

**Desi/Brown as Mediatized Muslim Youth Personae:
The Online and Offline Lives of Transnational Pakistanis**

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Pakistani-Americans and generally Muslim-Americans are often positioned within the American public sphere as 'foreign' or even 'threatening.' Bald (2015) describes the flattening of the "South Asian" identity in the US into a binary of either the (South) Asian model minority or a national threat. Scholars have admitted the problematic nature of 'desi', and of even the term "South Asian," to refer to an identity that spans the breadth of social experiences for Americans with origins in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka (Bald 2015; Prashad 2001). This paper develops this emerging debate by analyzing how transnational Pakistani youth in New York City and Lahore embody and trope on being urban, Muslim, and South Asian. My work tracks semiotic instantiations of performing 'desi' or brown on social media platforms. I also examine the public profile of an international social media 'star' who performs an interpretation of desi/brown Muslim transnational youth. These constructions of a Muslim 'desi' problematize the simplistic stereotypes of Pakistani youth, where such stereotypes do not account for the complex mediatized engagements which these youth undertake everyday. Mediatization, the process whereby institutional practices recursively link processes of communication to processes of commoditization (Agha 2011), serves as a framing device to consider how the digital alters forms of communication and their participation frameworks (through wage-labor migration, education, media use) and thus alters the transnational subject's experiences and aspirational trajectories. This paper seeks to present mediatized processes as part of the formation of transnational subjecthood. (249)