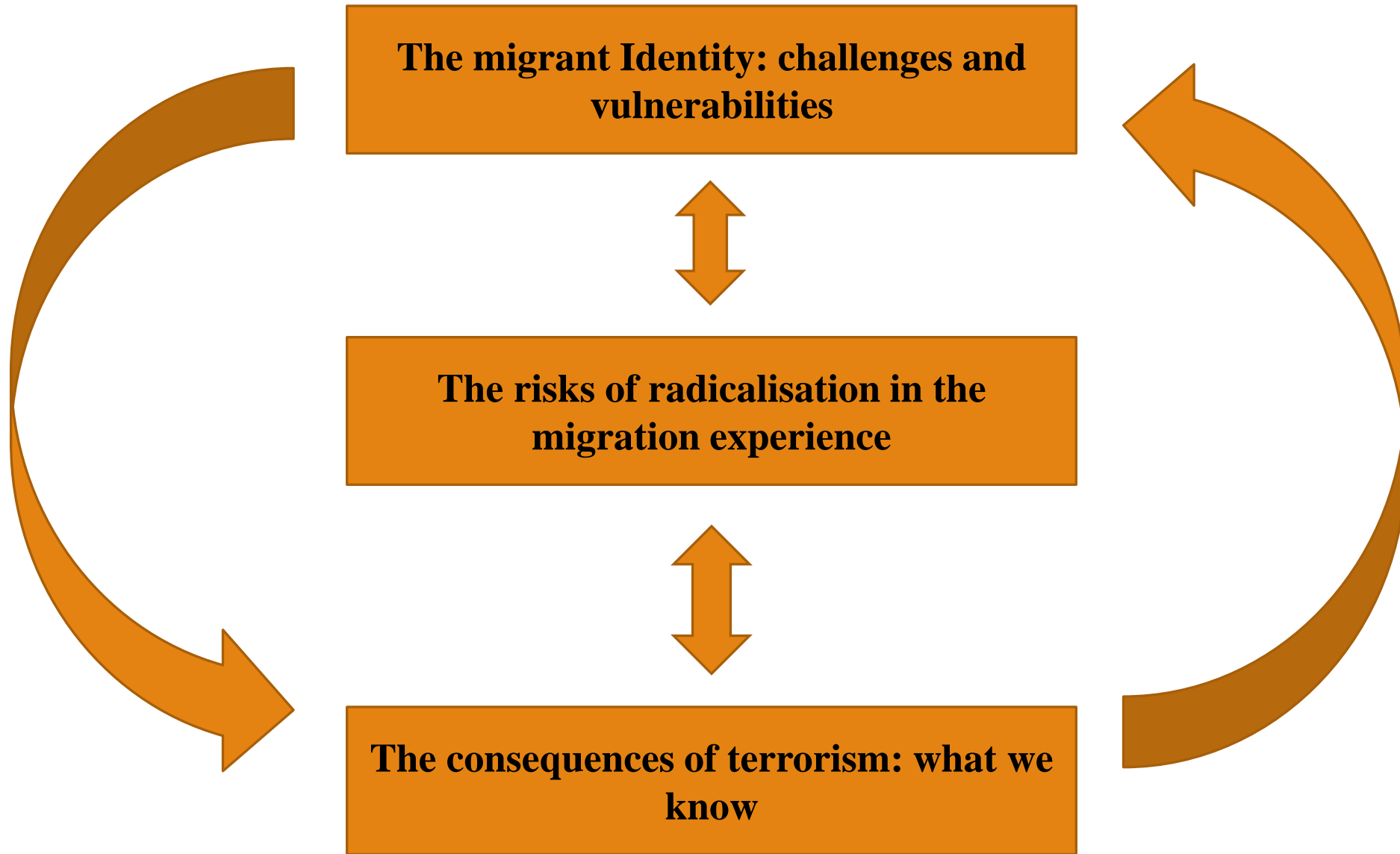




I, We, They at the time of international terrorism: identity and métissage in immigrant families

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The research

- Reconstruct the universes of meaning through which Italian Muslims families experience their multiple identities in the various contexts of their daily life in order to:
 - evaluate if and how the current international situation contributes to the organization and re-definition of the meanings themselves;
 - identify areas of vulnerability in order to assess possible risks of radicalization;
 - define appropriate intervention contexts and procedures.

Participants: 10 North-African immigrant families (Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt), living in North Italy. We interviewed one parent and one teen-age child. The parents, 7 women and 2 men, were 37 to 51 years old; the children, 7 girls and 3 boys, were 12 to 18 years old.

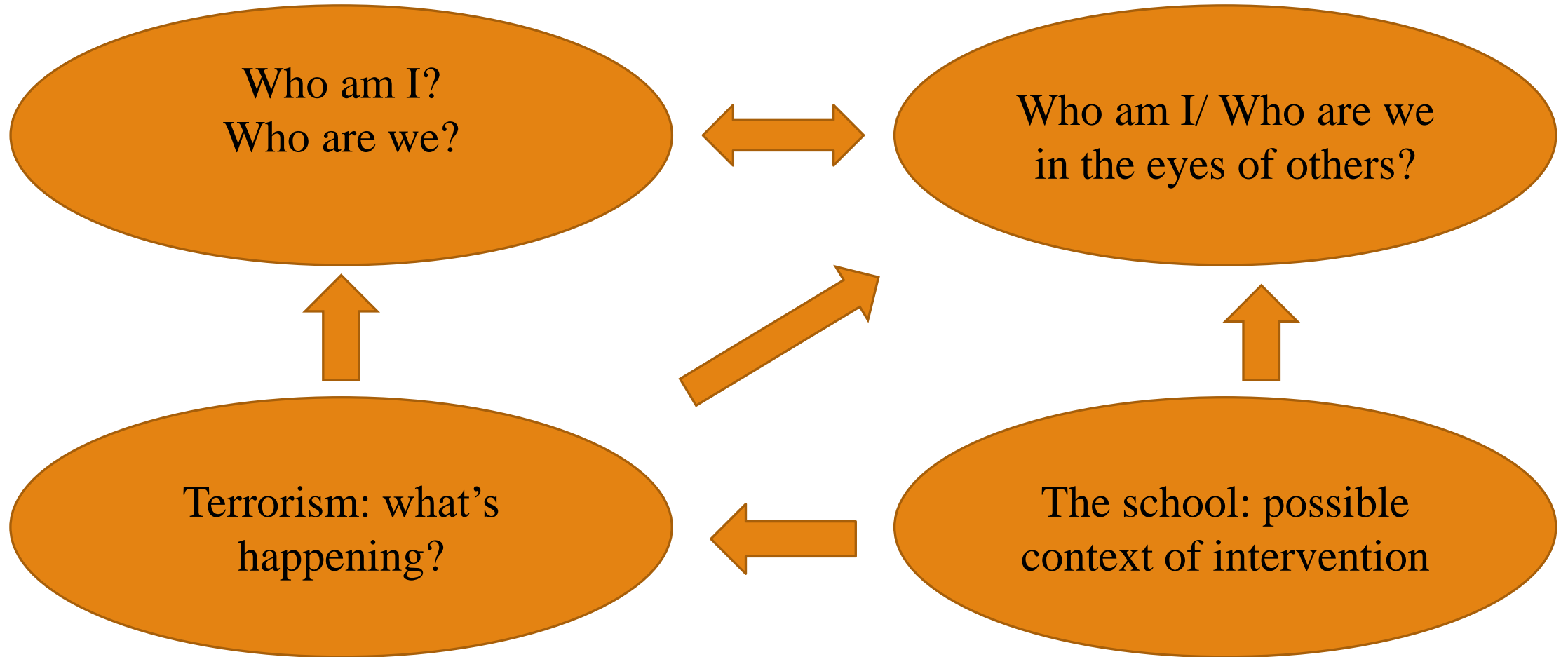
Instrument: semi-structured thematic interview, used according to a flexible and non-standardized survey model (Smith, 2008) aimed at bringing out the significant experiences of each participant, allowing the individual to construct his/her own narrative.

Procedure: after establishing a confidence pact that allowed the participants to feel free telling their stories, the interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis in private homes or public facilities, mainly in Italian (one exception). The interviews with minors required parental consent.

Data Analysis: the interviews, audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and transcribed verbatim, were analyzed according to the methodological procedures suggested by the *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (Smith, 2008; Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009):

- a) identifying the *master themes*;
- b) identifying the *salient events*;
- c) delineating the *emerging meanings*

The master themes



Conclusions:

- Immigrant families define themselves through a **complex, manifold and polyvalent set of attributes and values**, which summarise their existential contexts.
- The terrorist events, and the way in which they are conveyed in the public discourse, are building **crystallized and all-encompassing representations of the Arab-Muslim community**.
- The key factor is the attribution of a negative and threatening social label. This weakens the plan of confrontation and determines the **lack of recognition of the métissage** at social and institutional level. Participants are forced to redefine themselves according to public discourse.
- This determines a **caesura in the affiliation process** and, as a consequence, there is further level of **caesura in the second and third generation filiation process**: parents have difficulty in the confrontation with their children and risk to not recompose the vertical narrative identity.
- These areas of vulnerability determine possible outcomes of **polarization** and, therefore, **radicalisation**.

Intervention proposal:

- Participants identify **the school** as the first effective context for **social intervention**, to lower risks connected to the current situation of hostility.
- Results suggest going beyond the simple confrontation between school and family communication, as so far described in the literature (Rousseau, Machouf, 2005). They suggest structuring more **complex and systemic interventions** which use the school as a basis to involve the whole community.
- This indicates the need to:
 - activate **specific professional skills**, such as those of psychologists, sociologists and pedagogists;
 - implement transversal projects not based on intercultural comparison, but promoting **training and education to recognize “multiple ways of being multiple”**.

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Thanks for the attention

The migrant Identity

- **Identity: a multiple, polyvalent and creative construct.**

The *paradigm of métissage*: mestizo thinking and mestizo identity

Mestizo identity as a plural identity of a subjectivity whose autonomy is based on a series of heteronomies

(Laplantine, Nouss, 1997, 2001)

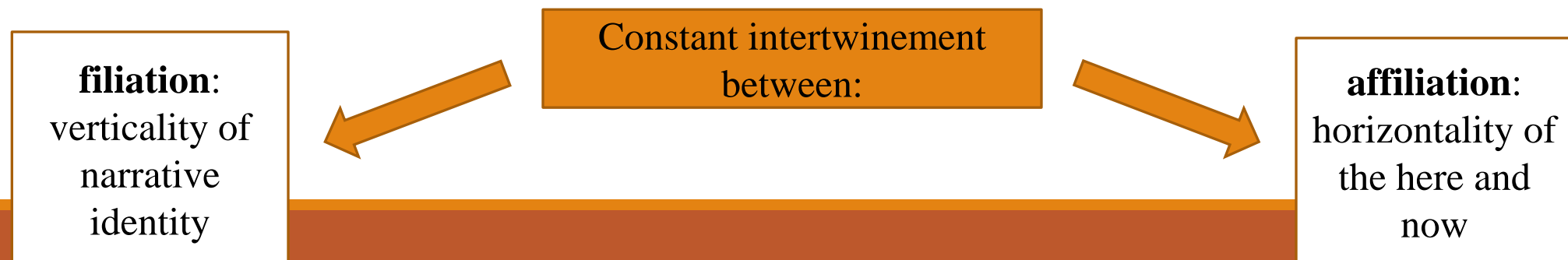
Plurality as an existential condition



- **Polyvalence in the migration experience: between identity crises and creative processes** (Park, 1992; Sayad, 1999; Anolli, 2004)

Métissage in the transcultural perspective:

The challenge of métissage: insert oneself into the world of here, supporting oneself into the world of origin of one's parents, leads to a dynamic mixture of women and men, of thoughts, of their becoming (Moro, Baubet, 2004).



Migrant identity transforms itself through a long, sometimes difficult process. The comparison between the code of self (and us)-knowledge of the world of origin and the code of daily life of the new world in which they are inscribed can be complex and open spaces of **vulnerability**. Migration can be configured as a **multi-level caesura event**:



Filiation process caesura:

- 1st generation: moment of interruption and re-definition of biographical continuity
- 2nd and 3th generation: difficulty to connect themselves to their vertical dimension, loss of family narrative identity (*floating filiation*)





Affiliation process caesura:

- the confrontation with a hostile social context that rejects, denies, weakens their memberships.

Moro, Baubet, 2004; Ferradji, Lesoeurs, 2013; Nathan, 2017.



Risks of radicalisation


- An overview of literature on radicalisation among Muslims in Europe finds **identity crises** to be a key precipitant able to explain the process. Findings from Social Identity Theory suggest that the **negotiation and redefinition processes** of these identities, in the European Muslim diaspora, may have risky outcomes: the nature of **community-level** groups and networks may contribute to identity ‘readiness’ for radicalisation. (Al Raffie, 2013).  Filiation 1st generation caesura
- The wandering or fluctuating experience of the **second generations** represents a loss of roots, a perception of being disconnected. For young children of migrants this determines a need to recognize themselves and be recognized for their singularity. One of the risks is precisely the attempt to **re-appropriate** and **re-write their veticality**, adhering to pseudo-identity models with extreme religious and cultural connotations (Nathan, 2017).  Filiation 2nd generation caesura



Psycho-social consequences of terrorism

- **Symptoms and psychopathologies** (Masten, Osofsky, 2010, Wang et al., 2006; Cohen, Chazan, Lerner, Maimon, 2010).
- **Social consequences:** 1) discrimination and marginalization (Cainkar, 2009; Jamal, Naber, 2008);
2) identity negotiation (Sirin, Fine, 2007, Sarroub, 2005);
3) coping strategies (Ewing, Hoyler, 2008; Peek, 2003).
- **Interventions:** 1) on children (CATS Consortium, 2007, Brown, Bobrow, 2004);
2) on communities: *moral complexity* / *moral clarity* between school and family (Rousseau, Machouf, 2005; Chanley, 2002; Punamaki, 1996; Apfel, Simon, 2000; Rouhana, Fiske, 1995);
3) support professionals (Lindy, Lindy, 2004; Tummala, 2005).

Limits of the literature

- Studies rarely link interpretation of terrorist events to an analysis of identity representations and emotional experiences of immigrants in the contexts of daily life.
- There are no studies on families, which evaluate the point of view of parents and children simultaneously. 

Who am I? Who are we?

As individual

As member of a group

Multiple ways of being multiple:
polyvalency, negotiation,
supranational membership, demand,
complex management

Family

Nuclei with variable geometry

Cultural métissage:
verticality-horizontality,
filiation-affiliation,
morphogenesis-morphostasis

Relational polyvalence:
autonomy-connection,
cohesion-adaptation

Social relations

Relational polyvalence: similarity-complementarity, support-conflict

Religious faith

Religious métissage: free and voluntary choice; respect for other faiths; to slip between more or less substantial practices; **complex and contradictory representations and values**

World of origin

Connection with roots: Coexisting resources; difficulty in living one's own traditions; maintain contacts; family narratives



Who am I/ who are we in the eyes of others?

Interpersonal level

Italian people's **representation** about Arab/muslim people **depends on the individual**: level of contact and knowledge, sharing of experience, access to adequate information, perception of threat, influence of the contexts.

On the interpersonal level, the **families can experience the recognition of their specificity/polyvalence**, alongside discrimination episodes.

Social and institutional level

At social and institutional level the **representation** of the foreigner, and specifically of Arab/muslim **people, is negatively affected by: current international context**, economic crisis, mass-media influence, construction of antisocial mentality.

On the socio-institutional level, the **families experience lack of recognition and social stigma**.
The social context can **force them to take side/to choose**.



Terrorism: what's happening ?

Coincidence between ISIS, Muslim faith and terrorist attacks

Public discourse, especially in the mass-media, is explaining terrorism through religious faith (instrumentalization, lack of reliability, stereotypical construction).

Threatening social category

Arab and muslim people are assigned to a **social category** to which they attribute a high **negative value**. Their faith and culture are **threatening elements which require justification and re-negotiation**.
This **incomplete and unsatisfactory definition** of themselves has several consequences:

Expectations about Italian community's reactions: increase in prejudice and in discrimination

Arab-muslim community's reactions: self-blame, shame, fear, social retreat; Parents: **risks for the second and third generation**

Inside the families: difficulties and fear in speaking about these topics; Parents: protection of children; Children: parents without answers



The school: possible context of intervention

In relation to the terrorism

Critic elements

Positive elements

Problems with teachers (on an educational and relational level); complex social contexts (prejudice, problematic behaviors, bullying); discrimination (teachers, pupils)

Teenagers
Peer relationship: low impact of memberships; mutual ability to recognize similarities and differences in social comparison; **protective and supportive relational context**

Parents
High value attributed; **high participation**

Tasks for school: building critical and aware consciences, promoting contexts of dialogue and providing adequate information.

What is actually done: intervention uncertain, with unsteady foundations, entrusted to the common sense of a few teachers

Risks: increased conflict and fear, unreliable interlocutors, not a school task

What should be done: school as a node of socialization; **complex planning; involvement of families; use of professionals**

