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A Critical Reflection on the Link Between Racism and Disaffection

A substantial body of research on Islam in the west has carried the assumption of a positive association between Islamophobia and radicalisation. Specifically, it is assumed that the experiences of racism and discourses of un-belonging generate disaffection among Muslims. More broadly, it has been thought that racism has this general morbid social effect. However, empirical data from national surveys in Australia do not provide clear support for this supposed positive association. In terms of Muslims in western settings, it has been asserted that the disaffection borne of Islamophobia generates a pre-disposition to radicalisation. The political utility of this assertion is clear, it presents a compelling argument to challenge racism and to specifically address Islamophobia. However the evidence for this link is poor. Drawing on field survey with Muslims Sydney (n: 345) this paper addresses the empirical evidence for a link between disaffection borne of Islamophobia and the vulnerability to radicalisation.

