RADICALIZATION AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

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STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENTATION

- Describe the radicalization process
- Describe the nature of contemporary “Islamophobia”
- Identify the connections between Islamophobia and radicalization
RADICALIZATION: A LOADED TERM

• A common association with terrorism and individuals from a Muslim background

• The common association stigmatizes Muslims and is misleading

• Violence originates from all ethnic groups and different ideologies (e.g., far-right extremist groups)
UNDERSTANDING RADICALIZATION

• Difficult to distinguish between radicalization that leads to violence and radicalization that does not

• There is no terrorist profile or “personality”

• There is no single predictive model of radicalization to violence, but there are some shared experiences
RADICALIZATION AND GRIEVANCES

- Grievances create a sense of victimization and injustice and a cognitive (mental) opening to radicalization

- Grievances can come from different experiences (e.g., loss of job, failed relationship, discrimination)

- Yet grievances (in isolation) cannot explain radicalization - many of us have these experiences
RADICALIZATION AND IDEOLOGY

• Ideologies frame grievances and give them greater meaning

• Ideologies create a world view or “master narrative” that places life experiences and social identities within a broader political context
RADICALIZATION AND SOCIALIZATION

• Socialization is an essential component of radicalization

• A vast majority of radicalized individuals adopt their views among close friends or kinship groups

• Social networks provide a sense of belonging and drive radicalization through peer pressure and “group think”
RADICALIZATION AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

• Enabling environments create a support network where radicalization can take place

• They can be virtual (online) or physical (e.g., school, prison, religious / cultural institution)
ISLAMOPHOBIA VS. ANTI-MUSLIM RACISM

• The term comes from a 1990s Runnymede Trust Report - defined as an “unfounded hostility towards Islam, and therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims”

• Islamophobia is inadequate – it does not describe the highly politicized form of racism that Muslims experience today

• Today politicians and a broad based anti-Islamic social movement foment anti-Muslim racism
CONNECTING ANTI-MUSLIM RACISM AND RADICALIZATION

• Anti-Muslim Racism is associated with two parts of the radicalization process: grievances and ideology.

• Studies show that experiences with discrimination can drive support for terrorism and violence (especially among young people).
RACISM AND THE FAR RIGHT

- Anti-Muslim racism defines much of the political energy of the far-right

- Groups share a belief that Muslim communities represent an existential threat to European identity, values and security

- The language of the far-right stimulates violence on the fringes
CONCLUSION

• Radicalization impacts every ethnic, cultural and religious group in Canada (far-right and militant Islamism represent primary threats to public safety)

• Counter these threats requires the promotion of ideas that undermine hate

• In the education system it is important to encourage empathy, respect and understanding of difference