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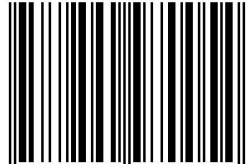Paris, 23-24 November 2018

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Publishing steps of the Proceedings and Organization of ICSS XVI

The first meeting has been held on 16 July 2018 concerning the announcement of the 16th edition of the ICSS series by the executive members of the committee. The first call for participation for submission of abstracts and full papers in social sciences, educational studies, economics, language studies and interdisciplinary studies, was announced to the registered subscribers of ICSS email database as well as through conference alerts services on 19 July 2018. The submitted abstracts and papers have been reviewed in terms of eligibility of the titles as well as their contents and the authors whose works were accepted were called to submit their final version of the papers until 31 October 2018. The peer reviewers who are also the registered authors of ICSS XVI did a voluntary work, exchanged review notes with the authors. The final papers were accepted until 6 November 2018. What follows is the result of these academic efforts.

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I, We, They at the Time of International Terrorism: Identity and Métissage in Immigrant Families

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Abstract

The current international terrorist situation is slowly but surely infiltrating and shaping inter-community relations in multi-ethnic societies. There are multiple consequences for people belonging to Arab and Muslim minority communities in North America and Europe. This article documents, in the light of the transcultural perspective and of the Social Identity Theory, how the terrorist situation is changing the space of social confrontation in Italy, forcing immigrant Arab Muslim families to re-define their identity representations in the contexts of daily life. For this qualitative study, the researchers interviewed ten immigrant families, using the theoretical and methodological approach of IPA. Results indicate that the construction in public discourse of the overlap between ISIS and Islam, determines the attribution of a threatening social category to the Arab Muslim community and the lack of recognition of the polyvalence through which these families represent themselves. The areas of vulnerability, produced by this situation, give rise to the possible risk of radicalisation in the attempt, for both first and second generations, to re-construct a positive self-image. Findings suggest using the school as a primary context of complex social interventions, able to involve the whole community.

Keywords: they at the time of international terrorism: identity and métissage in immigrant families

Introduction

In the aftermath of 9/11, international research has documented the psycho-social consequences of terrorism and the effects of the war on terror for majority and minority adults and, to a lesser extent, children and youngsters (Rousseau, Jamil, Bhui, Boudjara, 2013). There are three core groups of medical, psychological and social sciences studies, according to research objectives type and results achieved:

children's and families' **symptomatology and psychopathology** is widely documented in medical and psychiatric literature, and evaluates the impact of both direct exposure to terrorist events and indirect exposure through the media and family reactions (Masten, Osofsky, 2010, Wang et al., 2006; Cohen, Chazan, Lerner, Maimon, 2010).

the **social impact** of the terrorism on minorities and, in particular, on Arab and/or Muslim communities is mainly represented in terms of the following issues: (1) increased *negative stereotyping, discrimination and marginalization* (Cainkar, 2009; Jamal, Naber, 2008); (2) challenges of *identity negotiation* among young people (Sirin, Fine, 2007, Sarroub, 2005); and (3) *coping strategies* of individuals and communities for living in this socio-political context (Ewing, Hoyler, 2008; Peek, 2003).

an impressive array of **interventions** has been developed and implemented by different professionals: (1) addressing *children*'s needs to alleviate psychological distress and traumatic symptoms (CATS Consortium, 2007, Brown, Bobrow, 2004); (2) *helping and supporting professionals*, in the difficult task of taking care of terror-related reactions (Lindy, Lindy, 2004; Tummala, 2005); (3) *community interventions*, through public education campaigns and the mobilization of all institutional and community resources. A review of contributions reveals considerable discrepancies in recommendations for parents and teachers made by guidelines. Most initiatives advocate for coordination and homogeneity between home and school in order to develop a position of "**moral clarity**" and a strong protective ideology (Chanley, 2002; Punamaki, 1996). They do not however necessarily acknowledge the wide gap between majority and minority families' experiences (Rousseau, Machouf, 2005). Recent debate, in fact, emphasises that the awareness of "**moral complexity**" makes it possible to develop a sense of agency and the ability to choose between different actions and conflicting moral values. This can be guaranteed by divergence and autonomy in the dialogue between family and school (Apfel, Simon, 2000; Rouhana, Fiske, 1995).

Psychosocial studies of the last years show that in the current historical situation, in many Western countries, the sense of uncertainty and social threat perceived by majority groups is attributed to the presence of Muslim people perceived as a whole as potential terrorists (Aly & Green, 2010).

Because of the growing conviction that majority groups require protection from the social category identified as threatening, the need for security dominates public discourse. This process erodes the distinction between crime and what creates a perception of insecurity (Hörnqvist, 2004) and any element of non-compliance, by the minority group, is seen as a potential danger.

The negative image of self which the minority obtains from the majority (negative social reflection) has important implications for identity and mental health (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). Hart (2004) finds that, from the minority perspective, recent increase in anti-Muslim racist actions could be associated with increasing Islamization in communities which feel themselves threatened and react by affirming their identity.

The understanding of the terrorism impact on intergroup processes is strictly focused on the Social Identity Theory.

This makes it necessary to move the reflection from a group level (psychosocial) to an individual level (clinical): analyze the specific meaning of the migration experience and **migrant identity**, in order to evaluate how the current situation has an impact on self-representation and self-organization and on the consequent risks of radicalisation.

Contemporary studies in the philosophy, psychology, anthropology and sociology have defined the identity as a multiple, polyvalent and creative construct. This concept is well summarized in the **paradigm of métissage**: Laplantine and Nouss (1997, 2001) discussing the problems emerging from international migration, globalization and increasingly frequent inter-ethnic contacts, theorize mestizo thinking and mestizo identity. The hypothesis is that métissage is a plurality of a subjectivity whose autonomy is based on a series of heteronomies. Plurality and polyvalence therefore become a necessary existential condition.

Polyvalence characterizes even more specifically the migration experience between identity crises and creative processes (Park, 1992; Sayad, 1999; Anolli, 2004). In the transcultural perspective the métissage paradigm is used as a tool in analysis and clinical practice with migrants. Métissage becomes a personal and social challenge: integrating oneself into the world of here, supporting oneself in the world of origin of one's parents, leads to a dynamic combination of women and men, of thinking, of their becoming (Moro, Baubet, 2004). Migrants oscillate between two poles, that of the memory and that of the desire (to start or start again). From this derives the constant intertwinement between **filiation**, the verticality of familiar narrative identity, and **affiliation**, the horizontality of here and now.

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 can be complex and open up **spaces of vulnerability** (Moro, Baubet, 2004; Ferradji, Lesoeurs, 2013; Nathan, 2017). Migration can be described as an **event** involving **different levels of caesura**:

the first **caesura** occurs in the **filiation process** for both first and second generations. For the first generation, migration can be a moment of interruption and re-definition of biographical continuity. Second generations, on the other hand, experience difficulty in linking themselves to the family narrative identity (*floating filiation*, Nathan, 2017);

a second **caesura** can occur in the **affiliation process** when migrants confront a hostile social context which rejects, denies or weakens their memberships.

An overview of the literature on **radicalisation** seems to suggest that the risks of polarization lie precisely in those areas of vulnerability created by caesura processes.

Some studies find that identity crises are a key determinant able to explain radicalisation among Muslims in Europe. Findings from Social Identity Theory suggest that the negotiation and redefinition processes of these identities, in the European Muslim diaspora, may have risky outcomes in that the nature of community-level groups and networks may contribute to 'readiness' of the identity for radicalisation. (Al Raffie, 2013). This process appears to occur particularly in cases where first generation filiation is interrupted.

On the other hand, for the second generations, the experience of wandering or fluctuating in the difficult process of filiation can determine a loss of roots and a perception of being disconnected. For young children of migrants this determines a need to recognize themselves and be recognized for their peculiarity. One of the risks is precisely the attempt to re-appropriate and re-write their verticality, adhering to pseudo-identity models with extreme religious and cultural connotations (Nathan, 2017).
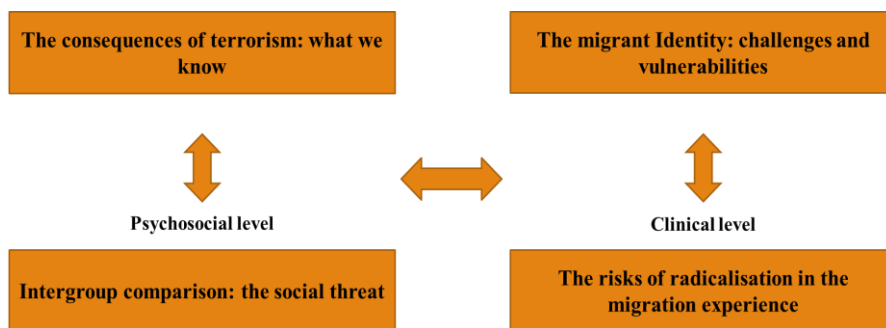
Research objectives

There are a few studies linking interpretation of terrorist events to an analysis of identity representations and emotional experiences of immigrants in the contexts of daily life and there appear to be no studies on families, which examine parents' and children's point of view simultaneously.

The present study, combining the psychosocial perspective and that one of transcultural psychology, aims to 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 whether 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 contexts and procedures for intervention.

Methodology

Participants

Ten North-African immigrant families from Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt, currently living in three different provinces of Northern Italy: Milano, Parma and Reggio Emilia. We interviewed one parent and one teen-age child from each family. The parents, seven women and two men, were 37 to 51 years old; the children, seven girls and three boys, were 12 to 18 years old.

Instrument

We used a semi-structured thematic interview, following 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

A confidential agreement was made with each individual so that they felt free to talk. 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 analysed according to the methodological procedures of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, 2008; Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009). The theoretical and methodological approach of **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis** (IPA) is based on both phenomenology (Giorgi, 1995) and symbolic interactionism (Denzin, 1995), two fields which suggest that human beings interpret and make sense of their world by creating their own life stories in a way that they can understand. Our analytic process involved identifying three main key elements:

a) *master themes*, which are the essential and somehow necessary nuclei. They concern by definition all the individuals in the same existential condition;

b) *salient events*, which constitute fundamental and particular conceptual elements deriving from the individual's experience;

c) delineating the *emerging meanings*, i.e. reconstructing meanings representative of each interlocutor's experiences and identifying recurrent patterns.

Results

Data Analysis identified four closely linked *master themes*. For each one, we identify the emerging meanings by tracing connections between salient events.
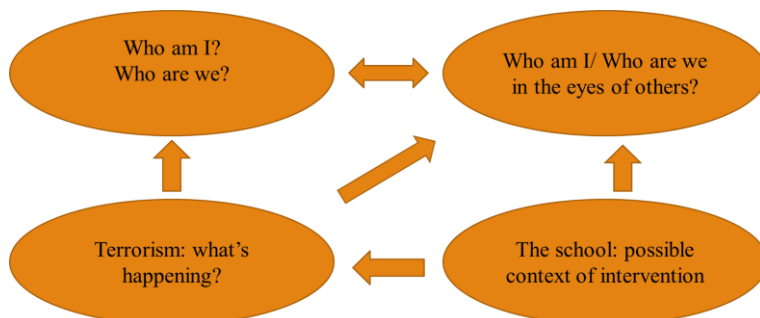
1. Who am I? Who are we?

Analysis of the interviews suggests that self-descriptions as individual or as member of a group are based on a complex, manifold and polyvalent set of attributes and values. This emerges from interviews with both parents and adolescents.

The self-representations **as individuals** show that there is no single way through which our interviewees experience métissage. Multiple ways of building métissage emerge from the self-narrative and each one is deeply rooted in the life of the individual. We can thus define *multiple ways of being multiple* (polyvalence, negotiation, supranational membership, national demand, complex management).

The same process occurs in the self-representations **as members of a group**:

families are represented as *nuclei with variable geometry*, which continually and constantly re-form at **cultural level** (verticality-horizontality, filiation-affiliation, morphogenesis-morphostasis) and at **relational level (**autonomy-connection, cohesion-adaptation);

in **social relations**, these families experience a *relational polyvalence*, where motivations, values and the quality of bonds and experiences are multiple and sometimes contradictory (similarity-complementarity, support-conflict);

their perception and description of **religious faith** appears to extend *métissage* to the *religious* level. Our respondents talk about free and voluntary choice, respect for other faiths, tendency to conflate more or less substantial practices, complex and contradictory representations and values. Their own representation of their being Muslim is particularly different from the stereotypical representation widespread in the Western world;

lastly, within a self-representation comprising multiple belongings, families emphasise their great need to *be connected with roots.* Although this is difficult in daily life, families maintain a link with their **world of origin** through shared family narratives.

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

The interviewees emphasize the need for *social recognition* of their plurality and polyvalence. Two levels of social recognition can be distinguished:

interpersonal level, where our interviewees report that Italians' representation of Arab/Muslim people depends on the individual and is influenced by several factors: level of contact and knowledge, sharing of experience, access to adequate information, perception of threat, influence of the contexts. This means that, on the interpersonal level, families *can experience recognition of their specificity/polyvalence*, alongside episodes of discrimination;

social and institutional level, where the representation of Arab/Muslim people, is negatively affected by: the current international situation, economic crisis, mass-media influence, construction of antisocial mentality. On the socio-institutional level, families therefore experience *lack of recognition and social stigma*. The social context may in fact be forcing them to take sides, to choose between dimensions which they instead perceive as indivisible and ingrained.

3. Terrorism: what is happening?

Families emphasise that the **strong overlap** between **ISIS**, the **Muslim faith** and **terrorist attacks** communicated by **public discourse**, especially in the mass-media extends responsibility for terrorism to an entire community. The media are perceived as responsible for instrumentalization, lack of reliability, and building of stereotypes. A perception of non-conformity is today focused on the Muslim community, which, because it shares a religious background with terrorists, is perceived and described as a potential source of danger. Because in representations widespread today there is a close overlap between Muslim and Arab, this view also affects the wider Arab community.

Interviewees perceive that they are assigned to a **social category** to which they attribute a **strong negative value**. They perceive that their faith and culture, which in different ways are part of their lives, are in this context *threatening elements which require justification and re-negotiation*.

This *incomplete and unsatisfactory definition* of themselves has several consequences:

expectations of the **Italian community's reactions**: interviewees perceive an increase in prejudice and in discrimination;

Arab-Muslim community's reactions: families mention *self-blame, shame, fear, social withdrawal*. The parents underline the *risks for the second and third generations* determined by the need to define themselves in a hostile social context;

within families: *difficulties* and *fear* in speaking about these topics. The parents underline the need to protect the children; the children describe parents without answers.

4. School: a possible context for intervention

School is described as a **contradictory context**:

on the one hand there are many **critical elements**: problems with teachers (on an educational and relational level), complex social contexts (prejudice, problematic behaviours, bullying), discrimination (by teachers and pupils);

on the other hand, both parents and teenagers underline **positive elements**: teenagers describe peer relationship as a *protective and supportive relational context*, where they experience a *low impact of memberships* and the mutual ability to recognize similarities and differences in social comparison; the parents attribute a *high value* to the school and describe a *strong participation* in school life.

These characteristics mean that the school is a potential context for complex social interventions. Indeed, talking about the **discussion about terrorism** at school, families underline that:

school has several important **tasks**: building critical and aware consciences, promoting contexts for dialogue and providing adequate information;

school today however provides **few interventions**, which are **not robust** and are left to the common sense and initiative of a few individual teachers. The interviewees also describe the possible **risks** involved in discussing these topics at school, including increased conflict and fear, unreliability of interlocutors and that such intervention may not be a function of school;

but at the same time, they define **what could and should be done**: using *school as a node of socialization*, activating *complex planning, involvement of families* and *use of professionals*.

Conclusions and proposals for intervention

Immigrant families define themselves through a complex, manifold and polyvalent set of attributes and values, which summarise their existential contexts.

Recent terrorist attacks, and the way in which they are reported 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 threating social label.

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This weakens the opportunities for social confrontation and determines the lack of recognition of métissage and of the specificity of migrants, at social and institutional level.

As a consequence, the negative impact on the Arab-Muslim community is forcing group members to redefine themselves according to public discourse, in order to form an adequate and satisfactory representation of themselves.

Identity negotiation therefore shifts from the level of experience and everyday life, where social confrontation is possible, to an ideological/institutional one.

This situation determines a caesura in the affiliation process, and, consequently, there is further level of caesura in the second and third generations filiation process: parents have difficulty in dialogue with their children and may be unable to form a vertical narrative identity.

These areas of vulnerability determine possible outcomes of polarization and, therefore, radicalisation (Al Raffie, 2013; Nathan, 2017): the re-definition and negotiation process determined by the current social situation imply the need to build again the vertical axis for both first and second generations, and this can lead to extreme and radical identity affirmation.

Participants identify school as the most effective context for social intervention, in order to lower risks brought by the current situation of hostility.

Our results suggest that it is necessary to move beyond discussion between school and family. To date these have been studied as two separate entities, as described in the literature (*moral complexity/moral clarity*, Rousseau, Machouf, 2005). Our findings reveal the need for more complex and systemic interventions involving school and family simultaneously. They suggest that certainly the supportive and non-judgmental peer context, in school, offers a space where it may be possible for young people to train moral complexity, but we have the opportunity to use school as an ideal basis for involving the whole community.

This indicates that there is need to:

access specific professional skills, such as those of psychologists, sociologists and pedagogists;

implement transversal projects involving society, not based on intercultural comparison, but that may promote training and education to recognize "*multiple ways of being multiple*" in oneself and therefore in others.

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