Today, there are well over a billion Muslims in the world. Many live in the diaspora in the West; an estimated 15 million live in Europe; and another 3 million to 6 million (depending on the source) live in North America, as well as the millions of others in other OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) nations. As a fast-growing population in a precarious moment in history, there is an urgent need to understand the realities of the diasporic and highly diverse Muslim population.

When Americans think about Muslims after the attacks on September 11, 2001, all too often their associations are negative, blurring the enormous variations in the Muslim community regarding their countries of origin, language, class, phenotype, religious practices, and political views. More than ever before, there are substantial misrepresentations, misunderstandings, and misperceptions about Muslims. Today throughout most of the Western world, Muslims are “designated Others” serving as
the targets of reflexive hatred. This response has been fueled and rationalized by, among other things, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the post 9/11 attacks, the train bombings in Madrid and London, and the ongoing tensions created by the Israeli/Palestinian conflicts. As a result, daily representations in the news media depict the actions of a few, albeit with enormous repercussions for many.

While much has been written about the adult experience of Muslims in Western settings, very little systematic research has been conducted among Muslims of immigrant origin in the United States. Even less is known about the experiences of adolescents and young adults of this population. *Muslim American Youth: Understanding Hyphenated Identities through Multiple Methods* brings the reader into the worlds of Muslim American youth: a diverse group from many countries of origin, with varying levels of affluence, education, and adherence to religious and cultural practices. While on the surface they have little in common, these young Muslim Americans share the profound formative experience of coming of age in the United States at a time of tremendous tension and hypersurveillance.

This book tackles a number of complex issues: How do Muslim American youth contend with growing up under the shadow of suspicion in a climate of surveillance by federal authorities? How do they walk the tightrope of scrutiny by both their own communities of origin and the American populace they encounter in a variety of “contact zones”? How do young people respond and make sense of these tensions? How do they forge fragile collective identities that honor both their parents’ culture of origin as well as their home in the United States? How can they develop a sense of belonging while coping with the dissonance of “excluded citizenship”? In what ways do young men and young women perceive similar forces at play but respond in different ways? In short, how do Muslim American immigrant origin youth respond to the “weight of the margin”?

Selcuk Sirin and Michelle Fine prove to be exceptionally adept at capturing the voices of these young people who develop in the context of the “toxicity of living amid feuding identities.” They use innovative methodological strategies drawing on the strengths of a quantitative survey approach as well as extensive qualitative approaches. Their mixed-methods strategy includes survey scales of American identity and Muslim identity, social and cultural preferences, coping strategies, frequency of perceived discrimination, discrimination-related stress, psychological well-being,
and collective self-esteem. In addition, they use the novel strategy of asking the youth to draw “identity maps” to illustrate the inner turmoil of many participants as well as the admirable coping strategies of others. Their focus groups and in-depth interviews capture the themes and convey the perceptions and experiences of these youth. Taken together, these triangulated strategies provide insight into the psychosocial experience of Muslim American youth as never before captured in such depth or with such acuity.

This superb, beautifully written, deeply insightful, and highly empathic book is a tremendous contribution to the fields of immigration studies, developmental psychology, and identity research. Furthermore, it will no doubt be a model for the essential future work that must be done with Muslim origin youth as well as other disparaged and marginalized youth growing up in the Diaspora in all too many settings in our conflict-ridden world.