cis, straight, and female—then choose either Rishi or Harsh in the comments. One fan's response, "Harsh and dimple..so that I can have rishi," demonstrates the level of involvement fans have in the show (purvashirodkar7529)—and, more importantly, how love triangles serve as an important catalyst for perceiving the characters as real people and thus for sustaining fans' involvement in these adolescent romance series.

Bollywood, Old and New: Ideal Love, Diasporic Consciousness, and Marketing

It is commonplace to find film music as background scores and choreographed dances as part of Indian television shows, and it is not surprising that this trend has made its way into OTT content as well. According to Bhaskar Sarkar, one of the functions of Bollywood is to serve as "a signifier that celebrates the uniqueness of Indian cinema in terms of certain essential, even reified features, including song and dance sequences, an overarching melodramatic mode, epic structures . . . that usually lead to feel-good resolutions that intimate a set of structures that uphold a civilizational moral universe" (33). We contend that overt and subtle ideologies related to love, romance, and happily ever afters are part of the "civilizational moral universe" and that Bollywood serves as a vehicle to convey these ideological concepts to adolescent audiences. In this section, we analyze the use of Bollywood song and dance and Bollywood-inspired scenes in *Mismatched* and *NHIE* to better understand how they connect to the characters' conceptualization and realization of love. Here, narrative allusions to Bollywood fulfill a number of functions, including but not restricted to nostalgia for simpler times, ideal love, romance, diasporic consciousness, and marketing. In addition to examining song and dance in this section, we explore other aspects of Bollywood, such as costumes, dialogue, cultural references, and fandom.

In *Mismatched*, the pilot, "When Dimple met Rishi," sets the stage for Rishi's longing for a simple, monogamous romance as commonly seen in Bollywood films from the 1950s

through the ’70s. *Mismatched* takes the intended audience on a nostalgic trip to “old school” Bollywood to show the comparison between present-day notions of love and seemingly uncomplicated ideas of love that existed in the earlier era. Rishi, whose parents are divorced, wants to model his relationship based on his grandparents’ marriage, and vintage Bollywood complements his vision of ideal love.

In this episode, Rishi’s grandmother initiates a conversation with her grandson about arranged marriages. She intentionally plays “Jaane Jaan”, a classic Bollywood song from *Jawani Deewani* (1972), on the car radio (“When Dimple Met Rishi” 00:12:44). As the song about searching for one’s true love plays in the background, Rishi talks about his grandparents’ ideal relationship and how he is likely to find it through the arranged marriage set-up. Since *Mismatched* is an adaptation of a young adult novel, sound and music plays an important role in conveying ideologies that are unique and intrinsic to the series. In her work on film adaptations of literary texts, Meghann Meeusen notes that “music is uniquely powerful in the kinds of emotions it can represent and stir” (20). Because Bollywood music has a lot of associations for viewers of Indian and South Asian descent, such as longing for love and happily ever afters and forming communities, it has the potential to stir in the viewer a range of memory-related, personal, emotional, and communal connections. By including “Jaane Jaan” as the background score for this scene, the creators expect an older implied audience to understand the subtle humor involved in the grandmother’s suggestion of the possibilities of searching for and finding her grandson’s one true love.

In the following episode, Rishi’s grandmother dreams of Dimple and Rishi getting together, which is portrayed within the framework of classic Bollywood films. The scene where Dimple accepts Rishi’s proposal is in black and white, and the protagonists are dressed in outfits that are reminiscent of Bollywood movies from the 1940s and ’50s (“Hot Summer, Cold Vibes” 00:03:13–45). *Mismatched* establishes an obvious connection among “old school” romance, Rishi’s grandmother, and Bollywood films, which in turn play an important role in establishing Rishi as a romantic young man yearning for an ideal, long-lasting relationship (“When Dimple Met Rishi” 00:00:36). The use of vintage Bollywood scenes here mirrors Rishi’s thoughts about love in the pilot episode, thus implying that long-lasting love was a thing of the past and that true love is hard to find in contemporary times.

Bollywood is such an intrinsic aspect of the way Rishi makes sense of love and relationships that he relies on the very same device to critique it when his relationship with Dimple gets fractured. In “You’re the One,” Sanskriti records Rishi for a wedding video that she is compiling for his mother and her fiancé. Pondering his broken relationship with Dimple, he quotes Shah Rukh Khan from the iconic film *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998). He is quick to dismiss Khan’s dialogue about falling in love just once as “[r]ubbish” and concludes that “[t]his is a filmy fantasy notion, and [that] ‘one true love’ is a myth” (00:04:34–44). Instead, he temporarily focuses on his mother’s philosophy of moving on from unsuccessful romances to help him make sense of his fractured relationship with Dimple and the promise of a budding relationship with Sanskriti. Even in the second season’s finale, Rishi references Bollywood love stories collectively while he is angry at Dimple and fumes, “To hell with romantic movies. To hell with one true love,” thus temporarily rejecting Bollywood, Dimple, and the ideal romance that he imagined he would have with her (“I Love You More” 00:13:33–35). However, both these episodes show Dimple and Rishi eventually coming back to each other and to the “ideal” relationship that Rishi foresaw for them. References to

Bollywood love and romance, in this case, serve as the narrative device used by the creators to show an adolescent's shifting understanding of love and relationships.

In addition to employing classic and contemporary Bollywood in relation to Dimple and Rishi, *Mismatched* uses this narrative device to talk about romantic love and self-love for its secondary characters as well. For instance, Dimple's parents use the popular "Jab Koi Baat" from *Jurm* (1990) as a tool to quell her anxiety. In fact, when Dimple has a panic attack in "When Dimple Met Rishi . . . Again," Harsh helps her calm down by having her remember this song and her parents. He even suggests music therapy to help her manage her anxiety. Another example of employing Bollywood themes is the creators' use of dance offs, a trope that is reminiscent of 1990s and 2000s Hindi films such as *Dil to Pagal Hai* (1997) and *Devdas* (2002). In "Heartech," Dimple and Harsh are pitted against Rishi and Sanskriti in a couples' dance battle, which in turn fosters the leads' romances with their secondary love interests. Bollywood also functions as a catalyst for Namrata and Ayesha's romance in the form of a Bollywood-themed tech quiz, which Namrata and Ayesha's team predictably wins. These two characters come together soon after Rishi makes a comment about how Namrata might be Ayesha's "lucky charm" (00:12:27–30). The show also features original soundtracks—inspired by Bollywood as well as Indian independent music—that ultimately relate back to love. These tracks serve as both "sounds that come from the environment of the [series]" (diegetic sounds) and those that "are not part of the story, but are added to augment the mood of a scene" (non-diegetic sounds) (Coats 23). In "Girl in the Middle," for example, Celina has a brain wave about her sexual identity while watching a choreographed song and dance about pride performed by Ayesha (00:22:00–38). Later, in "You're the One," Celina reveals the truth about her lower class status in the form of a rap song (00:18:24–19:32). The lyrics and the rhythm of this song are reminiscent of the popular Bollywood film *Gully Boy* (2019), in which the protagonist also raps about overcoming his socioeconomic challenges to make it big in life. In addition to these diegetic songs, there are tracks that play in the background to signal blossoming romances, including those between Dimple and Harsh and Sid and Zeenat.

One such original background song, "Aise Kyun" has become so popular with more than 23 million views on YouTube that its official lyric video has overtaken many of the promotional videos for *Mismatched*, including the "Compatibility Test," "Cold Coffee Challenge," and others, in terms of audience engagement. Similarly, the social media marketing team behind *Mismatched* created the "Pipni Challenge," based on the original diegetic track, "Pipni." This song features the newlyweds, Rishi's mother and her partner, as well as Rishi, Ashish, and their father performing a choreographed dance ("You're the One" 00:21:16–23:07). Audiences on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok were invited to perform the hook step to this refrain and post it in the form of shorts, reels, and videos, thus generating further engagement with the show.

The creators of *NHIE* also use Bollywood to convey the experiences of their diasporic Indian characters. In particular, references to Bollywood act as one of the means through which protagonist Devi comes to terms with her complex identity and, subsequently, finds romantic love. Two episodes in particular —". . . Felt Super Indian" towards the beginning and ". . . Said Goodbye" at the end of the series—demonstrate a shift in Devi's diasporic subjectivity by employing Bollywood as a narrative device, which in turn helps her in embracing her development as a person in relation to her family and community.

Season 1's ". . . Felt Super Indian" introduces viewers to an aspect of Indian culture through the Hindu festival, Ganesh Puja. Throughout the episode, moments that highlight the characters' Indianness are augmented by Bollywood songs. For instance, when Kamala enters Devi's room in an orange sari to help the latter dress in traditional attire for Ganesh Puja, a remixed version of "Dum Maro Dum" from *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* (1971) plays in the background. There are also scenes featuring Bollywood dance that play an integral role with regard to Devi's identity as a second-generation Indian American. In *Is It All About Hips?: Around the World with Bollywood Dance*, Sangita Shresthova notes that Bollywood dance in the US is "taught as a lesson in Indianness. . . . Bollywood dance's role in teaching Indianness grows out of the Indian diaspora's consumption of Hindi films, which are easily accessible source material for Indian culture…. [P]erforming Bollywood dance [then] creates the embodied experience of this visual source material" (118). Shresthova further observes that "[f]or second, and even third generation viewers (of Bollywood film and dance), more recent Bollywood films encourage a sense of cultural belonging with India" (*Is It* 119). This intrinsic understanding of Bollywood being synonymous with cultural belonging is demonstrated in a dance performance by Devi's peers at the temple.[7]

The scene that focuses on this group of young Indian American women dancing to "Nagada Sang Dhol"' from *Ram Leela* (2013) lasts roughly forty-five seconds (00:06:18–07:05). The dancers wear a mix of ghagra cholis and half saris. While both the ghagra choli and the half sari comprise similar elements—including a full-length skirt, blouse, and a long piece of fabric draped across the body—the half sari is traditionally worn by South Indian girls as they transition into womanhood. Devi too wears a half sari in this episode. Since "[c]lothing, as one of the most visible forms of consumption, performs a major role in the social construction of identity" (Crane 1), appearance-wise and sartorially, Devi does share similarities with the dancers. However, the narrator's commentary—"[S]he didn't think of herself as Indian-Indian . . . like these girls"—sets her apart from them (00:06:33–39). The dance, referred to as "Bollywood fusion," comprises Bollywood moves juxtaposed with classical, Indian dance motifs such as mudras (hand gestures) that collectively mark the performance as "Indian." Shresthova might argue that the use of these traditional and contemporary Indian dance moves allow the dancers to "present themselves as authentically Indian," a classification that viewers are made aware that Devi is not (*Is It* 129).

This classification is essential because, while Devi embodies the "model minority" stereotype associated with Indians and Asians, more broadly, she is also perceived as an ethnic "other" by those around her. For instance, early on in the episode a tween at Starbucks misidentifies Devi in a half sari as Princess Jasmine, and her mother bullies Devi into taking a picture for social media because "It's so cultural" (". . . Felt Super Indian" 00:01:40). Later, when Devi approaches the college counselor, Ron Hansen-Bhattacharya, about coaching her so that she can get into Princeton, he tells her that "schools don't want another Indian try-hard who is the president of the padded resume committee" (00:13:00–04). Instead, he asks her to capitalize on her father's untimely demise to make herself more interesting to college admission committees. By having Ron and the mother-daughter duo view her as a stereotypical Indian American, the creators of *NHIE* thus highlight microaggressions against Devi in particular and her community at large. As for Devi, there exists a dissonance between the Indianness she feels and her performance (or lack) of it.

What begins as questioning her cultural identity in season 1––enhanced by the presence of Bollywood song and dance—goes on to become more fully realized in the series

finale, ". . .Said Goodbye." Bollywood connects Devi to her identity once more in this episode. When Paati, Devi's paternal grandmother, marries her American boyfriend, Len, the background score is "Unnale En Jeevan" from the Tamil film, *Theri* (2016). The creators' choice to use a Tamil song—instead of one in Hindi or any other Indian language—speaks to Devi's and her family's very specific Tamil identity. Paati's wedding fuses Western ideas (such as walking down the aisle with bridesmaids) with Indian and Hindu ones (such as the décor and the application of vermillion on the bride's forehead), signifying Devi's and her family's identities as Indian Americans balancing the best of both worlds. Soon after the wedding, Devi and Kamala perform a dance, and Devi announces that the performance is for her grandmother who thinks she's a "coconut"—that is, brown on the outside and white on the inside (00:17:37). By explicitly pointing out that the performance is for the sake of disproving her grandmother and disowning the "coconut" identity conferred on her, Devi uses Bollywood dance to reclaim her Indian identity.

Devi and Kamala perform "Saami Saami" from the Telugu film *Pushpa: The Rise* (2021). The original "Saami Saami," performed by the actor Rashmika Mandanna, is suggestive, featuring sexually provocative hip thrusts and gyrations, as well as innuendos in the lyrics. By contrast, Devi and Kamala's sanitized performance employs several of the mudras utilized in Bollywood fusion dance, akin to the "Nagada Sang Dhol" dance described above. Further, by presenting "Saami Saami" in its dubbed Tamil version (as opposed to the original Telugu or even dubbed Hindi versions), the creators of the series tie the song back to Devi's Tamil culture. Devi's performance of this song can then be interpreted as "a display of [her] Indian-American [identity] and of [her] cultural heritage" (Shresthova, "Dancing" 260). Unlike Mandanna in the original video, but much like herself from ". . . Felt Super Indian," Devi wears a half sari and South Indian jewelry with jasmine flowers in her hair, all of which are markers of her Tamil identity, except this time she is more confident in her attire and thus in performing her diasporic self.

It is also significant that Ben does not witness this performance. Unlike the original "Saami Saami," Devi's dance is not an attempt at wooing her love interest. Instead, her dance functions as a performance of cultural identity that marks her as truly Indian, which in this case happens through a Bollywoodized display. It is only when Devi can accept her complex, diasporic identity as such that she is considered "ready" for her relationship with Ben. Indeed, Ben arrives on the scene soon after Devi's dance, and the two characters confess their love for one another. The series thus ends on a happily-ever-after note.

"Within the Indian diaspora," Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti argue, "film songs play a crucial role and enable immigrants to express multiple affiliations" (8). In addition to augmenting Devi's realization of her diasporic identity and viewers' understandings of her life, film songs also serve as a marketing tool to attract global audiences of *NHIE*. Richa Moorjani and Maitreyi Ramakrishnan, the actors who play Kamala and Devi, respectively, performed a cover of the popular Bollywood "item number," "Sheila ki Jawani" from *Tees Maar Khan* (2010) for the PINKVILLA channel on YouTube in 2022. "[O]ften envisaged as the film's erotic piece de resistance," the item number is designed for fan service, and frequently, a movie's promotion is centered around the song in question (Brara 68). With regard to the choreography and costumes, Moorjani and Ramakrishnan's paratextual "Sheila ki Jawani" is sexualized in a way that their "Saami Saami" dance within the show is not. Moorjani and Ramakrishnan's version of the famous song, then, functions much like an item number would with regard to promoting a film: it is meant to appeal to fans of the show the same way a

teaser would *and* has the added benefit of attracting more viewers to the show. This dance cover has over 6.7 million views, which is significantly more than the number of PINKVILLA's subscribers; it also has over 196,000 likes and 2,116 comments, which suggests that the audiences are active consumers and are deeply invested in the show. Some of the comments even postulate what Devi's mother Nalini's reaction to "Kamala" and "Devi" performing this dance might be. Such comments illustrate the bridging of a gap between the fictional world of the series and reality. Since this song was uploaded a year before the final season was released on Netflix, it leads us to wonder if the success of PINKVILLA's promotional material on YouTube helped solidify the creators' decision to include the "Saami Saami" dance sequence within the series. Regardless of which viewers see first—"Saami Saami" while watching the show or "Sheila ki Jawani" on YouTube—Bollywoodization has played an instrumental role in garnering and securing *NHIE*'s fanbase.

Weddings: Situating Romances of Older Generations

Wedding scenes play a pivotal role in most romances. They are symbolic of happily ever afters, serve as spaces of reflection and contemplation about relationships, and offer emotional resolution as the bride and groom come together in front of their family and friends and commit to a life together. Day observes, "While marriage envy most obviously affects adult women, the messages and media that perpetuate this phenomenon certainly have wider-reaching effects" (158). She adds that "the romantic comedies that have for decades been aimed at twenty-something women have been retooled for an audience of teens and tweens, so that 'these troubling "how to date" lessons are being consumed at earlier—and more formative—ages'" (Ames and Burcon qtd. in Day 159). These "how to date lessons" are coded within the scenes involving weddings in romantic comedies for adolescents, even though the teen protagonists themselves aren't the ones getting married. These wedding scenes function as important narrative devices to convey ideologies pertaining to love and relationships to adolescent characters and viewers.

In *Mismatched*, Rishi's mother's wedding is an important event in reuniting the protagonists in season 2. Paradoxically, the wedding is also a space that brings together Rishi and Sanskriti and sets the stage for Harsh's proposal to Dimple. Dimple and Rishi also have conversations with their respective fathers about love and romance: Rishi's father's lament about his ex-wife having been "the love of his life" ("You're the One" 00:27:23), in particular, urges Rishi to search for Dimple at the wedding venue. Dimple's father talks about the heart always winning over the mind with regard to love; during the course of this conversation, Dimple is reminded of an unnamed young boy (revealed to the viewer to be a younger Rishi) and his artwork she stumbled upon at the same venue a decade earlier. She wanders around looking for it. It is here that Rishi finds her, indicating that Dimple and Rishi had met as children and that it was "not coincidence" but "kismat" (fate) that brought them back to each other (00:29:41–49). The characters' respective conversations with their fathers at the wedding therefore help rekindle the couple's relationship.

In *NHIE*, Paati's wedding sets the stage for Devi's relationships with herself, Ben, her friends, family, and community. As discussed in the previous section, it is at this wedding that she demonstrates an affinity with her ethnolinguistic Tamil identity by performing "Saami Saami" with Kamala. Devi and Ben also declare their love for one another here, thus

establishing their own happily ever after.[8] Moreover, the wedding offers Devi's mother, Nalini, a sense of closure and a new beginning. She kisses Andres, her partner, against the backdrop of the wedding and soon after, she removes her thaali in the privacy of her bedroom. The thaali is a necklace given to Nalini by her late husband, Mohan, and is also the Tamil word that stands for the symbol of marriage (synonymous to the wedding ring in Western marriages). Notably, Nalini wears the thaali through both her season 2 relationship with her colleague Dr. Jackson and as she finds herself attracted to Andres in season 4. Nalini's potential romances are complicated by Devi's reactions to her love interests, and Devi's acceptance is intertwined with the women's collective grief, loss, and love for Mohan. The thaali thus serves as a tangible reminder of Nalini's love and loss in the show, and her decision to remove it in the finale indicates that she is finally ready to enter a relationship, wholeheartedly and without the baggage of grief.

The weddings of older generations in both the shows thus provide younger characters, and potentially adolescent viewers, different perspectives on love and relationships, sometimes even inspiring the protagonists and secondary characters of these shows to make choices regarding love that they might not have otherwise made.

Narrators and Voice-Overs: Double-Voiced Discourse and Narrative Alterity

Both *Mismatched* and *NHIE* feature voice-overs for narration, with the difference being that the former features character narrators and the latter, heterodiegetic narrators. The characters within the world of *Mismatched* take turns narrating an episode each in both the seasons, whereas in *NHIE*, the famous tennis player John McEnroe comments on the happenings in Devi's life.[9] These narrators and voice-overs serve as framing devices that simultaneously recount incidents as they happen in the shows and offer commentary from a more mature perspective on the characters themselves.

Narration as a framing device can be better understood by examining it through the lens of Bakhtin's double-voiced discourse. Mike Cadden draws on Bakhtin to explain double-voicedness in young adult literature thus:

> The dialogic or double-voiced text represents voices as equal and provides alternative interpretations that offer, in their aggregate, no single and final answer for the reader. In a double-voiced text the author is the creator of "not voice-less slaves . . . but *free* people, capable of standing along-side their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him." (Bakhtin qtd. in Cadden 147)[10]

Mismatched expands on the idea of double-voicedness by using polyphonic voices in the form of different characters narrating entire episodes, commenting on events happening both to themselves and to their peers. For instance, "Making Moves" is narrated by Rishi's best friend, Namrata. Although this episode is constructed with the intention of foregrounding Namrata's lesbian identity and her quest for a "butterflies-in-the-stomach kind of love" (00:00:15), her narration about queer love is often juxtaposed with visuals of heteronormative romance, especially those involving Rishi and Dimple. The episode begins

with Namrata stating, "Whom to love, whom not to love is not in our hands. . . . We don't choose it. It chooses us" (00:00:05–16). Although she is talking about her own queer orientation, this statement is broad enough to apply to heteronormative romances too, as evidenced by the fact that the conversation following this narration shifts from Namrata and her love interest (Celina) to Rishi and his love interest (Dimple) within seconds. Similarly, at the end of the episode, Namrata establishes that she is "all set to become a fool in love, but this time [she doesn't] want a silent, one-sided love" (00:28:43–51). Her confident acceptance of her love for Celina is juxtaposed with a visual of Dimple and Rishi flirting at a party. Although the episode ends with a frame of Namrata illustrating two women (clearly herself and Celina) kissing, along with the caption "Bliss" (00:28:58), her perspective of lesbian love is, for the most part, eclipsed by the visual of a heteronormative romance. This juxtaposition can be jarring for perceptive viewers. The creators' privileging of Dimple and Rishi's relationship might produce the effect of heteronormative storylines overshadowing the LGBTQ+ romance, thus reinforcing the implicit understanding that *Mismatched* is ultimately a story about the heteronormative relationship between the lead couple, keeping in line with Sandhya Menon's intent for *When Dimple Met Rishi*. Cadden notes that in a double-voiced text, "[t]wo or more ideological positions share the text without any one being in obvious control. Though the reader may come to some decisions about the 'rightness' of a particular perspective, the text has not clearly argued for that position and has provided other complete positions to consider" (147). In line with this thought, the polyphonic narration in *Mismatched* also allows for audiences to access various characters' minds and thoughts regarding love and relationships, thus giving viewers the opportunity to understand a myriad of perspectives instead of a singular one.

Unlike *Mismatched*, where the narrators are often teens themselves, *NHIE* features adult narrators who interpret and evaluate adolescent characters' thoughts and decisions. According to Maria Nikolajeva, "The child/adult imbalance is most tangibly manifested in the relationship between the ostensibly adult narrative voice and the child focalizing character" (8). "[S]ince alterity is by definition inevitable in writing for children," as she notes, "the way the adult narrator narrates the child reveals the *degree* of alterity" (Nikolajeva 8; italics added). In *NHIE,* this alterity is not only evident in the adolescent character–adult narrator relationships, but also in the fact that the show presents the story of a Tamil American female teen (Devi) through the eyes of white adult male (McEnroe). The creators of this series—including Tamil American Mindy Kaling herself—may have deliberately chosen to not present judgements or commentary on the adolescent characters' from the adolescents' perspectives because they might have been deemed unreliable. This is especially relevant given that one of the important functions of the adult male narrator is to recount incidents relating to Devi's father and her loss and grief.

Moreover, the creators could have deliberately chosen a white adult male narrator to reach non-Indian audiences and to garner a wider viewership for the show. For example, the narrator's introduction in ". . . Felt Super Indian," discussed above, offers much needed context for American audiences who might not be familiar with Ganesh Puja or the complexities surrounding the Indian American experience. Further, having an adult narrator invites other adults into the world of the story and contributes to the humor by juxtaposing Devi's hair-trigger reactions with a more mature perspective. In fact, when questioned about why the creators chose McEnroe as the narrator for a teenage girl's life, Kaling points out that there are two main similarities between Devi and McEnroe: "extreme sense of justice"

and "hotheadedness" ("Mindy Kaling Explains" 00:06:05–10). In considering how famous McEnroe's "unabashed expressions of anger on the court" are, Sharon R. Mazzarella and Emily D. Ryalls argue that "[g]iven the cultural dictates for girls and women to manage their anger as well as the enduring Western stereotype of Asian (including South Asian) women being submissive, deferential, shy, and quiet (Natalie Porter 2015) . . . McEnroe functions to provide Devi access to the only culturally acceptable form of anger—white male anger." While "white male anger" is certainly channeled to justify and contextualize Devi's anger, we do not agree with Mazzarella and Ryalls's characterization of the protagonist because what viewers witness on screen ultimately is still the female South Asian teen's performance of anger. After all, the show makes it abundantly clear that Devi is anything but "submissive, deferential, shy, and quiet." Although Devi's anger is not always acceptable due to its consequences on the people around her, her enactment of anger is refreshing to see because it demonstrates to viewers (especially female-identifying viewers of color) that women, too, can act on their anger.

That said, the presence of the white male narrator still has the potential to bolster viewers' criticism of what the Internet terms "the Mindy Kaling Effect." This is a phenomenon in which Kaling aspires towards whiteness, usually through prioritizing white love interests in the shows that she creates (Vedavyas). In an essay that discusses the role that Kaling and her adult sitcom *The Mindy Project* play in the representation of racial minorities in mass media, Sheena Sood

> purport[s] that Kaling's commitment to a discursive rhetoric of Whiteness on air mimics her commitment to a similar rhetoric off air. For example, Kaling identifies with a stage name that is more common and more easily pronounced than "Chockalingam.". . . Kaling's efforts to distance herself from her birth name also demonstrates the pervasiveness of White racial ideology and the normative influence of cultural assimilation on Non-Whites. (109)

This "cultural assimilation on non-whites" is evidenced primarily by the Indian characters' love interests: Devi, Nalini, and Paati each end up with white, non-Indian characters in the series finale. Given her penchant for "honorary whiteness," her choice to make the narrator of the show a white adult male also reifies what Sood would call Kaling's "assimilationist inclinations" (109). This leaves with the lingering question as to whether Kaling endorses whiteness or Indianness (to use a more homogenizing term) through *NHIE*, as well as whether or not the double-voiced discourse (of the white adult male narrator and the Tamil American teen female protagonist) is an active one.

Conclusion

With Netflix going global in the recent past, *NHIE* and *Mismatched* have gained popularity among transnational audiences. Creators of both shows use narrative devices such as love triangles and weddings to convey similar ideas and reach out to the overlapping audiences of these shows, including but not restricted to women, diasporic or native South Asians, and romance enthusiasts. Creators also employ Bollywood song and dance as well as

narrators and voice-overs in order to appeal to their unique audiences, which might not intersect with one another.

Arguably, the contexts and production of the shows themselves are transnational. We have demonstrated how the shows utilize similar narrative devices in order to convey ideologies pertaining to love and adolescence in the sections above. These narrative devices are used to convey intersectional ideologies of love and romance in an Indian or diasporic context and to construct agentic protagonists with a unique Indian and Indian American adolescent subjectivity. Consequently, love and romance are used as a framework to talk about topics—including grief and loss, as well as female sexuality and desire—that are considered taboo in many Indian and diasporic communities. The result is the creation of primary and secondary female characters who appear imperfect (sometimes in more ways than one) and need to depend on the people around them for support. Arguably, the female characters' dependence on their male counterparts might seem problematic from a gender perspective; however, it is refreshing to see representations of Indian and Indian American females who are or can be flawed and are loved despite—or even because—of it. By portraying characters' adolescent subjectivity as dialogic and developing in relation with friends, family, and love interests, *NHIE* and *Mismatched* thus invite viewers to think about their own subject positions and relationships from a more collectivist perspective.

---

[1] We use the term "realistic" to refer to scripted, verisimilitudinous constructions of reality. For example, *Mismatched*'s present-day setting in Jaipur, as well as its characters' somewhat typical adolescent experiences, provide the show with the appearance of real-life narratives.

[2] For the sake of broader understanding, we have drawn from the English subtitles of the Hindi dialogue in *Mismatched* in the direct quotations referenced in our analyses. We also limit our study to the first two seasons of *Mismatched* because the events in season 3 take place three years later when the characters are no longer adolescents.

[3] Following Sangita Shresthova, we use "Bollywood" to refer to regional language music and dance, although each regional film industry in India goes by a different name. For example, Kollywood is the Tamil film industry, Tollywood is the Telugu film industry, and so on.

[4] In our research, we noticed that many of the scholarly articles on young adult television focus on the genre of supernatural thrillers. See, for example, Megan Henesy; Kristina Brüning and Tina Belinda Benigno. While there is some scholarship on young adult romances, a lot of work still remains to be done in this space.

[5] As of 2025, there are two recently published essays on *Never Have I Ever*, both by Emily D. Ryalls and Sharon R. Mazzarella. One engages with ideas relating to anger and feminism and the other examines the construction of female erotic desire in heterosexual relationships. However, the authors do not discuss narrative devices pertaining to love and romance in the way that we do here.

[6] The introduction of love triangles—specifically for Dimple and Rishi—in this TV adaptation of *When Dimple Met Rishi* is one of the major differences between the novel and the series. This leads one to wonder if the change in the title of the adaptation to *Mismatched* is a deliberate move by the creators to expand the scope for love stories for, and beyond, Dimple and Rishi.

[7] In writing about the Indian diaspora's connection to Bollywood, Shresthova explains that Bollywood dance "has become a term used by film professionals, amateur performers, and audiences to reference dances choreographed to Hindi, and to a lesser extent other regional, Indian language film songs" ("Dancing" 244).

[8] While Ben and Devi themselves do not get married, they are set up for a long term commitment. In the final scene of the show, they are shown watching something on a laptop together, presumably making their relationship work as they study in Columbia and Princeton, respectively.

[9] There are four episodes in *NHIE* that feature other heterodiegetic celebrity narrators: model Gigi Hadid narrates two episodes from Paxton's perspective, and actor comedian Andy Samberg does the same for Ben.

[10] We rely on young adult literature scholarship to explain double-voiced discourse in young adult media because, as of 2025, similar studies do not exist in the fields of adolescent media or Indian television shows. Studies that do apply Bakhtin's theory of double-voiced discourse, such as "News Satire Engagement as a Transgressive Space for Genre Work" by Joanna Doona and "Heteroglossia and Identities of Young Adults in Bangladesh" by Shaila Sultana, focus on quantitative data analysis from in-depth interviews and focus group sessions; specifically, these studies examine young adults' responses or interactions with media.

Works Cited

"Aise Kyun | Official Music Video | Anurag Saikhia, Raghav & Nikhita | Raj Shekhar | Mismatched." *YouTube,* uploaded by Netflix India, 27 Nov. 2020, **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blRe2wQP-_U**.

". . . Been a Playa." *Never Have I Ever*, season 2, episode 1, 15 July 2021. Netflix, **https://www.netflix.com/watch/81302728**.

Benigno, Tina Belinda. "The Teen Witch and the Complexity of Care Under Capitalism Through a Case Study of *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*." *Women: A Cultural Review*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2024, pp. 41–61.

Brara, Rita. "The Item Number: Cinesexuality in Bollywood and Social Life." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 45, no. 23, 2010, pp. 67–74.

Brüning, Kristina. "'I'm Neither a Slut, Nor Am I Gonna Be Shamed': Sexual Violence, Feminist Anger, and Teen TV's New Heroine." *Television & New Media*, vol. 23, no. 7, 2022, pp. 667–82.

Cadden, Mike. "The Irony of Narration in the Young Adult Novel." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2000, pp. 146–54.

Chapman, Hannah Carroll, creator. *Heartbreak High*. Fremantle Australia and NewBe, 2022.

Coats, Karen. *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Children's and Young Adult Literature*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

Crane, Diana. *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing*. U of Chicago P, 2000.

Day, Sara K. "Reimagining Forever . . .: The Marriage Plot in Recent Young Adult Literature." *Beyond the Blockbusters: Themes and Trends in Contemporary Young Adult Fiction*, edited by Rebekah Fitzsimmons and Casey Alane Wilson, UP of Mississippi, 2020, pp. 156–70.

Doona, Joanna. "News Satire Engagement as a Transgressive Space for Genre Work." *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2021, pp. 15–33.

". . . Felt Super Indian." *Never Have I Ever*, season 1, episode 4, 27 Apr. 2020. *Netflix*, **https://www.netflix.com/watch/81128600**.

Forni, Dalila. "Young Adults and TV Series: Netflix and New Forms of Serial Narratives for Young Viewers." *MeTis. Mondi Educativi. Temi, Indagini, Suggestioni*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2020, pp. 296–312.

"Girl in the Middle." *Mismatched*, season 2, episode 2, 14 Oct. 2022. *Netflix*, **https://www.netflix.com/watch/81287829**.

Gopal, Sangita, and Sujata Moorti. "Introduction: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance." *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance*, edited by Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti, U of Minnesota P, 2008, pp. 1–60.

Girard, René. *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure.* Translated by Yvonne Freccero, Johns Hopkins UP, 1976.

"Harsh or Rishi? Who's the Better Boyfriend?| #Shorts." *YouTube,* uploaded by NetflixIndiaShorts, 17 Oct. 2022, **https://www.youtube.com/shorts/UhihVCdEnTQ**.

"Heartech." *Mismatched*, season 2, episode 4, 14 Oct. 2022. *Netflix*, **https://www.netflix.com/watch/81287831**.

Henesy, Megan. "'Leaving My Girlhood Behind': Woke Witches and Feminist Liminality in *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*." *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 21, no. 7, 2021, pp. 1143–57.

"Hot Summer, Cold Vibes." *Mismatched*, season 1, episode 2, 20 Nov. 2020. *Netflix*, **https://www.netflix.com/watch/81089277**.

"I Love You More." *Mismatched*, season 2, episode 8, 14 Oct. 2022. *Netflix*, **https://www.netflix.com/watch/81445833**.

Leon-Boys, Diana, and Claudia Bucciferro. "The Teenage Latina Genius on Television: Netflix's *Ashley Garcia*." *Women's Studies in Communication*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2023, pp. 87–107.

Lyttle, Stephanie. "Challenging the Love Triangle in Twenty-First-Century Fantastic Young Adult Literature." *The International Journal of Young Adult Literature*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2022, **https://doi.org/10.24877/IJYAL.80**.

"Making Moves." *Mismatched*, season 1, episode 4, 20 Nov. 2020. *Netflix*, **https://www.netflix.com/watch/81089279**.

Matrix, Sidneyeve. "The Netflix Effect: Teens, Binge Watching, and On-Demand Digital Media Trends." *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2014, pp. 119–38.

Mazzarella, Sharon R., and Emily D. Ryalls. "Girls, Anger, and Popular Feminism on Netflix." *Feminist Media Studies*, 2024, **https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2024.2375392**.

McCallum, Robyn. *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity*. Routledge, 1999.

———. "Scrivener's Progeny: Writing the Subject." *Subjectivity in Asian Children's Literature and Film: Global Theories and Implications*, edited by John Stephens, Taylor & Francis, 2012, pp. 213–23.

Meeusen, Meghann. *Children's Books on the Big Screen*. UP of Mississippi, 2020.

Menon, Sandhya. *When Dimple Met Rishi*. Simon Pulse, 2017.

Nikolajeva, Maria. *Power, Voice and Subjectivity in Literature for Young Readers*. Routledge, 2009.

"Mindy Kaling Explains How John McEnroe Got Involved in 'Never Have I Ever.'" *YouTube,* uploaded by extratv, 21 July 2021, **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYEBIj0ATNc&t=367s**.

Parks, Amy Noelle. **"The Feminist Possibilities of Heteroglossic Spaces in Contemporary Young Adult Romance Novels."** *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*, vol. 12, 2023.

"Pilot." *Never Have I Ever*, season 1, episode 1, 27 Apr. 2020. *Netflix*, **https://www.netflix.com/title/80179190**.

purvashirodkar7529. Comment on ""Harsh or Rishi? Who's the Better Boyfriend? | #Shorts." *YouTube*, uploaded by NetflixIndiaShorts, 17 October 2022, **https://www.youtube.com/shorts/UHihVCdEnTQ**.

Ryalls, Emily D., and Sharon R. Mazzarella. "Flipping the Heterosexual Script: Representing Girls' Positive Sexual Health on Netflix." *Continuum*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2024, pp. 239–50.

". . . Said Goodbye." Never Have I Ever, season 4, episode 10, 8 June 2023. Netflix, **https://www.netflix.com/watch/81597268**.

Sarkar, Bhaskar, "The Melodramas of Globalization." *Cultural Dynamics*, vol. 20, no.1, 2008, pp. 31–51.

". . . Set My Mom Up." Never Have I Ever, season 4, episode 8, 8 June 2023. Netflix, **https://www.netflix.com/watch/81597266**.

"Sheila Ki Jawani Dance Cover | Maitreyi Ramakrishnan, Richa Moorjani." *YouTube*, uploaded by PINKVILLA, 5 Aug. 2021, **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUrm7dmYYPg**.

Shresthova, Sangita. "Dancing to an Indian Beat: 'Dola' Goes My Diasporic Heart." *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance*, edited by Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti, U of Minnesota P, 2008, pp. 243–63.

———. *Is It All About Hips?: Around the World with Bollywood Dance*. Sage Publications, 2011.

Sood, Sheena. "Color-Blind Racism in the Media: Mindy Kaling as an 'Honorory White.'" *Race and Contention in Twenty-First Century U.S. Media*, edited by Jason A Smith and Bhoomi K. Thakore, Routledge, 2016, pp. 100–14.

". . . Stalked My Own Mother." Never Have I Ever, season 2, episode 9, 15 July 2021. Netflix, **https://www.netflix.com/watch/81302736**.

Sultana, Shaila. "Heteroglossia and Identities of Young Adults in Bangladesh." *Linguistics and Education,* vol. 26, 2014, pp. 40–56.

Thomas, Kaitlyn. "Netflix Is Coming of Age by Cornering the Market on Coming-of-Age Shows." *TVGuide.Com*, 26 Mar. 2018, **https://www.tvguide.com/news/netflix-coming-of-age-teen-series/**.

U/windupbird__. "After finishing S2, which team are you on? Ben or Paxton?" *Reddit*, 15 July 2021, **https://www.reddit.com/r/NeverHaveIEverShow/comments/okxv4z/after_finishing_s2_which_team_are_you_on_ben_or/?sort=top**.

Vedavyas, Eera. "The Mindy Kaling Effect: Why Proper South Asian Representation Is Important." *Her Campus,* 31 Jan. 2023, **https://www.hercampus.com/school/cu-boulder/the-mindy-kaling-effect-why-proper-south-asian-representation-is-important/**.

"When Dimple Met Rishi." *Mismatched*, season 1, episode 1, 20 Nov. 2020. *Netflix*, **https://www.netflix.com/watch/81089276**.

"You're The One." *Mismatched*, season 2, episode 6, 14 Oct. 2022. *Netflix*, **https://www.netflix.com/watch/81287833**.