Exploration of the Relationship between Social Critical Consciousness and Pastoral Ministry in International Missionary Congregations: A Case Study of the Comboni Family in Kenya.

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is a product of my work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration. It has not been previously presented to any other institution. All sources have been appropriately cited and duly acknowledged in full.
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Rev. Prof Francesco Pierli, a great inspirer for many and my mentor in life and academic studies. I would not have dared to begin this journey without his vision and passion. Thank you!

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The preparation, research, and completion of this study has been a long and transformative personal journey. However, it is also the fruit of broad exposure to comments, opinions, suggestions, and corrections of many scholars whom I had the privilege to consult at different stages of the writing and who had the care and patience to give precious feedback. Besides the two initial supervisors, Rev. Prof. Francesco Pierli and Rev. Prof. Patrick Ryan, I want to thank especially Rev. Prof. Sahaya G. Selvam and Rev. Prof. Clement Majawa for the readiness to take up the role of supervising a work already initiated, and the constant availability in following the final stages of the writing process.

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ABSTRACT

The present research is a qualitative exploration of the relationship between social critical consciousness and pastoral ministry in international missionary congregations within Catholic Church. The research focused on the case study of two international missionary Institutes, the Comboni Missionaries and the Comboni Missionary Sisters, in Kenya. In the present study, critical consciousness is not limited to personal transformation but has a clear orientation towards social transformation. Hence, it is defined as social critical consciousness, which is analysed in the three dimensions of social identity, positionality, and intersectionality. A vast literature in various fields has been produced to show how essential it is for today to develop a social critical consciousness in order to engage the challenge of complexity, expressed through the realities of coloniality and multiculturalism. The same complexity exists in the Catholic Church, more and more global, and it is particularly experienced in international missionary congregations. However, there is neither reflection nor study of the topic in Church's environments and among pastoral practitioners, dangerously posing the basis for an ineffective pastoral action for social transformation. The present study aimed at introducing the concept of social critical consciousness in the missionary narrative and praxis. It investigated the pastoral practitioners' awareness of social critical consciousness through the exploration of their perception of the self, their pastoral action, their multicultural relationships, and their collaboration in the context of a multicultural community. A typological and thematic analysis of transcripts from twenty-nine personal interviews and three focus groups in different locations in Kenya was performed. Life and field experience of the participants was integrated with the vision emerging from archival documents of the two Institutes. Four main challenges emerged: the tendency of pastoral practitioners to describe themselves through one dominant charismatic identity, which leads to the prevailing of mission over personal identities; the de-politicisation of social identities and pastoral action; a disorientation as the common experience of the participants in multicultural contexts; an acritical acceptance of pluralism in ministry, which limits collaboration and enhances fragmentation. The study showed that there is an insufficient awareness of social critical consciousness among pastoral practitioners and proposed four recommendations for strategies for integrating social critical consciousness in pastoral ministry for social transformation: a social critical pastoral methodology, a social critical partnership, a social critical community, and a social critical training.

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ABBREVIATIONS OR ACRONYMS

CLM	Comboni Lay Missionaries
CMS	Comboni Missionary Sisters
CST	Catholic Social Tradition
FGDs	Focus Group(s) Discussion
MCCJ	Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus
PCM	Pastoral Cycle Methodology
SCC	Social Critical Consciousness
SCM	Comboni Secular Missionaries

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

The concepts used in the study are briefly defined and analysed in the context of pastoral praxis for social transformation.

Agency is "the ability of the individual to exercise some degree of control over social relations in which they find themselves" (Idahosa & Vincent, 2019, p. 3), which "in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree" (Sewell, 1992, p. 20). In particular, *African agency or subjectivity* indicates the way in which African political, economic, social, and cultural subjects are able to exercise power at both continental and global level. In this study, *agency, agent* is opposite to *subalternity, subaltern*.

Allyship "is a practice of unlearning and relearning, and is a life-long process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals or groups" (PeerNetBC, 2020). Recognizing the marginalized others as the full subjects of the action for social transformation, allyship states that any partnerships is in support of their work.

Anti-oppressive practice is any action inspired by and based on the ethics of social justice and dignity of the other, which addresses multilayered oppression at the micro and macro level. (Hogewoning, 2012; Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). In a Christian perspective, it follows the logic and practice of Jesus Christ, who became like the underprivileged so that all may become aware of their inalienable relation with God.

Church refers to the Catholic Church, to which the Institutes of the Comboni Family belong. It indicates both the structural/hierarchical level and the community/people dimension.

Coloniality is the creation and reproduction of asymmetrical power relations, rooted in colonialism but extended beyond it up to these days. It affects the dimensions of power, knowledge, and mind.

Comboni Family is the collective name to indicate the four group (religious congregations and associations) living according to the charism of Daniel Comboni: the Comboni Missionaries (MCCJ), the Comboni Missionary Sisters (CMS), the Comboni Secular Missionaries (SCM), and the Comboni Lay Missionaries (CLM). Daniel Comboni, an Italian missionary in Central Africa in XIX century, directly founded the first two groups in 1867 and 1872 respectively.

Critical consciousness is "the process of continuously reflecting upon and examining how our biases, assumptions, and cultural worldviews affect the ways we perceive difference and power dynamics at a personal level" (Pitner & Sakamoto, 2005, p. 685). The process of critical reflection

"is also action" and assures that "action will constitute an authentic praxis" (Freire, 2000, pp. 128, 66).

Interculturality is the recognition of cultural pluralism not as a problem but as a positive challenge towards cultural interaction and positive coexistence. The study uses the definition of *critical interculturality* to underline the necessity to link the concept to the process of unmasking social structures of domination and inequality.

Intersectionality refers to the fact that "socially constructed categories of oppression and privilege, such as race, class, gender, and age, simultaneously interact to create unique life experiences" (Murphy et al., 2009, p. 7). As people exist at the intersection of multiple aspects of identity, so oppressive institutions are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another (Crenshaw, 1989; Elliott, 2015).

Kenya in the title and, in general, in the research, is intended to be limited to the geographical locations where the communities of the Comboni Family are operating: Kacheliba and Amakuriat (West Pokot County), Marsabit (Marsabit County), Nakwamewki and Lokichar (Turkana County), and Nairobi.

Multiculturalism, in its descriptive definition, is the simple recognition of the coexistence of multiple cultural behaviours, preferences, and values. In its political and ideological connotation, it refers to the various politics of tolerance, integration, and management of differences (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). The study speaks also of *critical multiculturalism* as the attempt to go beyond mere acknowledgment of diversity and engage "the multiple and complex power relations of difference and the mechanisms of oppression that operate in society" (Sloan et al., 2018, p. 2).

Oppression. This can be exercised by social, political, and economic structures, or be "the result of ordinary people's unconscious thoughts and feelings" (Mattsson, 2014, p. 9). It includes the division of people into dominant and inferior groups; the process of devaluation and disempowerment of those considered and kept inferior; their exclusion from the resources available to the dominant group (Dominelli, 2002). Oppression is the consequence of "often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions, media, cultural stereotypes, and structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms– in short, the normal processes of everyday life" (I. M. Young, 2011, p. 41). The concept is widely present in the Bible and in the Catholic Social Tradition. Elimination of oppression is a constitutive dimension of the Church's social action in achieving a more just and equal society.

Pastoral ministry is a collective term describing the activities of service exercised either for the direct benefit of the faith community (Church-oriented ministries) or for the development and transformation of society at large (society-oriented ministries).

Pastoral practitioners (or *pastoral agents*) are people who, by fact of their faith and belonging to a faith community, are engaged in the Church's mission of evangelisation through the exercise of diverse pastoral ministries for social transformation and through the enhancement of human and non-human life. The Holy Spirit remains the main agent in the mission of the Church.

Positionality is the awareness of one's social location in time and space and one's worldview which, albeit unconsciously, influence the type and modes of response to social challenges (Sánchez, 2010; Takacs, 2003). Positionality is determined "by where one stands in relation to 'the other'" (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 411).

Praxis is the combination of reflection and action in order to transform the world (Freire, 2000), the connection between a reflected-upon action and acted-upon reflection (Bevans, 1997; Haight, 1994; Macallan & Hendriks, 2012), a theory-informed action and reflection (Clark-Taylor, 2017).

Privilege indicates an advantage or entitlement granted to certain people because they belong to a particular social group. In a context of coloniality, there are, among others, privileges linked to race (white privilege), class (economic privilege), sex (male privilege), gender (heterosexual privilege), and religious (Christian privilege). Privileges are usually invisible to those who have them.

Social analysis is the scientific exploration of historical and structural relationships in a given social situation to obtain its most complete possible picture (Holland & Henriot, 1980). It is a presupposition of any pastoral action for social transformation and a proof of its seriousness (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1984, part VII, no. 3).

Social critical consciousness is the awareness of pastoral practitioners in understanding their social identity and positionality, the intersectionality of oppressions in multicultural contexts, and the persisting effects of coloniality in today's reality. It has a twofold aim: to challenge the power dynamics in the pastoral practitioner–beneficiary relation (personal level) and to know how social structures affect the practice of social transformation (structural level) (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). In the research, social critical consciousness is explored through the concepts of social identity, positionality, and intersectionality.

Social identity implies the idea that "a person's identity is shaped by his or her membership in a specific group" (Pitner & Sakamoto, 2005, p. 686) and by historical, cultural, social factors. Multiple social identities affect the way pastoral practitioners approach, know, and understand the reality around them and how they acknowledge diversity, difference, and power structures (Pitner & Sakamoto, 2005).

Social theology is the analysis and study of social issues from a faith perspective, "an effort to understand more broadly and deeply the analyzed experience in the light of living faith, scripture, church social teaching, and the resources of tradition" (Holland & Henriot, 1980, p. 9).

Social transformation is the process through which both social reality and people's and collective consciousness grow towards human flourishing or enhancement of quality life (Parise, 2009; Pierli & Selvam, 2017). It implies and requires a transformation of personal perspective and worldview based on new and more inclusive assumptions (Gabriel, 2008).

Social transformative action (or *pastoral ministry* or *pastoral praxis for social transformation*) indicates specifically the process of social transformation as carried out by the Church. It is the Church's transformative presence at all levels and of all dimensions of society, toward human flourishing by contributing to establishing more just and equal human relationships and social structures.

Social work is an academic discipline and an action-oriented profession, which engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being, promoting social change, development, social unity, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Its constitutive principles are social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities. (International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2014). Through social work, both social conditions and practitioners are transformed in the pursuit of a more just world (Abram & Cruce, 2007).

Subaltern has multiple, although connected meanings. Following Gramsci, it indicates the unrepresented group of people in society, subjected to the hegemony of the ruling class. In postcolonial studies, subalterns are "the wretched of the earth" (Fanon, 1963), the victims of the hegemonic colonizers, without voice (Spivak, 1988) nor representativeness, primarily because of gender and ethnic discrimination. In this research, the term refers to the people who are dispossessed of their agency by asymmetrical power relations (R. Young, 2001), and it maintains a robust theological connotation.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The chapter presents the problem of the research, which is the Social Critical Consciousness of the pastoral practitioners in social transformation of international missionary congregations. It opens with a personal experience of insertion of the researcher and the consequent reflections, which help to illustrate the problem. The pervasiveness of coloniality, the urgency of recovering African agency, and the role of the Church in this context, are all significant aspects for the problem analysis.

1.1 Insertion / Personal Experience

This section connects the problem addressed in the thesis with the personal experience of the researcher, thus showing that the problem is not just a theoretical question. However, it is also treated at a theoretical level. 'Insertion' includes an event, which the researcher considers particularly significant (an epiphany experience, a disorienting dilemma); clarification on the positionality of the researcher; and a personal reflection on that experience. For the researcher, it is the source of interest for the problem and the starting point for a deeper reflection and research.

1.1.1 A personal experience of subalternity and rebellion

John (not his real name) is a young man living in one of the many slums of Nairobi. The pseudonym is used to guarantee the privacy of the interlocutor. He grew up in the church environment, which used to offer multiple pastoral youth initiatives, and support human and spiritual formation. Once he became an adult, he distanced himself from formal, regular participation in church activities, although he remained faithful to the values he had learnt and accepted in his life. An intense sentiment of gratitude continued to characterise his relationship with the Christian community to the present day. Even now that he has grown up, reaching a personal autonomy in life and a mature social sensitivity, this situation has remained. I have known him for quite a while, and I consider him one of the most talented and intelligent youth.

One day, I received a short text message from John: "I need to talk to you". We met the following day, in the compound of the church. We sat, and he began his story. He told me of his collaboration with a group of friends and an Italian Catholic NGO that wished to "insert" itself in

the slums “to help the poor”. Their relationship grew, and so the projects: sponsorships for a significant group of primary school children, a capillary connection with their families, various animations of children and youth. It appears that everything was going fine, and that it was just another “success story” we Europeans love telling when we speak of Africa.

However, the sad eyes of my friend revealed that something was wrong. “I am confused,” he said, almost embarrassed, “I do not know what to do, what to think.” After another moment of hesitation, he confided the other side of the story. The NGO had the lead in the project, controlling every detail and dictating every policy, from budgets to reports. My friend had just awakened to the sad truth that he had been nothing more than a worker and that he and his friends had never actually been listened to, leave alone considered at the same level of the ‘executive committee’ in Italy.

These persons are the ones in the field, on the front line of the slum of which they know every corner. They collect stories, build stable relations with the children, and gain the trust of the families. Yet, all this is of little importance to the committee in Italy. What counts is to take pictures of the ‘sponsored kids’, build success stories, and show the success and goodness of the organisation. The apparent aim is to catch donors in Europe, those who still have some money to spend in Africa, ‘for the poor’.

It is as if John’s eyes suddenly opened, and he finally began to sense the perverse system behind all this. A system, which does not bring development, or even, transformation but rather dependency and confusion, as John is experiencing presently. “I am not in, I do not agree,” he whispered, almost afraid of this act of rebellion, “I cannot spoil the beautiful relationships with the children and their families for a couple of pictures. I cannot accept to work on a project with people who do not consider my opinion, for whom I am not at the same level, and who decide everything thousands of kilometres away. I do not want to be part of this game.” His dilemma is profound because, at stake, are the relationships with the families and the members of the NGO. For the little I know, it is uncommon for an African to give up a relationship. Nonetheless, what is at stake is also his dignity, the legitimate request for equality and mutuality that cannot be dismissed.

John and his friends want something different than stereotyped paternalism; they want to be protagonists of their lives and co-responsible for the lives of others, in their slum and country. They are ready to cooperate, but at par with others. I can only imagine how hard it was for him to speak to me, a white, Western missionary, in the way he spoke. I can only imagine the mixed

feelings of humiliation, anger, rebellion, confusion, and the deep desire to be true to himself and to his people. Perhaps, he can also only imagine the explosive mixture of emotions *in me*, caught in between two fires, also confused, angry, and humiliated by the unconscious behaviour of many Christian good wishers. For both of us, the encounter was an eye-opener. In me, it unleashed a deep reflection, which, supported by further readings, led me into a personal journey of transformation. Gradually, I became aware of my positionality, which is fundamental to understand my perspective and the conceptualisation of this research.

1.1.2 The researcher's positionality

The researcher is a white, European, Catholic priest, belonging to the international religious Institute of the Comboni Missionaries. He has been involved in pastoral ministry in Poland, from 1997 to 2008. He returned to Kenya in 2009 (after his theological studies from 1993 to 1997) and here he has alternated pastoral ministry in situations of marginality in Nairobi with a ministry of accompaniment and formation of future pastoral practitioners for his Institute. The two types of ministerial experiences gave him a particular privileged perspective: the possibility to connect the process of social transformation and empowerment of the civic and religious community with the life-long process of personal transformation of the individuals through mutual relations and the development of critical consciousness. The dialogue with John reveals the necessity of such a connection and confirms that "human transformative activity depends upon a transformed imagination" (Brueggemann, 2001, p. xx) and "the first step to any form of action is awareness" (Hobson, 2014). Pope Francis, in his programmatic Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, warns that "changing structures without generating new convictions and attitudes will only ensure that those same structures will become, sooner or later, corrupt, oppressive and ineffectual" (2013, no 189).

Experiential knowledge, however, shows that pastoral practitioners, including the researcher, know very little about critical consciousness, and they often fail in identifying their assumptions and biases. The lack of awareness is even more severe in multicultural contexts where many missionaries live today. Reflecting on the dialogue with John from the researcher's social position, some unsettling questions began to emerge: How can such unawareness be changed? How can the transformation of the social transformers be enhanced? How can the Church (all Churches in general, but in this research, specifically the Catholic Church) become a real agent of

transformation of both social structures and people's consciousness, if her pastoral practitioners' consciousness is not transformed and their positionality not made explicit?

1.1.3 A background reflection on the experiential event

The story narrated in 1.1.1 is meaningful for several reasons and thoroughly describes the situation that unfortunately is common in Africa. Many Christians, who consider themselves being good and with good intentions, through their social action for human development, keep, albeit unconsciously, 'their beneficiaries' in a subaltern position. At the same time, still many people, the supposedly 'beneficiaries' of the social action of the Church, are not capable yet, or are still afraid of reclaiming their full dignity for equal participation.

At least three aspects emerge which express three significant challenges in Africa today, for both Africans and expatriates, whether pastoral practitioners or NGO workers in the field of development and social transformation. The three aspects are the persistence and pervasiveness of coloniality, the urgency of reclaiming African agency, and the direct role of the Catholic Church.

The persistence and pervasiveness of coloniality is the first aspect. As the literature review will show, coloniality has been differentiated from colonialism and described as the creation and reproduction of asymmetrical power relations, the univocal representation of the 'other', and the annihilation of African agency through mind colonisation. In the opening story, coloniality appears through benevolent paternalism, exploitation of labour, forms of subtle racism, dehumanisation, and undervaluing of the other. While such a colonial approach has characterised much of the missionary endeavour in the past, the question is whether coloniality persists today, especially in international missionary congregations, where descendants of former colonisers and formerly colonised, share life and work. The concept of coloniality will be developed in the literature review in chapter two.

The second aspect is the urgency of reclaiming African agency, which Shaw defines as "the ways in which Africa's political, economic, social, and security actors can and do exert influence both on the continent and in global politics, as opposed to simply being passive targets or victims of others' actions" (2016, p. 109). African people in general, and young generations in particular, being easily exposed to a broader world through social media and friends, have become more and more aware of specific dynamics and relations, which keep them as subalterns, "passive targets or victims", instead of promoting their well-being. They are no longer available to remain in that position, merely representing the stereotype of 'a poor but smiling Africa', which is only meant to

appease the Western feeling of guilt and need to dominate even when 'helping'. The same reclamation of an active protagonism and responsibility is evident among members of international missionary congregations.

The third aspect directly concerns the Catholic Church, to which the research refers. The fact that John wanted to share his story and disorienting dilemma with me, a European and a Catholic priest, may reveal that there is still some credit of trust towards pastoral practitioners. Nevertheless, from the recent history of missions, it is undoubted that pastoral practitioners have been seen as part of the colonial power. What is the Church's responsibility in creating and maintaining coloniality in her theological reflection and pastoral action? Which role could she play in a long-awaited and long-overdue process of decoloniality? The conversation is about whether the Church opts to remain accomplice of the injustice through acritical action or to become a critical mediator in the process of liberation and empowerment. It is also about the role and influence that the organisation of the Church has on individual pastoral practitioners, and the gap, which exists between the theory of Church's institutions and the practice in the field. These aspects are further developed in the background of the problem.

1.2 Background to the Problem

The problem of this research is built on three interrelated aspects: (i) the pervasiveness of coloniality in society and the Church, (ii) the asymmetrical power relations, which affect the very praxis for social transformation, and (iii) the lack of critical consciousness among the pastoral practitioners operating in a growing complexity of human and social relations.

It is essential to underline the social, political, cultural, and religious context of this research, because the very idea and goals of social transformation may change significantly depending on one's standpoint. The location of social analysis is a determining factor in the outcome of social action. For example, in assessing modernity, those who have greatly benefitted from its discoveries and advancements will tend to propose it as the goal of development, expecting, therefore, that, 'under-developed' populations will eventually 'catch-up' with the 'most advanced' nations. On the contrary, former subalterns and the colonised, who have been the victims of "the dark side of modernity" (Alexander, 2013; Mignolo, 2011) and are struggling to be fully recognised in their subjectivity, will consider less a progressive development and more a structural, social and cultural transformation. Being located in postcolonial neo-colonial Africa, the research

situates itself in the second group, advocating for a personal and collective perspective transformation and a structural, social and cultural transformation.

The pervasiveness of coloniality is crucial in understanding the complexity of today's reality. It makes the social analysis more difficult precisely because asymmetrical power structures influence every aspect of reality, including social development and actions for social transformation. After gaining political independence, the former colonies continued to be dominated by, what Abdi (2016, p. 223) describes as, "new and unprecedented forms of globalizations that were driven, *sans exception*, by Europe's political, economic, educational and cultural interests and intentions". Some educational and cultural domination is particularly worrying because it is less acknowledged. The most subtle form of colonisation is the colonisation of the mind (Kaunda, 2015; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986) which becomes a deterrent to social transformation (Dugassa, 2011). Moreover, since Crenshaw (1989) introduced the concept of intersectionality, we know that oppression cannot be simplified without losing the complexity of its different dimensions and interconnections. Several layers of oppression intersect in a matrix of domination, producing injustice, which is experienced differently by subjects with different positionalities (Collins, 2000). The study shows that only a social critical consciousness (SCC), in its dimensions of social identity, positionality, and intersectionality, is able to detect this matrix of domination and engage the complexity of social structures and human multicultural relationships.

The second aspect of today's complexity is the growing multiculturalism, a reality both in society as a whole, and in the Church. It is not merely a matter of learning how to live together. There is the need to recognise the others in their subjectivity, especially those coming from groups once underprivileged and marginalised. The multicultural encounter is not any longer one direction (giver-receiver, donor-beneficiary, educated-ignorant), but it is now founded on a claim of equality and universal human dignity. Precisely, the empowerment of the former colonised and the difficulty of former colonisers in understanding the different layers of oppression make human relations particularly complex (Vallely, 2018).

Particular attention must be given to the Church as a catalyst of social transformation, an integral part of evangelisation. As the initial story shows, her role has been and probably still is ambivalent (Magesa, 2000; Mugambi, 1996, 1999; Okon, 2014). On the one hand, the Church has been an accomplice in religious colonisation, although often unconsciously. As evidence, scholars point at the Church's acritical social action for development, the production of knowledge in the

Church-sponsored educational system (Pawliková-Vilhanová, 2007; Simpson, 1999), and a unilateral representation of the other, using the same categories created by modernity (tribal, uncivilised, pagan, poor, underdeveloped) (Adichie, 2009; Swanson, 2004). Tiénou (1991, p. 6) even speaks of "the bulldozer ethos", that is the tendency "to level other traditions and erect buildings in international style". Magesa rightly points out that, at least at its beginnings, Church's theological and pastoral style was persuaded to follow the conclusions reached in the West; hence, "the paradigms of Christian mission in Africa were paradigms of negation" (Magesa, 2000, p. 159).

On the other hand, however, the Church is meant to be a multicultural community of equals where former colonisers and former colonised live, share and praise together. The preferential option of the poor, rooted in the Gospel and Church Tradition, has often located the Church on the side of the oppressed against the oppressors. A long list of witnesses and martyrs is a testimony of this. Whether locating herself on the side of the poor has succeeded in influencing the Church's organisational structures, and decision-making modalities is still an open debate.

International missionary congregations are in the front line concerning living in multicultural contexts, facing outcomes of pervasive coloniality, and engaging, in such contexts, in social transformation. Among the international missionary congregations, the research focused on the Comboni Family, comprised of four entities: the Comboni Missionaries (MCCJ), the Comboni Missionary Sisters (CMS), the Comboni Secular Missionaries (SCM), and the Lay Comboni Missionary (CLM). However, the data collection has considered the Comboni Missionaries and the Comboni Missionary Sisters. These being the two oldest, most numerous, and most representative institutes in the Comboni Family, the research speaks of Comboni Family even though it deals with only two of the four groups.

It is in facing the two aspects of today's complexity – coloniality and multiculturalism – that the Church's methodology for social transformation appears inadequate. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), commonly known as Vatican II, brought a new understanding of the role and praxis of the Church in the contemporary world. A more considerable attention to social sciences and scientific research has shed a new meaning in reading the signs of the time. Since then, pastoral practitioners in different contexts have begun to adopt the PCM, based on the four steps of insertion, social analysis, theological reflection, and action (Hope & Timmel, 1984a, 1984b, 1984c, 1999, 2014; Macallan & Hendriks, 2012; Pierli, 2009). The research contends that today's complexity of relations and the growing awareness of the intersection of different layers of structures of

oppression, including the personal level (unacknowledged privileges) and the Church's organisational level (unquestioned position of power in social action) make necessary and urgent a revision of this valuable methodology. How SCC can give its contribution to the PCM is one of the points of reflection of this study.

Lastly, the research values the contribution of social sciences to the understanding of the problem, primarily through the literature and researches on the growing relevance of critical consciousness in social work. It is from these fields that today we know how our epistemology affects our action, and how, at different levels, we are part of asymmetrical power structures. Developing a critical consciousness is essential for anti-oppressive social work, and the first step to address "the challenge of responding to the complexities of culture, difference, and otherness" (Pitner & Sakamoto, 2005, p. 684).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Literature and researches on coloniality and anti-oppressive social work have amply demonstrated the link between social workers' SCC and anti-oppressive social work. Greater awareness on this link would also be necessary among individual pastoral practitioners and international missionary communities committed in transformative social action, in both the Church in general, and in the Comboni Family (MCCJ, CMS, CLM, and LCM) in particular.

However, there is no known study (to the knowledge of the researcher) on the topic in theological and missionary context. Despite the Comboni Family's theoretical vision statements on cross-culture and interculturality (Comboni Missionaries, 1999b, 2018) and the long Catholic social tradition, pastoral practitioners' SCC has neither been addressed with sufficient attention in the Church's environment nor in the Comboni Family. There are no known studies considering the relationship between identity, positionality, and intersectionality of pastoral practitioners in the multicultural missionary communities with social transformation. The pastoral practitioners' cultural background, assumptions, biases, and experiential knowledge are left unspoken, unvalued, and unchallenged in the process of determining social action. Hence, the Comboni Family's social transformative action risks remaining de-cultured, unaware of the existence of social identities, and prevalently focused on the action itself. If this is the case, pastoral, social action remains more a humanitarian 'doing good' through uncomplicated solutions of local development, than a structural transformation critically addressing multiple levels of oppression. All this would make

the pastoral ministry of the Comboni Family not transformative. Therefore, it becomes paramount to introduce the concepts of social identity, positionality, and intersectionality in the reflection of missionary pastoral practitioners, exploring their perception of these realities in their experience and missionary work. Subsequently, the following are the objectives of the present study.

1.4 Objectives of the Research

The research had the aim of exploring the Social Critical Consciousness of pastoral practitioners in the Catholic Church, and its relationship with their pastoral ministry for social transformation. Pastoral practitioners were considered as both individuals and members of their respective multicultural communities. Establishing a connection between SCC and pastoral ministry has enabled the integration of SCC and PCM, as one of the most known and used pastoral methodology in the Catholic Church. The theological reflection has contributed to identify perspectives that are not considered in the reviewed literature, which is rooted in humanistic and social sciences. Finally, this process has led to recommendations for the training of international pastoral practitioners to live and work in multicultural environments, becoming aware of their social identities and positionality.

The specific objectives focused on both individual (the first two) and community (the last two) were:

1. To explore if and how the dimensions of social critical consciousness (social identities, positionality, intersectionality) are perceived by the individual pastoral practitioners among the Comboni Missionaries and the Comboni Missionary Sisters, from their personal history, and formation;
2. To explore if and how the dimensions of social critical consciousness (social identities, positionality, intersectionality) are perceived by the individual pastoral practitioners among the Comboni Missionaries and the Comboni Missionary Sisters, in their social transformative action;
3. To explore if and how the dimensions of social critical consciousness (social identities, positionality, intersectionality) are perceived by the individual pastoral practitioners among the Comboni Missionaries and the Comboni Missionary Sisters, in their interpersonal relationships as members of a concrete multicultural Comboni community;

4. To explore if and how the dimensions of social critical consciousness (social identities, positionality, intersectionality) are perceived by the individual pastoral practitioners among the Comboni Missionaries and the Comboni Missionary Sisters, in their collaborations in social transformative action, as members of a concrete multicultural Comboni community.

All the four objectives concern the pastoral practitioner's perception of the dimensions of social critical consciousness in reference to a particular aspect: identity (self-definition) in the first objective, social transformative action or pastoral ministry in the second, multicultural relationships in the third, and collaboration or teamwork in the fourth objective.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions for the pastoral practitioners of MCCJ and CMS in Kenya purposefully selected are:

1. What is the pastoral practitioners' awareness of their social critical consciousness (social identities, positionality, intersectionality) in their personal history and formation?
2. What is the pastoral practitioners' awareness of their social critical consciousness (social identities, positionality, intersectionality) in their social transformative action?
3. What is the individual pastoral practitioners' perception of the influence of social critical consciousness (social identities, positionality, intersectionality) on their interpersonal relationships in a multicultural Comboni community?
4. What is the individual pastoral practitioners' perception of social critical consciousness (social identities, positionality, intersectionality) in the collaboration in social transformative action within a multicultural Comboni community?

1.6 The Significance of the Study

The research contributes to filling the knowledge gap in the Church environment on SCC among pastoral practitioners in international missionary congregations, who will be the first beneficiaries. In particular, the research also contributes to the effectiveness of Comboni multicultural communities engaged in praxis for social transformation. It helps in conceptualising the dynamics of relationships of the pastoral practitioners in their praxis for social transformation.

The analysis and interpretation of the collected data bring light to personal experiences of pastoral practitioners in the Comboni community regarding multicultural relationships, communication, social identities, and the level of awareness of the complexity of today's reality. Therefore, the study can open the way to strategies of training for pastoral ministry in international missionary communities. Above all, the new awareness of one's positionality better equips pastoral practitioners to engage in multicultural, complex social and religious contexts.

The research also contributes to the pastoral theological reflection on decolonial mission and decolonial and intersectional theology (Kaunda, 2015, 2016; Kaunda & Hewitt, 2015; G. J.-S. Kim & Shaw, 2018), reverse mission (Abram & Cruce, 2007) and vulnerable mission (Harries, 2015; Nussbaum, 2018), towards a genuine mutuality among pastoral practitioners and between pastoral practitioners and participants in social action (Bosch, 1978).

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

The research considered only two of the four entities of the Comboni Family, specifically MCCJ and CMS in Kenya. As indicated in the operational definitions, Kenya does not claim to cover the entire geographical and cultural area of the Country. It is limited to the four areas where MCCJ and CMS operates: Turkana County (Nakwamekwi and Lokichar), West Pokot County (Kacheliba and Amakuriat), Marsabit County (Marsabit), and Nairobi County (Nairobi).

Being a case study qualitative research, it describes and analyses the bounded system of the Comboni Family, intending to reveal features transferrable to other similar missionary congregations. Also, the research selected participants in interviews and focus group discussion among those pastoral practitioners who are more directly involved in pastoral action.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the background of the research problem and the necessity of widening pastoral practitioners' awareness of their social identity and positionality in both the context of a multicultural religious communities and the pastoral praxis for social transformation. The pervasiveness of coloniality, on the side and the growing complexity of multicultural relations on the other, linked to the rise of African subjectivity, make necessary and not postponable the development of SCC among pastoral practitioners. The research focuses in particular on the pastoral practitioners within two groups of the Comboni Family, the Comboni Missionaries and

the Comboni Missionary Sisters. The next chapter attempts to analyse some fundamental concepts in social sciences, following a critical and decolonial paradigm, which will help in the process of reconceptualising the praxis for social transformation.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The chapter analyses the literature on the various elements of the research problem: The role and praxis of the Church in social transformation, with particular reference to the PCM; the growing complexity of today's world, primarily referring to the persistence and pervasiveness of coloniality on one side, and the growing multiculturalism on the other side, which also presents the challenge of interculturality; the decolonial turn as a necessity to understand reality better and act more efficaciously to transform it; lastly, the critical consciousness theory, transformative learning, and their social relevance for a capable praxis for social transformation. The chapter uses the concept of social transformation as the process that must address both the social reality and peoples' consciousness through the reconstruction of a personal perspective on the individual and in the world. The chapter lays the foundations for a possible integration of PCM and SCC to their mutual enrichment. Such integration is the outcome of data analysis and interpretation.

2.1 The Social Mission of the Church

The corpus of magisterial documents of the Catholic Church on social issues has been identified as the Catholic Social Teaching of the Church, or Catholic Social Doctrine, or even Catholic Social Thought. In the past, commentators have opposed this corpus on different grounds. Some have objected to the term 'social doctrine' because it recalls a body of unchanging teaching, which is particularly inappropriate in a complex and fast-changing world. Moreover, it is unjust besides being ineffective to impose Western categories, which are used in the social magisterium of the Church, on very diverse local situations (Hobgood, 1991; Williams & Houck, 1994). Dorr (2005) discards both 'social teaching' and 'social doctrine' because they might imply the belief that the Church has a body of principles for a 'third way' model of society between capitalism and socialism. Verstraeten speaks of "a complex living tradition of practice and thought, a continuing learning process at the point of intersection of gospel and life" (2011, p. 314), something much more comprehensive than papal teaching. Finally, other scholars have used the definition of 'social mission of the Church', a broader concept, which includes much more than merely the official social teaching by the hierarchy (Haight, 1988; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1982, 1994).

The present chapter uses this last definition, the social mission of the Church, to underline the fact that Church's mission of evangelization cannot and should not be delinked from its specific address of social issues in today's reality. The definition also serves to keep together Church's theology and praxis in the society, through Christian individual and communities.

The presence of the Church in society has ranged from models of almost total separation and creation of alternative societies to others of deep insertion, social action, and holistic liberation. The alternation was due to the Church's size and strength at a given time of history, and her theological sensitivity to the social dimension of the Gospel, always struggling to strike a balance between the preservation of self-identity and the call of solidarity with the oppressed (Maggay, 1996).

In the long history of different modalities of the Church's presence in society, Vatican II offered an extraordinary contribution. It introduced a more inductive methodology, based on attentiveness to history through the discernment of the signs of the time. It also fostered a new dialogue between the Church and the world, as wished by John XXIII at the opening of the Council (Faggioli, 2012, 2015; Gaillardetz & Clifford, 2012; Gaillardetz & Hahnenberg, 2015; Magesa, 2016; Prusak, 2004; Rahner, 1981b, 1981a; Thompson, 2010). The relationship between the Church and the world changed radically to mutual interaction and dialogue in which the Church listens to and learns from the society, maintaining, at the same time, a critical stance (Thompson, 2010; Wilde, 2007). Since the encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris* (John XXIII, 1963), the theology of the signs of the times expresses the willingness of the Church to identify and engage the challenges that any historical epoch presents. The Church strives not only to find the right response but also to reflect on the ecclesiological issues that these challenges represent (Mannion, 2007; McEvoy, 2006; Second Vatican Council, 1965b).

In the ecclesio-theological debate following Vatican II and facing growing challenges in addressing political, economic and social problems, the Church developed a greater awareness of the systemic dimensions of those problems (Cadorette, 2009; Faggioli, 2013) and the conviction that pastoral praxis for transformation precedes and informs reflection (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1994). There has been a tremendous growth in the Church's awareness that her social mission is not ancillary to the religious mission of evangelisation. In 1971, the Synod of Bishops, reflecting on the topic 'Justice in the world', stated that,

> Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation" (1971, no. 6).

Later, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI (1975, no. 18) confirmed,

> The Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs.

More recently, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis (2013, no. 176) warned that if the social dimension of evangelisation "is not properly brought out, there is a constant risk of distorting the authentic and integral meaning of the mission of evangelisation".

As far as the Church in Africa is concerned, Magesa writes that "being of Western origin in the form it came to Africa, and being dominant and vocal here, the Christian church's work in Africa has from the beginning been characterized by European-American social, economic and political ideologies" (2000, p. 175). However, there has been a growing perception in the African Church of her role in the processes of modernization, democratization, and social reconstruction (Benedict XVI, 2011; Ilo, 2013, 2014; John Paul II, 1995; Mugambi, 1999; Villumstad, 2000), although probably a full consciousness of the implications of these terms in today's context of coloniality may be lacking. Overall, a serious reflection on the legacies of colonialism in the Church's practices and theological narrative is still missing. If the Church wishes to be an agent of structural and cultural change and be part of the solution of today's problems through social transformation, it needs first "to develop a self-critical attitude that helps us reflect on how we have come to be (and still are) part of the problem" (Rieger, 2004, p. 221). As the South African scholar, Maluleke puts it,

> It was Christian theology and Christian texts that formed both the backdrop and the ideological framework for the colonial project […] We are not merely talking about a historical phase or epoch once here and now gone. We are speaking of a continuing reality deeply rooted in the practices of the churches of the colony and the postcolony (2007, p. 513).

Nevertheless, the growing awareness of the Church concerning her role in history and society, linked with the continuous theological reflection rooted in the Bible and the Tradition, helped to develop the pastoral cycle methodology, which is illustrated and explained in the next section.

2.1.1 The Pastoral Cycle Methodology

The Pastoral Cycle is a pastoral methodology, which addresses social and ecclesial issues by combining social analysis and theological reflection. It is rooted in the conviction that social sciences and faith tradition must cooperate for a better and more in-depth understanding of the complexity of reality and for a discernment of God's presence in a contextual experience. The reference to the Word of God and other sources from the Church's Tradition are complemented with the pastoral practitioners' experience and sources from social sciences. The mutual aid of ecclesial and secular references is particularly relevant because one of the critiques to the magisterial social thought is its insularity in sources, making it "a fully formed, entirely self-referential body of truth that can speak to, but not learn from, the non-Catholic world" (Sullins, 2009, p. 24).

This methodology is rooted in the hermeneutic circle, the idea that a text as a whole and its parts are strictly interconnected and essential for the understanding of the text. The idea was progressively developed by Schleiermacher (1768-1834), Dilthey (1833-1911), Heidegger (1889-1976), and Gadamer (1900-2002). Later, Habermas' critique of ideologies will have a decisive impact on the development of the political-historical hermeneutics, especially with Moltmann and Metz (Mannucci, 1983). Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* (1965b) and other social documents of the Church like John Paul II's *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), *Laborem Exercens* (1981), and *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* (1967), *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971), and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), and the Synod of Bishops *Justice in the World* (1971) have deepened the dimensions of history, salvation, and liberation of the faith and praxis of the Church.

The reflection on history in contextual theology and liberation theology, together with the development of the social magisterium were gradually organised into a pastoral methodology: the Pastoral Circle first, and then the Pastoral Cycle. It has its remote origins in the 'see-judge-act' method of Joseph L. Cardijn's Young Christian Workers which was later accepted by Pope John XXIII in his encyclical letter *Mater and Magistra* (1961) and adopted in liberation theology

(Segundo, 1976). A significant systematisation and, later, revision of the methodology was developed by Peter Henriot (Holland & Henriot, 1980; Wijsen et al., 2005), under the influence of other significant contributors (Freire, 2000; Gutiérrez, 1988; Synod of Bishops, 1971), but prevalently in an African context. The three-step process 'see-judge-act' represents the first effort of an inductive approach to reality and to the challenges faced by the Christian community. The method connects experiential knowledge on a given situation, its analysis and reflection through the contribution of both social sciences and theology, which leads then to a plan of action. It is a clear attempt to systematise the pastoral approach and to universalise it, by exporting the method to different realities.

The PCM has developed over the years in both terminology and content. The name itself changed from 'circle', inspired by Freire's circle of praxis and Segundo's methodological application in theology of Gadamer's hermeneutic circle, to 'cycle' which stresses the openness of the process (Wijsen et al., 2005). However, Froehle and Orobator (2017) maintain that the word "circle" is particularly meaningful in an African context as it recalls the decision-making process in African villages.

The circle begins with the praxis of committed Christians and their critical reflection on the dominant ideologies and power structures, which shape the world. In biblical studies, it means, "our life situation will necessarily determine the questions we bring to the text, and hence strongly influence what it says and means to us" (C. Myers, 1988, p. 5).

Traditionally, the PCM is a four-step process of insertion, social analysis, theological reflection, and action (Holland & Henriot, 1980). Cardijn's second step of judging the situation is now divided in social analysis and theological reflection, making explicit the necessity for the pastoral practitioners to have a double perspective when looking at the context of their situation. The PCM later developed even to more steps. For example, Ojore (2017), in his qualitative research on the practice of levirate among Luo widows, proposes an extension to six steps: Insertion, socio-cultural analysis, theological reflection, careful pastoral planning, appropriate pastoral action, and evaluation and celebration. It is a reformulation of the six steps in the methodology adopted by the Institute of Social Transformation in the Tangaza University College: Insertion, social analysis, theological reflection, planned action, celebration, and evaluation. As a matter of fact, there is not much difference in the two six-step models, nor do they differ significantly from the original four-step method. 'Celebration' underlines the importance of a

community (liturgical) recognition and appropriation of the process in the way it was developed and concluded. In its turn, 'evaluation' summarizes the results achieved or not achieved, and the improvements needed in the method. It also opens the way to an updated insertion (closing and reopening the cycle), since both the external situation and the experience of the pastoral practitioners have changed.

Parise (2009) underlines the pedagogical and transformational dimension of the PCM since it contributes to a change of consciousness which is constitutive of the process of social transformation. Each step focuses on different aspects of this process of personal and structural transformation: the perception and understanding of reality, the knowledge acquired through insertion and practice, and the process of transformation of one's worldview in general.

The different models proposed of the same pastoral method find their ultimate foundation in the first three-step process of 'see-judge-act'. Moreover, as it was already pointed out, the final steps of the cycle overlap with the first one: naturally, the moments of evaluation-celebration open up to a new insertion: reality has changed, and the pastoral practitioners' way of seeing has changed too. The research sought to address this ongoing transformation of the 'eyes' of the pastoral practitioners, who have been made more aware of their assumptions and perspectives, through which they see and judge the world, and act in it. This aspect has significant potential repercussions on the training of pastoral practitioners.

2.1.2 Formation of pastoral practitioners

To the question of whether today pastoral practitioners are adequately formed for individual and societal transformation, Protas (2009, pp. 85–86) answers 'no' without appeal. His reasons are hierarchisation of ministries, lack of insertion (that is, isolation of religious formation houses and training and academic centres) and no contextualisation of curriculums, which leads to uncritical and unchallenged learning. These factors make the pastoral practitioners' formation not contextualised and "neutral" towards existing social and political structures. It means that formation of pastoral practitioners does not consider the systemic ongoing violence and the "complicity in harm" (Andreotti, 2020, p. 3), that is the benefitting of a part of the world from the exploitation of another part of the world. Hence, it also makes their social action ineffective and not transformative. Pedagogical practices, the social location of seminaries, and theological curricula are the challenges also identified by Myers, who, however, adds a fourth, relevant one, "the pervasive ideology of professionalism" (C. Myers, 2001, p. 49). Incorporated within the

system of production of knowledge, ministerial training and theological studies are also suffering the effects of such an ideology, whose three main components are individualism, elitism, and psychology of entitlement. Thus, the goal of most seminaries and theological centres has become the professional credentialing for parish ministry and academic teaching.

> These forces take academic culture further from the life of the church that (at least ideally) promotes the communal over the private, the economics of gift and grace over that of debt and merit, and the cooperative and associative over the competitive. Nevertheless, seminaries (typified by the Association of Theological Schools) continue to move away from their traditional accountability to the church and toward the professionalist standards of the secular university. This means that the gulf between seminaries and local congregations, practical ministry or public advocacy is deepening dramatically (C. Myers, 2001, p. 50).

Other scholars too have addressed the educational challenge of training social activists and by extension, pastoral practitioners. There are two educational objectives for the learners: the capacity of knowing and understanding today's world, and the openness to recognise their assumptions, biases, and epistemologies as part of the system they want to change. Writing on the educational challenges of imagining the world differently, Andreotti (2016b, p. 105) identifies the "constitutive disavowal of implication in systemic harm [as] the greatest challenge of education about international development". Moreover, she adds that "if the educational gap is not one of individual ignorance, but of a socially sanctioned ignorance, educational approaches that simply impart the knowledge that is foreclosed will likely be ineffective and create resistance" (2016b, p. 105).

Quoting Brookfield (2012, p. 134) on the relation between critical theory and transformative learning, Gambrell also addresses the link existing between the personal, educational, transformative process and the systemic level:

> If transformation entails a fundamental reordering of the most deep-rooted and paradigmatic assumptions that we hold, a student must be able to "discern how the ethic of capitalism and the logic of bureaucratic rationality push people into ways of living that perpetuate economic, racial, and gender oppression" (Gambrell, 2016, p. 22).

Curry-Stevens introduces the concept of "pedagogy of the privileged" which is not neutral, but "counterhegemonic in its goals and works within a framework of praxis, whereby assisting in transformation is linked with becoming an ally in struggles for justice" (Curry-Stevens, 2007, p. 34).

The growing complexity of society and a deeper awareness of pastoral practitioners concerning the challenges of culture, difference, and otherness require adequate, interdisciplinary training, capable of combining multiculturalism and globalisation with locality and human relationships involved in any pastoral action. Pastoral training has to move from a neutral, de-politicised, uncomplicated, not-contextualised pedagogical strategy to a pluri-disciplinary, positioned, political, prophetic, and practical one. As a very first step, it has to acknowledge and understand the complexity of today's reality.

2.2 Coloniality and the Urgency of a "Decolonial Turn"

2.2.1 Coloniality

The socio-political and economic analysis of today's African continent is complex, and it has to be included in the broader post-cold-war international order (Magesa, 2000) and world-system analysis (Wallerstein, 2013). While there has been an undoubted increment in political power, at least from 1957 when the first African Country (Ghana) achieved independence, starting from the '80s, the overall economic and social condition of Africa has worsened (Abdi, 2016; Wallerstein, 2017) and the continent has become even more marginalised (Magesa, 2000). Still in 1986, twenty years and more after the conclusion of the process of independence in the continent (except for Mozambique), Mazrui was still of the opinion that "things are not working in Africa", which is still going through a war of cultures, "between indigenous Africa and the forces of Western civilizations" (Mazrui, 1986, pp. 11–12).

The control of economic power, today, goes well beyond the political power of the nation-states. That is why scholars from former colonies, both in the American and African continent, speak of coloniality, as Wallerstein (1991) advocates a new language to move beyond the apparent distinction of the three arenas of society, economy, and politics. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2016, p. ix) writes that "any discussion of the continent must take into account the depths from which Africa has emerged and the world forces – from slave trade, slavery and colonialism to debt slavery– against which it has to struggle".

Coloniality differs from colonialism as decoloniality is different from decolonisation (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). According to Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 243), coloniality "refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations". All normal relations and the usual way of thinking of people, from ordinary citizens to professionals, are still profoundly affected by the binaries modern-traditional/tribal, progress-backwardness, civilised-regressed, good-bad. These dichotomies lie at the very foundation of modernity and still inspire economic policies and academic curriculums. Myers (2011, p. 6) notes that "every non-Western professional has imbibed this worldview as an unspoken part of his or her professional training", in which "the very idea of what means to be civilized and progressive is conceptually codified in opposition to what it means intrinsically, to be an African" (Kaunda, 2015, p. 80).

Coloniality is seen as the fundamental problem in the modern and post-modern age (Kaunda, 2015; Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Mignolo, 2000, 2002; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, 2013b, 2015a, 2015b; Quijano, 2000, 2007). The concept extends beyond the "postcolony" (Mbembe, 2001) to wherever there are asymmetrical power relations, organised around the principle of race and creating subalternity, marginalisation, and epistemic domination. The asymmetry in international political, social, and cultural relations is rooted in the unsustainability of the present post-colonial neo-colonial system. It assures comforts, securities, and enjoyments to one part of the world (the Global North and the North of the Global South) through expropriation, extraction, exploitation, genocides, epistemicides, and ecocides of the other part of the world (the Global South) (Andreotti, 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012).

Three units of analysis of coloniality are usually identified: coloniality of power (Figueroa Helland & Lindgren, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a; Quijano, 2000), knowledge (Akena, 2012; Andreotti, 2011; Bhambra, 2014; Suárez-Krabbe, 2009), and being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Wynter, 2003), which divide the world into 'zones of being' and 'zones of nonbeing' (Fanon, 1986; Gordon, 2007) maintained by invisible "abyssal lines" (Santos, 2007).

Through asymmetrical power structures, coloniality first controls the economy, secondly authority, gender relations, and ultimately, knowledge and subjectivity, "the greatest and most subtle form of colonisation" (Kaunda, 2015, p. 78). It is what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) calls the colonisation of the mind, which Dugassa (2011) sees as a deterrent to social transformation. Steve

Biko (1978, p. 68) said that "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed". This phenomenon is not natural nor accidental, but it is socially and politically construed. It is the fruit of a definite matrix of power created by the process of colonisation/modernisation on the imposition of a racial/ethnic classification of the world population (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). It extends to "the technocratic paradigm" (Francis, 2015a, no. 106-114) with the fundamentalistic idea that "there is only one sole epistemic tradition from which to achieve Truth and Universality" (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 212). Abdi sustains that Africa was delinked from the rest of the world, not because of the incapacity of the African people, but on the contrary, due to "the direct outcome of a world system that is historico-ethnocentrically interlinked or delinked" and which directly favours the interests of the countries "whose powers are usually sustained by the *longue durée* inertia of the de-culturing process" (Abdi, 2016, p. 224). There is very little reflection on the involvement of the Church and the pastoral practitioners in this matrix of power; surely, there is not literature within the Comboni Family. The missionary reflection may address the matrix of power, but not the influence that such power structures have on the missionaries and their work for social transformation.

2.2.2 Decolonial turn and social transformation

Decoloniality is the dismantling of asymmetrical relations of power, the unmasking of the monopoly of production of knowledge, and the preservation of modes of knowing, being, and relating threatened by coloniality (Stein & Andreotti, 2016). It unveils "the traditions of resistance" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1994, p. 28) and resilience among the former subalterns, which "materialized at the very moment in which the slave trade, imperialism, and colonialism were being launched" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015b, p. 488). Thus, decoloniality means resistance, critical thinking, action towards cultural, social, economic, religious, and political freedom.

Decolonial turn is a concept developed by Puerto Rican scholar Maldonado-Torres, who summarizes it as the "shift away from modernization towards decoloniality" (Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p. 2). It groups different positions, whose common denominator is the critique of coloniality as the major problem in modern age and decoloniality of power, knoweldge and mind as the necessary step in the unfinished process of decolonization. All in all, the 'turn' demanded by the process of decoloniality, is broader and deeper than the process of decolonization, which, in its usual meaning, refers to the past realities of colonial regimes in Africa. First and foremost, it is an

epistemic turn because the physical elimination of colonialism (the physical colonial empire) is not enough without removing it epistemically (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020).

Pioneers like Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Albert Luthuli, Steve Biko, Thomas Sankara, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, Frantz Fanon, Paulo Freire, Lorenzo Milani, Wangari Maathai, John Mbiti, Jesse Mugambi, Joseph Malula, and Laurenti Magesa, just to quote few, have travelled the path of resistance and political, economic, cultural, and religious decolonisation. It is the political and existential journey toward "rehumanizing the world" (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p. 10), breaking racial and gender hierarchization and inaugurating "an-other thought, an-other logic, an-other thinking (…) that has the potential to liberate ex-colonised people's minds" (Mignolo, cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b, p. 7).

For social workers and pastoral practitioners, this journey marks the passage from being *for* the poor/subalterns to being *with* them to *listening to* them, and, finally, to *learn to read the world through their eyes* (Andreotti & de Souza, 2008) in what Kaunda (personal communication, June 2018) defines as decolonial dialogues. It also reveals the urgency for the liberation of both former colonised and former colonised (Freire, 2000) since individuals of post-industrialised societies "were acculturated to feel comfortable in relations of domination and subordination rather than equality and independence" (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 163).

If coloniality has built and maintained its power through a targeted production of knowledge for the annihilation of other's agency, then decoloniality must go through the deconstruction of such an imposed culture by reclaiming a plurality of epistemologies. Mind decolonisation is the condition to make social transformation, political progress, economic development, and academic renewal to happen (Kaunda, 2015). It gives back to the people the power of their stories, founded in the free expression of their functionalities and their capabilities (Kaunda, 2015; B. L. Myers, 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015b; Sen, 1999; Wilson & Bird, 2012). In the context of this research, decolonisation of mind includes the recovery of one's positionality, the "reconstruction of one's perspective and worldview based on a set of altered and more inclusive basic assumptions" (Gabriel, 2008, p. vi), the differentiation identities, worldviews and epistemologies among pastoral practitioners engaged towards the same goal of life enhancement. It is also the development of critical consciousness to understand that "without exception, every sphere of social action is profoundly influenced by structures of domination" (Weber, in Bundy-Fazioli et al., 2013, p. 100).

Differentiation and respect of identities, worldviews and epistemologies are key elements to understand the realities of multiculturalism and interculturality in the present study. The next section will develop further these dimensions in the perspective of decoloniality.

2.2.3 Critical multiculturalism, interculturality, and decoloniality

Multiculturalism has been previously presented as one of the indicators of the growing complexity of the world today. This section aims at defining the realities of multiculturalism and interculturality, and presenting their understanding in the context of decolonial theory and the critical theory, involving an analysis of the societal power structures that maintain injustice and inequality in today's world.

The descriptive meaning of multiculturalism is the simple recognition of the existence and cohabitation of multiple cultural behaviours, preferences, and values. In this meaning, multiculturalism is a synonym of pluralism (Mileto, 2018b). Structural-functional theories of social stratification explain the existence of difference and consequently, inequality in society as something natural and functional to the social order (Sloan et al., 2018).

There is also a meaning, which is more political and ideological, connected to the various politics of tolerance, integration, and management of differences (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Mileto (2018b) and Sloan et al. (2018) present an excursus on some of the different typologies of this multiculturalism as a political strategy of management of the relations among different ethnic groups.

Mileto speaks of hard multiculturalism, which is the recognition of each culture in its particularity, highlighting the value and the right of being different. The essentialist perspective, drawing from essentialism, affirms that, as there is no fundamental unity in the human race, so there is no possibility to establish the universality of individual human rights. On the contrary, existing differences among ethnic groups are relevant and must be upheld. This definition of multiculturalism neither foresees nor encourages any interaction among cultures; each is to maintain its purity.

Strong and soft multiculturalism are two other possible definitions. According to the first definition, diversities must be defended and safeguarded. As per the soft version however, there is a focus on the exotic aspects introduced by immigrants or other people travelling from their original cultural environment to a different one. The appreciation of foods, fashions, music, and art mainly remains at the external cultural manifestation without reaching the core of the culture,

which remains untranslatable and immeasurable. In both strong and soft multiculturalism, the core of cultural identity remains safeguarded, revealing a concept of culture as something fixed, monolithic, and self-sufficient. In the framework of the research in the understanding of the researcher, such an understanding of multiculturalism is not enough to facilitate the real encounter among diversities and the birth of something new.

The critical point made by Mileto is that these understandings of multiculturalism do not translate into concrete projects for genuine encounters, which can favour a mutual enrichment of the different cultures. Only the intercultural perspective in society goes precisely in this direction. On this note therefore, interculturality is the recognition of cultural pluralism, not as a problem, but as a positive challenge, capable of mobilising people and resources for cultural interaction, towards a real positive coexistence. The use of the prefix "inter-" already signals this openness towards interactions, exchange, and reciprocity. Not only does interculturality facilitate the encounter between human subjects, but also, most importantly, bears the intentional objective of opening the minds towards a new modality of knowing the complexity of reality (Mileto, 2018b).

A decolonial and critical perspective on multiculturalism and interculturality show how realities are somewhat more complex. The perspective inserts the two concepts in the postcolonial neo-colonial reality of the world today, dominated, as shown, by the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being. It is no surprise that coloniality has tried manipulating, partly succeeding, the realities of multiculturalism and interculturality, to maintain and reinforce the existing structures of power. Sloan et al., define critical multiculturalism as "a concept that allows us to move beyond the goal of learning about and appreciating diversity to engaging in an exploration of the multiple and complex power relations of difference and the mechanisms of oppression that operate in society" (2018, p. 2). These scholars summarize the different understandings of multiculturalism in a table that is reported here in its entirety:

Table 1

The Five Forms of Multiculturalism

Form of multiculturalism	Definition
Conservative	• Focuses on white Western patriarchal culture • Believes the Western system is the best and should be imposed on others • Believes in economic imperialism, or control of the economies of less powerful nations by more powerful nations

Form of multiculturalism	Definition
	• Place blame for marginalization on individuals or their community • Denies the existence of mechanisms of oppression • Ignores issues regarding access to power
Liberal	• Denies the fact that different groups have different levels of access to resources and opportunities • Subscribes to a philosophy of "colour blindness", which makes racial minorities invisible • Ignores class and gender differences • Views white male standards/values as the ideal • Believes that assimilation is the answer
Pluralist	• Focuses on difference, separate but equal • Only recognizes safe and controllable dimensions of difference • Shares shortcomings of liberal multiculturalism • Values the coexistence of people from different cultures • Believes that anyone can make it by working hard • Confuses psychological affirmation with political empowerment • Does not address socioeconomic status/structural inequality • Celebrates difference while ignoring powerlessness, violence, and poverty
Left-essentialist	• Focuses on differences as an essential piece of identity • Fails to acknowledge difference within identity groups • Believes that authenticity transcends history, social context, and power • Has a tendency to romanticize difference • Rejects biological basis for differences but downplays the impact of history • Believes only oppressed people can possess moral authority to speak about oppression • Assumes cultures are equal and there is no bias
Critical	• Focuses on emancipation • Views identity formation as socially constructed and constantly shifting • Believes that self-reflection promotes changes of perspective • Makes no pretense of neutrality • Works to expose processes that privilege the affluent and undermine the poor • Is dedicated to egalitarianism and elimination of human suffering • Sees class as central concern as it interacts with race, gender, and other axes of power

Form of multiculturalism	Definition
	• Is concerned with the contextualization of inequalities and how power has operated historically • Acknowledges that there are as many differences within cultural groups as there are between them • Acknowledges that power relations shape our consciousness • Acknowledges that ideological inscriptions become imprinted on our subjectivity • Recognizes that culture reproduces power relations and constructs experiences that preserve the privilege of the white supremacy, patriarchy, class elitism, and other oppressive forces • Seeks to understand the power of difference when conceptualized within the larger concerns of social justice

Source: Sloan et al., 2018, pp. 6-7

Two examples may help in showing how multiculturalism can be used to reinforce coloniality. As a first example, referring to the political and cultural panorama of Latin America, Walsh writes that multiculturalism was introduced in the late 80s "as a component part of the logic of neoliberalism and its project to pacify resistance, fragment movements, and bring the excluded into global capitalism's all-consuming framework and structure" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 57). The sad reality that, for Indigenous people, the political project of multiculturalism, through which they were "recognised", eventually turned out to be a mere reproduction of colonial relations, is what makes Zárate Pérez declare that as long as relations of dominion persist, interculturality is unfeasible (Zárate Pérez, 2014).

The second example is Canada, presented as a nation characterised by openness and commitment to values of diversity and multiculturalism. This position became a State policy in 1971. The formal implementation, first created and then reinforced the narrative of a "nation having made a successful transition from a white settler colony to a multiracial, multi-ethnic, liberal-democratic society" (Thobani, 2007, p. 144). In reality, the multicultural choice in Canada was partial, *de* facto preferring and privileging the two "founding nations", the British and the French while leaving behind in the background the multitude of the other cultural groups. These groups were recognised, but were given a secondary role in the formation, organisation and, most importantly, in the narrative of the Canadian nation. Therefore, it is evident that the mere recognition of the existence of multiculturalism does not lead to the challenging, let alone the

dismantling of asymmetrical structures of power. Living together in diversity does not mean living together in equality. It is an observation very relevant in the multicultural context of the Comboni Family.

In the African context, the question of multiculturalism cannot be separated from the historical processes leading to political independence from colonial powers and the birth of post-colonial African states. Cultural diversity was manipulated by colonial powers as a strategy to *divide et impera*; divide and rule. That is why the process of political decolonization, the creation of a sense of national identity around shared national symbols, and the integration of cultural diversities in the new post-colonial states was never an easy one (Ahluwalia, 2001; Bernhard et al., 2004; Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994; Chandra, 2013; Lúcia & Aixelà-Cabré, 2013). The real question, however, is to determine – if it is possible – to what extent ethnicity is a real appreciation of cultural identities beyond borders (Ashcroft et al., 2000). In response to this, Lúcia and Aixelà-Cabré conclude that,

> colonization defined processes of social transformation; how it was part of the shift in social and inter-group relations; how it imposed means of social control, systems of construction and of configuration of society based on the separation of groups, on the control and encouragement of population movements; and how it impacted on the analysis of the means and strategies of resistance of one group against another, either of *racial colonial election* with slavery and forced labor, or of *transferred colonial election*, as can be seen in the heirs of colonial power in independent countries (Lúcia & Aixelà-Cabré, 2013, p. 2).

The technique of de-politicising concepts, experiences, and actions is typical of coloniality to assimilate and control any possible alternative thinking. The strategy of de-politicization of the concepts of pluralism, multiculturalism, and interculturality caused their disconnection from any analysis of the social and historical context, and of the asymmetrical power structures dominating today's world, making evident the manipulation and assimilation of these concepts into the ideological and epistemological framework of coloniality.

The same can be said for the process of "othering", used to define and solidify the West by defining what is not Western. Used systematically by Spivak in 1985 (Spivak, 1985; see also Jensen, 2011), othering is defined as "the various ways in which colonial discourse produces its subjects" (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 156). One of the primary historical applications of the concept

is the way Europe constructed African identity and all colonised people in general. The very idea of "Africanisation" traces back to the colonial domination, which held the view that Africa was a continent without history (Brizuela-García, 2006, p. 87). In the opinion of European colonizers, as they "discovered" the African continent, so were they contributing to creating its history, knowledge, and identity through the process of civilisation. In one of his controversial statements, Mazrui affirms that "it took European colonialism to inform Africans that they were Africans" (1986, p. 99). He highlights three significant processes through which Europe "Africanised" Africa: the universalisation of the European way of seeing and understanding Africa through its cartography and mapmaking, the racist ideology, and through imperialism and colonisation.

All these aspects, on the one side, contributed towards creating a sense of identity among Black people, and, on the other, clearly separating 'being African' from 'being European'. The creation of the identity of the subaltern served to reinforce and maintain the identity of the colonizer (Mazrui, 1986, 2005). Ndlovu-Gatsheni presents part of the vast debate on African identity and the invention of Africa, showing how the discourse enriched to become a double invention: Africa was "invented" by colonization, especially through the establishment of systems of knowledge, and the process of resistance to colonial systems (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2014). He further states that "the decolonial perspective (…) is a response to imperial and colonial discourse on African subjectivity. It was imposed on Africans as an agenda by history of domination, racial discrimination, and exploitation" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2014, p. 12).

Beyond its historical background, othering is "a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities" (Powell & Menendian, 2016, p. 17). In the resurgence of nationalistic ideologies, the process of othering is still used to set clear boundaries, which can define who belongs to a society and who does not, following the paradigm 'us-them' (Jensen, 2011; Powell, 2017). As Nyoni (2013, p. 86) puts it, "the safe diversity paradigm of pluralistic multiculturalism enables the normalized Western *us* to understand the different, ethnic *them* through a lens of privilege and power devoid of critical analysis or self-reflection, further exploiting marginalized people and reinforcing disparities".

A common strategy to devoid power and privileges of critical analysis is the de-politicisation of concepts. In the case of multiculturalism and interculturality, de-politicisation delinks the potential value present in the concepts from experience with oppression caused by the

existing structures of power. Pluralistic multiculturalism "operates through whiteness by assuming a right and invisible norm through which difference is celebrated, as long as that difference doesn't stray too far from expected conformities" (Nyoni, 2013, p. 85). On this note, Nyoni highlights the consequences of such a vision not only at a political level but also in education, at least in the South African context from which he writes. The idea of a positive (psychological) empowerment of the individual, disconnected from the analysis of power relations, poverty, injustices, and economic imbalance, is considered the highway to emancipation and mutual acceptance (Nyoni, 2013).

Walsh (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 58) introduces the idea of "functional interculturality" to show that also, this concept was co-opted and used by the same colonial framework. No surprise, in this context, interculturality is not transformative nor critical, but "functional" to the system and a multicultural strategy of capitalism order to expand the market.

> Through individual inclusion, the facade of dialogue, and the discourse of citizenship, functional interculturality constitutes a more complex mode of domination that captures, co-opts, pacifies, demobilizes and divides movements, collectives, and leaders; impels individualism, complacency, and indifference; and shrouds the structural and increasingly compound convolution of capitalism and coloniality (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 58).

In opposition to this functional approach, Walsh defends a critical decolonizing view of interculturality, which is critical and proactive at the same time. In the framework of decolonial theory, it unmasks the structures of domination, oppression, and exclusion, which are a legacy of colonialism and the pillars of coloniality. At the same time, through the challenge to the system, it calls for a reconceptualization of structures of power, knowledge, and thought "in ways that put inequitable (but still conflictive) relation diverse cultural logics, practices, and ways of knowing, thinking, acting, being, and living" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 59).

The critical conclusion of Walsh is, in the decolonial perspective, what has already been pointed out by Mileto that interculturality is not a fixed, given reality. On the contrary, it is "a process and project in continuous insurgence, movement, and construction, a conscious action, radical activity, and praxis-based tool of affirmation, correlation, and transformation" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 59). In the perspective of the research, this is a crucial point because it opens the

way to (and it demands) new strategies to enhance interculturality in the multicultural relationships among pastoral practitioners.

2.3 Critical Consciousness for Social Transformation

Critical consciousness and the process of its formation are particularly relevant in the context of various disciplines. As possible examples among others, anti-oppressive social work (Bransford, 2011; Dominelli, 2002; Hogewoning, 2012; Mattsson, 2014; Rogers, 2012; Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005), international service-learning (Abram & Cruce, 2007; Brekke, 2017; Bruce, 2013; Gough, 2013; Kiely, 2002, 2004; Schensul & Berg, 2004), education (Cadenas, 2017; McDonough, 2015; Pollard, 2017) and minorities (Cadenas, 2017; Godfrey & Wolf, 2016; G. H. Smith, 2004; Turner-Essel, 2013) are all reflecting on the necessity for practitioners and activists to form a critical consciousness.

In the past years, the literature on critical consciousness has developed in two intersecting directions. The first has its origins in Freire's understanding of critical consciousness, as expressed in his seminal work *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (2000). It refers to how the oppressed learn 'the word' and 'the world', that is, how they learn to analyse their social condition and act to transform it critically. It is the process of "challenging domination" on a personal, interpersonal, organisational, and systemic level (Suárez et al., 2008). The second direction can be traced back to Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, which is

> the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7–8).

This perspective considers critical consciousness as "the process of continuously reflecting upon and examining how our biases, assumptions, and cultural worldviews affect the ways we perceive difference and power dynamics at a personal level" (Pitner & Sakamoto, 2005, p. 685). Hence, it is a critical stance not only on external societal structures, but also on internal biases and assumptions which affect the way we know and understand the world (Takacs, 2003).

It is fundamental in the context of this research to stress the importance of keeping the two directions of critical consciousness together, that is challenging both power structures and personal biases as well as assumptions. The assumption is that,

> the thinking subject does not exist in isolation but, rather, in relationship to others in the world. The development of critical consciousness involves a reflective awareness of the differences in power and privilege and the inequities that are embedded in social relationships… and the fostering of a reorientation of perspective towards a commitment to social justice. The development of this type of consciousness–a process that Freire calls 'conscientization'–is both cognitive and affective and leads to engaged discourse, collaborative problem-solving, and a 'rehumanization' of human relationships (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009, p. 783).

That is why, in this study, the word 'social' has been added to 'critical consciousness'. Social critical consciousness refers to the process of individuals and collectivities to explore and identify personal biases and assumptions and societal structures of asymmetrical power, intending to transform both towards more aware and inclusive participation in social and pastoral action.

Both Mezirow's transformative learning and Freire's process of conscientization have their roots in critical theory that looks at society with an intent of emancipation or transformation, be it at a personal or a societal level (Brookfield, 2005; Fleming, 2016).

Although Mezirow's transformative learning has been described as individualistic and culture-blind (Johnson-Bailey, 2012, p. 265), Gambrell (2016) shows that, in reality, it is not limited to personal transformation, but has an impact on society (Brookfield, 2002, 2005; Cranton, 1997; Taylor et al., 2012). More recently, Watts, Diemer and Voight (2011) have identified three components of critical consciousness that are particularly relevant in the framework of this research. They are (a) the critical reflection on the causes of asymmetrical power and socioeconomic inequities; (b) political efficacy, that is "the perceived ability to effect socio-political change" (p. 45); (c) the critical action, individual and collective, taken to transform society.

Critical reflection is crucial to acknowledge the complexity of today's society, still immersed, as we have seen, in the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being. A critical eye is also needed to recognise one's multiple identities and positionality towards others. Political efficacy is, in our understanding, almost a synonym of agency: recovering self-appreciation and courage to rebel and act to make the people more convinced of the real possibility to transform

successfully unequal socio-political structures. Lastly, critical action is the ultimate goal of the process of social transformation in general, and the PCM in particular. The three components of critical consciousness link very effectively critical reflection and social action, creating what the researcher has called social critical consciousness.

Pitner and Sakamoto (2005, p. 684) present a rich bibliography of scholars who agree that the only way for social workers to address the challenge of "the complexities of culture, difference, and otherness" is for them "to critically examine their cultural backgrounds". According to them, the strength of developing critical consciousness is that social workers are better equipped to identify their biases and assumptions, so avoiding the imposition of their values on their clients and avoiding any engagement in stereotypical thinking in multicultural practice (Pitner & Sakamoto, 2005). However, Cranton (1996) warns that critical consciousness, while remaining central to the process of transformative learning and praxis for social transformation, does not automatically lead to transformation, in the sense that, through their experience, social and pastoral practitioners can question realities without changing them. That is why all the three components previously mentioned are equally important: critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action.

In the process of critical reflection on oneself, pastoral practitioners are helped to understand that they find themselves at the intersection of multiple levels of oppression. Moreover, how pastoral practitioners position themselves, as individuals, in front of others, especially within the same multicultural Comboni community, will have a direct influence on how the whole community will be able to know and understand the surrounding reality and act on it. These two dynamics are illustrated using the two crucial concepts of intersectionality and positionality. They have emerged in social science in the last thirty years, but they are still unknown among Church's pastoral practitioners.

However, before developing these concepts, the whole idea of social identity has to be highlighted and clarified, especially in the religious, missionary context of this study. In the framework of this research, social identity, intersectionality, and positionality are deeply linked and believed to shed new light on the Church's pastoral action for social transformation. The awareness of belonging to one or more social groups and being at the intersections of systems of oppression, contribute to the growth of awareness of one's social location and positioning in front

of the other. Such an awareness of complexity, the researcher contends, profoundly shapes the action for social transformation.

2.3.1 Social identity

The concept of identity is considered within the theoretical framework of the research. The focus remains on individuals and collectivity, which are acting with the society for its transformation.

Identity is never a personal issue, but is linked and shaped by the belonging to one or more specific social groups (Pitner & Sakamoto, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2010). It embraces more than what is usually considered in the individual development of the person (Sloan et al., 2018). It is a complex entity within a complex reality of both the individual and social groups. Parekh speaks of individual personal identity and social identity. The first is the beliefs and values around which individuals define themselves as unique persons (2008, p. 10). The second is social identity, which is the set of "socially significant categories [which] identify and define individuals as certain kinds of persons and subject them to certain norms and expectations" (Parekh, 2008, p. 15).

In the framework of this research, the study is interested in the individual's awareness of belonging to one or more social groups and in how this membership influences the individual and their action in society. Moreover, in the perspective of the decolonial paradigm, it is also relevant to explore the connection between coloniality in its multiple forms (power, knowledge, and mind), identity, and representation of the other.

Parekh admits that among the reasons for such features to be socially significant is "the desire to maintain a particular structure of power" (Parekh, 2008, p. 15). Yuval-Davis differentiates identity and identity politics, the latter being "a specific type of project of the politics of belonging" (Yuval-Davis, 2010, p. 266). With this therefore, there is a mutual construction of belonging and collectivity, one contributing to the formation of the other. Belonging to a specific social group, in this political sense, means determining "boundaries of belonging", assuming "a necessary and homogeneous narrative of primordial or quasi-primordial attachment" to the group, and accepting "a particular leadership as the authoritative representative of the identity category/grouping, as well as an authoritative interpreter of what is to be a 'real'" member of that group (Yuval-Davis, 2010, p. 266).

Two aspects must be highlighted. First, in the framework of this research, identity is considered as constructed through the ongoing process of personal development, conscientization,

and social exchange with other individuals, within social groups. Individual personalities are hence, shaped by personal critical reflection and consciousness, and by the influence of and expectations from the individuals' belonging to communities of ideas and principles. That is why Parekh speaks of a plurality of social identities:

> Since human life is inherently plural in the sense that different areas of life are autonomous to different degrees and make independent claims, different identities cannot be subordinated to any of them, however far-reaching it might otherwise be. The context decides which identity is relevant, and that identity, as socially defined, largely dictates appropriate behavior. We capture this better by saying that we have plural rather than several or multiple identities (Parekh, 2008, p. 23).

The second aspect is that, as already mentioned, in the neo-colonial, globalised world today, social identities actively contribute to maintaining a social order, which is based on asymmetrical structures of power. For example, being a woman is never and nowhere merely a biological issue, but carries with it profound social and political significance and consequences. The same can be said of many other social identities, especially those connected with religion, nationality, ethnicity, social class or status, and culture (Appiah, 2018).

With this therefore, it becomes clearer why it is relevant for pastoral practitioners to become aware of their plural social identities and positionality. This is because, belonging to specific communities of ideas and principles means relying on the authoritative and normative interpretation of reality proposed by that community, particularly in terms of the self, the other, and the 'mission' embedded in the relationship, which is established between them. In response to that position, decolonial perspective contends that a constitutive part of such an authoritative interpretation of reality is the representation of the other, or, at an even deeper level, the very creation of the other as separate from 'me' or 'us'. The dichotomy between 'us' and 'them' "fails to recognize the heterogeneity of cross-cutting social spheres and social identities" (Bhambra, 2007, p. 55).

In the praxis for social transformation, particularly in the Church by pastoral practitioners, these aspects are very relevant. It is at this level of analysis that the distinction between social transformation and development emerge or should emerge. Moreover, it also becomes more evident how multiple social identities can bring different perceptions and experiences of power

and privileges within the same group, for example, the same community of pastoral practitioners. The concept of intersectionality is paramount in understanding this reality.

2.3.2 Intersectionality

Kim and Shaw define intersectionality as "a tool for analysis that takes into account the simultaneously experienced multiple social locations, identities, and institutions that shape individual and collective experience within hierarchically structured systems of power and privilege" (G. J.-S. Kim & Shaw, 2018, p. 2).

The term originated in feminist theory, used first by Kimberlé W. Crenshaw in her paper "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black Feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics" (1989). She contends that black women were twice marginalised due to the intersection of their gender and race, in what she referred to as the double bind of race and gender (Crenshaw, 2004). The concept was later developed by Patricia Hill Collins who theorised how race, gender, class, sexuality, and nationality intersect in a "matrix of domination [which illustrates] how these intersecting oppressions are actually organised" (Collins, 2000, p. 18). According to her, "intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type and that oppressions work together in producing injustice" (Collins, 2000, p. 18). In addition to that, May writes that intersectionality "is a form of resistant knowledge developed to unsettle conventional mindset, challenge oppressive power, think through the full architecture of structural inequalities and asymmetrical life opportunities, and seek a more just world" (2015, p. ix). This position goes against the "single-axis" forms of thinking and defining power, and instead fosters a "matrix thinking" (G. J.-S. Kim & Shaw, 2018, p. 7), where the understanding of power is multi-dimensional and grounded in a "both/and" worldview.

Intersectionality is strictly linked to power and identity, both critical concepts for this research. About power, intersectionality works at three levels. First, it "makes power visible" (G. J.-S. Kim & Shaw, 2018, p. 7). In support of this, Yan (2016) summarises his analysis of intersectionality, saying that the concept helps to promote social justice and social change by analysing social inequalities caused by the unexamined power of different social categorisations and how they interrelate.

Second, intersectionality extends and deepens the critical analysis on power from only "between-group power asymmetries", to also "within-group differences and inequities" (May, 2015, p. 4). By widening the perspective on power, gender, and race, intersectionality brings

attention to power dynamics in and among the persons who struggle for justice and equality that is, the pastoral practitioners, in the context of this research.

Third, intersectionality helps in revealing how power is organised. Kim and Shaw summarize the contribution of Collins and Bilge on the four domains of power: interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural, and structural (G. J.-S. Kim & Shaw, 2018, pp. 8–9). Interpersonal power therefore, refers to how power infiltrates human interactions and relationships; disciplinary power is the domain of how power operates to discipline people; the cultural domain is the power of ideas that shape our understanding; lastly, the structural domain of power concerns "the mutually reinforcing relations of gender, race, class, sexuality, nation, and social institutions" (G. J.-S. Kim & Shaw, 2018, p. 9).

Concerning intersectionality and identity, the two concepts are connected on two levels. The first level deals with the awareness, or lack, of how individual subjects enjoy privileges or suffer disadvantages because of their social identities. According to Elliot (2015), the examination of one's identity is the first, essential step towards understanding positionality. Such self-analysis and self-knowledge is hindered by privileges, which, especially within dominant groups, allow people to avoid considering in which ways they perpetuate injustice. Mattsson (2014, p. 10) makes this connection even more explicit affirming that intersectionality is "a way to understand both complex identities and how social structures affect people's living conditions". We are members of a given social group, and we relate to the 'other' who is different from us and belongs to other social groups, which are socially and culturally different from ours.

The second level of connection between intersectionality and identity is how identity is understood from an intersectional perspective. May affirms, "intersectionality understands people as ontologically plural, not only in terms of multiple identities, but also in terms of locational and relational power" (2015, p. 39). The multiplicity at the level of the person is important, first because it does not reduce the person to one dimension (G. J.-S. Kim & Shaw, 2018); second, because acknowledging the complexity of the subject, it also acknowledges how identities cannot be separated or isolated from a history and a context, but must always be situated.

The question of multiple identities of pastoral practitioners, with their subjective experience of privilege, marginalisation, and oppression are, once again, brought to the forefront of the discussion. How are the organisations or churches, to which the pastoral practitioners belong, part of the matrix of domination? How are pastoral practitioners involved in the structures of

oppression, which they aim to transform? How do they and the people participants, experience this matrix of domination? The concept of positionality, introduced in the next section, will help in addressing these questions.

2.3.3 Positionality

This construct is defined as "the possibility of people's ability to position and their inability of being positioned" (Yan, 2016, p. 11). It is the awareness of one's social location in time and space and one's worldview which, often unconsciously, influence the type and modes of response to social challenges (Sánchez, 2010). It is determined by one's position about 'the other' (Merriam et al., 2001) "on the asymmetrical axis of social power within a particular social dimension" (Yan, 2016, p. 11). Takacs (2003) directly links positionality (who and where we are) to epistemology (what and how we know). Interestingly, Johnson-Bailey defines positionality as a way of classifying the unknown (Johnson-Bailey, 2012) presented to us by the others and connecting with the known, that is everything we already know. In this way, it is possible not only to know people, but to know them in relation to us.

Yan (2016) underlines the importance of "positioning": We can turn our social position into a subject position, which means that we can actively engage in mobilising or not the different aspects of our social positions in particular circumstances. It is the recovery of the subjectivity that was lacking in the approach of intersectionality, the "self-indication process" that depends on how the individuals in the social process perceive their roles (Yan, 2016). It means that people can change the behaviour expected from their roles and begin telling their stories differently. Hence, pastoral practitioners can become aware of their social position and write different stories on relations with the participants. However, they can also unwittingly accept the asymmetrical powers inscribed in their social positions. If pastoral practitioners are not aware of their positionality, they will not be able to identify how their worldview shapes their understanding of society, contributing to maintaining oppression or challenging it. They run the risk of acting for the transformation of society without actually transforming its structures of power.

From what has been expressed so far, it appears that a process of personal transformation in pastoral practitioners is not a given outcome, an automatic response to any type of disorienting dilemmas. Precisely when positionality is factored in the process of transformative learning, things become more complex. The question becomes whether educators, learner, and, in the case of this research, pastoral practitioners are ready and willing to take up the challenge of positionality. It

seeks to understand whether they are ready to become "aware of their social positioning and accompanying connected privileges or lack thereof" (Johnson-Bailey, 2012, p. 267). It is not merely a matter of goodwill and personal openness to be challenged; it is – it should be evident by now – more complex. It depends on several factors present in the personal history of each individual, the way the person has been socialised into their family, culture, ethnic and social group, whether they grew up in a heterogeneous or homogeneous environment, or they belonged to a minority or majority group (Johnson-Bailey, 2012). Two relevant annotations arise. The first is that transformative learning is cumulative; namely, it builds up through a series of triggering events, not necessarily one. The second annotation states that, transformative learning is adaptive, that is, it is affected, but not limited nor determined by positionality (Johnson-Bailey, 2012).

What happens when the concepts of social identity, positionality, and intersectionality are applied to the pastoral action for social transformation? The next section attempts to deepen such a relation, looking at the critique that social critical consciousness may offer to the pastoral cycle methodology.

2.4 The Pastoral Cycle Methodology and Social Critical Consciousness

PCM is not immune to drawbacks. In the process of revisiting the method, twenty-five years after its first systematisation, Elsener (2005) identifies four weaknesses which are relevant to the topic of this research.

The first pitfall concerns the Cycle's first step of insertion. Elsener notices the risk of behaving "as if we were starting from zero and as if nothing had been done before" (2005, p. 62). Pastoral practitioners focus on the goal they plan to reach, without considering from where they come. The researcher's pastoral experience, albeit limited, tends to agree strongly with this observation. Moreover, the problem concerns not only the disconnection from the past of planning and action but also the lack of awareness of the identities of who carries out such planning and action. The question Elsener poses – "Where do we come from?"– should also be asked regarding the pastoral practitioners. This aspect is clarified in the explanation of the second pitfall of the PCM.

Elsener (2005) considers the problematic integration of social analysis and theological reflection, especially as far as awareness, and use of values are concerned. Simply stated, we should not use our values to make judgements in the phase of social analysis. However – and this

is the point of interest for the topic of our research – Elsener affirms that "as it is not possible to dissociate oneself completely from one's own value judgements (…) *it is necessary to become aware of them and to make them transparent* [emphasis added]" (2005, p. 69). Consequently, a greater awareness of the positionality of the subject of social analysis and theological reflection is deemed essential to make the method practical and effective. Elsener also underlines the danger of excessive abstraction or spiritualisation in the passage from social analysis to theological reflection, "setting the vision too high (…) and not relating it to stark reality" (2005, p. 71); hence, discouraging people from acting. The affirmation is right about not only the social context but also the multicultural identities of the pastoral practitioners. If the Christian sense of mission to 'save' the world – what Vanessa Andreotti calls salvationism (2012) or self-serving motivations (2018) – becomes the first and most important reason for social commitment, this from-above and often "exalted" (Thobani, 2007) identity quickly dismisses the historical, multiple identities of the pastoral practitioners, their multiculturality, their personal stories and their intersectionality. Katongole (2011) beautifully shows that stories shape our view of reality, how we respond to life, and the very sort of persons we become. They are the stories of individuals, families, and communities. However, if they remain invisible and untold, they hold us in their grip (Katongole, 2011). Orozco-Mendoza underlines the importance of including the stories of the oppressed in the narrative of history itself:

> Since western culture has distorted much of the historical events in an attempt to justify its past actions and atrocities, it is important that history and stories are recuperated and told by those who suffered the consequences of domination since their view needs to be incorporated as part of history itself (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008, p. 58).

From these positions therefore, personal stories and multiple identities of the pastoral practitioners are of fundamental importance, especially today, "as we move toward a more variegated society". The pastoral practitioners "must continue to face the challenge of responding to the complexities of culture, difference, and otherness" (Pitner & Sakamoto, 2005, p. 684), not only in the outside world but also within the team or community of pastoral practitioners.

The third pitfall lays in the "tendency to remain with some general recommendations and to shy away from concrete and detailed action plans" (2005, p. 71). According to Andreotti (2012, p. 1), this is just but one of the common problems with actions that tend to whitewash the

complexity of global social issues offering "uncomplicated solutions". To avoid this, Andreotti proposes an educational path:

> (a) to understand and learn from "repeated historical patterns of mistakes"; (b) to exercise a deeper social analysis because by being superficial at this stage, "we may do more harm than good"; (c) "to recognize how we are implicated or complicit in the problems we are trying to address", which is the challenge of positionality and intersectionality; (d) to establish broader networks for exchange of knowledge, analysis, and possible solutions (2012, pp. 1–2).

Finally, the fourth and last pitfall identified by Elsener is the lack of evaluation at the end of the process, which "is one of the root causes of the complaints that church meetings are particularly ineffective" (2005, p. 75). There are several reasons for this deficiency, whose analysis goes beyond the purpose of this chapter. It suffices here to say that the lack of evaluation dramatically reduces the historical depth of the process in general and the single actions in particular. When there is no historical connection at the beginning (see the first pitfall) and at the end of the process, pastoral action is like the seed, which fell on rocky ground: It will wither for lack of roots (Gospel of Mark, 4:1-8).

In conclusion, the undoubted strength of the PCM has to be enriched critically with new elements which come from listening to the world, especially to the ongoing reflection and research in social science (Second Vatican Council, 1965b, no 44). If it is true that theory offers us categories to name the world (Freire, 2000), to explain it, and to know how to transform it, then it must be from the theories in social sciences that the Church can learn ways for a new praxis for social transformation, "rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization" (Francis, 2013, no. 33).

The combination of decolonial theory as the tool to look at the world and social critical thinking, which indicates the path to identify and address biases, assumptions, and privileges, are the components of the theoretical framework, which is presented in the next section.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Decolonial theory and Critical Consciousness theory are the two theoretical foundations of the research. Decolonial theory helps in analysing today's "postcolonial neo-colonial world" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, p. 3), the structures of power and their influence on political

organisation, knowledge production, and people's consciousness. The decolonial theory is a form of contextualised critical theory, applied to ethnic studies. For the research, its relevance is in the contribution which Latin American (Grosfoguel, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2016; Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 2016; Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 2000, 2007) and African scholars (Kaunda, 2015, 2016; Kaunda & Hewitt, 2015; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, 2013b, 2015a, 2015b) made to the analysis of the present postcolonial neo-colonial world. The educational approach of Vanessa Andreotti (2007, 2012, 2016a, 2016b; Andreotti & de Souza, 2008; Stein & Andreotti, 2016) is also significant, as it opens up the vision to know the world differently.

The critical consciousness theory, originating from Freire's critical consciousness (1974, 2000) and Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1981, 1990), with its social applications (Brookfield, 2005, 2012; Gambrell, 2016; Schlitz et al., 2010), guide the exploration of the inner transformation of pastoral practitioners' awareness. The disorienting dilemma experienced in relationships in multicultural contexts may function as a catalyst for such an inner transformation (Green & Mälkki, 2017). Especially relevant is the analysis of critical consciousness in multicultural practice and its use in anti-oppressive social work practice proposed by Ronald O. Pitner and Izumi Sakamoto (2005; 2005). The theoretical research approach also refers to other concepts like intersectionality, positionality, and worldview which "combines beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, values, and ideas to form a comprehensive model of reality" (Schlitz et al., 2010, p. 19), shaping perceptions, both consciously and unconsciously, and behaviours in every aspect of life.

These theories, supporting the earlier presented explanation of the constructs relevant in this research, pave the way for the conceptual framework that guides the present study.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The study tries to integrate Critical Consciousness Theory and Decolonial Theory with the Social Tradition of the Church and her methodology of transformation embodied in the Pastoral Cycle Methodology. Critical Consciousness Theory focuses on the person of the pastoral practitioner (any member of the Comboni Family) as interacting with others in the multicultural environment of the Comboni community and today's complex society marked by the pervasiveness of coloniality. Decolonial Theory is used to analyse today's society, particularly from the standpoint in Africa, and to understand how coloniality influences the individual's knowledge and understanding of reality.

Through a decolonial perspective, pastoral practitioners are invited to become aware of their social critical consciousness in the multicultural context of the Comboni community, with which they interact in life and the practice of social transformative action. The dynamics through which social critical consciousness influence the pastoral social transformative action might be perceived differently by the individual considered as a single unit or as a member of the Comboni community.

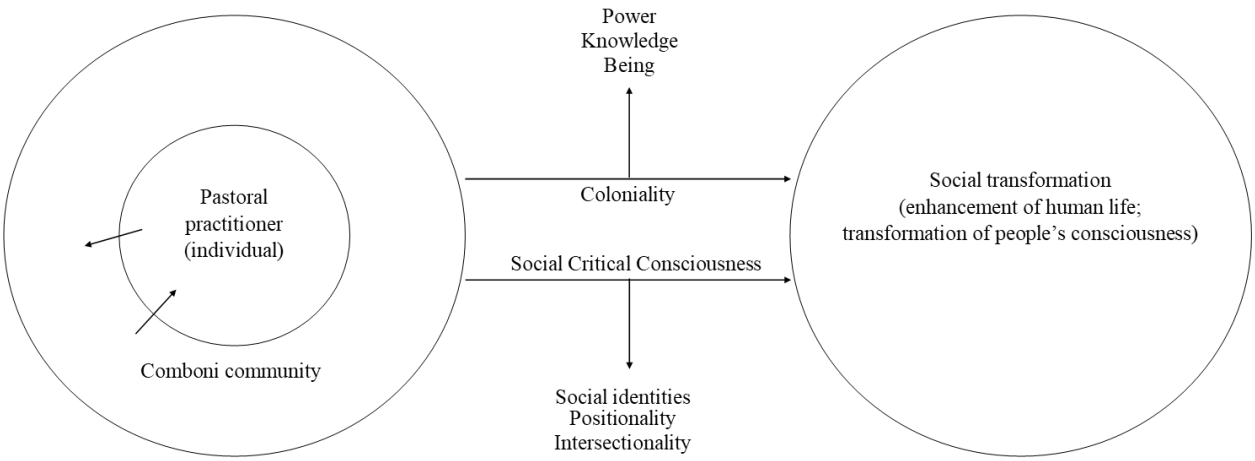


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Source: Author

The interactions of pastoral practitioners within the multicultural community happen in an environment, which is marked by coloniality, expressed in the three dimensions of power, knowledge, and being. This situation is considered has a given, it is characterised the reality in which social transformation has to happen.

In this reality, pastoral practitioners as individual and as a community can grow in social critical consciousness. The three dimensions of social critical consciousness and social transformative action are conceptualised as follows:

Table 2

Dimensions

Social Critical Consciousness	Pastoral Social Transformative Action
• Social identity	• Enhancement of human life
• Positionality	• Transformation of people's consciousness
• Intersectionality	• Collective political action in the complexity of multicultural reality

The study speaks rather of concepts and their dimensions, which are not independent of each other. For example, the positionality of the participants is influenced by their social identity and location of ministry, which, in turn, triggers a transformation of the individual consciousness.

Pastoral practitioners' Social Critical Consciousness is explored through the three categories of social identity, positionality, and intersectionality. The transformative dimension of the pastoral action of the Comboni community is considered in its fundamental objective, that is, the enhancement of human life (Pierli & Selvam, 2017), an objective consistently maintained in the whole Catholic Social Tradition. The dimension of personal transformation of the pastoral practitioners, through greater awareness of one's social identity and positionality, and the collective and political dimensions of pastoral action are also be considered as components of social transformative action. They are rooted in the concept of holistic, total liberation, which is found in the traditions of the Bible, the Catholic Social Teaching (Francis, 2015a; John Paul II, 1987; Paul VI, 1967, 1975), and the Comboni Family tradition (Comboni Missionaries, 1988, no. 61).

Conclusion

The chapter has presented the literature review in the three theoretical areas of the research: the social mission of the Church, coloniality and decolonial process as part of social transformation, and social critical consciousness, highlighting the concepts of intersectionality and positionality and exploring the link with the social transformation. Within the social mission of the Church, particular attention was given to the methodology of the Pastoral Cycle and the urgent need of a more adequate training of pastoral practitioners. The chapter concluded with a critical analysis of PCM through the lenses of the theories used in the theoretical framework, opening the way to a possible, and hoped for, integration of PCM and SCC. The following chapter will illustrate the methodology used in the research.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used in the research. The study operates on a critical theory paradigm, and it is a qualitative case study, focusing on the two primary components of the Comboni Family, namely, the Comboni Missionaries (MCCJ) and the Comboni Missionary Sisters (CMS). The collection of data was done through focus groups and interviews, and the analysis of selected archival documents. The general objective of the qualitative research was to explore the link between SCC and the pastoral ministry for social transformation in the Church: a greater awareness of SCC leads to greater effectiveness in praxis for social transformation. Achieving the general purpose of the research has offered recommendations for community organising and training of international pastoral practitioners to work effectively in complex and multicultural environments.

3.1 Research Design

Multiple reasons have led to adopting a qualitative approach for this study. First, qualitative research methods are used to understand social processes in context (Mohajan, 2018). The current study focused on the experience of pastoral practitioners engaging in multicultural relationships in the context of a Comboni community and praxis for social transformation. The focus was not the measurement of effectiveness of their social action but rather the pastoral practitioner's perception of their identities and positionality and their interplay within the multicultural community and the action for social transformation.

Second, a qualitative approach allows the exploration of feelings, thought processes, relational experiences, which are usually not observable through quantitative research methods. It aims at capturing nuanced, subjective aspects that influence people (Kvale, 2006). Therefore, a qualitative study seems to be most appropriate to discover and describe the meaning pastoral practitioners give to their professional role in the praxis of social transformation, focusing on their relations with the "beneficiaries". The nature of the research is an exploration of the experiences and meanings of pastoral practitioners through focus groups and open-ended interviews.

Third, qualitative methods emphasise the role of the researcher as an active participant in the study. The development of the new science in the last century (quantum physics) has shown how relevant is the interaction between the inquirer and the inquired. As Mills (1959, p. 195) puts it, "the most admirable thinkers (…) do not split their work from their lives. They seem to take them both too seriously to allow such dissociation, and they want to use each for the enrichment of the other". The researcher is not merely looking at facts through a one-way mirror. On the contrary, findings are created through the researcher's interaction with the phenomenon observed. The research design is influenced by the researcher's standpoint, which affects the choice of the topic and consequently affects the choice of paradigmatic frame (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Dodge, 2011; Given, 2008; Kvale, 2006). Lastly, as Jones puts it (2000, p. 67), "the qualitative methodology is an appropriate way to engage 'another's interpretive frame of reference'".

The qualitative case study of the Comboni Family in Kenya is the methodology for the research. Merriam (2009) defines a case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system". The most defining characteristic of this method is the delimitation of the object of study, the case. Hence, it is more about the case itself, the object to be studied, than a methodological choice (Merriam, 2009). Schwandt and Gates (2018, p. 342), following Gerring (2004), define a case study as an "in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar's aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena".

The qualitative data intended to give voice to the experience of the pastoral practitioners, trying to bring to light their real experience in a multicultural context, their capacity of relationships within such a context, and the difficulties encountered. Most importantly, interviews addressed the pastoral practitioners' awareness and reflection on their multiple social identities and the implications these identities have in the praxis for social transformation by changing or perpetuating structures of power.

3.2 Epistemological Underpinnings

The research used a critical theory paradigm, which combines theory and practice because of social change through the empowerment of the voices neglected in the present relations of power (Fleming, 2016). It also takes into consideration role of culture as a "domain of struggle where the

production and transmission of knowledge is always a contested process" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011, p. 292). The paradigm is also consistent with the social critical consciousness. There is "mounting criticism of social science as failing to provide adequate accounts of nonmainstream lives (the "other") or to provide the material for a criticism of our own Western culture" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 106). There is a link between critical theory, adult learning, critical consciousness and perspective transformation:

> The critical theory tradition draws on Marxist scholarship to illuminate the ways in which people accept as normal a world characterized by massive inequities and the systemic exploitation of the many by the few. For adult educators, the tradition helps to understand how people learn to perceive and challenge this situation. A critical approach to understanding adult learning sees it as comprising a number of crucial tasks such as learning how to perceive and challenge dominant ideology, unmasking power, contest hegemony, overcome alienation, pursue liberation, reclaim reason, and practice democracy (Brookfield, 2005, p. 2).

The critical theory challenges the reality as it is, acknowledging that it is shaped by socio-cultural, political, economic, ethnic and gender-based forces. The structures created by such forces are not to be considered natural or immutable; they are, however, real in the sense that they exercise their power on people and social situations. Nevertheless, the aim of critical theory is not just the description of how society works, even if this description is done from the vantage point of the subalterns and oppressed by existing structures of power. The aim is the transformation of the explored situation and, by extension, of society as a whole.

In this paradigm, the researcher and the researched are assumed to be interacting. One of the fundamental assumptions of critical theory is that "mainstream research practices are generally, although unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression" (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 164). The researcher inevitably influences the inquiry: "What can be known is inextricably intertwined with the interaction between a *particular* investigator and a *particular* object or group" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). Lucas (2013, p. 15) explains that "true objectivity begins with the recognition that vision is embodied ('situated') and that thus only perspectives that recognize themselves as partial (as opposed to transcendental or omnipotent) can be considered objective".

In a research context, critical theory does not provide a map that defines how the researcher sees the world, "it helps devise questions and strategies for exploring it" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011, p. 288). The methodology used in the critical theory paradigm combines observation through experiential knowledge and interviewing to foster a more informed consciousness in both the researcher and the researched. The dialectic aims at questioning the social status quo, which too often is considered as given and unchangeable. The critical research becomes "self-conscious criticism" through which the researcher becomes aware of assumptions, biases, and epistemological presuppositions and their "normative reference claims" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011, p. 301).

In summary, the critical theory, in its specific form of decolonial theory, and qualitative research methodology can be used to decolonise knowledge, make the subjects (both the researcher and the informants) aware of their entanglement in the system they try to change, and focus on the experience of the individuals in their social and cultural contexts.

3.3 Participants

3.3.1 Target population and study area

The Comboni Family is an international body of congregations and groups, whose pastoral practitioners (religious priests and brothers, religious sisters, secular missionaries, and laypeople) operate in complex and multicultural environments, both internally (communities and teams) and externally (the relationship with the local people). They all have an international, multicultural composition, and for all of them, multiculturalism is a crucial factor in their mission. Also, all pastoral practitioners in the Comboni Family undergo specific training for their work, which lasts several years, according to the specificity of the organisation.

The MCCJ is an international missionary Institute, under the umbrella of the Catholic Church. The Comboni Missionaries are present in 41 Countries, and, from a juridical point of view, they are subdivided into 28 Provinces constituting the administrative entities of the Institute. Kenya is one of these Provinces, where MCCJ has been present since 1974. They are organised in four geographical and ministerial Zones: Nairobi, Turkana, West Pokot, and Marsabit.

The second missionary congregation within which the study was conducted is the CMS, also an international missionary congregation, present in Kenya since 1964. Also for them, Kenya

is a Province, with an autonomy of organisation, planning, and distribution of personnel. CMS works in the dioceses of Nairobi, Kitale, and Malindi.

The two Institutes present essential common features, which made their association in this study possible, meaningful, and relevant. First, they are both international and multicultural bodies, which have been present in Kenya for more or less the same time. Second, MCCJ and CMS continue to face common challenges, among them a diminishing number of European members, with a corresponding significant increment in African members, especially among the MCCJ.

During the 2019 Provincial Assembly of the MCCJ in Kenya (February 2019), the Vicar General of the MCCJ presented the general situation of the personnel in the Institute. While the overall number shows that 53% of the members are from Europe and 30% from Africa, the percentage of new candidates is 88% from Africa and only 2.6% from Europe (dos Santos Martins, 2019). This trend creates a visible age gap in the local communities, with an old generation of European missionaries living together with a relatively young generation of African missionaries. The pattern has brought issues of multiculturalism and interculturality to the front of internal reflections and discussions. The final document of the XVII General Chapter well summarises the awareness of the rising tensions within the Institute, the Church at large, and in the theological framework for mission (Comboni Missionaries, 2009, no. 3.1ff). In particular, concerning the identity of the Comboni Institute, the document says,

> *The Comboni Institute* is living through a phase of deep and rapid transformation. While enriched by new nationalities and cultures we also face negative developments, resistance to the "old" or the "new", and challenging situations like the ageing of certain Provinces, a reduction in personnel, a significant number of people leaving the Institute, and confreres in difficulty. The Institute's face is changing and becoming ever more multicultural, rich and diversified, yet also requiring an extra effort in maintaining unity while guaranteeing the transmission and inculturation of the charism. It finds itself having to face a missionary service which is ever more diversified, characterised by many ministries and specializations, and involving a greater spirit of collaboration - all of which seriously put to the test our ability to safeguard unity in diversity (Comboni Missionaries, 2009, no. 3.4).

Lastly, both Institutes are carrying on a reflection on vital issues of financial self-sustainability and adequate training of new members, which could be suitable to face the complexity of today's time. Both these two aspects are strictly connected with the new geographical origin and distribution of the members of the two Institutes.

The same picture emerges from the reality of the CMS. During the last General Chapter, which was held in Rome in 2016, the statistics pictured the Institute with 35 different nationalities (but with 68.56% still coming from Europe), an age average of 70 years (56.4% members above 70 years of age), and with a foreseen 25% decrement of the total membership every six years (Comboni Missionary Sisters, 2016).

The research was limited to MCCJ and CMS in Kenya, even though the Comboni Family counts four entities. The reasons for such limitations were: (1) in Kenya, the group SCM is in the making, just starting its existence in the Country, and therefore its members have a minimal multicultural and missionary experience. Moreover, the group is still in the phase of being fully recognised by the SCM central administration. (2) The group CLM is not yet established in Kenya; the initial idea of the researcher to collect data from CLM operating in Uganda or Ethiopia was eventually not feasible as CLM members working in those areas were about to terminate or had already terminated their missionary service.

In addition, the choice of concentrating on only two groups of the Comboni Family (MCCJ and CMS) was considered reasonable and justifiable. This is because these are the two major and most significant groups in the Comboni Family at both international and local level. Historically, they undoubtedly bear the longest witness, and their contribution to the reflection and gradual contextualisation of the Comboni charism has significantly contributed to shaping the presence of the Comboni Family in the world. Nevertheless, given the fact that the four entities of the Comboni Family share some similar basic characteristics, as already mentioned prior, the findings of the research can be transferred to the other groups by their members. The same transferability applies to other international missionary congregations.

The chosen study area was Kenya. This is because it is the place of a long shared history of the two Institutes. In addition, it is the country of residence of the researcher; hence, it facilitated the direct contact with the participants. At the same time, it limited distances allowing for efficient and timely data collection.

MCCJ and CMS have been present in Kenya since 1974 and 1964 respectively. The two Institutes have several members ministering in different locations of the country. These members have accumulated a vital individual and collective experience in living and ministering in multicultural contexts. In Kenya, as in April 2019, the MCCJ had 45 members with perpetual vows and CMS had 35.

The total population was all members of the two Institutes MCCJ and CMS in Kenya, involved in multiple ministries for social transformation, in different fields and capacities and at various levels (rural and urban ministry, projects of development, education, community-building activities, media, medical care). All the participants were living in multicultural communities. To this population, one MCCJ member was added from outside Kenya.

Table 3 shows the total population size of MCCJ and CMS, both in Kenya and outside, and the total number of the units of analysis, after purposeful sampling.

Table 3

Size Population, Participants and Cases

	Population			Units of analysis
	In Kenya	**Outside Kenya**	**Total**	**(interviews and focus groups)**
MCCJ	45	1	**46**	26 (56.52% of the total MCCJ)
CMS	35	-	**35**	8 (22.86% of the total CMS)
Total	80	1	**81**	34 (41.97% of the total population)

Source: Author

Note: The participants outside Kenya was selected for the relevance of his biographical, cultural, and missionary experience

Before data collection, the researcher obtained the necessary permissions from Tangaza University College (Appendix A1) and NACOSTI (Appendix B). Having been duly notified about the research, MCCJ and CMS Provincial Superiors in Kenya gave their consent.

The MCCJ and CMS members who were asked to take part in the research were duly informed about procedures used in interviews and focus group discussions, confidentiality and their right of accessing the data and withdrawing at any moment of the process. All of them read and signed the Research Participant Consent Form (Appendix C), besides filling an Information Sheet (Appendix D) for necessary biographical information. Both Forms and Information Sheets

are kept in the office of the researcher. Confidentiality was assured throughout the process of data collection.

3.3.2 Sampling procedure

Patton (2002, p. 244) affirms that the sample size depends on "what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what will be possible, given time and resources". The issue at stake in qualitative research is meaning rather than representativeness (Jones, 2000), and sample adequacy capable of generating information rather than the sample size. In fact, "adequate sample size is one that sufficiently answers the research question" (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013).

The study followed the method of purposeful sampling. The general criteria for the selection included appropriateness and adequacy of the sample (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013); the significance of the proportion of the sample compared to the total population; the principle of saturation (Charmaz, 2006), reporting how data saturation is achieved; and the quantity of data that can be handled.

In the present study, the inclusion criteria for purposeful sampling were (1) the age of the participants, which offers information also about the length of their experience in an international community; (2) the country of origin (the data indicate only the continent for greater confidentiality); (3) the participants' capacity and readiness to share their personal experience with the researcher; (4) the participants' capacity to explore and interpret their experience in reference to the topic of the research; (5) the significance of the participants' pastoral praxis, both for the participants themselves and for their organisations.

3.3.3 Sampling description

The research purposefully targeted rural and urban ministries (which alone present a great variety of activities for social transformation), media, education, projects of rehabilitation, youth, and medical care. Out of the 45 members of the MCCJ in Kenya, those directly involved in these pastoral ministries were 30. The researcher succeeded to interview 25, all in their respective locations of ministry. Four other potential participants were outside of the country at the time of data collection, and one failed to present himself for the planned interview because of unforeseen commitments.

One MCCJ was interviewed in Rome, during an international workshop on interculturality organised by the MCCJ and attended by the researcher. Although this participant was from outside

the selected study area (Kenya), the researcher decided to consider him because his life story and missionary experience gave him a significant level of awareness of his social critical consciousness, making him particularly sensitive to the topic of the research. The 26 interviews were transcribed, coded, and analysed.

Two communities of CMS were initially proposed for participating in the study, one in Nairobi and the second in Adu (Malindi). However, time and distance limited the research to two CMS communities in Nairobi with a total of nine members. A focus group discussion of six participants was organised in one of the two communities. Three sisters were purposefully selected for the interview, considering the criteria of age, type of ministry, continent of origin, number of years of belonging to the Institute, and their capacity and readiness to share about their personal experiences concerning the topic of the research. Specifically, two sisters were from two different African countries, while one was from the American continent; missionary experience was diverse as one was much younger than the other two, with an age difference of 16 and 18 years respectively. Ministerial field was also differentiated; of course, the sisters longer in the Institute could refer also to past ministerial experiences. All three were available and they revealed a good capacity to read, interpret, and share their life and ministerial experiences.

The background of the participants, or units of analysis, is shown in Appendix G, through the Participants' demographic matrix, which includes the sampling criteria discussed in the previous paragraphs. The study used biographical details exclusively for a descriptive purpose, avoiding any chance of establishing the identity of the participants. Hence, pseudonyms replaced the participants' real names, and continents replaced countries of origin. Any direct reference to locations or other biographical details, which could contribute to determining the identity of the participants, have been omitted.

Table 4 shows some percentages of the group of 34 units of analysis, whose contributions (through interviews or focus group discussion or both) were coded and analysed for a total of ten interviews (seven male and three female) and three focus groups discussions with a total of 16 participants. The data are summarised as follows:

Table 4

Attributes of Units of Participants

Attributes of units of participants	Sub-grouping of attributes	Totals (percentage on the total)
Units of analysis	Interview	18 (52.9%)
	Focus Group	5 (14.7%)
	Interview and Focus Group	11 (32.4%)
	Total	**34**
Gender	Male	26 (76.5%)
	Female	8 (23.5%)
Age group	20-40	9 (26.5%)
	41-60	17 (50%)
	61-90	8 (23.5%)
Years in the Institute	<=10	5 (14.7%)
	11-25	17 (50%)
	26-40	5 (14.7%)
	>40	7 (20.6%)
Continent	Africa	18 (52.9%)
	Europe	8 (23.5%)
	America	6 (17.6%)
	Asia	2 (6%)
Ministry	Pastoralists	13 (38.2%)
	Urban pastoral	6 (17.5%)
	Education	3 (8.8%)
	Media	3 (8.8%)
	Formation	2 (6%)
	Mission Animation	2 (6%)
	Medical	2 (6%)
	Administration	1 (2.9%)
	Rehabilitation	1 (2.9%)
	Youth	1 (2.9%)

Source: Author

Out of 34 cases, 18 participants were interviewed, five participated in FGD, and eleven participated in both interview and FGD. The gender distribution was 76.5% male (26) and 23.5% female (8). The geographical distribution saw 18 participants from Africa (52.9%), eight from Europe (23.5%), six from America (17.6%) and two from Asia (6%). The geographical "screenshot"

represent quite realistically the present geography of the two Institutes MCCJ and CMS. The same can be said as far as age is concerned. Half of the participants (50%) belonged to the 41-60 age group, while 26.5% were between 20 and 40 years, and 23.5% were above 61.

Regarding the years of presence in the respective Institutes, 50% have been in the congregation between 11 and 25 years. The participants who have been in the Institutes between 26 and 40, or for less than ten years are 14.7% of the total participants, while 20.6% are the people who have been members for more than 40 years.

The distribution of the type of ministry of the units of analysis also reveals a balance. Ten types of ministries were represented, according to the indications offered by the participants themselves. Among the participants, 13 (38.2%) were involved in rural pastoral work among pastoralists, while 6 (17%) worked in urban pastoral. The other 15 participants were distributed among the remaining eight ministries (education, media, formation, mission animation, medical, administration, rehabilitation, and youth ministry). These data mirror the distributions of MCCJ and CMS missionaries in Kenya, where a majority are engaged in pastoral work among the pastoralists, outside big cities.

3.4 Research Instruments

The qualitative data were collected from selected archival documents of the two Institutes MCCJ and CMS, through focus groups discussions (FGD), and in-depth, open-ended interviews with the selected participants. The multiple sources of data allowed the process of triangulation to capture different dimensions of the topic of the research, and to cross-validate the data, assuring the validity of the research itself (Berg, 2001; Flick, 2004). However, Mason (2002) warns against a possible misunderstanding of triangulation. It is not about the idea of investigating the same phenomenon from different angles and then, 'objectively', choose the most reliable or valid method. This approach would imply the idea that it exists an objective and knowable social reality and the appropriate triangulation would assure its right measurement. Instead, "different methods and data sources are likely to throw light onto different or ontological phenomena or research questions (or to provide different versions or 'levels' of answer)" (Mason, 2002, p. 190). Precisely for this reason, besides the one-on-one interviews, the focus groups allowed the exploration of different dynamics of responding to questions and interacting in different contexts (Berg, 2001).

3.4.1 Archival documents

In the course of their history, the two Institutes MCCJ and CMS have produced several official documents. They range from the foundational texts like the Rule of Life to the Acts of the General Chapters to more recent letters written by their respective General Councils to all members. The topics can vary widely, from the formation of ministers to strategies for mission in fast-changing cultural and social contexts. For example, since their foundation until now, MCCJ has celebrated eighteen General Chapters, while CMS has had twenty.

Among these many documents, only some were purposefully selected for the research. The criteria of inclusion were: the foundational documents of the two Institutes; the documents (proceedings of General Chapters, official letters of the General Councils to the members) that dealt with the question of multiculturalism and interculturality; other specific contributions (workshops, conference papers) relevant to the topic.

Necessarily, the first two documents were the MCCJ and CMS Rules of Life, which are the foundational documents enshrining vision, mission, and missionary methodology of the two Institutes. They were published in 1988 and 1987, respectively (Comboni Missionaries, 1988; Comboni Missionary Sisters, 1987).

The General Chapter is the supreme authority in the two Institutes. It is convoked every six years for reviewing, discussing, and deciding on policies and strategies concerning any aspect of the life of the two Institutes. Because MCCJ started considering multiculturalism a challenge only towards the end of the Nineties, the study has considered their last four General Chapters, from 1997 to 2015. They were added to the body of archival documents (Comboni Missionaries, 1997, 2003, 2009, 2015a) and analysed in the sections dealing with community, multiculturalism, interculturality, and missionary action.

Two official documents containing the conclusions on the process of the *Ratio Missionis* (Comboni Missionaries, 2012) and the directives for the global formative project of the MCCJ Institute (Comboni Missionaries, 2015b) were also considered. The *Ratio Missionis* was a study and reflection, which was carried out among the members of MCCJ between 2003 and 2012. It was proposed as a process of renewal, "understood in the widest sense, and including out theological motivations, spirituality, methodology, fields of mission, and community life" (Comboni Missionaries, 2012, p. II). It was considered relevant to the study because it contains critical reflections from the grassroots members on the Comboni missionary praxis and identity.

The *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis et Studiorum* is the official document on the formative project in the MCCJ Institute. First published in 1991, an updated and revised edition was printed in 2015 to ensure "the seriousness and efficacy of Comboni formation, safe-guarding the unity of its content and essential orientation but within the diversity of its concrete expression" (Comboni Missionaries, 2015b, p. 23).

Three MCCJ letters to all members were considered for the collection of qualitative data. The first one is a letter entitled "Attention to the person in the Comboni Community", on the centrality of the person of the missionary (Comboni Missionaries, 2001). It was the first document, which explicitly focused on the individual member of the community, and not on the action that the individual carries out from within a community. The other two letters are specifically on cross-culture, multiculturalism, and interculturality. "Cross-culture in the Comboni community" (Comboni Missionaries, 1999b) is the first and only MCCJ document explicitly on cross-culture, while the second message inaugurated the year 2019 as the Year of Interculturality (Comboni Missionaries, 2019), marking the twentieth anniversary from the 1999 publication. Certainly these are very pertinent because not only they explicitly deal with the topic of the study (the impact of interculturality on the Comboni community, its relationships and its pastoral action), but they also reveal the historical progress of the reflection on the subject.

Regarding CMS, the Acts of the last three General Chapters (Comboni Missionary Sisters, 2004, 2010, 2016) and three Letters from the General Council to the whole Institute (Comboni Missionary Sisters, 2008, 2014, 2019) were made available, besides the already mentioned Rule of Life. The report on an international workshop on the multicultural community organised in 1997 by the CMS was also considered (Comboni Missionary Sisters, 1997) because it represents the only specific CMS source on the topic of the study.

Lastly, the researcher also considered two contributions of Fr P. Mileto, a Comboni Missionary and a scholar in cross-culture, multiculturalism, and interculturality. The criteria for inclusion of the two contributions were the fact that they were offered by a scholar to a relevant forum of MCCJ, specifically on the themes of multiculturalism and interculturality. The first reflection, unpublished, is on "consecrated life in the ethnic/cultural multi-belonging in a globalised world" and was given to MCCJ leaders gathered in Rome in 2018 (Mileto, 2018a). The second is a paper presented at a workshop on "Mission and Interculturality" organised by the

MCCJ in Italy in April 2018 (Mileto, 2018b). The paper has been published within the Proceedings of the symposium for internal use of the Institute of MCCJ.

3.4.2 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were focused, but not limited to the first and second objectives of the research. The interview process followed the stages of thematising and designing, interviewing, transcribing, and analysing, along with the other collected data (Jones, 2000). A guideline for the interviews was prepared to assure that the participants were well informed about the topic of the interview, they gave their consent to record and use the conversation, and they were informed about confidentiality. The guidelines also helped in guaranteeing the necessary level of unbiased questions and approach. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, and they were recorded and later transcribed *verbatim*.

Appendix E presents the general framework for the interviews questions. Considering the first two objectives of the research, the interview questions were divided into three main blocks, two for the first objective and one for the second. The first block of three questions dealt with the issue of the participants' perception and understanding of social identity: self-perception, perception of privileges and disadvantages in their life-situation, and the awareness of belonging to social categories. The main aim was to explore whether the participants are aware or not of their social identities and whether this belonging was experienced. The second block of questions concerned positionality: the participants' perception of the multicultural context, in which they lived, their intercultural interactions, and their interpersonal relationships. Participants were invited to describe their community, their relationships within the community, and their experience of cultural diversity. Lastly, the block of question referring to the second objective dealt with the social transformative action. The participants were asked to describe their ministry, their perception of whether their ministry was effective, whether the community was involved in their pastoral action, and whether the multicultural reality of their community was having an impact on their pastoral work.

3.4.3 Focus group discussions

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were focused but not limited, to objectives three and four. Krueger and Casey (2009, p. 66) affirm that "the intent of focus groups is not to infer but to understand, not to generalise but to determine the range, and not to make statements about the population but to provide insights about how people in the groups perceive a situation".

Three FGDs were organised among participants belonging to the same community or pastoral zone, an aspect, which ensured a certain homogeneity among the participants. At the same time, there was a sufficient variation among the participants (continent of origin, age, life experience, type of ministry), which favoured plurality and diversity of experiences and opinions.

As far as the number of participants is concerned, the literature on the topic suggests that the ideal size of a focus group is five to eight participants (Berg, 2001; Krueger & Casey, 2009; Tracy, 2013). For the number of focus groups needed, the research relied on Guest, Namey, and McKenna (2017) whose methodological studied revealed that two or three focus groups were sufficient to discover more than 80% of all themes. For this research, as already pointed out, the researcher organised three focus group discussions, one with four and two with six participants. Two FGD had only male participants, and one had only female participants. The FGD with four participants was supposed to have five, but at the last moment, one member was unable to participate.

Appendix F presents the general framework for the focus groups discussion. The guide addressed some introductory and logistic aspects, including some ground rules, which were necessary for the smooth running of the discussion. The core of the guide directly concerns the topics to be discussed, which refers to the last two objectives of the research (the question of multicultural relationships and collaboration in the pastoral action). The guide invited the participants to describe their multicultural community, sharing about the advantages or disadvantages of living in such a community. In a similar way, they could describe their pastoral work, making explicit the values that they consider fundamental and indispensable, why they think so and whether the rest of the community shares their vision. Lastly, the participants were invited to share about their experience of possible conflicts, their origins, and the strategies adopted to solve them. The aim of such guides for the discussion was to help the participants to identify what is essential in their pastoral action, as they perceived it (which is presumably linked to their biographical and cultural history), and reflect on the level of sharing of such fundamental aspects within the community.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The interviews were conducted between March and September 2019, in the missions where the participants usually reside and work. Date and location were agreed upon with the researcher,

who travelled to the different locations: Kacheliba (West Pokot County), Marsabit (Marsabit County), Nakwamewki (Turkana County), and Nairobi. In Kacheliba and Nakwamekwi, the researcher also met participants who work in the same pastoral zone, but reside somewhere else (Amakuriat and Lokichar, respectively). All participants availed themselves for the exercise and fully participated in it. They were aware of the nature of the research, the requests concerning the interview and their participation. In only one case, one interview failed because sudden commitments held the person with whom the interview was agreed.

The three focus groups were organised between March and September 2019, in Kacheliba (West Pokot County), Marsabit (Marsabit County), and Nairobi. In the first two locations, all those who participated in the interviews were invited to the focus groups. All but one (in Marsabit) participated. Concerning the group in Nairobi, the participants were all female, and only one was previously interviewed.

It is worth noticing the composition of the focus groups, especially as far as age is concerned. Naturally, older missionaries, whether male or female, have a longer permanence in their Institutes and a more extended ministerial experience, and they prevalently come from Europe. The historical Provinces of MCCJ and CMS are Italy, Germany, and Spain. However, they have gone through the passage of increasing multiculturalism in the Institutes, with a growing presence of new generations of missionaries from Countries and cultures different from their own.

The age of the participants in the focus group of Marsabit was quite homogeneous, between 37 and 47 out of four missionaries, with an average of 41. Kariobangi and Kacheliba focus groups were somehow different. Kariobangi had a higher age average (60.83 out of six participants), but with a broader range, between one sister of 39 years and two sisters of 80. Consequently, even the years of belonging to the Institute CMS were scattered, between 14 up to 59. The composition mirrors the current situation in the CMS, and the current challenges, particularly concerning the growing multicultural presence.

While there is a terrible effort by the older sisters to fit into a reality entirely different from the one at the time when they joined the congregation, it is clear that this passage has posed many challenges to them. It has required a great effort in adaptation. Some expressions used in the discussion by the older sisters seem to reveal that the challenge is still ongoing and the passage not fully completed yet. “To help them...”, “I have to accept them...” may reveal that now they find themselves in a situation, which they did not actively choose. It came to be because of external

reasons, and they had to adapt to it. Nevertheless, the result is encouraging, as they do live together in a multicultural community - something, which for an older person is more difficult to accept.

The same background appears in the focus group held in Kacheliba. Among the six participants, the age went from a minimum of 31 to a maximum of 86, with an average of 48.66. The distribution of the age of permanence in the Institute is even more explicit: three members below ten years and one above 65. Tensions between older and younger missionaries, which is between long-standing and newer missionary visions, understanding, and strategies appeared in both the discussion and some of the interviews.

This was precisely the main objective of the focus groups discussions: to have the participants interact among themselves, from their particular, individual perspective and experiences. Undoubtedly, it was a richness, but it represented a challenge as well.

The data collection process presented various challenges, of which the most relevant were the role of the researcher, the level of participation of those who took part in the exercise, the use of a foreign language for the majority of the participants. Moreover, people were dealing with a topic or perspective, which for many of them was unexplored.

The role of the researcher: The study used a critical theory paradigm, which acknowledges and challenges existing socio-cultural, political, economic, ethnic, and gender-based forces, which shape reality. In this paradigm, as explained in chapter three, the researcher and the researched interacted. In collecting and analysing the data, the researcher took concrete steps to try to maintain a clear awareness of his role in the process. The first step was the self-awareness of being part of the case study, the Comboni Family, which meant that the researcher had a previous, variably deep relationship with all the participants. The second step was the acknowledgement that the theoretical framework and personal perspective of the researcher unavoidably conditioned the process of data collection and analysis. Therefore, assuring objectivity required that the researcher recognised how his vision and perspective were situated (positioned), which means partial, not universal nor definitive. Triangulation in data analysis guaranteed the credibility of the findings, while confirmation of the analysis by a third party ensured its confirmability. Lastly, the awareness of his position, assumptions and possible biases made the researcher careful in not implicitly suggesting content to the participants when answering during the interviews or debating in the focus groups.

Level of involvement of the participants: It widely varied in different situations due to several factors. The first factor is linked to the individual personality: people are different and participated differently in the exercise. Some spoke at length, although not always on the topic, while with others, it was more challenging to obtain a definite answer linked to personal experience. The second factor was time, which, in a few situations, conditioned the interviews: the participant had to finish in a given time due to impellent other commitment. Partly, that is why some interviews lasted one hour and others only thirty minutes. A third factor was the objective capacity of the participant to interact on the topic of the research. Some people maintained a descriptive level of analysis, for example, concerning their ministry or their experience of the multicultural community. Others managed to go a step deeper, offering a more in-depth picture of their interactions with people of different cultures, visions, and formation. This becomes a point of reflection where it emerges from the data: the capability of connecting personal experience and formation, multicultural relationships in the community, and collaborative pastoral ministry.

Use of English: Besides the great majority of participants not being originally English speaking, among them, the mastery of the foreign language was diverse. Hence, not always was the fluency in speaking, and the proper use of English grammar, satisfactory. This aspect had repercussions at the moment of transcribing the audio of both interviews and focus group discussions. The transcription *verbatim* left the text in the same spoken form, which, when read by a third party, could cause some misunderstanding. Nevertheless, there was no situation, in which what the participants conveyed was not clear enough to get the sense of their communication.

For this study, the data were collected through individual in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and analysis of archival documents. Table 5 indicates the relations between research questions, the major topics in each of them, and the three data sources.

Table 5

Research Questions in Relation to Data Sources

Research Question	Typologies	Interview Questions	FG Guidelines	Archival documents
1. What is the pastoral practitioners' awareness of their social identities and positionality in their personal history and formation?	Social Identity	IQ1		Rule of Life (MCCJ, 1988) Rule of Life (CMS, 1987) Letters on Interculturality (MCCJ, 1999, 2019) Attention to the person (2001) Mileto, 2018a, 2018b
	Positionality	IQ2		

2. What is the individual pastoral practitioners' awareness of their social identities and positionality in their social transformative action?	Ministry (pastoral action for social transformation)	IQ3, IQ4, IQ5		Chapter Acts (MCCJ, 1997-2015) Ratio Missionis (2012)
3. What is the individual pastoral practitioners' perception of the influence of SCC (social identities and positionality) on their interpersonal relationships in a multicultural Comboni community?	Experience of a multicultural community		FGQ1	The multicultural community (CMS, 1997) Rule of Life (MCCJ, 1998). Attention to the person (2001).
	(Common?) Vision of ministry		FGQ2 FGQ3	Chapter Acts (MCCJ, 1997-2015) Ratio Missionis (2012)
4. What is the individual pastoral practitioners' perception of SCC (social identities and positionality) in the collaboration in social transformative action within a multicultural Comboni community?	Ministry in and as community		FGQ4	Chapter Acts (MCCJ, 1997-2015) Ratio Missionis (2012) Letters on Interculturality (MCCJ, 1999, 2019)

Source: Author

All interviews and focus group discussions were recorded, transcribed *verbatim*, and uploaded in the software NVivo 12.

3.6 Data Analysis

A qualitative design is emergent, in the sense that collection of data, the timing of analysis and integration of analysis with other tasks of the research go together: "The process of data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic" (Merriam, 2009, p. 169). Besides, in qualitative research, "data are not collected but generated, co-created, or at least selected to reflect the assumption that knowledge does not exist independently of the inquirer" (Jones, 2000, p. 68; see also Merriam, 1998). The analysis of the first data shed greater light on the collection of the subsequent ones. Ongoing comparison of data collection and the progressive findings was essential to elaborate and interpret the data, in view of obtaining a set of emerging themes, which served to answer the research questions. The data collected, their analysis and their interpretation gave the final product of the research (Merriam, 2009).

Following Bogdan and Blinken (2007), Merriam (2009) offers some concrete steps for analysing the collected data: a) Narrowing the study, avoiding to collect data on everything; b) Choosing the type of study, whether it has to be descriptive or theory-generating; c) Developing

analytical questions which are reviewed during data collection; d) Planning data collection sessions according to previous findings; e) Not sampling recording data, but adding "observer's comments" and memos which help in critical reflection on the material; f) Involving selected participants in evaluating some emerging patterns; g) Reviewing the literature on the topic while data are being collected; h) Using metaphors, analogies, concepts, and visualizations of what is emerging. Coding the data is also essential as it helps to retrieve them or part of them at any stage of the research.

The process of data analysis used typological and thematic analysis (Ayres & Knafl, 2008; Hatch, 2002) as the initial framework. LeCompte and Goetz describe typological analysis as "dividing everything observed into groups or categories on the basis of some canon for disaggregating the whole phenomenon under study" (1993, p. 257). Hatch (2002, p. 152) writes that "typologies are generated from theory, common sense, and/or research objectives, and initial data processing happens within those typological groupings". At the beginning of the analysis process, the use of typological analysis facilitated the identification of general topics, or classifications (see table 6) and the creation of categories based on the initial framework given by the research questions. The process helped to "disaggregate" the data set from the whole into elements based on the predetermined categories (Hatch, 2002, p. 152). Table 6 indicates the categories highlighted about the main topics of interviews and FGDs.

Table 6

Guidelines and Categories for Data Analysis

			Guidelines for data analysis	**Categories**
RQ	**Interview Blocks of Questions**			
1	1	Self-Introduction	How the participant sees himself/herself. Perception of self-identity. Connecting different, multiple social identities.	Identity
1	2	Perception of Privileges/Disadvantages	Perception of whether and how personal identity (identities) is (are) the source of privileges or disadvantages in the community and society.	Identity Power
1	3	The Multicultural Community	Perception of one's community. The multicultural community and the self.	Positionality
1	4	Relationships	Description of relationships in the community. Interpersonal and intercultural relationships.	Multicultural Community Positionality

			Guidelines for data analysis	Categories
2	5	Ministry	Description of one's ministry (how the participants describe their ministry).	Ministry (Narration)
2	6	Effectiveness of Ministry	Perception of the effectiveness of one's ministry.	Ministry (Effectiveness)
2	7	Involvement of the Community	Level of participation of the community. Am I alone? Are we planning, working, evaluating together?	Multicultural Community Ministry (Team-work)
2	8	Impact of Community Diversity on Ministry	Establishing relations between the multicultural community and one's ministry (implying the effectiveness of ministry).	Multicultural Community Ministry (Effectiveness)
2	9	Understanding of Social Transformation	How one understands social transformation.	Social Transformation
	Focus Group Discussion			
3	1	Advantages/Disadvantages of Multicultural Community	Perception of advantages/disadvantages of being in a multicultural community.	Multicultural Community
3	2	Description of Ministry	Description of one's ministry to other members of the community	Ministry (Narration)
4	3	Essential Dimensions of Ministry	What is fundamental, indispensable in one's perception, experience, opinion	Ministry (Fundamental features)
4	4	Level of Sharing of the Essential Values in the Community	Does the community share it?	Multicultural Community (Communication)
	Archival documents			
1	1	Identity of the missionary	How is the missionary defined in the archival documents?	Identity
2	2	Interculturality, Multiculturality	How is interculturality/multiculturality defined in the archival documents and other internal contributions?	Multicultural community
3	3	Ministry	How is ministry defined in the archival documents?	Ministry
4	4	Social Transformation, social mission	How is social transformation/social mission defined in the archival documents?	Social Transformation

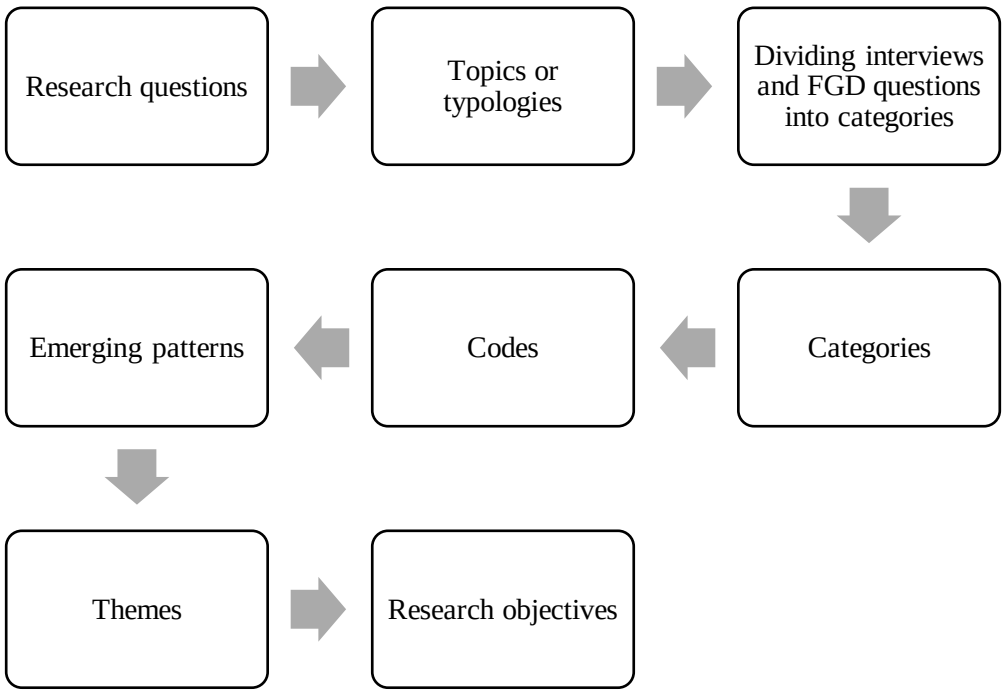
Source: Author

In the coding process, the codes were created based on the categories from the transcripts of the interviews and focus group discussions of the selected sample using the software NVivo 12 (first stage coding process). The coding process started before the completion of all interviews and FGDs, allowing an ongoing reflection on and the reviewing of the questions and guidelines, refining them as the first data were coded. Observations and thoughts for further analysis were recorded in memos linked to codes.

The second stage coding process consisted in analysing all the coded texts of all sources (interviews, FGDs, and archival documents) to identify emerging patterns, which subsequently were condensed in themes under each research question. They are presented in the next chapter. The sequence of the analysis process was as follows:

Figure 2

Process of Data Analysis



Source: Author

The codes identified were grouped according to the categories shown in Table 12 in Appendix J. The main groups of codes were the following: defining concepts, exploring the self, encountering the other, engaging in ministry, receiving the charism, social transformation, and strategies in practice. “Defining concepts” mainly refer to the archival documents, as they identify the definitions of the significant elements of the mission of the Comboni Missionaries and Comboni Missionary Sisters. The group includes codes like multiculturalism/pluralism, transculturality, the relation between charism and culture, identity, interculturality. Moreover, the coding process also considered some strategies, which are proposed at the theoretical level in the archival documents.

"Exploring the self" is the group of codes concerning everything about the participants' perception of their identity. The two principal sub-codes are single-layered identity and multi-layered identity. The first codes indicate participants describing themselves in one way, somehow missing, or not revealing an awareness of, the multiplicity of identities. On the contrary, multi-layered identity is the code used to highlight excerpts of interviews and FGDs, in which the participants show a certain degree of awareness of their multiple and complex identities. Another relevant code in this group is "privilege", which indicates the perception of the participants of whether personal identities are the source of privileges or positions of disadvantage within both the Christian and Comboni community and in society.

The third main group of codes is "encountering the other". It mainly refers to every aspect concerning the participants' encounter with the other, highlighting, in particular, the concept of positionality (how the participants position themselves in front of the other). Therefore, in the group there are codes describing attitudes and behaviours, feelings experienced and expressed in encountering the other, how the participants are aware of their diversity and the other's diversity in the event of the encounter. The narration by the participants of their experience of the multicultural community, advantages and challenges, and interpersonal and intercultural relationships are codes also included in this group.

"Engaging in ministry" groups everything concerning ministry in the perception and narration of the participants, in their context of a multicultural community and diverse social environment. Codes indicate how the participants narrate about, and relate to their ministries; how they perceive this ministry within the community (sharing of fundamental values, the involvement of the community in the ministry of the individuals, impact of community ministry on reality).

The fifth group is "receiving the charism", which wants to underline the participants' perception and understanding of the charism in concrete personal, communal, and missionary experience. "Social transformation", the sixth group of codes, relates to the participants' understanding of social transformation, in relation to people/relationships, reality/structures, self (social transformation as the change of mind and attitudes), and the Church. Lastly, the code "strategies in practice" deals with any practical plan of action put in place by the participants at different levels, for improving the way of living together and enhancing the effectiveness in ministry. It is the practical side of the code "strategies in theory" in the first group of codes, emerging from archival documents.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

All researches aim to produce valid and reliable results ethically. The statement is true also in the case of qualitative research, in which case, the transparent and unbiased role of the researcher is determinant to the acceptability of the results. Usually, credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability are terms used in place of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity, which are commonly part of quantitative terminology (Merriam, 2009).

Credibility refers to the believability and trustworthiness of the findings, something that only the participants can assure; triangulation through different data sources was used to crosschecking information from different angles.

Dependability indicates the consistency of the findings, namely, the level of repeatability; for this, the researcher has documented all aspects involved in the research process, together with any change or unexpected occurrences.

Transferability concerns the level of possibility for any reader of transferring the findings to different contexts, which maintain similarities to the case study of the research. The presentation of the sampling process and data collection make transferability possible in a similar context of international missionary congregations.

Finally, confirmability indicates the measure of objectivity in analysing the collected data, which, in qualitative research, might be influenced by the subjectivity of the researcher. To assure this aspect, a third person, different from the researcher and the participants, has viewed and confirmed the data analysis, minimising possible misunderstandings by the researcher and creating the conditions for confirmability.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research depend on the ethical commitment of the researcher (Merriam, 2009). It requires the presentation of self, training, intellectual rigour, and methodological competence (Patton, 2002).

Issues that were carefully considered were the protection of subjects from harm, the right to privacy and confidentiality, the notion of informed consent, and avoidance of any form of deception. For this research, the consent form for the participants and the information sheet are included in Appendix C and D, respectively. Appendix A contains the Research Ethics Approval Form, which was later approved by Tangaza University College Research Ethics Committee, on

the 20th November 2018 (Appendix A1). A request for a research permit was forwarded to the Commission Secretary of the National Council for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI), which, in date, 14th January 2019, issued a Research Authorization (Appendix B).

Merriam (2009) sustains that it is only in the field that issues arise and have to be solved because "this situational nature of ethical dilemmas depends not upon a set of general pre-established guidelines but upon the investigator's own sensitivity and values" (Merriam, 2009, p. 230). The processes of interviewing and focus groups also present some ethical issues as "qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world" (Stake, 2005, p. 456). Given the topic and context of the research, Kvale's (2006) remarks on a possible exercise of dominance through interviews must be carefully taken into consideration. Indeed, "recognition of power dynamics by the social construction of knowledge in interviews is necessary to ascertain objectivity and ethicality in interview research" (Kvale, 2006, p. 480).

Having been duly notified about the research, MCCJ and CMS Provincial Superiors in Kenya gave their consent to involve members of their communities. The MCCJ and CMS members who were asked to take part in the research were duly informed about procedures used in interviews and focus group discussions, confidentiality and their right of accessing the data and withdrawing at any moment of the process. All of them read and signed the Research Participant Consent Form (Appendix C), besides filling an Information Sheet (Appendix D) for necessary biographical information. Both Forms and Information Sheets are kept in the office of the researcher. Confidentiality was assured throughout the process of data collection.

3.9 Data Collection Matrix

Table 7 represents the matrix for data collection, which indicates the objectives, the method of data collection, the sample size, the instruments used, and the type of analysis.

Table 7

Matrix for Data Collection

Objectives	Method of Data Collection	Sampling Techniques and Sample Size	Instruments	Analysis
1) To explore if and how the dimensions of SCC (social identities and positionality) are perceived by the MCCJ and CMS individual pastoral practitioners in their personal history, and formation;	In-depth interview	29 participants purposefully selected	Interview guide	Transcription of audio. Thematic analysis. Software Nvivo.
2) To explore if and how the dimensions of SCC (social identities and positionality) are perceived by the MCCJ and CMS individual pastoral practitioners in their social transformative action (pastoral ministry);	In-depth interview	29 participants purposefully selected	Interview guide	Transcription of the audio. Thematic analysis. Software Nvivo.
Total participants in interviews		29		
3) To explore if and how the dimensions of SCC (social identities and positionality) are perceived by the MCCJ and CMS individual pastoral practitioners in their interpersonal relationships as members of a concrete multicultural Comboni community;	Focus Group discussion	Three homogeneous focus groups, one of 4 and two of 6 participants, purposefully selected	Focus group discussion guide	Memos and transcription of the audio. Thematic analysis. Software Nvivo.

Objectives	Method of Data Collection	Sampling Techniques and Sample Size	Instruments	Analysis
4) To explore if and how the dimensions of SCC (social identities and positionality) are perceived by the MCCJ and CMS individual pastoral practitioners in their collaborations in social transformative action, as members of a concrete multicultural Comboni community.	Focus Group discussion	Three homogeneous focus groups, one of 4 and two of 6 participants, purposefully selected	Focus group discussion guide	Memos and transcription of the audio. Thematic analysis. Software Nvivo.
Total participants in focus group discussion		16		
Total sample		**45 (of which 34 are unique units of analysis - see Appendix I)**		

Source: Author

3.10 Pilot Study

A pilot study is a small test whose main aim is to ensure the practical feasibility of the methods put in place (Y. Kim, 2011). There are some reservations on whether to conduct a pilot study in qualitative research. For example, according to Sampson (2016), pilot study may be understood only as a test of research instruments, linking it "with more positivist approaches in social sciences" (2016, p. 383). Kim points out that pilot study may go against the very concept of qualitative research which uses "an emergent design" in a way that "data collection and data analysis (…) are often subject to change once implemented" (Y. Kim, 2011, p. 192).

Before formally beginning data collection, the researcher organised a pilot focus group discussion with five participants, which is the average number of participants foreseen in the data collection. The main aim of the pilot study was to assess the guidelines of focus groups discussion and to self-evaluate the researcher's "readiness, capability, and commitment as a qualitative researcher" (Y. Kim, 2011, p. 193).

On December 5, 2018, a pilot focus group discussion among five Comboni Missionaries was conducted in one Comboni community in Nairobi. The participants were purposefully

sampled among the students of theology, according to the criteria indicated in the Sampling Techniques (see Table 8). They were between 27 and 33 years of age, represented a multicultural group (five different nationalities), and were involved in pastoral work. Moreover, they offered a good capacity to explore and interpret their experience in reference to the topic of the research.

Table 8

Pilot Focus Group

Participant	Tool	Pseudonym	Age Group	Years in the Institute	Continent	Ministry	Gender
1	FGD	Blake	20-40	4	AF	Urban pastoral	M
2	FGD	Cale	20-40	4	AM	Urban pastoral	M
3	FGD	Vince	20-40	9	AF	Urban pastoral	M
4	FGD	Finn	20-40	10	AF	Urban pastoral	M
5	FGD	Saul	20-40	9	AF	Youth Ministry	M

Source: Author

The participants were introduced to the topic of the research through the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix D). They all signed the Research Participation Consent Form (Appendix C), and they gave some necessary personal information. The discussion was recorded, with the consent of the participants, and later transcribed by the researcher.

As the pilot study involves a small sample, it is "not intended to produce results" (Y. Kim, 2011, p. 192), but to test the feasibility of the methods. Consequently, some observations were made on the exercise, which were useful in assessing the approach and guidelines used.

The first general observation was the absence of group dynamic. The focus group tended to be more a sequence of individual interviews than a real discussion among the participants. An initial uneasiness created an excessively formal setting. The existing relationships among the participants and the researcher could have contributed to this aspect. However, the tension disappeared as the participants were answering, and all in all, the communication was relaxed and open.

Initially, the participants introduced themselves and described their ministerial experience. Then, they were invited to describe their multicultural community and their perceived connection between the community and their ministry. Although all the participants were still students, in the

process of formation and with limited pastoral experience, they were given the possibility to choose the experience they considered most significant. The criterion of relevance was already an indication of a personal reflection on the experience itself and openness to share.

The discussion revolved around the topic of the community, understood in its double meaning: the in-group of the Comboni Missionaries in a given Comboni community, and the out-group of the Christian community where the Comboni Missionaries were ministering. The participants seemed to refer more often and more quickly to the external community (the community of the people they were ministering to) than to the internal Comboni community. A revision and improvement of the guidelines was done to make the connection between ministry and Comboni community clearer, particularly considering the involvement of the Comboni community in the ministry of the individual member. However, this fact also suggested that the focus of the participants tends to be predominantly on the external context, that is, the community of people with whom they minister, at both social and ecclesial level. The dynamics internal to the Comboni community seemed not to attract the same level of reflection. The pilot study highlighted this aspect as a possible focus of attention, which eventually was confirmed by the field data.

The pilot study clarified that it was more relevant to have in-depth interviews first and then focus group discussions, preferably with the same participants who participated in the interview. In-depth interviews helped to create a personal awareness on the topic of the study, which was later deepened in the context of the focus group discussions. It was therefore, advisable to have FGDs with members of the same Comboni community or pastoral zone since the already existing knowledge and collaboration would facilitate the dynamics of the discussion.

The guidelines of the focus group discussion were reviewed, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Modification of Focus Group Guidelines and Topics after Pilot Study

Focus Groups Guidelines and Topics *before* Pilot Study	**Focus Groups Guidelines and Topics *after* Pilot Study**
Self-introduction	Self-introduction
Description of the multicultural Comboni community	Description of the multicultural Comboni community
Description of the ministry the participant wants to refer to and why it is important for the participants	Description of the ministry the participant wants to refer to and why it is important for the participants
Do you think your community acknowledges this importance? How?	Was your community involved in your ministry? How? How did you involve the community in your ministry (planning, reporting)?

Have you ever experienced divergence of opinion (vision, methodology, and implementation) concerning your ministry (or the ministry of another member of the community)? Can you share about it? (content, causes, strategies for solution)	Did you experience any divergence or particular difficulty, or, on the contrary, any significant success in such an involvement?
Would you say that your community helps/does not help you in your ministry? Why do you think so?	Looking at your personal experience, would you say that your multicultural Comboni community helps or does not help in your ministry? Why do you think so?

Source: Author

Conclusion

The chapter has described the research design for qualitative research within the paradigm of critical theory, which was briefly presented as the epistemological framework of the study. It has explained the methodology of case study, which is applied to the Institutes MCCJ and CMS in the Comboni Family among the international missionary congregations. Issues of sampling techniques, instruments of data collection and analysis, besides some essential ethical considerations were also discussed, together with questions of validity and reliability applied to a qualitative study. The chapter closed with a description of the process of data analysis.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Introduction

The chapter presents the analysis of the data linked to each of the four research questions, the emerging themes and the findings supporting them. Findings and themes are directly linked to the research questions and supported by relevant quotations from the participants. Each research question is considered in separate sections, which present a summary of the key findings (Dale Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

The study had four research questions (see section 1.5). The first two focused inwardly on the self, that is, the relation of the individual pastoral practitioner to the self and to ministry. The third and fourth research questions focused outwardly on the relation of the individual pastoral practitioner with others, in the multicultural context of a Comboni community, and with ministry as a collective action of the community. In all the research questions, the subject is always the self, considered as an individual (first two research questions, answered primarily through interviews) or as a member of a multicultural community (third and fourth research questions, answered principally through FGDs). The interviews and FGDs invited a personal and group narration of the different dimensions included in the guidelines for the discussion: identity and self-representation, the experience of belonging to a multicultural context, and the ministerial pastoral action, its perceived effectiveness and the level of shared values within the community. As the research questions are distinct but connected, so are the emerging patterns in the data. Findings might seem to overlap; in reality, they are dealing with similar issues from different perspectives.

4.1 Individual Awareness of Social Critical Consciousness and Personal History

The first research question explored the awareness of the individual (the self) in front of self. It was addressed through interview questions on self-definition and perception of privileges or disadvantages, and the analysis of selected archival documents.

The major themes that emerged under Research Question One were the role of charism in individual and social identities, with the tendency of the participants to define themselves mainly through charismatic identity, and the fact that privileges were primarily understood as abilities to act and empowerment to fulfil religious vocation and practice ministry.

4.1.1 Self-representation through charism and mission

The vast majority mainly focused on vocation and charismatic identity, sometimes after a few introductory words on personality and family background. The self-representation is concentrated on the identity received by joining the missionary Institute, and the following ministry exercised in the mission. For example, Jack affirms:

> Something that I think it is important, it is for the identity, for sure is the work I am doing or the vocation I am trying to fulfil. So, it is to be a missionary, to be a priest, to be part of the Comboni Missionaries congregation. It is, for sure, a very big part of this identity. On this, there are built many other things… I belong to a certain community also, let us say, culturally speaking, or from the language point of view… but I do not feel very much attached to it (Jack, 18/03/2019).

Mark, after some quick description of his personality, concludes, "That is about my personality, then in terms of whom I am: I am a Comboni Missionary priest" (Mark, 17/03/2019).

Evidently, charismatic identity is not negative or in any way diminishing the 'real' identity. Nevertheless, there is little or no capacity among the participants who were interviewed to connect their background to the present way of thinking, knowing, and acting, which emerges from the new charismatic identity.

In many missionaries, men and women, the event of joining the Institute has marked a precise turning point in their lives. It is quite evident in the testimony of Luke, who, after understanding that "it was worthy to dedicate my life to the Gospel", left "his business studies…fascinated by the ideal of Comboni to regenerate Africa through Africa":

> Therefore, I changed my way… I liked this choice, and I chose to become a Comboni Missionary. This is somehow my identity, a proclaimer of the Gospel in the path of Comboni… I would define myself as somebody who renounced, who chose this life of a missionary, an ambulant missionary because he thinks that the Word of God can really change the life of the people to the better (Luke, 9/04/2019).

Judy as well shared about the huge change that becoming and being a Comboni Sister has brought into her life, "This experience of my consecration to God has marked my life a lot, has changed me, the way I look at things, the way I judge, the way I do, the way I live with others, what I value" (Judy, 9/09/2019).

Archival documents reiterate this approach to identity through charism, as the Chapter Acts 2009 shows:

> We profess ourselves to be people passionate about mission: (a) chosen and called… consecrated and sent to evangelize (*ad gentes*); (b) mission as the proclamation of the gospel of reconciliation and liberation is the fundamental option of our existence, which takes us out of the limited circle of our boundaries and opens us to the whole world (*ad extra*) ready to spend our whole lives in its service (*ad vitam*) (Comboni Missionaries, 2009 no. 5.1).

Comboni Missionary Sisters go in the same line, when they affirm that they are "Women of the Gospel consecrated to God for the Mission A Gentes, Ad extra, Ad Vitam" (Chapter Acts 2004, cited in Comboni Missionary Sisters, 2016, p. 19). The 2004 text goes even further speaking of a "sense of citizenship in the charism wherever we are".

Some participants revealed a greater awareness of multiple identities originating from the multicultural context of the family. From his personal experience, Hank revealed that losing his parents early in his life and living in "bigger families" until formal adoption by his uncle's family, also numerous, gave him "a kind of exposure to the reality that I am living now, to stay with many people" (Hank, 13/04/2019).

Other two interviewees, Dave and Jill, underlined the importance of a context in which they have been exposed to diversity (mixed, multicultural families). In answering the question, their approach was entirely different: they spent time describing their cultural family background, which had a significant impact on the formation of their persons:

> I was born in a family that already did, already was doing the experience of multiculturalism. And more than this: I was born in an intercultural family. My mother is <nationality>, my father <nationality>. This makes two people from totally different cultures, united in matrimony, are already intercultural… I grew up in a family, as I said, which is intercultural (Dave, 25/01/2019).

Cultural mixture is also underlined in the sharing of Jill:

> I am a <nationality>, a mix of cultures. I am we call <ethnic group>, and half we call <ethnic group>, it's the mix between <nationality> and <nationality>. So there are two different cultures in my country, so I am the combination of the two of them. I am a woman. I am a religious woman (Jill, 9/09/2019).

It is interesting to notice the contribution of Max:

> I am from a tribe called <name> in <country>, and that is the area… the first missionaries, when they reached the country, they reached also to my village, to try to expand the good news. But at some point, things did not go on well, and then they had to leave. It is an area people say it is a cursed village because of the clashes between the missionaries and the people from the village and coming from that area all of us being aware of what happened in the history; we catch somehow what our parents lived as the identity that we are the cursed people, in the world. But for now, I will say maybe some few different causes, also the area was said to be cursed, but out of that area God has given me a new identity to be His minister as a priest, so from being a cursed person to the minister of God. So that I can say why I have a new identity (Max, 9/09/2019).

Therefore, in Max's experience (in the way he perceives his experience), the new charismatic identity received by God's grace has undone the curse pending on his ethnic group because of the clashes between the people and the first missionaries. The clashes 'produced' a curse on the people, a fact that may be indicative of how Max perceives his culture and the presence of the missionaries. By accepting the new identity given by God, that is, by becoming a missionary, Max has contributed to undo the evil outcome originated at the time of clashes between his people and the first missionaries. It is also interesting the fact that Max refers back to his cultural origins only to show how the new identity as God's minister, as a priest, has to be valued above everything else.

4.1.2 No or minimum awareness of privileges in the life of pastoral practitioners

The interview question on possible situations of privilege originating from the position of the participants (their family background, gender, ethnicity, formal education, social status) quite often was received with a motion of surprise. In the answers, the participants took some moments in answering, as if they were collecting their thoughts on something they never thought of, or about which they were not used to think.

Most of the participants seemed to understand privileges as abilities to do things, empowerment to fulfil their vocation and practice their ministry. For example, Mark refers to what he has (which, from a charismatic perspective, makes him who he is) as gifts from God:

> God has given some gifts… what I mean is it is a God's gift; it is not something that I worked for it. It is something that I have been granted. It is something that I found within myself. It is not something that I am working for it to be creative (Mark, 17/03/2019).

Burt and Eddy are aware of their privileged position because of their education. Burt sees the privilege in the context of his family, while Eddy focuses more on the professional empowerment in all his activities:

> From my family, I was the last born, and then I was one who attend, who finished secondary school, to go to university, before I entered [the Institute]. So, I think that is a privilege for me, in my family… I am lucky. I am lucky. (Burt, 18/03/2019)

> I think my studies helped me a lot and it could be also that, that is my advantage, that… In any case, nobody has to say anything for my professionality because that saves me all the time in all the activities that I did (Eddy, 1/05/2019).

For some participants, 'being a priest' and 'being a white man' are both situations of privilege. They were the only two situations of perceived privilege connected with a context broader than the single life of the individual. Nevertheless, there was no deeper reflection on the global contexts of the Church and society, in which such privileges flourish. 'Being a priest' is a benefited status simply because in the Church it is "exaggerated" (Jack), putting the person of the ordained minister above all others. Lay people tend to accept the situation, and even to magnify it. This opinion is shared among the different participants, for example, Jim, Neil, and Ross. In the same line, Judy recognised that "being a sister, being dressed like a sister…gives protection, but sometimes also privilege" (Judy), but this situation gives her "a responsibility", that is to behave and act in the way people expect.

'Being a white man' is also understood to be a privilege because people tend to think that such a position is linked to economic power and offers "respect" (Erik). Carl (a European) also experienced this when living in another country: "I realised my being white was definitely it, was definitely a door opening, it was always halfway through the door already". However, Carl also said that from experience, he started being colour blind:

> It's very hard for me to see the colour. Yeah, I have the words, I know the attitudes of rejection, but the colour honestly… in that I know, I'm very colour blind, I don't care, it doesn't affect me a bit (Carl, 5/09/2019).

Cole shared on this point from the opposite perspective. Coming from "a third world country", he explained how he feels limited in answering to economic needs of the people, while "fellow confreres coming maybe from the first world might be having more privilege to respond to such a need" (Cole, 10/04/2019).

Luke, an European missionary, aged above 70, admits,

> We are always in a position of privilege compared to where we are, what we do… As foreign missionaries, in the situation where we are. Maybe we would be in a disadvantaged position in Europe, in America, in the Western world, but in Africa, in India, in Asia, in Latin America, we are always advantaged. And this disturbs me somehow. It annoys me a bit (Luke, 9/04/2019).

A different approach is one of Erik, according to whom privilege coming from better material, economic status is something necessary to be able to serve the people. Being in a healthy condition, "well attended in everything" is "uneasy", but a necessary condition for the expatriate missionary, who would not be able "to live like them" (Erik). The better status of the missionary is seen only within the background, in which the missionary and the people are situated.

Cultural origin was also seen as an advantage because of the Christian roots of that culture: "I think is, is an advantage. Not putting the people down, but I think that the Christian roots are an advantage in comparison to them..." (Erik, 1/05/2019).

4.2 Relationship between Individual's Awareness of Social Critical Consciousness and Pastoral Ministry

The second research question explored the awareness of the individual pastoral practitioners in front of their ministry and the influence of their identities and positionalities on the social transformative action. It was addressed through some archival documents and interview questions on the multicultural community, relationships, and ministry as perceived and narrated by the participants. Some archival documents were also used to answer the question.

The major themes that emerged under Research Question Two were the prioritisation of mission over identities (the participants' focus on what they do). These were confirmed the

participants' understanding of social transformation that appeared to imply a divide between religious mission and social mission, and the persistence of a binary perspective in ministry (we/they).

4.2.1 Prioritising mission over identities

Almost all participants tended to bypass the issue of identity and 'jump' quickly to the one of ministry. The tendency appeared to be a preference of action over being, or, to put it more honestly, of defining oneself through the ministry carried out in the church and society. It is directly connected with the theme that emerged under research question one, that is, the representation of the self through charismatic identity and ministry. The charism is perceived as shaping the pastoral action more than the identity.

When Ben said,

> I have always loved to define myself as the man of the Word, which could also be translated a communicator, a communicator through the word. And the Word could also have a capital letter because being a missionary, the word I esteem most is the Word of God. And I have always tried to be a good voice for this Word, trying to make it understandable (Ben, 29/03/2019),

he was defining himself not only through the charism but more directly through the ministry as he experienced and fulfilled it in his missionary life. It looks as if there was no Ben before becoming "the man of the word", which corresponds to service for others (making the word understandable). Carl is on the same line affirming that he feels "pretty much identified with my vocation and what I do" (Carl).

The participants seemed to describe their ministry through an implicit logical sequence, in which 'religious mission' precedes 'social mission'. Generally, social mission is acknowledged and practised. However, it is sometimes generically defined as "a lot of things in development side" (Burt), and it appears to be subsequent to pastoral work. Therefore, for example, Steve clearly affirms his "obligation" as a priest: "My ministry as a priest first is my obligation, the main task to administer sacraments, especially here in the parish and going to different outstations to administer the sacraments, and that is the main obligation here as a priest" (Steve, 18/03/2019).

Jack fixes the priority of being here "first of all" as a priest: "I am here, first of all, as a missionary, as a priest… The ministry that I am doing for sure is connected with the vocation as a priest and missionary" (Jack, 18/03/2019).

Burt continues in the same line. In his statement, it is interesting noting his expression "and then also", which seem to confirm the temporal second place of any action different from a direct religious mission:

> We are celebrating the sacraments, Eucharist, masses in the zones, we are visiting also the schools, and then also we are giving sponsorships to the children whose parents are not able. And then also a lot of things in development side, also activities, pastoral activities, and then as a parish priest, I try to animate the team to be involved and then to involve the Christian communities (Burt, 18/03/2019).

The focus on mission is also detectable in the understanding that the participants have about social transformation.

4.2.2 Individual's understanding of social transformation

In connection with one's understanding of and position towards ministry, during the interview, a question was asked about the understanding of social transformation. The common understanding of ministry in general, and social transformation, in particular, is a process that is oriented towards the outside (focus on what is done or to be done, changing the reality and influencing people's life) – very few considered self-transformation as part of social transformation. For example, Judy directly referred to social transformation as a process of changing mentality, when she said, "social transformation I would look at it... first of all change of mentality, what I believe in (...) decision, change of mentality, then decision to do something about it and to be faithful to follow up" (Judy, 9/09/2019). Jack also, explaining his understanding of social transformation as a process bringing about a "durable, stable change", mentioned mentality and culture. In order to be durable, the change must touch people's culture and mentality that is the view and understanding of the world.

Four participants, Jill, Eddy, Joan and Burt, explained social transformation in different aspects. Notable is the explanation from Jill who stressed the relation with and involvement of the people,

> I understand maybe social transformation in a… a way to change what… the reality, can be small or big society, but with the people inside, no? Everybody has to be involved, for improving something in common that is affecting… But it needs to be like… if it is social, it needs to be together to change something (Jill, 9/09/2019).

Eddy saw himself as a sort of catalyst of a transformation in society that is ongoing,

> I am a part of it of course if I am here, whether they want or not, I am bringing new ideas or view, some development, some, eh... activities and so on... eh, some education and that is part of the social transformation... (Eddy, 1/05/2019).

Joan offered a three-layered definition of social transformation as a process that has to do with structures, individuals, and relationships. Any change of structures must come from the personal involvement of individuals, who pursue their personal but shared visions of life, and it has to be done with the people (relationships).

Lastly, Burt spoke about development. He linked the possibility of transformation with the change "of our involvement to give chance to the people" and the effort to "find something else, which can help people to move in their life and to change mentality because the world is moving on, but it is like here the world has stopped" (Burt, 18/03/2019). He underlined the reality that there has been "the same development" for ages, but "nothing is moving on".

The understanding of mission and social transformation are connected with the perception of the effectiveness of the pastoral action carried among the people.

4.2.3 Individual's understanding of effectiveness of ministry

When addressing the pastoral practitioners' perception of their pastoral action, a question was posed concerning the effectiveness of ministry. The intention was to understand better what the participants understood for effectiveness: when can they consider their ministry effective? Moreover, it was also intended to explore whether informants were able to connect their position to the effectiveness of their ministry.

Many of the respondents connected effectiveness to the achievement of the objectives of their particular ministry, whatever was the field of action. Achieving the objectives also meant listening to the people who are reached out through the ministry and seeing positive outcomes in their lives (Joan). Jude acknowledged that, though he thought that his ministry was useful, in reality, he realised that he did not have the tools to make a truthful impact assessment. "Up to now – he said – honestly speaking, I haven't proven scientifically that this work I'm doing has an impact" (Jude, 29/03/2019).

Neil also underlined the need to change methodology and approach, especially in terms of greater involvement of the people in the decision-making processes.

> I think, I tend to think some people's understanding, we need maybe to start doing things differently, many, many aspects... I think there is… some Christians are aware that maybe we need… maybe to… maybe to be involved more in all areas, in all areas. I don't limit it to any area, I think in terms of people able to take responsibility, make decisions and also move on, in terms of what pertains to them… (Neil, 10/04/2019).

Jill highlighted the dimensions of trust and positive, "horizontal" relationships in the place of work as two fundamental components to assure, or to facilitate effectiveness in ministry. "Horizontal" relationships are the opposite of "vertical", hierarchical, top-down relationships.

> I think it was effective, I can say because the person who was like the leader came to trust [me], so you can go ahead. It can be, I felt also it was effective when it was like a kind of... if I have doubt, I can go to ask. When I did not do that, maybe something was not coming out. Also, when the people cannot trust… it will not work. But it works when… it was very effective when it was a kind of… not vertical, (but) horizontal. I felt that when the work was done like that, it was working very well. But when it was very vertical, one of the two can block (Jill, 9/09/2019).

Lastly, a relevant point was brought up by Carl, who works with particularly emarginated and discriminated people:

> It is effective as a whole I think yes; I think we make a small dent honestly… Certain perceptions, even the perception even in <location> has changed a lot in the community at large, people were very perplexed, and I think there, yes, we have made a dent… that was one of my goals, the perception of people who look at them (Carl, 5/09/2019).

The ministry was considered effective not only because it has attained its objectives, but also because it has contributed to a change of perspective and mentality in the broader civic and Christian community.

4.2.4 Pastoral practitioners' positionality towards the others: Persistence of a binary perspective "we/they"

In the ministerial approach to people and situations, participants seemed to be divided into two categories. Some maintained a 'being-with-people' approach. During an FGD, Burt affirmed

that “instead of doing the things for the people, I want to be with them and do together with them, to do things together with them, and also learn from them” (Burt, 18/03/2019). For his part, in his interview, Dave recalled his missionary experience with the people:

> Being with the indigenous peoples reminded us of the process of conquering land in the old testament, of the search for the promised land. It made us believe that it is possible to believe in Jesus, in all his evangelical proposal. And who helped us to live and better understand this were the indigenous peoples themselves, how? Being there with them, simply, maybe doing nothing, listening to them (Dave, 25/01/2019).

However, there were participants, who showed a different approach, emphasising more their role in leading, instructing and forming the people. Mark seemed to be very explicit on this:

> I can say my ministry here, I am an educator, let us talk the first thing, an educator. In the sense that, apart from being a priest and saying the masses and this, you need something beyond that. This means the people that I am working with, they need to be educated, and I have identified areas in which they need education, proper. (…) So I feel my pastoral work here is to give instructions on matters concerning faith, matters concerning social wellbeing, apart from faith, social wellbeing (Mark, 17/03/2019).

Evidently, in Mark’s understanding, being a priest and educator empowers him to “give instructions” and “identify areas” in which people need “proper education”.

Eddy communicated that while staying and working with the people, he tries “to give some suggestions to change the other or improve more than changing, improve their lives, also bringing new ideas sometimes and working with them to see if they work, they do not work and so on” (Eddy, 1/05/2019). Joan continued along the same line:

> Because I always feel that when I go, something must remain. If something has to remain, the people have to learn how to do things in their own way. We work together; we share our knowledge. We are all… many of us now are educated. Many of the people out there they have some knowledge, they have some capacities, but when not encouraged, they will always remain dormant. But if they are encouraged, they are able to get something (Joan, 29/09/2019).

It seems that 'being-with-people' is understood as a pastoral strategy to achieve a goal, a change in the life of the people. Nevertheless, the change is still initiated by the missionary through their presence with the people. People do have some qualities and talents, but must be pushed not "to remain dormant". It appears that the separation "we-they" is still maintained. Missionaries see themselves with the people, yet somehow separated from them in terms of competence, knowledge, vision, and understanding of reality. It is this positionality and epistemological imbalance that needs to be further analysed and interpreted.

Having analysed the data on the participants' perception of their pastoral ministry, the next section will focus on multicultural relationships in the context of a Comboni community.

4.3 Individual's awareness of Social Critical Consciousness in multicultural relationships

The third research question explored the individuals in their relationship with others, in the context of a multicultural community. The question was addressed mainly through FGD guidelines on the perceptions of advantages or disadvantages of a multicultural community and the essential values in ministry as understood by the participants. The complexity of social critical consciousness in a multicultural context was explored through the participants' narration of two situations. The first was the personal experience in that context (narration of the multicultural community); the second situation was when the values that are perceived as essential met with the essential values of others.

The major themes that emerged under Research Question Three were the common experience of a disorienting dilemma, namely the widespread perception of a gap between the charismatic ideal and the complex, multicultural reality, in both the community and social environment. A gap is perceived between the ideal and the real, as well as concerning the past and the present of the individuals. It points towards a disconnection on how the participants perceived themselves before and after joining missionary life. The participants seemed to express a difficulty or inability to face this complexity, experienced, for example, in the challenge of cross-cultural communication.

4.3.1 Facing complexity in a multicultural community

Throughout the archival documents, the ideal of the charism and the priority of mission are presented as something given, a fact, an undoubted reality. They define the Institutes, as the *Letter of presentation* of the MCCJ Chapter Acts 1997 affirms plainly:

> Yes, mission is the centre, the heart if you like, of this General Chapter. We did not attempt to give a definition of mission. Instead, we expressed it in a descriptive way. It has to do with our life, our vocation, our work, our being, our journey of faith. Without mission, we cannot be Comboni missionaries. Mission goes with us, wherever we are and work in the name of the Institute (Lopes Ferreira et al., 1997, p. 10).

Missionaries come together in their diversities because they are called by the Spirit. "We welcome with joy the many faces of the Institute" (Comboni Missionaries, 2009), and the Institute "does not suppress diversities, but makes them factors of unity" (Comboni Missionaries, 1988, no. 18). Belonging to an international Institute and living in a multicultural community allows the members to "relate with other cultures" and "to open up to cultural diversity" (Comboni Missionary Sisters, 1997). The international nature of MCCJ and CMS has been recognised as an integral part of the charism since the very beginning of their respective histories.

However, it is only in the last two decades that internationality has been connected with multiculturalism and different dimensions of social identity, and has been perceived as a challenge. Archival documents show that there is a growing awareness of the value of interculturality (Comboni Missionary Sisters, 2004, no. 9), that living in multicultural contexts requires "a cross-cultural option" and "a certain initial disposition towards a cross-cultural attitude" (Comboni Missionaries, 1999b). The capacity to live and face cross-cultural environments and communities was "taken for granted" (Comboni Missionaries, 2003, no. 74.7), but now requires a conscious desire "to form ourselves to be competent, to engage in a project that will make this gift [interculturality] a force for life and growth" (Comboni Missionaries, 2019).

The same process of coming to awareness of the beauty and the cross of interculturality is detectable among the CMS as well. Their last General Chapter, held in Rome in 2016, took up an indication from a previous Chapter in 2004, which is very relevant. The document said that there was "need to purify and change a mentality and language, which may convey an idea of exclusiveness of places and peoples, diminishing that sense of citizenship in the charism wherever we are" (Chapter Acts 2004, cited in Comboni Missionary Sisters, 2016, p. 19).

The strategies put in place in the official documents of the two Institutes are declarations of intent, usually through a language, which reveals a "directive" approach: "it is necessary…", "should", "will have to…", "we are all summoned to…" In some instances, there is the awareness

that “good will is not enough” in building sound relationships in a multicultural context. Hence, the document indicates the possibility, “in case of weariness or of apparent insurmountable conflict, to turn to techniques or to experts who can give guidance” (Comboni Missionaries, 1999b, no. 56). The gradualism in acquiring “an international disposition and outlook” is also acknowledged (Comboni Missionaries, 1988, no. 18.1).

Nevertheless, it seems that the indications offered in the documents tend to remain at the level of enunciation of principles. In some cases they offer a spiritual, charismatic perspective on the complexity of human multicultural relations, which should function as the foundation of both the principle itself and the consequent desirable action.

Some of the participants seemed to experience a lack of competence in facing a complex, multicultural context. For example, Luke recognised that his community was “a bit restless. It is a puzzle, which cannot be composed. Imagine four pieces…well, four pieces it is an easy puzzle, but you can’t join them”. In one of the FGDs, Alex admitted not only that communication can become a cross in a multicultural context, but also it is so “because you are sometimes unable to approach this person: from which angle am I going to enter here to communicate my message to this person?” (Alex, 13/04/2019). Not knowing how to approach the other makes communication difficult with the result that “things go unsaid, and then they become the source of real underlining problem in the community” (Alex, 13/04/2019).

Nora, an elderly European sister (age group 61-90), acknowledged that her beginnings in a multicultural community were not easy:

> We, for a long time, did not accept other people, others. So I started with this, and so I found it a bit hard… When we started accepting the Africans, for me, it was a struggle because I did not know very much other cultures (Nora, 1/10/2019).

The contrast between the ideal given by the charism and the reality clearly appears also in the experience of Lara, a young African sister (age group 20-40):

> Then from other communities that I have been, yeah, still there, I see that… though we were, how can I say? a gift, a gift from one another, there is still there that way of misunderstanding based on each one culture, each one way of living, of acting, no, those things, no? So for me, living in a multicultural community is at the time beautiful and also a challenge (Lara, 1/10/2019).

and in Alex’s disillusionment:

> We move to plan and do everything as a community, but you will discover that it is a dream of each one of us, that is the way we would like things to be like that. But then as we start the life, the life drags people in different directions, even if we are living in community life. And then all the good ideas, the good things that we would like to aspire to, may be frustrated either by the new member who has a new idea or by the old member who has the ideas (Alex, 13/04/2019).

4.3.2 Personal stories remain disconnected from one another

Interviews and focus group discussions seemed to indicate that very few participants connect their charismatic and ministerial reality with their bio-geographical and cultural past. It is as if cultural origins and ways of "being socialised into life" (Alex) had been placed in brackets. The experiences of some respondents revealed the perception that the event of discovering their vocation caused or even must cause a rupture in life. For example, Liza shared her first impact with multicultural diversity, describing it as "challenging". In her experience, trials were overcome by the consciousness of being a missionary:

> But anyhow, I would say that is, I mean, something… how do you say? Challenging. But at the same time, you feel that you are a missionary. I mean, you are not somebody else, we are missionaries. At the beginning, you come with the idea that you want to give up your life for the Lord, no? (Liza, 1/10/2019).

The biographical background remains visible mainly in the values and skills acquired in the family through the teaching and example of the parents. Therefore, Burt underlined the traditional religion of his family as facilitating his passage through the different stages of initiation and training in the Institute, while Eddy and Mark recognised the value of work as learnt from their parents. However, a particular aspect shared by Mark is worth underlining. In the context of privileges and situation of disadvantages, he highlighted some difficulties in Kenya linked to ethnic origins of the people, how it is very easy to be labelled because of a "pre-conceived knowledge about certain ethnicity". The solution proposed by Mark is, once again, the charismatic identity:

> Many people in Kenya now are fearing to say their tribe, their ethnicity […] sometimes because people they relate with you from the knowledge they had before, I can say like a pre-conceived knowledge about certain ethnicity, and sometimes this also affects our ministry… People will say that man is from that place. So

> sometimes it forces you, you do not become so open, you know, to say I am from this place, you like to remain in the… I am a priest, Comboni Missionary, finish (Mark, 17/03/2019).

The disconnection between the biographical identity and the new charismatic identity is motivated, in this case, to solve the complexity, which derives from prejudices and stereotypes on particular ethnic groups. It is still functional to the effectiveness in ministry, an aspect, which is recurrent among the participants.

On the other hand, living together in a multicultural community seemed to be considered often in a practical, functional way: it must serve the mission, it must help the people, and it gives witness of the values the community wants to transmit to other people. From a focus group discussion, it emerged the idea that people "observe us" (Lena), see what we do and how we do it, and they can perceive whether the community members are united or not. Among the participants, there seems to be the idea that the more the community is 'one', the higher and more positive is the impact on the people.

> In a community where I was, people were saying, you and the others you seem *tumbo moja*... It was strong. And the community of <location> they said these sisters change, but they keep the same way with us. And this for them was a powerful... yes... this I think is...the great thing the community has to live (Nora, 1/10/2019).

It will be necessary to understand the real meaning of 'being one': is it a unity, which is the fruit of common discernment? Or is it more in the line of uniformity, suppressing or ignoring existing differences in the name of the superior principle of charism and mission? The comment of Nora, "it was strong", seemed to reveal an awareness that the perception of the community by the people posed a serious and healthy challenge to the members as if to say, "because people do see us as one, we must endeavour in being one".

Once again, Dave represented an exception. Narrating his experience, he showed how he was helped by the people to read his life and the life of his family anew:

> And a few days ago, I was thinking about how to really overcome […] the wounds that mark one, deep wounds. It was with <the people in the mission> who, in a certain way, still live under a certain slavery, when they were asking me, where do you come from? Who are you? That I understood that the form, the natives taught

> me, that the best way to speak of freedom of spirit, on an evangelical freedom, was to feel free first. […] They were telling me this very clearly: if you do not feel free, if you do not know your past, do not come to evangelise us (Dave, 25/01/2019).

At the same time, Dave found himself open to other cultures because he grew up in a multicultural environment: "I grew up in an intercultural family. The multicultural experience leads one, willing or not, to assimilate the values of various cultures, but there comes a time when you have to decide what you want to be" (Dave, 25/01/2019).

4.4 Individual's Perception of Social Critical Consciousness in Pastoral Ministry within a Multicultural Community

The fourth research question explored the participants' awareness of the influence of individualities on individual or collective ministry, in the context of a community. The question was addressed through interview questions on effectiveness of ministry, involvement of the community, and impact of community diversity on ministry. FGD guidelines also addressed the question in the section concerning the pastoral values perceived as essential and to what extent they are shared in the community. In looking for answers to this research question, the focus was on the praxis of ministry.

The significant themes emerging under Research Question Four were the existence, and acceptance, of a plurality of ways of exercising pastoral work (implementation of the charism), which seems to lead to individual(istic) ministerial action.

4.4.1 Facing complexity in ministry

The participants seemed to confirm what already emerged in the answers to the previous research questions. There seemed to be a high awareness of a shared mission, which originates from the charism. However, the implementation of the mission appears to be left to the individual, producing a great diversity of ministerial approaches and styles. As Jack affirmed,

> The main vision, I think, it is very clear and accepted by everyone. Then the way, I do not know, the methodology, the times, the different perspectives or ways that we can do it or put in practice, this is different (Jack, 18/03/2019).

The work of evangelisation, which is the charismatic ideal of all ministerial actions in the Comboni family, "can be expressed in many different ways" (Jack). Mark shared the same opinion when he said,

> In any community there is, I can say, the mission that you are carrying out as a community. But it is high time that we accept that this common mission can be done in various ministries […] that is when we come to individual gifts of the community members (Mark, 17/03/2019).

The particular gift of each member of the community is at the service of the shared mission, but it also gives the individual a certain degree of freedom in action: "I let him do that ministry […] as long as we are in line with the common mission" (Mark, 17/03/2019).

Steve too seems to confirm this point when he asserted,

> For me, I could say that there are some factors that we don't agree. But the factor, the one factor that we agree as common for us, in my idea, that we agree that we are one because we are the same Comboni Missionaries, we have the same vision and mission why we came here. But when we say agreement between us, that is individual differences that sometimes we don't agree with each other (Steve, 18/03/2019).

Archival documents acknowledged a "variety of styles and methods" in the apostolic field (Comboni Missionaries, 2001, no. 10). In some instances, they appeared to value it as a positive aspect of the life of the communities; somewhere else, a greater preoccupation seemed to surface. The conclusive document of the process of the *Ratio Missionis* stated:

> In this 'runaway world' there exist among our Missionaries differing attitudes – concerning our life and our missionary praxis– which the *Ratio Missionis* only alludes to against the background of the spoken and written word, in that it has not brought such attitudes all the way to the surface or elaborated them in a very great detail (Comboni Missionaries, 2012, p. 45).

There is fatigue in living the charism in the complexity of the present world, "which seems to be beyond understanding and in which one no longer appears to belong" (Comboni Missionaries, 2012, p. 46). The complexity of the world and, at a lower level, of the Comboni community (as shown in the findings under the third research question) can bring tensions between the ideal of "evangelising as a community" (Hank) and the necessity "to come to a certain agreement in which where we say this is how we stand as a family" (Larry). Both Hank and Larry, like other

participants, agreed on a shared vision ("seeing the situation together"), which has to be translated in a collective praxis.

> We may not have a common vision, each one moving in different directions with his own vision and that is also very dangerous because I may think something is important and yet it is only when we see the situation together with others that we may discover, no maybe that is not the most important thing, what he says is the most important. All of us should strive towards that (Hank, 13/04/2019).

Alex and Luke are among those who affirmed that, besides differing in implementation, community members might also differ at the level of vision and a general understanding of mission, as Alex said:

> You asked the question if we share the vision of the mission, I would say no, because many times we are five, we also have five visions. Six, six visions, and each one seems to pursue his own vision when it comes to many issues. And also our understanding of people is different, the way I understand this... when we reach a common understanding that these people are like this, then we really understand the approach to mission, and it takes long (Alex, 13/04/2019).

From his part, Luke acknowledged that the common mission was limited to a simple collaboration in fulfilling different tasks. He stated, "The ideal would be to have a common vision; that's why we were asked to sit down and see, try to have a unified vision of things. But there are different visions of the pastoral work" (Luke, 9/04/2019).

Practical issues more linked to the personality and way of life of individuals can affect the collaboration, limiting it or even making it impossible. Jill, a young sister, underlined the fact that diversity of culture and different roles in the team can become a serious obstacle in the collaboration. People make fear to show that they do not know something, either because they consider it as a failure or because they do not want to "ask the young ones (because) it does not look nice" (Jill). How leadership is understood in one's cultural environment is determinant in how the person will relate to others or will expect something from others.

> Leadership…always there is the reference to somebody, maybe like a confirmation somehow. But these people on top, can be the mother or the father, do not decide for the others. And there is a lot of dialogue, you see? It is more and advice, but

> also you look for the advice. So you seek. It can be in the community; it can be in the family… you sit at the table after food…so everybody says (Jill, 9/09/2019).

Jill underlined the aspect of leadership in dialogue, where "everybody says", in contraposition to her present reality, where she was not experiencing the same openness in asking and giving advice.

4.4.2 Functional approach in ministry

Another aspect worth mentioning is that the participants seemed to appreciate the multicultural diversity of their community in functional terms, that is, because it gives a message to the people, either positive or negative. It is a witness in front of the people, a way to show them, to teach them specific values and styles of living together. This aspect emerged already in reference to research question three: while there, it referred more to the multicultural community, in this context concerns more ministry.

In a focus groups discussion, Joan said, "Our apostolate sometimes brings people close to us". Lena commented that their living together has a positive impact on the life of the people. "It is – she said – I can say, the witness that we give, so it has an impact on our living together and the way we relate to the people outside" (Lena, 1/10/2019).

The functional approach also appears in the archival documents: Being together in our diversity is seen as beneficial "for an efficacious missionary service" (Comboni Missionary Sisters, 1987, no. 17) because "the multicultural community makes us credible" (Comboni Missionary Sisters, 1997), it becomes witness and prophecy, a counter-sign in today's society (Comboni Missionaries, 1999). In a society marked by divisions and nationalism, the multicultural community shows that "a different humanity is possible" (Comboni Missionaries, 1999, no. 62). Moreover, it is "a help and preparation" (no. 63) to enter and understand the culture of the people.

Two strategies emerged from the data as ways to bring unity of vision in the community. The first is sharing among the members on different experiences in ministry; it is done regularly, and it helps:

> I would say we have chance to share every Tuesday. We have chance to share about our apostolate, though maybe sometimes we do not share at the meeting, sometimes we even share the difficulties we have in the workplace and so on. Maybe we have to deepen it, but we have chance to share every Tuesday, what do you have, what is happening and something like that. So we have chance to share. Maybe the depth is still wanting... (Joan, 29/09/2019).

The second strategy is community discernment, as Burt expressed:

> We are different, but we accept to be in the community, and if you accept to be in the community, OK, I'm not going to say in my culture we are eating this one, for example, so...no, I think we need what we call, for me, discernment, discernment community. Yes, I have my convictions, pastoral, it is not necessarily obvious the same convictions for others. We come from the same scholasticate, with the same vision of theology… We have the same work, but you have a different vision, so here I think should enter what I call discernment in the community, to find a better way to do something together, the same thing together, but OK we have different charisms, but we need discernment. Discernment is very important (Burt, 18/03/2019).

The challenge immediately appears to be discernment in a multicultural community, where different worldviews, values, criteria, and personalities come together in search of a shared understanding and belonging. Are the all-encompassing ideas of charism and mission enough to reach the goal?

Having analysed how the data answer the research questions, the next section presents a transversal theme, which appeared in the contributions of several participants and cut across the different dimensions highlighted in the research questions. It is the theme of race.

4.5 Race: A Transversal Theme

A theme that is of interest in the discussion, emerged from the contributions of some participants. It cuts across all the research questions as it concerns self-identity, interpersonal relationships, community living and pastoral practice. Some participants highlighted how race, linked to the age factor, can be a problem in the multicultural community, and how it may influence the approach to diversity in general and pastoral practice in particular.

Mark, a young African MCCJ (age group 20-40, with less than ten years in the Institute), recognised that being young is an advantage. From his words, the energy and great desire to act was evident. He wanted to be relevant in the reality that has been given him through his assignment. However, in the encounter with other confreres much older than him, Mark experienced the suffering of being judged, taught, and diminished in his being African.

> As for me, I don't want to say, but once I felt it, in one community, that I lived with someone who is a racist in the sense he doesn't trust, he doesn't see anything good in you. You try yourself, but he doesn't appreciate, you know, because he knows from… that an African is inferior to someone else from another race which is superior (Mark, 17/03/2019).

His words reveal a certain modesty in the language, as if he felt that, by expressing his feelings about his experience, he might hurt or appear to judge someone. It was as if he needed an extra dose of courage to speak out.

Mark described the colonial mind as the outcome of old age, which according to him, means being stuck in the past, and doing things in a way that has been abandoned by the Church: "But if you are stuck in what you did when you first came to Kenya, you will never move" (Mark, 17/03/2019). In the end, he was able to point explicitly at the problem of race and racism in the Institute:

> If you live with people who are racist, they do not see any good in you, and I can say, also we the Comboni Missionaries we are not spared of this fact. I do not say we are racist, but there are some of us who have this racist ideology (Mark, 17/03/2019).

On the contrary, Ben, an older European missionary (age group 61-90, more than 40 years in the Institute), recalled that it was difficult for him, at the beginnings of his missionary experience, to be considered and treated as a young man. For him, being young was a disadvantage; it meant just being a friend to others. He said, "The fact that I was a [young man] it disturbs me a little bit. In fact, I could not make up a decision; I had always to say, let me consult with the *mzee*".

Now he is considered an elder, he is recognised, and people come to him for advice. A certain judging attitude shines through his words, with a mixture of intolerance and suffering for not being able to understand thoroughly the diversity he sees in others: "As for me and the Africans, I don't know, I don't know… I keep reflecting on the dialogue of culture or the living together of cultures" (Ben, 29/03/2019). In his words, for the first time, he lives in a truly multicultural community; before the majority of community members were all from his culture. There are difficulties in understanding, and "sometimes I fear that one culture lacks responsibility. Most probably that lack of responsibility to my eyes is just a question of different timing or different rhythm and so on" (Ben, 29/03/2019). Furthermore, with great honesty and deep self-knowledge,

he admitted, “I am still very, very European, Aristotelic in mind. One concept must come after the other, and I find it extremely difficult to go on by different circles” (Ben, 29/03/2019).

Dave, an American, mid-aged MCCJ (age group 41-60 and more than ten years in the Institute), shared his experience of living in communities dominated by European culture. He saw a certain colonial attitude, visible in the way community life was organised: “These communities were living in very concrete places… but with many European behaviours” (Dave), which touched different aspects like food, schedules, norms, hospitality. This attitude had repercussions on the pastoral action, with some members more inclined towards an approach based on building structures and giving out resources in a paternalistic way. However, Dave also stressed very much the transformation, which the community went through, especially in his last missionary experience. People themselves as subjects, and being with the people as pastoral methodology, taught them how to change:

> I felt certain prejudices at the beginning. I felt that in the three communities where I have been as a Comboni, what is different is a threat. Maybe because of other experiences with other Latinos, other Africans, people from different cultures, but that has changed over time. The community opens up, I see that, whether it wants it or not, the community is obliged to change certain things, certain behaviours, certain values. The community where normally you have a European presence, in the few I have been, and they are three, I feel that they have positively opened up towards the different. How? In the way of sharing, in the way of dialoguing, in the way of praying, in the way of welcoming the other. I feel that the houses, little by little, I do it sometimes, I open the doors for those who pass by, a friend, a relative, someone who works with us, I invite him to eat, and I feel that this presence is gradually different and it is no longer something that bothers the community (Dave, 25/01/2019).

4.6 Summary of the findings

The major themes emerging from the findings under the four research questions were:

1) Exalted identity: A self-identity, which focuses on charism and mission, and it is somehow disconnected from the biographical identity.

2) De-politicisation of privileges and mission: Unawareness of privileges, and the consequent incapacity of recognising the position of power, in which the pastoral practitioners find themselves, as highlighted in the theme of race. It localises pastoral action without a systemic approach.
3) Disorientation in multicultural relationships (disorienting dilemma) in front of the complexity of multicultural relationships. Disorientation is also due to the perception within which there is a lack of practical skills to engage in such complexity. It leads to a functional approach to community life, stopping at the level of multiculturalism without attempting the process of interculturality.
4) Acritical need for acceptance of pluralism in ministry, of diverse individual(istic) approaches to ministry, although there is a call for community discernment and practice of sharing individual pastoral experiences.

Figure 3 illustrates and summarizes the findings:

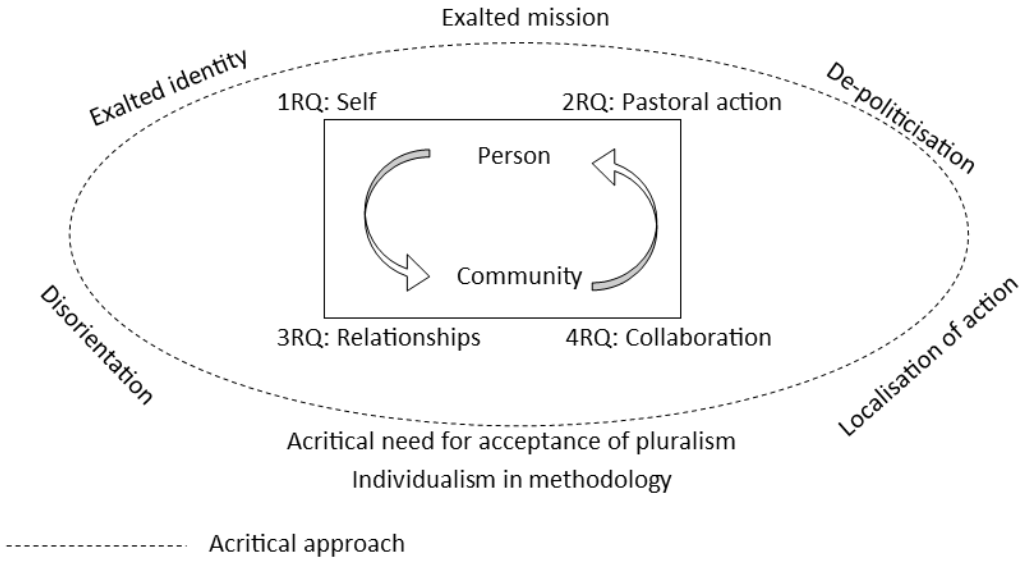


Figure 3 Conceptual Framework improved by the Data

Each of the four research questions is summarized in one concept: self (RQ1), pastoral action (RQ2), relationships (RQ3), and collaboration (RQ4). They all refer to the interaction of the individual pastoral practitioner with self and the pastoral action within the context of a multicultural community. The themes that emerged are indicated as ‘exalted identity’, ‘exalted

mission', 'de-politicisation' of privileges and pastoral action, which remains localised without addressing the systemic level; 'disorientation' as the shared experience of pastoral practitioners in facing multicultural relationships, 'acritical acceptance of pluralism' in ministry.

The next chapter presents the idea of complexity, how it relates to the research questions and its links to the themes that emerged from the analysis of the results. Each theme is developed, showing its interconnection, and offering a theological interpretation.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Introduction

The present chapter aims at interpreting and discussing the findings, which emerged from the data analysis. Interpretation is the step that connects data, experience, insight, and literature (Dale Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 236).

It is essential to remind the perspective through which the data were analysed, and the results discussed. The research is an exploration of the awareness of pastoral practitioners of their social critical consciousness in multicultural relationships and in social transformative action. Their experience and perception of relationships, situations, and challenges remain the starting point and primary criterion of analysis. The possible gap between ideal statements contained in the documents of the two Institutes MCCJ and CMS and the concrete strategies put in place, has to be measured on the real life and experience of the members. The offer of tools and practices by the Institutes to face the complexity of today's reality does not mean that the challenges have been overcome. The challenges and questions posed by the participants in their life experience – whether directly or indirectly – become a criterion to evaluate and, if necessary, challenge the existing framework in MCCJ and CMS.

The two theories used in the theoretical framework served in the process of interpretation. The decolonial theory helped in keeping the eyes fixed on the complexity of today's world, marked by asymmetrical power, which affects not only societal structures, but also individuals in their ways of knowing, interpreting, relating, and acting. It has already been stated that coloniality of power, knowledge, and being, touches both participants and the researcher. The concepts of intersectionality and positionality helped to reflect on how power and privileges function among the members of the same multicultural community. The critical consciousness theory, particularly in its social outcomes, guided the reflection on the person of the pastoral practitioner (and again, the researcher) and the dynamics in front of the disorienting dilemma (for example, in the case of small conflicts in multicultural relationships), which may initiate critical thinking. Both theories offered recommendations for pedagogical and pastoral strategies for the training of pastoral practitioners and their action for social transformation.

As it emerged in the literature review, one in the features of today's world is complexity. Understanding and addressing the complexity of culture, difference, and otherness is also one of the characteristics and tasks of critical consciousness. Avoiding or ignoring such complexity may be the trait of an acritical consciousness, an acritical approach to reality, which tends to prefer the shortcut of simplified, uncomplicated solutions, to complex life situations like a multicultural community or a pastoral action in a complex world.

The following sections of the present chapter develop an interpretation of the themes that emerged from the findings. However, first, it is essential to understand the notion of complexity, which is the analytic category for interpreting the findings.

5.1 The Analytic Category of Complexity

The results analysed in the previous chapter have shown, among the MCCJ and CMS pastoral practitioners, the existing challenge in facing the complexity of today's world and multicultural relationships. The interpretation of this datum must begin from what has emerged in the previous section, namely the dominant idea of charismatic identity and mission.

Both archival documents and data present the ideal of charism and mission in a direct way. In this context, the documents underline the value of internationality and cultural diversity, the meaning of such variety for the universality of the Church, and the fact that multicultural MCCJ and CMS communities become a shining light of unity in a fragmented world. All this is undeniable and commendable, and represents a great motivation for the missionaries. Internationality has been considered one of the constitutive dimensions of the charism of Comboni and his Institutes since their inception. Usually, the key text of the Founder of MCCJ and CMS, Daniel Comboni, is the description of the international community as cenacle of Apostles:

> This Institute, then, becomes like a little Cenacle of Apostles for Africa, a centre of light sending to the centre of Africa as many rays as are the Missionaries who go out from it. These rays of light, bringing warmth as well as illumination, cannot but reveal the nature of the Centre from which they spread out (Comboni, 2005, p. 835).

Internationality was also underlined in the quite revolutionary affirmation (in those days) that "the Work must be catholic, not just Spanish, French, German or Italian" (Comboni, 2005, p. 274). Up to this day, the very reality of living together, though coming from very different experiences and

backgrounds, has been a tremendous call to unity and mutual acceptance, especially in countries torn by ethnic wars and nationalistic ideologies.

However, the foundational documents of the two Institutes, not to mention the spiritual and missionary experience of their Founder, have come to light in a time that is culturally, socially, and religiously profoundly different from the one of today. One thing is the call to universality and acceptance of diversity that comes from within a mono-cultural context or at least a context with an evident dominant culture (as the two Institutes were up to thirty years ago); another thing is living in a multicultural context, without that dominant component. On the contrary, today's context is characterised by a shared experience of multiple points of reference and diverse systems of interpretation. In the past, society, as well as the church, functioned on clear and simple ideas, having the power to motivate, unite people and lead them to action. Today, in different disciplines, complexity has become a fundamental criterion to understand and interpret reality. There is the awareness that "there is no simple idea because a simple idea […] is always inserted, to be understood, in a complex system of thoughts and experiences" (Bachelard, cited in Alhadeff-Jones, 2012, p. 180). Therefore, before proceeding with the interpretation of the data on the participants facing complexity, it is necessary to understand what complexity is in the context of this research.

The paradigm of complexity, formulated by Edgar Morin (2005) in opposition to a certain reductionism and compartmentalisation in sciences, tries to understand the relations between the whole and the parts and to accept the challenge that the whole is always greater than the sum of the single parts (Francis, 2013, no. 234-237). While a 'complicated' situation can be observed, understood, disentangled, and eventually solved, a complex phenomenon is fundamentally non-simple. Moreover, researchers on the complex phenomenon are bound to recognise their uncertainty about the way they conceive it (Alhadeff-Jones, 2012). A tendency of glossing over complexity and proposing "uncomplicated solutions" is one of the common problems in global campaigns and educational strategies (Andreotti, 2012). The study of multifaceted phenomena, instead, should require a "complex way of thinking" (Alhadeff-Jones, 2012, p. 179) or "intersectional thinking" (G. J.-S. Kim & Shaw, 2018), able to consider multiple factors simultaneously, remaining in a "both/and" approach and always taking into account the role of the observer in describing and understanding those factors.

In critical consciousness theory, the challenge "to critically question and assess the integrity of [one's] deeply held assumptions about how to relate to the world" (Mezirow, 2013, p. xi) is a

pillar of transformative learning. Following Alhadeff-Jones' analysis of the links between transformative learning and the challenges of complexity, this section tries to contextualise those challenges within this research. The point is that the complexity experienced in multicultural relationships and social transformative action demands a new understanding, even a new definition, of concepts like identity, charism, community, and pastoral action for social transformation, expanding the old vocabulary to include concepts like chaos, disorder, non-linearity, self-organisation, systems (Alhadeff-Jones, 2012). Out of the six challenges identified by Alhadeff-Jones (2012, pp. 180–188), four are considered of great interest for the present study.

Generality and singularity: The first challenge of complexity is "negotiating the tensions between generality and singularity" (Alhadeff-Jones, 2012, p. 181). In the context of this research, generality refers to charismatic identity and mission in MCCJ and CMS, which are conceptualised based on general principles, or not negotiable values. The expression "non-negotiable values" recurs several times in MCCJ documents, particularly those concerning the formation of future missionaries (Comboni Missionaries, 1999a, 2005, 2011b, 2015b). It is the level of the ideal, which is clear (it can be stated unequivocally through a list of non-negotiable values), self-explanatory, and universal (it can and must be proposed to and accepted by everyone, independent of their context).

Singularity refers to the "randomness of the experience of epiphany" (Alhadeff-Jones, 2012, p. 181), that is, the impact of individual experiences with reality in a non-linear way. While the charism has a universal dimension, it is always contextualised in the experience, understanding, and awareness of the individuals and communities. In this perspective, any claim of universality, understood as an attempt towards uniformity, assimilation, or absorption is questioned and rejected. On the contrary, in a complex context, both decolonial theory and transformative learning favour what has been forgotten, diminished, disqualified, excluded, or silenced. In a complex perspective, the particularity of personal, localized experiences becomes an essential dimension, without representing a contradiction or an unsolvable tension with the universal value. Quite the opposite, it is an invitation to embrace the multifaceted reality emerging from their connection. As it is discussed later, one of the possible strategies adopted in front of complex reality is simply to avoid or simplify it.

Linearity and non-linearity: The second challenge is "reconsidering the linearity and the non-linearity" (Alhadeff-Jones, 2012, p. 182) of charismatic identity and mission. The principle of

linear causality is substituted by the principle of complex causality. What does this mean in the context of the present study? Although every MCCJ and CMS go through the same training, namely the same process of socialisation (which includes a certain risk of universalisation and de-contextualisation) there is no single, uniform outcome, as missionaries remain indeed very diverse in their worldview and pastoral approaches. The process of socialisation, made of progressing phases and shared contents, also includes the personal transformation that affects individuals and their environment. Sometimes, only several unsuccessful attempts lead the pastoral practitioner to new learning and personal transformation. In their turn, progressively transformed individuals contribute to shaping both the socialisation process through which they have been transformed, and the understanding of the reality mission, in which they live now. In complexity theory, this idea is called "recursive loop […] through which products and effects are themselves producers of what produces them" (Alhadeff-Jones, 2012, pp. 182–183). This position recalls Gidden's structuration theory on the interaction and mutual influence of structure and agency: "structures shape people's practice, but it is also people's practices that constitute (and reproduce) structures" (Sewell, 1992, p. 4).

The repercussions on the conceptualisations of charism and mission are enormous since they are now considered co-produced by the various personal transformation constituting the individual's evolution.

Holistic and multireferential approach: The third challenge is "conceiving the emerging nature of transformation through its levels of organisation" (Alhadeff-Jones, 2012, p. 183). This highlights the critical importance of a holistic approach to individual and collective transformations, which require interdisciplinary connections (social sciences, psychology, anthropology, economic and political sciences, and theology). In particular, it is vital to bring together context, culture, and the process of personal transformation, linking individual perspective transformation and social change. The approach also requires and encourages multi-referentiality:

> A multireferential approach promotes the adoption of a plural way of reading its objects (practices or theories), adopting various angles and involving as many specific looks [regards] and languages, appropriate to the required descriptions, based on distinct systems of references, acknowledged as explicitly irreducible to

each other, in other words as heterogeneous (Ardoino, cited in Alhadeff-Jones, 2012, p. 185).

Once again, the significances for the interpretation of reality, in general, and in the context of the research, are very relevant. The adoption of a plural, multireferential way of reading practices and theories goes in the opposite direction of any excessively simplified, uncomplicated strategy to avoid complexity. The connection between context, culture, and transformative learning becomes particularly relevant in the international, multicultural context of missionary congregations.

Autonomy and dependence: Lastly, the fourth challenge of complexity considered in the context of this research is "reconsidering the relationship between autonomy and dependence" (Alhadeff-Jones, 2012, p. 186). Complexity is revealed in the tension arising between autonomy of the individual missionary and dependence from the structure, be it the Institute at large or the local community. It is undeniable that, in the recent past, the person has gained importance, and received particular attention, also among missionaries (Comboni Missionaries, 2001). However, the environment that favours this attention is the also the very one that expects the maximum dependence from its members. A pedagogical approach "that would encourage the individual to choose critical thinking over assimilation" (Green & Mälkki, 2017, p. 71) is still a challenge in educational environments within Church institutions and organisations. Assimilation, in this context, does not necessarily mean blind obedience to the institution, but also an acritical assimilation to an easy and simplified way of being and acting in a complex environment, which does not question reality as it is.

In summary, the category of complexity points at the relevance of some dimensions in the intersections of the individual, the community, the Institute, and society. It suggests certain ways of being and acting, once a complex way of thinking has been accepted: the dynamism of the relationships between the institution (traditions, rules, non-negotiable values) and the individuals, with their bio-geographical and cultural stories. The individuals co-create the charism and the mission of the group, in a non-linear way strictly connected to experiential events. These events, and reality as a whole, require the capacity to be interpreted from multiple perspectives, overcoming any temptation of oversimplification and generalisation. Finally, such a complex way of thinking requires a specific pedagogy for critical thinking over assimilation.

These features of the complex way of thinking, or intersectional thinking, far from being exhaustive of the question of complexity, serve as a framework for the discussion of the findings.

Each of the findings linked to one of the research questions will show a particular way of avoiding complexity. However, the collected data also brought to light ways in which the participants, as members of their respective Institutes, try to constructively engage their experience of complexity.

5.2 Critically engaging complexity

There is a struggle in the two Institutes MCCJ and CMS, which has been going on for at least the past twenty years. It is the challenge to know "how to embrace complexity, which sometimes means that we live our interpersonal relationships in *situations, which are not always clear*" (Comboni Missionary Sisters, 2016, no. 10.7, emphasis in the original). Lack of clarity, tested and straightforward practices, cultural uniformity, and shared vision are all elements of the disorienting dilemma experienced in Comboni communities.

The different types of response to the disorienting experience of complexity are like a two-faced Janus: they reveal a double reality. One is usually considered positively, as a value, a step forward towards acceptance of diversity, pacific coexistence, and promotion of diversity. The other side of the medal is more problematic and presents greater challenges. The two faces of reality can be kept together only privileging a "both/and" thinking instead of "either/or". It means precisely accepting the complexity of the reality in the individual, the community, and society. It is important to keep the eyes fixed on the pervasiveness of coloniality in today's world and to maintain a decolonial approach to the positive strategies proposed by the Comboni Family. It will be a sort of test to understand how far the positive attempts succeed to transform either the person or the community, and how far, on the contrary, they are revealed as strategies, which instead perpetuate the structures of asymmetrical power.

The different ways of positively engaging complexity, which have emerged from the data, can be summarized as follows: efforts in community dialogue and discernment, a more considerable attention to the person of the missionary, acknowledgement of multiculturalism through the promotion of multicultural tolerance and the struggle to dismantle prejudices. The present section develops each of these aspects.

5.2.1 Community dialogue

As a way to engage complexity constructively, data analysis reveals two possible strategies: community discernment and community life sharing focused on pastoral experiences.

The need for a community discernment was brought up by one of the respondents in an interview. Although acknowledging the fact that missionaries may come from the same formative journey, having the same vision of theology, and living in the same community, he realised that they might maintain "different charisms" and different pastoral visions simply because what is the conviction of one "is not necessarily obvious the same conviction for others" (Burt, 18/03/2019). In Burt's perception, discernment should not concern secondary aspects like food, but engage the diversity of people committed in pastoral action, "to find a better way to do something together, the same thing together" (Burt, 18/03/2019). It appears that discernment is seen as a tool that, by unveiling personal convictions and charisms, brings people to do something together, "the same thing together". Once again, it is an approach that is functional to the pastoral action, the doing together, and possibly and hopefully, doing the same thing together. The explicit desire for a community discernment could hide an implicit desire of greater clarity and uniformity, which is often understood as a necessity for an effective witness and efficacious pastoral practice in front of the people.

Life sharing of pastoral experiences is undoubtedly an excellent way to bring people into an active communication. It requires a minimum critical reflection on what the person does and experiences, and the capacity of listening to the narration of others. Unfortunately, the discussion during the focus group did not bring to light more than the mere information about that particular community activity. In the discussion, the participant did not mention how deep the sharing goes, moving from mere information to communicating of personal struggles. Nor did they reveal whether such sharing has later a reflex in their personal lives and the pastoral methodology. Hence, from the data, whether the sharing of pastoral experiences leads to a community discernment on life and action of the members cannot be stated.

In the Comboni Family, discernment has been identified as an essential personal and community tool only recently. CMS spoke of a regular practice of discernment in 1998; it was only in 2009 that discernment was identified as one of the main priorities to be proposed to the practice in the MCCJ Institute. In the immediate aftermath of the General Chapter 2009, the Secretariat of Evangelisation, of which, by then, the Sector of Ongoing Formation was a sub-secretariat, prepared a series of guidelines and suggestions "for the re-working of charters and pastoral plans" within the community. The main aim, as it was expressed in the Chapter Acts, was "to strengthen a sense

of belonging to the Institute", which is strictly linked to the question of identity (Comboni Missionaries, 2009, no. 13ff).

The guidelines proposed by the Secretariat of Evangelisation after a continental meeting in Pretoria, 2011, were presented as "Comboni Community Animation Tools" (Comboni Missionaries, 2011a). It includes guidelines for the preparation of the community charter, community project, pastoral planning, and other suggestions on how to animate a community council or a community day. Of greater interest for this research are the notes that were added to the topic 'communication and community'. Communication is understood as a fundamental need for an authentic fraternal life in the community. Its scarcity and superficiality is the cause of increasing individualism in spiritual experience. Such communication requires time, availability of one to be known by others, and effort to improve its quality. There is a vague mention of possible psychological difficulties arising in communication, and a generic invitation to make use of human sciences to deal with them. Lastly, the multicultural composition of any Comboni community is presented as undeniable evidence of the urgent need to improve communication; without dialogue and listening, people are led into a juxtaposed existence (multiculturalism), in contradiction with the ideal of fraternal living (interculturality).

This tension between ideal and real, emerging from the data and present in the presentation of the Community Animation Tools, is also explicitly recognised in the Conclusions of the Process of the *Ratio Missionis*, which on discernment, says:

> It seems to be beyond dispute that discernment has become – *at least in the realm of our intentions* [emphasis added] – the way to read reality at the level of Community, of the Province and of the Institute, even though a lot remains to be done (Comboni Missionaries, 2012, p. 50).

There is an awareness of the importance of the tool, but it appears that there is still no or insufficient practice. If the "theory" (the understanding of the ideal and its theological foundation) is clear, how does it happen that the practice remains so tricky and challenging? The interpretation of the data contends that one of the main obstacles to the implementation of community discernment as a compelling personal and communitarian tool is the ignorance of multiple social identities of the community members. Discernment is seen and used as a tool to understand the reality external to the community, in view of a better missionary service (functional approach). There is neither a reflection nor an awareness on *who* is the subject of such discernment; who is

the person of the missionary with their biographical, cultural, and experiential legacy. In all MCCJ and CMS documents, as well as in the contributions of the participants in interviews and focus groups, there is the implicit assumption that the members of the community (the subject of discernment) are one, having a monolithic, well definable and representable identity. Members' multiple identities, their positionalities and the intersections of power within the community are neither acknowledged in their existence nor included in the discernment process.

5.2.2 Awareness of the importance and uniqueness of the person

Another positive awareness, which could lead to an effective strategy to engage the complexity of multicultural relationships, is the growing consciousness of the importance and uniqueness of the person, who consequently has the right to be recognised and to be given specific attention within the community and in the pastoral context. As already mentioned, a key passage was the publication of the Letter *Attention to the person in the Comboni Community* in 2001 (Comboni Missionaries, 2001). The authors of the document recognise that "in their inalienable individuality it is the persons who form our communities and carry on the mission" (Comboni Missionaries, 2001, no. 2).

Focusing on the reality of the MCCJ Institute, the letter underlines that people have shaped "their character and their capabilities to the service of their confreres and of the people" (Comboni Missionaries, 2001, no. 8). They have shared lives and projects because of a common plan within the Comboni community, "notwithstanding the differences of age, character, formation or culture" (Comboni Missionaries, 2001, no. 9). They register pastoral success (building of living and material churches, the witness of Christian coherence, fidelity in troubled times, searching for new pastoral ways in new social contexts), "even if with a variety of styles and methods" (Comboni Missionaries, 2001, no. 10). In addition, the letter highlights some important challenges: there is a prevailing opinion that "what is difficult should be avoided", which almost naturally reduces dialogue to matters of work. Also, the document acknowledges an "inability of understanding the always changing sensitivity of our society", and a natural inclination of the missionaries to immerse themselves in work outside the community, which easily becomes an addiction "to avoid facing our own selves" (Comboni Missionaries, 2001, no. 11-17). It is clear how these challenges echo the discussion developed in the previous section. In some ways, they all point towards the main challenge of facing and positively engaging today's complexity, at a personal, communal, or societal level.

The Letter reiterates the primacy of mission over everything else. Nevertheless, it brings in a new awareness on the connection between mission and the person of the individual Comboni Missionary: "The mission will always have the quality of the person that realises it" (Comboni Missionaries, 2001, no. 18). This is precisely the main point of this study, namely, the direct connection between the person of the pastoral practitioner and the quality and effectiveness of the missionary pastoral action. However, the Letter misses one aspect, which emerges from the literature review and from the data analysis. The aspect is that, while there is an invitation to personal, inner growth, towards a better community harmony and missionary service, there is no mention of the in-group dynamics and intersectionalities. Once again, it seems that the pastoral practitioners are considered in their monolithic, single-layered identity, which develops in terms of the individual's capacity of assuming and interpreting it. No awareness is shown of multiple identities and social locations of individuals and the community as a whole, nor is there a reflection on how these aspects affect the understanding of the world and how the world understands the pastoral practitioners and the pastoral community.

A decolonial perspective helps in clarifying the challenge by integrating social causes to psychological issues and understanding how identity is socially construed. One critique addressed by decolonial scholars to psychological science is "the tendency to imagine and study psychological experience as the self-contained product of individual organisms abstracted from historical and social context" (Adams et al., 2015, p. 2015). It leads psychological science and, in general, the understanding of personal growth and development, to be disconnected from the sociocultural context, reluctant to address issues of power and domination, and wishing to present itself as apolitical (Adams et al., 2015). Based on this position, the necessary decolonial turn requires a shift from the individual as the central unit of analysis to a more positioned understanding of the person, considering their socio-political and economic context (Kessi, 2016).

In the context of the Comboni Family within this research, acknowledging the importance of the person but not addressing issues of power and domination, positionalities and biases both within the individual and the community, simply "mask within-group differences via homogenization" (May, 2015, p. 81) and does not result in new visions, understandings, and practices.

Acknowledging differences in a multicultural context becomes fundamental in order to address privileges and promote multicultural tolerance, two aspects that reveal a positive engagement with complexity. They are developed in the next section.

5.2.3 Promotion of multicultural tolerance and addressing prejudices

It is already pointed out that, in several circumstances, the two Institutes have acknowledged multiculturalism as a constitutive dimension of their charism and identity. There is an evident appreciation of the international character of the Institutes and a constant definite invitation to encounter the other in their diversity, discovering the richness that each person can bring to the community and to the pastoral environment.

Moreover, the more acknowledged the multicultural character of the communities and pastoral teams become, the more the growth and the awareness of the existence and persistence of cultural prejudices. In the most recent General Chapters of MCCJ (2015) and CMS (2016), there was the painful and shameful admission about prejudices and "the desolation for the helplessness we felt in face of realities to which we are incapable of giving a response" (Comboni Missionary Sisters, 2016, no. 9.2). Undoubtedly, within the MCCJ and the CMS there is an ongoing reflection on the issue. Sometimes, possible strategies are suggested in a rather commanding way, as members "are summoned to abandon complexes and prejudices, suspicion and fear of the difference incarnated in the Other" (Comboni Missionaries, 2015a, no. 47.4). In the opinion of the researcher, this aspect reveals once again the gap existing between the ideals of the documents or official pronunciations, and the reality at grassroots level. It is one of the elements emerging from the data showing that dealing with complexity remains a challenge, which is often avoided, as the next section explains.

5.3 Dealing with complexity by avoiding complexity

The data analysis highlights the difficulty of participants in facing a complex multicultural context and relating to others who are culturally different. The difficulty does not question the theoretical level, the ideal value of pluralism and universality, but it is perceived in the concrete, day-to-day reality of shared spaces and projects. The participants revealed this difficulty in a direct or indirect way, when the uneasiness and disorientation in front of the complexity of reality were transpiring from their words. Experiencing uneasiness tends to lead to avoiding the complexity faced in the different areas tackled by the research questions: identity, pastoral ministry,

relationships, and collaboration. A special mention is reserved to the question of the training of pastoral practitioners.

5.3.1 Research Question 1 – the self: Avoiding complexity by exalting charismatic identity

In the Catholic Church, religious life is inextricably linked to the charism that is the particular experience of the Spirit of concrete people in a determined time and place. Such experience is "transmitted to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth" (Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, 1978, no. 11). The teaching of the Church and the millenary tradition of religious life have always held that these charisms, the gifts freely dispensed by the Holy Spirit, are for the common good of the Church and the whole world (Pfeil, 2007; Second Vatican Council, 1965a). Such dynamism is well stated in the Instruction *Starting afresh from Christ*,

> Consecrated life, like all forms of Christian life, is by its nature dynamic, and all who are called by the Spirit to embrace it must constantly renew themselves in growing toward that perfect stature of the body of Christ. It came into being through the creative prompting of the Spirit who moved founders and foundresses along the Gospel path, giving rise to an admirable variety of charisms … Their experience of the Spirit must not only be preserved by those who follow them but must also be deepened and developed … instilling the courage of interdependence and inventiveness needed to respond to the signs of the times (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 2002, no. 20).

The research is focused on personal and social transformation; hence, it is particularly attracted by this idea of dynamism, ongoing development, and deepening. In fact, the changed picture of society and missionary institutes pose a question on the identity of such institutes. In the concreteness of the research case study – the two Institutes of MCCJ and CMS in Kenya within the larger Comboni Family – there has been a clear transition from a mono-cultural to a multicultural reality. However, this passage did not happen without trials and suffering. Today, the multicultural nature of the two Institutes affects the interpretation of the charism, the dynamics of relationships in and outside the community, the way of knowing reality, and the understanding of ministry for transformation. Lastly, the experience of training of new members, that is, the process

of socialisation within the existing MCCJ and CMS structures, is being challenged by the new reality, to which, for example, MCCJ have produced new updates of the policies. (Mileto, 2018a)

It is undoubted that, in the real life of a person, the personal experience of encounter not only with Christ but also with a specific charism incarnated in a historical group of people brings new meanings to the narrative of the self, consequently creating a new sense of belonging. The process of re-socialisation of individuals in the Institute (what, in religious language is the formation process) is concluded with a new, enlarged identity, deeply connected with an awareness of belonging to a new family. "Belonging is about an emotional (or even ontological) attachment, about feeling 'at home'" (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 10) and both the Institute, through the foundational documents and various guidelines, and the individuals, always try to create an environment that can be considered a new home.

Therefore, the new charismatic identity leads those who accept it into a new life lived in a specific multicultural community life. The whole experience represents a radical transformation in the life of the person, which also brings a new personal map of meanings. This reality emerges in the contributions of several participants in interviews and discussions, obviously narrated through their specific lenses given by their personality, culture, and life experience. Maintaining the undeniable value of such a new life, the understanding of the charismatic identity and the concrete ways of implementing it in life, present some challenges.

The findings reveal a tendency of the participants to prefer a definition of the self, which refers directly to charism and mission. Faced with the question to define themselves, very few connected back to their family, cultural, national background; almost everyone started immediately from their experience of vocation, how they joined the Institute, and narrated the ministry carried out now. The point is essential in the perspective of the research theoretical framework, particularly when it is connected with the question of the perception of privileges and the relationships built up in ministry with the people. Several participants, both men and women, underlined the fact that their position as priests or religious puts them in a position of privilege and power in relation to the people.

In her book *Exalted Subjects* on the making of nation and race in Canada, Sunera Thobani writes, "The figure of the national subject is a much venerated one, exalted above all others as the embodiment of the quintessential characteristics of the nation and the personification of its values, ethics, and civilizational mores" (2007, p. 3). The same idea can be transferred to the description

of what may happen when the charismatic identity is "exalted". "Exaltation has been key to the constitution of the national subject as a particular kind of human being, a member of a particular kind of community, and, hence, ontologically and existentially distinct from the strangers to this community" (Thobani, 2007, p. 5). Becoming a priest, in Catholic theology, means becoming ontologically different from other members of the church. Being a religious means joining a specific class of people who, in the eyes of many, are seen as above others, and in the language of the Church have chosen the better part, "the pursuit of perfect charity…imitating Christ more closely" (Second Vatican Council, 1965c, no 1). People consider them a privileged group of persons because they have consecrated their lives to God and hold decisional power in the Church (particularly the clergy).

Most importantly, they are "exalted above all others as the embodiment of the quintessential characteristics" of being Christian, a person who is at the service of others, totally dedicated to God and people. The language of perfection and perfect state of life can still be traced in the official documents of the Church on religious life. The way some participants saw their leading and educating role among the people, who have to be helped and directed confirms such an understanding.

How does this vision of priests and religious link with the question of social critical consciousness? Identity is the core of the individual, and it is very personal and unique. However, it can be described as single-layered or multi-layered identity, two descriptive concepts used in the coding process during data analysis. The same concepts are also found in literature, sometimes through other terminologies: singular vs plural identity, monolithic identity, multiple identities (Gomzina, 2012; Parekh, 2008; Sen, 2006). The present study accepts the idea that identity is plural, multi-layered, as opposed to a monolithic and static identity. That is the reason for the concept of social identity: persons behaving differently according to the context in which they are, the people to whom they relate and who may have specific expectations from them. In a clerical ecclesiological model, a priest or, to a certain extent, a religious sister is expected to behave in a certain way and indeed is given particular respect, if not reverence.

In the context of this research, the problem arises when the strong identity originating from the vocational experience, the reception of the charism, and the new map of meanings linked to it lead to situations, which may become problematic in the complex, multicultural context of today's

world. For example, one such critical situation may arise when a strong sense of belonging to the new group is linked to a strong sense of security.

A singular, well-defined identity combined with a clear mission (life-task) offer "ontological security". Green and Mälkki (2017, p. 71) define this security through Mezirow's words: "[a] defining condition of being human is our urgent need to understand and order the meaning of our experience, to integrate it with what we know, in order to avoid the threat of chaos" (Mezirow, 2000). Ontological security is linked to the concept of comfort zone, "the affective dimension of one's meaning perspective" (Green & Mälkki, 2017, p. 73). Jensen et al. go even a step further, hinting at the fact that "individuals are hailed by ideology to occupy specific subject positions, thereby achieving identity" (Jensen, 2011, p. 64).

However, Andreotti warns that the yearning for wholeness might be confused with a yearning to belong (Andreotti, 2016c), which, in this case, would provoke the building of boundaries, fences, comfort zones, and uniform schemes of thinking. Yuval-Davis raises the alert that when it is threatened, 'belonging' tends to become structured, formalised, and politicised (Yuval-Davis, 2011). In this case, the real, human need of ontological security can be manipulated and become dependent:

> [O]n a series of presumed entitlements to the false promises of: autonomy, immunity, and hierarchy (promised via separability), social mobility and property accumulation (promised via capitalism), law and order (promised via the nation-state), universal knowledge and morality (promised via Enlightenment humanism), and others (Stein et al., 2017).

The person who joins a religious Institute goes through training, which is the process of socialisation into the new map of meanings, principles, and assumptions that inform life and action of the members, according to the charism and the living tradition of the group. If the self is able to trace back all events and encounters to their established map of meanings in an unproblematic way, then the person experiences pleasantness and comfort. On the contrary, facing the complexity of multicultural relationships and being usually immersed in challenging and unjust realities, the person may feel threatened in their identity. In a complex, unclear, not uniform context, the perceived danger of losing identity or losing the meaning of 'being together' may lead to a stiffening of meanings, traditions, particular worldviews and epistemologies. The attempt of making diversity uniform and homogeneous may be the aim of specific political projects aiming

at constructing collectivities (communities) in a particular way (Yuval-Davis, 2011), which can quickly become a label, a sort of identity card to determine who is in and who is out. Fundamentalism is always a way to avoid complexity.

Having discussed the findings emerging from the first research question, the next section examines the results from the second research question on the individual's perception of pastoral ministry.

5.3.2 Research Question 2 – pastoral ministry: Avoiding complexity by de-politicising privileges and mission

Privileges. Another possible and usual reaction to the complexity of today's reality is to disconnect entitlements and privileges from their socio-political origins and implications. This is one of the findings, which emerged from the data analysis presented in the previous chapter. It is not a conscious process ('I do not want to see my privileges'); in fact, privileges are usually invisible to those who have them. Rather, the disconnection is an unconscious way of assuring security and motivating action for transformation ('I have this quality or advantage, so I can use it, I need to share it'), according to the two dominant narratives of security and benevolence or philanthropism (Jefferess, 2011). In the answers of the participants, privileges are always seen in reference to the individual, at a personal level, and never to external structures or contexts. It is also worth noticing the types of reactions of the participants in interviews at the question, which raises the issue of possible privileges. In some cases, the person immediately reacted by clearly stating whom the person is not, rather than analysing the possibility of a privileged situation. For example, at the mentioning of sexual orientation, the immediate reaction was "I am not homosexual", revealing – in the interpretation of the researcher – on one side fear and uneasiness, and, on the other, the acritical acceptance of heterosexualism as normative in society and even more in a Comboni community. Another reaction was to become "colour blind", indifferent at the ethnicity of the other (an attitude perceived as truly multicultural), and bringing all differences back to the level of personality and behaviour. Howard (2020) explains well the problematic nature of the idea of "colour-blindness".

In the general framework of charismatic, single-layered identity (one dominant characteristic can adequately describe the person), any privilege is perceived as a gift, or talent, received by God for the good of the person and the effectiveness of ministry. A privileged situation is also considered being lucky, compared to others who do not have the same chance. In both cases,

privileges are perceived as situations, which are given, independent of any individual effort; they do not require any justification, but rather, a sense of gratitude and an appeal to greater social responsibility. An identified privilege provokes a movement to give back or share with those who do not have, creating an imbalanced relationship: the 'haves' and the 'have-not', the 'lucky ones' and the 'unlucky'. In any case, there is a disregard for the impact of asymmetrical powers on people and pastoral practitioners.

There is no evidence from the data of a more in-depth, more complex social analysis, which could help consider privileges and entitlements in a different light. The lack of social analysis reveals the extent, to which everyone, including MCCJ and CMS pastoral practitioners, is conditioned by coloniality in its various expressions. It exposes the real asymmetry, which exists today between the beneficiaries of coloniality and its victims. It is no longer a division along geographical lines (North-South); instead, it is epistemological. That is why the location of the individual is critical in the process of seeing, analysing, and judging the reality. Among those who have so far benefitted from the successes of the dominant socio-political and cultural systems, there exists a difficulty in acknowledging such benefits (technological advancement, improvement of the quality of life, increase in life expectancy, medical results). It is one thing to evaluate modernity from the privileged perspective of those who enjoy mass literacy, human rights, women rights, and political and religious freedom. The other is to look at the same reality from the locations of the victims of the "dark side of modernity" (Alexander, 2013; Mignolo, 2011): mercantilism, imperialism, colonialism, slave trade, forced religious conversions, apartheid, structural adjustment programs. The perspectives are very different.

The pastoral practitioners' blindness in the face of the privileges that the system grants to them, becomes more evident in the two cases mentioned in the data analysis: 'being priest' and 'being white'. The respondents were aware and acknowledged that both conditions put them in a situation of advantage over others, which means they assure power – a concept, which very rarely emerged from the answers and discussions. However, none of the participants ventured in a deeper analysis of the roots and consequences of having such an advantage. If connected with the engagement in pastoral work and action for social transformation, and the tendency to use the binary 'we/they', the lack of awareness of privileges may reinforce a paternalistic approach. It is the idea of "exalted mission", which is developed in the next section.

Exalted mission. If "a narrative of identity is a necessary condition for the existence of any notion of agency and subjectivity" (Yuval-Davis, 2010, p. 267), then an exalted and celebrated identity, founded on the charismatic tradition of the missionary Institutes leads to a sense of mission, which will also be easily exalted. "Mission" is what primarily defines the members of the Institutes, and the term is voluntarily kept generic to include the greatest possible variety of missionaries and ministries. Hence, to be a good missionary means to go out to the others, who, in the imaginary of the group, lack something (faith, education, medical care). It is the theological version of the binary construction of Western ontologies, in which the self is "constituted in relation to its excluded Other" (Thobani, 2007, p. 5).

Mission as a defining principle of identity, mission as a task, or mission as an act of moral goodness for others, are all slippery conceptions. If mission is what defines the new member of the group, then naturally, whatever existed in the life of that person before that entry, tends to be dismissed, devalued or simply ignored. For any theoretical effort to insert missionary and religious vocation in the social, cultural, and professional background of the person there is evidence from the ground that the effort is not very successful. A significant majority of respondents, who defined themselves through charism and mission, only mentioned their origins as a by the way.

The understanding of mission as a task, which demands sacrifice, self-denial, forgetting the fulfilment of oneself, and mission as doing something good to others also pose some challenges. Embodied in these ideas, there is the danger of salvationism, "framing help as the burden of the fittest" (Andreotti, 2012). Nevertheless, from a theological perspective, typical in the missionary environment, salvationism receives a different explanation. For centuries, the dominant narrative in mission theology has been about the urgency of going out and "save" the non-Christian others. It has been considered the Church's best contribution for humanity, and historically, and undeniably, the stress has been much more on 'saving' than on 'evangelising'.

Mission understood as doing something good for others is rooted in what can be called the narrative of the servant, which becomes problematic when implementing the practice of mutuality. Craig Greenfield, an activist and social entrepreneur, writes, "As Christians, we have become so fixated on our roles as servants that we miss out on the relationships of mutuality that the Spirit wants to knit between people" (Greenfield, 2016, p. 123). Such attitude can easily lead to another danger, paternalism, that is "the practice of providing a set of 'basic needs' for people (the set may vary), typically without consulting them on what their needs actually are" (Duflo, 2012, p. 2). It is

a practice that not only does not empower people but on the contrary, keep them in an infantile state (Andreotti, 2012; Andreotti et al., 2018). It is the Church's old approach to the world, "in the attempt to keep it as a child" (Congar, cited in Faggioli, 2015, p. 132).

The narrative of the servant and benevolence (Jefferess, 2011) and moral, religious obligations towards the less fortunate define pastoral practitioners as compassionate, kind, and capable to forget themselves. At the same time, it defines the other as lacking something when compared to the position of the pastoral practitioner. Unfortunately, the missionary narrative reinforces the idea of "people without" well described by Grosfoguel:

> We went from the sixteenth century characterization of 'people without writing' to the eighteenth and nineteenth century characterization of 'people without history', to the twentieth century characterization of 'people without development' and more recently, to the early twenty-first century of 'people without democracy' (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 214).

More than forty years ago, David Bosch (1978) wrote about the urgency to move towards mutuality in the relationships between older, Western churches and younger churches, mainly located in what today is referred to as the Global South or "Majority World" (Kağitçibaşi, cited in Adams et al., 2015, p. 214). After a historical excursus on the development of mutual relationships, Bosch warned that there still exists a "donor mentality" and a "receiver mentality", which naturally and necessarily create an imbalance in the interactions among churches.

Today, the situation is not very different. Undoubtedly, there has been significant development of the theology of the local churches and the idea of synodality, especially since Vatican II and with a new boost under the pontificate of Francis. Nevertheless, the level of centralisation of the Catholic Church and the enormous disparity in autonomy and financial capacity among older and younger churches maintains the same imbalance denounced in Bosch's article. Not only must the idea of mutuality be deepened at the sociological and theological level, but it should also be translated into clear pedagogical and pastoral strategies.

The exaltation of identity and mission is particularly significant and crucial when it contributes to construct, justify, maintain, and reproduce collective identities. The "identity narratives", the mission stories and testimonies contribute to defining what being a missionary means, which behaviours are accepted and expected, and which criteria are to be used to determine

(discern) who is fit for the job and who is not. They have an enormous repercussion on the training of future missionaries that can be misunderstood as a selection of the fittest.

In summary, what are the implications for the research objectives? The point here is not an accusation of lack of goodwill or presence of bad will to keep others in an inferior state while enjoying a privileged position of power. The good intention of pastoral practitioners should never be put to question, although unconscious, acritical 'doing good' often ends up in doing more harm (Land, 2015). How often have pastoral practitioners questioned their efficacy in ministry: "Despite our personal piety, our good intentions; despite our prayers, it seems as though we are rendered powerless by economic forces, or perhaps by some other system we are powerless against" (Nel, 2011, p. 158).

Therefore, the question remains, why do pastoral practitioners in MCCJ and CMS tend to put their family and cultural identity into brackets, and focus more directly on the charismatic identity? One possible answer is that this represents a mechanism of defence to avoid the complexity of reality, be it within or outside the multicultural community, in the pluralistic context of today's mission. The next section deals with this aspect.

A second attempt to answer reveals a structural conditioning embedded in the dominant narrative among the pastoral practitioners. This is seen in concepts of self-denial, giving oneself and helping others while indeed motivating people to commendable actions, and maintain asymmetrical (as the opposite of mutual) relationships in existence. Moreover, there is a tendency (most probably unconscious) to "conceptualize identity [of others] in unidimensional terms" (Hays, 2016, p. 4). The approach to people's diversity in the different missionary contexts happens from the perspective of the pastoral practitioner and the concept of identity and mission received in the Institute. It is highly probable, then, that faithful of traditional religions is seen mainly as non-Christian; laypeople are defined as non-clergy, or non-religious; the young people facing some challenges in the process of formation are judged as non-mature. Probably, as controversial as this statement may sound, Africans or Asians or Latin Americans are still seen as non-Europeans.

Also, the lack of awareness of the ramifications of individual and collective identity and mission are evident. These are put in the context of the postcolonial, neo-colonial world today. This is one of the warnings emerging from the research: lack of awareness of the implications of coloniality in the structures of society and the consciousness of the people condemn pastoral practitioners, particularly those involved in organised efforts to transform society, to remain

subordinated to that coloniality. An inadequate social analysis, mainly through the analytical instruments and practical strategies offered by social and political sciences, is an insurmountable impediment for pastoral practitioners in their engagement for social transformation. Lack of theoretical tools for analysis is paired with the personal and collective sense of powerlessness in facing and engaging the complexity of multicultural relationships, which is the theme of the next section.

Localisation and de-politicisation of pastoral action: Another form of disengaging complexity faced in pastoral action is to keep the action localised and de-politicised. This means emptying the action of any analysis of the root causes of the problem or limiting such analysis at a local and generic level. Localising the pastoral action means confusing social transformation with (local) development. A social action, which is depoliticised, a-historical, not complex, paternalistic, based on unchecked ethnocentrism and hegemony, and is not an action for social transformation. The process might develop structures and infrastructures, but it has minimum power in challenging the status quo and transforming ideas.

In the particular context of the Catholic Church and in the Comboni Family, de-politicising pastoral action for social transformation means systematically trying to change the world without acknowledging the complexity of the neo-colonial system and the numerous privileges, which the Church and other Church agencies enjoy from that very system. In other words, pastoral practitioners keep trying to solve problems starting from the same ideological assumptions that have created them, ending up in inadvertently displaying the same privileges and power they want to eliminate (Andreotti, 2016a; Land, 2015). The 'beneficiaries' of missionaries' "redemptive actions" (Adu-Opako, 2007) often wonder "why does it often seem that some of our best white friends behave like some of our worst enemies?" (Land, 2015, p. 7).

Any social action, which does not recognise and face the complexity of the system and its privileges, has neither the power nor the credibility to transform the status quo. It is so because the absence of critical reflection for social transformation leads to the absence of a fundamental change in perspective (Cranton, 1996). This means that any reasonable effort for development and social transformation is nullified, and the *status quo* is left as it is.

> If we neither criticize the world we have nor make proposals for the world that should exist – that is, if our lives and plans are not guided by 'utopian reason' and its corresponding state of mind and way of thinking and of feeling – it will become

> clear that we are happy as we are, that we are satisfied with the present 'order'(...) and then logically people satisfied with what they have cannot (...) produce any sort of change (Castillo, 2004, p. 35).

In the same way, choosing societal peripheries as the preferred location for the service to and with the marginalised is not enough for a real transformation. It must also coincide with the epistemological shift of rethinking hegemonic forms of knowledge in different fields (Adams, 2014), including Church ministry, and looking at the world through the eyes of the poor (Andreotti & de Souza, 2008).

This section has discussed the findings from the Research Question Two, focusing on how the de-politicisation of privileges and pastoral action are forms of avoiding the complexity encountered in the context of ministry. The next section addresses the challenge of complexity in the context of multicultural relationships, focusing on the results emerging from the Research Question Three.

5.3.3 Research Question 3 – relationships: Avoiding complexity by remaining disconnected in relationships

Concerning the third research question about relationships in a multicultural context, findings show a rather common experience of disorientation among the participants. Though upholding the value of internationality and multiculturalism, people seem not ready or suitable equipped to face a concrete multicultural environment. This is what appears, especially concerning the challenge of interpersonal communication and the struggle in encountering the other's identity. These situations tend to lead to a certain functional approach to community life and teamwork, significantly reducing the impact of these two values in the life of the missionaries. However, before discussing the concrete situations in the Comboni communities, it is important to develop the experience of disorientation or disorienting dilemma.

Disorienting dilemma: In Mezirow's theory of learning process, a disorienting dilemma is everything that has the power to trigger a critical reflection and question the person's frame of reference, namely the "set of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindset)" (Mezirow, 2003, p. 58). It is one of the steps in the process of transformative learning, which also include self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, exploration for new options (including in relationships and actions), planning and training for

implementing the plan, building competence and self-confidence, and reintegration in one's life of the new acquired perspective (Mezirow, 2000).

Green and Mälkki (2017) distinguish between major and minor disorienting dilemmas: divorcing or losing a job is different from experiencing tensions or conflicts in relationship. Major disorienting dilemmas have the power to initiate a process that may lead to a change of perspective and an expansion of the map of meanings. Green and Mälkki contend that clashes and conflicts in everyday human relationships are less dramatic and invasive in the life of a person, but may still trigger the same forces as in other significant life events.

This perspective is relevant to the discussion of the research findings for two reasons. The first derives from acknowledging that everyday reality is never neutral nor natural. On the contrary, everyday situations "represent particular constructions of reality that reflect and serve the interests of the powerful" (Adams et al., 2015, p. 216) in those particular situations. Tensions, misunderstandings, clashes in human relationships are linked to some forms of power and power struggle, and they can be considered as minor disorienting dilemmas, according to Green and Mälkki's point of view. This means that the possibility to trigger a critical reflection on the ongoing experience is something that can happen every day, without having to wait for an unexpected or dramatic event that can turn one's life upside-down.

This observation is particularly significant in a multicultural context. In this context, worldviews, assumptions, and systems of knowledge are multiple and very differentiated; low-intensity conflicts or misunderstandings can happen at any moment. Consequently, any Comboni multicultural community can be the cradle of such low-intensity disorienting dilemma as the first step of critical questioning of one's frame of reference.

The second important reason is maybe even more relevant, and it recalls what has already been stated earlier in the study. Green and Mälkki affirm that, although relationship conflicts can initiate a critical reflection, this response is not automatic. If it happens, it leads to a critical examination of how one's assumptions generate conflict (Green & Mälkki, 2017). However, not everybody decides to begin the journey of transformation based on their assumptions and beliefs. The positionality of the person may condition what they see or do not see. Ese-osa Idahosa and Vincent say:

> the contexts into which we are born (in which there are both constraining and enabling conditions), endow us with different interests depending on our social

> positions within those contexts and this in turn influences whether an individual will be likely to choose to either reproduce the status quo or seek to change the status quo (Idahosa & Vincent, 2019, p. 3).

The decision to change or reproduce the status quo depends on the level of conscientization, based on some prerequisites in the personality of the individual, the environment, and on the pedagogical process.

Concerning the character of the person, Charaniya (2012) mentions four such qualities: intellectual curiosity, tolerance of ambiguity, intellectual and social humility. A "mentoring community", to use the expression of Laurent A. Daloz as cited by Charaniya, is also a requirement, as well as "the purposeful use of pedagogy". They are both founded on the concept that any group of people, coming together as relatively strangers from different cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, "must first create a community of their own from which to draw the skills, the knowledge, and expertise to accomplish their task" (Charaniya, 2012, p. 241). It is worth noticing that the "new" community arising from the interactions among the formerly strangers and now connected individuals becomes the source of "skills, knowledge, and expertise". Everyone joins the group with their experiential and cultural baggage, but it is only through a willing and critical interaction with others that new skills and methodologies to face the complexity of reality can be acquired.

The clarification on disorienting dilemma and the expanding vision that low-intensity relational conflicts can be consider as experiential disorientation help now in the discussion of the findings from the data. These are the challenge of multicultural communication, the struggle in encountering others and their personal stories, and the risk of accepting a functional approach to community life and multicultural relationships.

Communication is one area of complexity that emerged from the data. Not only the use of foreign languages but also, at a deeper level, the universe of symbols, gestures, preferences, words, and silences is for many a mysterious world. Lack of openness and desire to enter this world, gradually transforms it into an insurmountable obstacle. In such situations, "things go unsaid", as one of the respondents vividly admitted. This expression is powerful and can signify two things. First, it is simply the acknowledgement of a difficult situation, which is the complexity of communicating with another who is different. The second is more dramatic as it is the silent acceptance of the impossibility of any communication. "Things go unsaid" implies the forced

choice of silence or the preference of a more manageable and straightforward interaction. Obviously, it is not a moral judgment, an assessment of what is good or bad, what should or should not be done. It is merely the forced decision to avoid the effort, which a deeper communication would require. It is forced because it is out of the person's incapability of such a multicultural communication.

Encountering other persons, recognising and appreciating their identities, is never easy. It may become even more complicated once charismatic identity is prioritised, because in this case, it seems almost natural that other plural identities become problematic. If by giving precedence to charismatic identity, individuals prefer to forget or dismiss their social identities, it is reasonable to forget or dismiss also the social identities of others. Besides, accepting that in practice no communication is possible, because the other is too different, or because there are no skills to engage such a communication, leads to external and superficial interactions that are mainly restricted to organisation, report on activities or the chronicle of daily events.

This dynamic of communication within the multicultural community is what has been referred to as a functional approach to community life and teamwork. At a theoretical level, the level of the ideal, the effort of living and interacting in a multicultural context is worthy and accepted because it is believed to have a positive impact on the life of the people in the surroundings, besides being considered God's will for humanity – coming together as one human family. However, few respondents spontaneously acknowledged that multicultural relationships in the community have clearly contributed to their transformation. It was easier to recognise how pastoral ministry and the relationships with people outside the community have changed them. To put things bluntly, some multicultural communities may appear like those marriages, which, despite having exhausted any possible reason to continue, still hold together only for the sake and goodness of the children. The point made here is that it appears that multicultural communities are appreciated because people from outside value them as positive witnesses of unity and harmony. The reality seen from inside the community may reveal a different picture.

It is in this picture that the present study uses the descriptive term of disconnected stories. In the multicultural community of pastoral practitioners, all focused on mission (serving others), originating in the new identity (charism), the personal (biographical, cultural, existential) stories of the individuals remain in the background. They are a personal treasure, almost a hidden secret, of the person, but remain disconnected from the real, daily life of the community. The complexity

of facing the diversity of these stories is overcome by the simple – but costing – choice to focus on something else: the external mission to the people, which, as it is shown later, unconsciously helps in maintaining a position of privilege, power, and control.

This section has shown how a multicultural context like a Comboni community requires a different communication and the availability to truly encounter others as they are, with their identity and diversity. However, the experience of disorientation makes these dynamics difficult, especially when people perceive themselves to be ill equipped for this. Avoiding this complexity leads the group of pastoral practitioners to remain disconnected among themselves and outer-oriented towards the pastoral action. The next section addresses the question of collaboration in pastoral work, in a multicultural context.

5.3.4 Research Question 4 – collaboration: Avoiding complexity by a-critically accepting pluralism in ministry

The fourth research question dealt with the individual perception of social critical consciousness in pastoral ministry within a multicultural community. It is about collaboration, teamwork in a multicultural context. It has already been shown how avoiding the complexity of multicultural relationships may lead to a functional approach to community life. The same can happen concerning teamwork.

Avoiding the complexity of multicultural relationships and real situations where pastoral ministry is exercised, lead to the silent acceptance of "a variety of styles and methods" (Comboni Missionaries, 2001, no. 10) in the pastoral action. While a certain level of orthodoxy – a common vision of pastoral action founded on shared values and principles – is accepted, it is much more difficult, if not impossible, to move together towards an orthopraxis. However, it is not entirely clear whether the acceptance of different pastoral styles is due to an accepted pluralistic vision or it is, once more, a technique to avoid complexity.

When moving from a theoretical level to a practical one, the pastoral practitioner meets with a significantly different reality, in which the proclaimed values of unity, positive diversity and growth through reconciliation of differences is not something existing naturally and cannot be taken for granted.

> In fact, there is a significant gap between the "ideal" proposed by the Rule of Life and our documents, often 'flying high,' and the concrete reality of our communities,

> often moving at ground level, according to a logic of the "lowest common denominator" values (Comboni Missionaries, 2011a, pp. 16–17).

The logic of the "lowest common denominator" is what the study indicates as acritical acceptance of pluralism. It is the functional approach to diverse relationships in the community (previous section on research question three) and the tolerance of multiple styles and methods in pastoral work.

The issue is strictly connected to the previous ones, especially the lack of awareness of privileges and their socio-political implications. If interculturality demands the recognition of one's positionality and privileges, then it is understandable that, under the present conditions of community life and theological and pastoral training, a process of collective growth towards interculturality, beyond multiculturalism, would be arduous. Unless such complexity and the way power intersects within the community are acknowledged, interculturality is impracticable (Zárate Pérez, 2014).

The acritical acceptance of plurality can also be noticed in the relationships of pastoral practitioners with people outside the religious community. As it emerged from the data, there is still a tendency to maintaining a dualistic discourse based on the binary us/them. Analysing the implication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* to the missionary universe, Swanson (2004) points out that missionary discourse has often been dualistic, embracing unchanging truths and derogatory or paternalistic representations of the other.

Swanson discusses another point of interest in this context, namely the tendency of missionaries to consider particular, typical responses as sort of paradigms "to make sense out of the totality of their experiences" (Swanson, 2004, p. 110) with the people encountered in their mission. It is not difficult to see how this can also be a strategy to avoid complexity: constantly, and uniquely, referring to one's particular missionary and pastoral experience as paradigmatic for others. It is a feature that becomes more evident (but is not limited to this) in situations of generational gap, namely, when in a community there are missionaries with a great difference in age. The risk is for the elder to refer to their experiences, while the younger desire to work in their ways. In this case, what is missing is the capacity to link the pastoral methodology to the personal life experience of the person, understanding why that particular style and method is so important for that person. Keeping personal stories ignored and disconnected only leads to disconnected methodologies.

The opposite of disconnected stories and acritical pastoral pluralism is precisely a community that is capable and willing to recognise and take seriously the intersections of race, ethnicity, ability, experiential knowledge, passions, and desires present in each of its members. A person should be trained towards this attitude of openness and respect, bringing to the forefront the delicate question of formation of future missionaries. How the acritical approach or the social critical consciousness impact on formation is the next step in the present discussion.

5.3.5 Impact on training of future pastoral practitioners (formation)

The four aspects emerging revealing an acritical approach to complexity – exalting charismatic identity, depoliticising privileges and mission, remaining disconnected in relationships, and a-critically accepting pluralism in ministry – have a relevant impact on the training of future pastoral practitioners.

The effort of the Institutes MCCJ and CMS to improve and update their formative curriculum is undeniable. In 2015, MCCJ came up with a new edition of the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis et Studiorum*, the magna charta of the values and strategies regulating the long training process of the new missionaries. There has been a growing attention to the person of the missionary, which is explicit in the MCCJ document *Attention to the person in the Comboni community* (Comboni Missionaries, 2001). The document recognises that "in their inalienable individuality it is the persons who form our communities and carry on the mission" (Comboni Missionaries, 2001, no. 2).

In the context of formation, usually, it is understood that the first phase of formation (postulancy) allows the candidate to "acquire the necessary level of human and Christian maturity by assuming and integrating their personal history, character, family and cultural reality" (Comboni Missionaries, 2015b, no. 266). This happens through discovering, deepening, and accepting one's cultural identity, sense of belonging to a people, and a "critical acceptance and actual experience of those typical values that unite him to his own human group" (Comboni Missionaries, 2015b, no. 281). At the same time, the candidates are invited to be open to the richness of other cultures, in an attitude of dialogue and accepting diversity. Among the means proposed to this goal, the document includes "a critical sense towards one's own and others' cultures" (Comboni Missionaries, 2015b, no. 282), which can contribute to the overcoming of "nationalism, tribalism, and diffidence towards different races and cultures" (Comboni Missionaries, 2015b, no. 282).

The last phase of formation, the period of temporary vows, is meant to offer to the young missionaries a concrete chance to live the new charismatic identity confirmed through the religious profession. One of the fundamental objectives of this stage is to live daily "in an intercultural environment" and to deepen "a sense of belonging to the Institute" (Comboni Missionaries, 2015b, no 406). It is assumed that each person is aware of the undeniable patrimony received from family, people, and the Church of origin. In this phase, however, the candidate is invited to deepen, enrich, and re-express (their) preceding experiences, and be able to recognise the richness in other cultures (Comboni Missionaries, 2015b, no. 428-429). It is important to notice that the document explicitly invites each house of formation to contextualise the fundamental values and general formative directives to the socio-ecclesial environment, in which the house is inserted (Comboni Missionaries, 2015b, no. 405). To this aim, the *Ratio Fundamentalis* suggests three steps: understanding the socio-political and cultural reality, as seen by the candidates; re-interpreting the charism, based on the local reality; and the style of formation.

The whole process of formation in MCCJ is regulated and oriented by the educative model of integration. It is a process, which guides the person to build their life around a vital and significant centre. In Christian and religious life, this centre is Jesus Christ, who becomes the source of a rediscovered identity and truth in each individual. In the process of growth, the person is invited to read their life experience anew, unveiling its new meaning received through the continuous presence of God (Comboni Missionaries, 2009, no. 85, 2015b, no. 101). The educative model of integration builds on three key interrelated dimensions: identity, spirituality, and mission (Comboni Missionaries, 2015b, no. 101.1-3). This mode, therefore, opens the individual to a life-long process of integral growth. The focus of the model is the psycho-spiritual process of growth and the inner transformation of the individual; in this dimension, it has proven use.

However, in the theoretical framework of the present study and considering the data collected for the research, some considerations must be made. The most important observation, in the interpretation of the researcher, is that the model is disconnected from the socio-cultural context not only of the individual but also of the surrounding environment and society. Identity is considered in one dimension, single-layered, and there is no mention at any point, of multiple identities, positionality, and privileges. Kessi (2016) sustains that making a lasting difference in people's lives also requires an intervention "in the structural inequalities and experiences of

violence and discrimination that exist in society". Otherwise, she asks, "If we don't, aren't we simply assisting people to adapt to and survive oppressive living conditions?"

Evidence of this disconnection is found in the literature examined, the collected data and what has already been highlighted earlier concerning complexity, and exalted identities. The theory or enunciation of ideals as well as fundamental values may be clear, but in practice, people face disorientation in their daily experiences. The surprise and even embarrassment of the participants in dealing with the question on privileges combined with the acknowledgement by many of the difficulties met in multicultural communication, reveals a gap in the educative model. It may undoubtedly be due to a lack of appropriate preparation of the formators. Nevertheless, the present study contends that it is more a structural problem in as much as it ignores multiple identities and positionalities of the individual and disconnects formation from the analysis of power structures within and outside the community. It also reproduces a way of knowing and formulating values that privileges a Western epistemology:

> The prevailing discourse puts forth an apparently natural and ahistorical reality, structuring it in such a way as to cause it to be accepted without question. This makes it impossible to derive lessons from experience and, more important, makes it impossible to find the roots of one's own identity, which is as much needed for interpreting one's sense of the present as for glimpsing possible alternatives that might exist (…) The recovery of historical memory supposes the reconstruction of models of identification that, instead of chaining and caging the people, open up the horizon for them, toward their liberation and fulfilment (Martín-Baró, cited in Adams et al., 2015, p. 217).

Recovering of historical memories, de-ideologizing everyday realities, and privileging marginalised perspectives are three urgent tasks for liberation psychology (Adams et al., 2015) and they are in line with the features of a complex way of thinking exposed earlier.

5.4 Summary of the discussion

Before moving to the theological interpretation, it is useful to recapitulate the discussion so far. The four findings have been discussed within the framework of decolonial theory and critical consciousness theory and considering the features of an emerging complex way of thinking. It has been shown that such critical thinking is not automatic, although it can be triggered by

everyday situations of discomfort and disorientation, especially in a multicultural context. Overall, the analysis and interpretation of data have highlighted some needs that can lead to strategies for action, which the study considers relevant for the MCCJ and CMS Institutes. Here they are presented in connection with the research questions:

1) Self: The need to rediscover and value the personal story of each person, bringing together context, culture, and personal transformation.
2) Pastoral action: The need to become political, which means having systemic thinking and approach to the situations, in which pastoral practitioners are involved.
3) Relationships: The need to reconnect the personal stories of the individual within the multicultural community. This means to acknowledge others in their positionality, as well as one's positionality, in both multicultural living and practice.
4) Collaboration: The need to re-centre collaboration within and outside the community towards allyship, meaning a partnership with others, especially marginalized and silenced. This takes into account the privileges enjoyed by the missionaries.
5) Formation: The need for a critical pedagogy in the formation of pastoral practitioners, which is capable of fostering the psycho-spiritual growth of the individual, but which is also contextualised in the complexity of the system of coloniality where the training is carried out.

Figure 4 illustrates the combination of the findings (as they appear in fig. 3) and the results of the discussion, which open the way to strategies for social transformation.

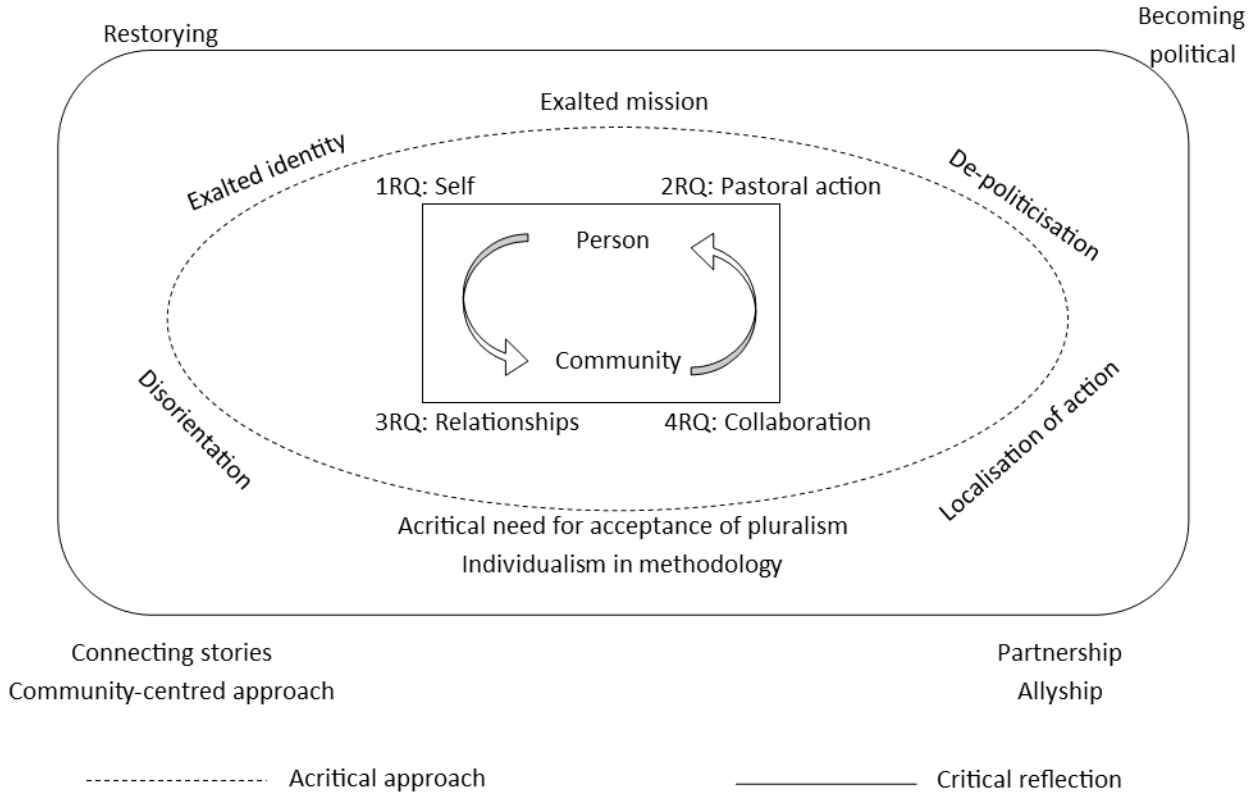


Figure 4 Summary of the Themes and Recommendations

On top of all this, there is the need for a faith experience, which is at the same time, contextualised in today's history, inclusive and evocative of an alternative imagination. Only in this way can faith be meaningful and relevant not only to the pastoral practitioners in their faith journey but also to the people involved in the pastoral action. This aspect is be developed in the next section of theological interpretation.

5.5 Theological Interpretation

The moment of theological reflection and interpretation is constitutive of both the methodology of the Pastoral Cycle and the present study in social transformation. It brings to the discussion the element of faith, the light from Scriptures, and the critical reflection of the Catholic Social Tradition. Theological reflection is rooted in reality through a solid social and cultural analysis, but at the same time, it empowers a new imagination that is informed by faith and the prophetic tradition found in the Bible and in the Tradition of the Church. In the concrete case of this study, it is the moment, in which faith-based reflection is called to give its contribution to the

analysis and discussion of the data collected. Theological reflection also contributes to fill the gap in the existing literature, which originates in humanistic and social sciences, but is absent in theological field and missionary reflections.

5.5.1 The meaning of theological interpretation

The theoretical framework of the research demands a critical perspective on the moment of theological reflection as well. While PCM speaks of theological interpretation or reflection on the pastoral situation of insertion, this study speaks of the critical interpretation of theology. In fact, decolonial and critical theories scrutinize theology to check when and how it is a tool for liberation and transformation or, on the contrary, an instrument, which reproduces the status quo of coloniality of power, knowledge, and mind. The disconnection of the reflection from reality inevitably condemns it as ineffective in the proclamation of the Good News and as complicit with injustice. That is why PCM has not lost its relevance. On the contrary, in this time of history, in which interdisciplinarity has become essential for any discipline, including theology, the cooperation of social sciences and theology can no longer be ignored.

However, as much as methodology and proper social analysis are essential, they are not enough. The social location of doing theology is also critical for a reflection that can truly speak in and to the world today. The point emerging from the research is the double significance of such a social location, namely, the positionality of the subject (the theologians) and the action (doing theology). It is necessary to understand and clarify who does theology, where theology is done, and how it is done.

'Who does theology' refers to the positionality of the theologian, the eyes seeing the world and reading the Word. While, as it was developed in chapter two, the positionality of practitioners has become very relevant in many different fields, unfortunately, there is "very little self-reflection on the impact of theologians' social location on theology (…) as if their theologies do not reflect the bias of their own social positions and power" (G. J.-S. Kim & Shaw, 2018, p. 3). In theological interpretation, the interpreter must be interpreted, "taking into account the biases and preunderstandings that inevitably shape the meaning he or she derives from the [biblical] text" (C. Myers, 1988, p. 4), including the arising personal reflections.

'Where theology is done' refers to the importance of the *locus theologicus*, the place from where theologians see the world and read the Word. For the privileged of society, Ched Myers writes, the site of biblical reading and theological reflection is the "empire, *locus* imperium" (1988,

p. 5). Empire is "a post-globalized human condition where we see the free flow of capital, information, and technology (…) the uneven development of centre and the periphery countries and the irresistible gap between the rich and the poor" (Vinayaraj, 2016, p. 81). It has neither a geographical centre of power nor territorial boundaries. It is decentralised and ever expanding by defining, managing, and eventually absorbing differences. Most importantly:

> The emergence of the global Empire provides the new global context of theology. This context is ecumenical and universal. No theological reflection can avoid this context. All faiths and religions are bound to deal with this context. There may be different starting points, depending on the locus of the faith community. Whether one is at the seat and center of the Empire or at its periphery, one is not outside of the Empire (Kim Yong-Bok, cited in Vinayaraj, 2016, p. 79).

'How theology is done' means the method in theology. Gustavo Gutiérrez, one of the founders of the theology of liberation, speaks of a new way of doing theology. "Theology, he writes, is a critical reflection on historical praxis" (Gutiérrez, 1988, p. 66), the only way to be relevant and liberating. It is a theology deeply immersed in the complex reality, which it tries to understand and transform. Moreover, theology tries "to be part of the process through which the world is transformed" (Gutiérrez, 1988, p. 66). To do so, theology must enter into dialogue with social sciences, seeking the root causes of oppression and understanding its historical development. However, the most important aspect of theology, which reflects on historical events, is precisely the fact that it is a reflection. It means that, theology is the second step, the first being the praxis for transformation, which happens in a specific, historical context (Gutiérrez, 1988; Phan, 2000). The critical reflection on history is what, according to Raschke (2016), characterises a critical theology, whose main aim is to situate historically Christian revelation, identify and address the global crises of a particular time.

Therefore, critical theology and decolonial perspective seek to keep a focus on the socio-political and historical contexts. Moreover, it calls not only for a geographical shift (going to the peripheries, reaching out to the marginalised, making an option for the poor) but, most importantly, calls for an epistemological turn. Back in 1991, David Bosch, in his seminal book *Transforming Mission*, spoke of an epistemological break of contextual theology, which is from below, with social sciences as the primary source, and the poor as the main interlocutor (1991, p. 423).

The next step of this process of contextualisation, which is still in the making, is theological production. Self-theologizing of the local Church has to be added to the traditional self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing, which are usually used to characterise a genuinely local, indigenous Church (Bosch, 1991). Being with the marginalised is a good step; learning to see the world through their eyes is a further one (Andreotti & de Souza, 2008). However, the final goal remains to transform society and the Church in a way that all voices from any place are given the same dignity and valued in the same way. Moreover, activist practice and intersectional thinking compel a "shift from language featuring margins and centers toward metaphors of intersections" (Hancock, 2016, p. 56).

Therefore, which faith experience and connected spirituality can be relevant to today's complex and multicultural intersections of relationships? At the same time, which theology remains open to be challenged by today's reality that is still dominated by coloniality but it is also aspiring to become something different? How can faith experience and theological reflection help pastoral practitioners and all people to imagine and create a world that is radically different from the present status quo? An articulated answering to these questions goes well beyond the limitations of this research. Nevertheless, an answer is required as the field of this research is pastoral ministry for social transformation. Also the context is among pastoral practitioners who have made the following of Jesus, their central dimension of identity and their main reason for action.

The research questions for this study sought to explore the awareness of SCC in pastoral practitioners and their communities. They also investigate how SCC shapes relationships and pastoral action in a Comboni community. In response to the questions, the next sections link theological reflection to the emerging themes in line with the objectives of the study. They are rediscovering the value and centrality of the person with their personal stories, becoming political, reconnecting personal stories within the multicultural community, re-centring pastoral collaboration towards allyship. What has faith to say about all these? And how does faith need to change to engage all these?

5.5.2 Encountering the other, connecting the stories of the people

Jesus' narrative as found in the books of the New Testament is full of situations in which the personal story of the protagonist is the starting point for Jesus to reflect, challenge, heal, and teach. The Samaritan woman, Zaccheus, Bartimaeus, the anonymous woman with haemorrhages,

just to mention a few, had the possibility – in fact, they created the possibility to meet Jesus, to narrate their story, and to be recognised in that story, which became the location for Jesus to challenge the person and initiate transformation.

The people who encounter Jesus are seen always as a carrier of a personal story, which illustrate their whole life. That story, with its complex intertwining lights and shadows, whether the person is aware or not, is the reason for attitudes, behaviours, understandings, worldviews, and beliefs. For this, a return to the story of the person, the narration and the listening, are important and necessary. They have to be done in a way that can facilitate the connection of different stories, within a community. The narration of these stories is the starting place of any theology that is the reflection on ultimate meaning and values (Henderson-Espinoza, 2019). Stories are much more than simple reports of a sequence of events. It is not the event in itself that is important, but how the person has lived it, reflected upon it, and can re-narrate it to others.

The positionality of self and the others can be discovered and recognised only through a narration that originates from a critical reflection of one's life experience. The narration must come before any collective or individual action, precisely because it is the story that gives meaning and foundation to the action. Each personal theory, ideology, vision of the world is shaped by a story. Henderson-Espinoza (2019) calls this moment of narration "restorying ourselves" – re-telling personal story meaningfully. In this understanding, therefore, it is not anymore a question of translating theory into action and enlightening theory through action (the circle of praxis), but connecting praxis to the lived experience of each person in their everyday lives. The consequence of this is that, in a multicultural community of pastoral practitioners, the first question should not be "What are you doing?" (revealing an immediate focus on the action), but "Why is what you are doing important to you?" (focusing on the life experience and perceptions of the person).

In "restorying", members of a community become the starting point for planning, for action, and for evaluation. This is the integral part of any methodology because only stories (not theories) have the power to touch minds and hearts, and initiate a different level of communication, that opens the possibility for a common understanding and for a shared vision, as it was in Jesus' praxis. One of the crucial aspects of this praxis was his capacity to advocate for those without voice and to unmask the privileges of the powerful.

5.5.3 Advocating for the silenced, unmasking privileges

Given what has been stated earlier concerning the importance of the location, from where biblical reading and theological reflection are done, it should not be difficult to grasp the political relevance of Jesus as a person, and his message, for those who struggle for restorative justice and equality. He non-violently resisted the Roman Empire by declaring the Kingdom of God at hand and showing its impact. He called simple people from outside the circles of power, subtracting them from the structures of the imperial political and economic system. He proclaimed God's sovereignty and peace as the truly good news for humankind, in evident opposition to the Roman proclamation of Cesar's rule and *pax romana*. He healed the victims of the unjust and deadly Roman imperial system, as a sign of reparation of physical and social sicknesses, all geared towards a restoration of the human family. He practised social, economic, and religious inclusiveness, sharing resources and advocating for marginalized groups, especially women. By so doing, he constantly challenged the privileges of the political and religious elites and invited his audience to see deeper and further; he sought critical reflection on what each saw (Carter, 2005).

The evangelical story of the woman weeping and anointing Jesus' feet (Lk 7-36-8:3) is particularly telling about the themes, which have emerged from data analysis and from the interpretation. This reflection heavily relies on Ched Myers' political reading of the passage (C. Myers, 2016, 2019). During a dinner in the house of a Pharisee, to which Jesus was also invited, an uninvited and unwelcomed woman makes her appearance. She is defined in different ways depending on the version of the Bible used: a "sinful woman" (The New African Bible/The New American Bible), "a woman from the city, notorious as a woman of ill repute" (The Voice Bible), "a woman from the city, who was a sinner" (The New Revised Standard Version). The label is confirmed by the Pharisee's thoughts, when he stares, surprised and scandalized, at the scene of the woman weeping and anointing Jesus' feet.

The social location of the protagonists is clear, as it is also the way, in which the marginalised woman is represented by the male elite. Not only is the gesture of touching and anointing Jesus's feet a total disruption of social norms and acceptability but also the daring act of entering the Pharisee's house. In the Gospel narrative, the woman is repositioned from the margins of society, where she has been relegated by social conventions and purity codes, to the centre of the action, standing "behind him [Jesus] at his feet" (Lk 7:38). True to the position of women in society, the Pharisee defends his position of privilege. He does not see the woman beyond the

social label of being a sinner who has ruined his house and reputation. The Pharisee's look is heavily conditioned by his positionality and his representation of the woman.

By his reaction, through his parable and gestures, Jesus challenges the host precisely on this point. "Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman?'" (Lk 7:44). The invitation/challenge, which was and remains until today revolutionary, is to *see* the woman as she is, and to see all those who, in the course of history, have been defined, marginalised, silenced, and condemned, as they are. The elementary and natural act of seeing becomes a political act, which has the power of unveiling the asymmetrical structures of power, questioning and changing them, in the name of the equal dignity, which is the only universal dimension of human identity.

Jesus' ministry is a non-violent challenge to social divisions and a religiosity subaltern to the iniquitous status quo. Jesus could do this because he positioned himself in a very concrete and clear way in the society of his time. He chose a location, a *locus theologicus*, from which he could speak of God credibly and authoritatively. That location was the margins of a society dominated by elites and discriminated by social norms and religious, moral codes. By openly positioning himself and coherently communicating from that position, Jesus was and is able to challenge every listener to become aware of their positionalities, of how they position and represent others who are different because of race, social position, or moral conduct. "Do you see this woman?" is the challenge to notice her, first, but then to see her more deeply and honestly, to recognise her for who she is, with her story, suffering, and aspirations.

Myers connects the narrative of this passage of the Gospel to advocacy, which, he says, is not speaking on behalf of the voiceless (a common refrain in many religious circles), but rather "curating spaces where the silenced can be heard" (C. Myers, 2019). The reference to Spivak's question, "Can the subaltern speak?" is immediate (Spivak, 1988). Jesus' ministry is person-centred more than action-centred, in this sense, each person is far more important than traditions, concepts, strategies, or ideals. Any and each of these dimensions is scrutinised for its efficacy in recognising, liberating, and empowering the individual within a community.

In the context of this research, which is the multicultural environment of religious communities and of pastoral practice, the challenge is particularly significant. The acritical acceptance of pluralism, which emerged from the data, means choosing a simple multicultural cohabitation over an intercultural process. Interculturality, as it has been shown earlier, cannot be

functional, non-transformative, but must demand the recognition of one's positionality and privileges in society and on the Comboni community. Particularly in a religious community, it is important to recognise the repositioning demanded by Jesus to his followers, a repositioning that is at the same time of the person choosing the margins among the marginalised, and the marginalised using privileges to create spaces for the silenced to be heard. This repositioning is developed in the next section.

5.5.4 Positioning the pastoral practitioner and the pastoral action

Jesus was able to challenge structures of power and the privileges enjoyed by political and religious elites because he clearly positioned himself. He chose to carry out his ministry in a life-journey from the margins to the centre of the political and religious empire. The same geographical preferential option for the poor has been a constant in the Church's magisterium and practice.

However, the Catholic Social Tradition and ministerial practice have grown in the awareness that a transformation of social structures without a change of mind, a perspective transformation, is impossible: "Changing structures without generating new convictions and attitudes will only ensure that those same structures will become, sooner or later, corrupt, oppressive and ineffectual" (Francis, 2013, no. 189). Brueggemann makes the same point: "Human transformative activity depends on a transformed imagination" (2001, p. xx). If there is no questioning of one's assumptions and starting values, then even choosing the margins is not enough for an epistemic transformation involving new thinking. Kaunda (2015, p. 75) links the possibility of social transformation, political progress, and economic development to the decolonisation of African mind, another way to express the journey towards critical thinking and personal agency. If we want the new world to happen, then we need to regain "a utopian consciousness" (Castillo, cited in Ayallo, 2014, p. 7), able to critique the present and to envisage the future.

The connection between the geographical location (the peripheries) and the perspective on looking and understanding reality is made clear by Pope Francis in an interview:

> When I speak of peripheries, I speak of limits. Usually, we move in spaces that we somehow control. That is the centre. However, as we go leaving the centre, we discover more things. When we look at the centre from these new things we have found, from our new places, from that periphery, we see that the reality is different. It is one thing to see the reality from the centre, and another thing is to see it from

> the last place we reached. One example. Europe, seen from Madrid in the XVI century, was one thing, but when Magellan reaches the end of the American continent and looks at Europe, from there, he understands another thing. Reality is best viewed from the periphery than from the centre. The reality of the person, of the existential peripheries and even the reality of thought. You can have a very structured thinking, but when you are confronted with someone who is outside that system of thought, in one way or another you have to look for the reasons of your thinking, you start discussing, you are enriched by the thinking of the other from the periphery (Francis, 2015b, p. 2, translation of the author from the original in Spanish).

Two movements are involved: the first is geographical, moving from the centre to the peripheries. The second is epistemological, accepting to be challenged by a different system of thought and to assume a different perspective, to see the world from the margins and with the eyes of the marginalised.

Among the MCCJ, the need for this epistemic turn is explicitly mentioned in the final document of the XV General Chapter of the MCCJ (1997). The text suggests three attitudes for a fresh start from mission: (1) to stop and look at reality, (2) to walk with the people, and (3) to be signs of communion. The second attitude is particularly relevant for the topic of this section, as it is explained that

> A fresh start from mission means: to see with the eyes of the poor; preferential option for the poor means, to look - as Jesus did - at the world, the Church and our Institute, in a new way; to be present in their midst with simplicity, committing ourselves to the defence of life and the removal of the causes of poverty in the world (Comboni Missionaries, 1997, no. 26).

The invitation and challenge of seeing (and understanding has to be added) reality with the eyes of the poor, represents the epistemic turn needed today, which the Church, and the Institute need to execute. Unfortunately, the invitation has remained at the level of exhortation without any evident impact on the work of evangelisation.

One of the recurrent critiques in the mission of the Church, which also emerged from the data, has been that the process of inculturation has remained at a rather superficial level without affecting thoughts and behaviour. This is especially so where, in a multicultural environment, there

is still one dominant culture, as a result of a majority of members, or because the past has shaped a "normal" way of living and seeing. In such a case, unawareness of privileges and of how power intersects the universal Church, and the local communities, keep the epistemic turn at the level of theoretical commitment without having the strength to modify assumptions and behaviours. With this, the decolonial theory that has been guiding reflection and conceptualisation of the research offers a contribution and poses a challenge to theology and mission.

5.5.5 A decolonial challenge: the political dimension of the option for the poor

The contribution from the decolonial perspective is a critical revisitation of the concept of margins or borders. It poses a serious challenge to the idea and practice of the preferential option for the poor and a call to overcome the binary centre/margins towards an authentic human community.

The decolonial perspective is a constant reminder of how today's world has been constructed through ideas of civilizations, progress, and development. This construction has led to a violent conquest of uncivilized territories (geographical expansion) and the creation of epistemological boundaries, separating "us" and "them", civilized and barbarians, good and evil. The dominant narrative about progress and development has constructed "new meanings about African life that are for Africa, but not about Africa" (Abdi, 2016, p. 228) and created new identities "relegated to the status of non-viability" (Abdi, 2016, p. 223), contrasted to the centre, which remains the location of true identity and civilization. For that reason, people have continuously experienced dislocation through necessary-for-survival transnational movements that originate in past and present colonialism (Bhambra, 2015; Elizondo, 1998), segregated lives in the margins, and epistemological diminishing of cultural and traditional concepts and experiences. Social development in Africa has been fundamentally 'de-cultured' (Abdi, 2016, p. 223) and de-contextualized from world system and historical perspective. Moreover, there has not been, so far, "a critical scrutiny of the ideas that have engendered the actions [for development] on the continent" (Adu-Opako, 2007, p. xii), the "ideohistorical background of development, from which actions have been…derived to reconstruct the African" (Adu-Opako, 2007, p. 1).

The same can be said concerning development realised by Christian agencies. In many ways, the Church has succumbed to the modern worldview of separation of the spiritual and physical realm, running the real risk of detaching spiritual work from social action (B. L. Myers, 2011). In this way, margins have been created within the very structure and, at an even deeper level,

the very identity of the Church. Social action for social transformation ceases to be a constitutive dimension of evangelization (Synod of Bishops, 1971 no. 6) but becomes a mere external appendix of what is considered the real mission of the Church, namely the spiritual work.

The metaphor of the margins has been used widely in social sciences to conceptualize social injustice, oppression, disadvantages vs privileges, and power relations in today's world (L. T. Smith, 2012). At the same time, experience and literature show that these locations have become sites of resistance and resilience to the expansion of the frontier, "challenging […] not only conquest and destruction but also the very notion that the boundaries that establish human differences can or should function to exclude what is 'different'" (Goizueta & Aquino, 1998, p. ix).

With this background therefore, the decolonial theory helps in conceptualizing peripheries, margins, and borders, in their geographical, socio-political, and cultural understanding. The theory distinguishes between margins/peripheries and borders. At this level, the initial concept has primarily a social dimension and refers to the social location of marginalised groups in today's unbalanced system of power. Borders, instead, refer not only to a geographical and social reality, but also to the political, cultural, and epistemic significance, underlining the relational aspect: "The very concept of 'border' implies the existence of people, languages, religions and knowledge on both sides linked through relations established by the coloniality of power" (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006, p. 208).

The borderland is the space 'in between,' the 'third space,' "neither the One nor the Other but something else besides" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 28). This very situation of in-betweenness can be favourable to transformation, both of structures (a world without margins) and people's consciousness (the birth of a new hybrid identity) (Park, 2011, p. 5). However, hybrid identity does not emerge naturally; it is the outcome of a conscious process of critical analysis and constructive interpretation of the experience of borderlands or marginality, as mentioned earlier.

The Church has been criticised, also by decolonial authors, of having been part of the social and religious construction of margins (Ingleby, 2010). The missionary narrative, in a particular way, has maintained for long the divide us/them (as it emerged from the data), which create exclusions and representations of identities (the poor, the needy, the pagan) (Swanson, 2004).

At the same time, since her inception, the Church has been called to go to the peripheries, to cross borders, to contribute to building the one human family (Elizondo, 1998). The previous

section presented how missionaries and theologians have contributed to the reconceptualization of peripheries in their broadest meaning: not only territorial, but also epistemological, ethnic, racial, gender, ecclesial, and religious (Aquino & Goizueta, 1998). In several situations, they have become threshold people, those who "live within and among multiple worlds, […] (developing) a 'perspective from the cracks' […] (using) their views from these cracks-between-worlds to invent holistic, relational theories and tactics enabling them to reconceive or in other ways transform the various worlds in which they exist" (Keating, 2006, p. 9).

Today, more than ever, and in line with the epistemic turn advocated by decolonial scholars, the fundamental option for the poor, a pillar in the Catholic Social Teaching, has to be reimagined. It has to be inserted in the socio-political context which continues to shape socio-political processes in Africa, namely "the politics of privilege which favours the perspectives and experiences of the elite to the detriment of people at the margins" (Ayallo, 2014, p. 1). The Church is called to a voluntary relocation "on a trajectory of border-crossing solidarity" (Ashworth, 2015, p. iv): opting out of the mainstream (the centre), choosing the borders, dwelling in there and learning how to think from the borders. Church's pastoral practitioners, particularly missionaries, become a sort of bridge between the place of origin and the destination (Anzaldúa, 1987; Park, 2011). They find themselves in the borderland, in whose spaces the Church's action for social transformation takes place and a new perspective is acquired. An essential part of this change is to "provide an education which teaches critical thinking" for a more profound discernment, a "rethinking [of] the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization", the creation of a new community-based and life-centred mindset (Francis, 2013, no. 33, 64, 188).

In the context of the research, the critical passage of the Church's voluntary relocation is learning to think from the borders, what earlier has been indicated as the epistemic turn. Choosing the margins and dwelling in there is the aspect of insertion, the first step in PCM. All subsequent steps (social analysis, theological reflection, and action) should be shaped by this perspective from the margins. The reflection from the margins on the world and the Word can have the potential of transforming the peripheries in borders, thresholds, meeting places. Moreover, the liminal space represented by the margins as threshold (Jones, 2000) is the place where mind decolonisation can happen (Kaunda, 2016). That is why "margins can be seen, not as victims of the mainstream, but as a threat or danger to it" (Jones, 2000, p. 106). The epistemic turn happening in choosing, dwelling, and theorising from the margins represents a tremendous challenge for the centre,

whether political or religious, which is confronted precisely in its knowledge, representation of the truth, *uni-versalism*. It is the prophetic narrative, which Brueggemann (2012, p. 39) considers dangerous and subversive because it causes an epistemological break with the dominant imagination. This is the political dimension of the pastoral action among the marginalised. If pastoral practitioners can engage the complexity of reality and keep the connection between their location (margins), their positionality, and the system as a whole (centre), then they are able, with the people and through their praxis (reflection and action) to pose a serious challenge to the system of coloniality. The structures of power in the society fear less direct criticism and protest than a new imagination that is capable of visioning and creating a different future. The new imagination and its link to a relationship-centred community is the topic of the next section.

5.5.6 A new imagination: a relationship-centred community/Church

Any empire as centre of power and knowledge exists because of its margins. Only by defining, representing, and maintaining the peripheral or marginalised other, can it continue remaining the centre, attracting, domesticating, and absorbing any possible alternatives. How the empire, the colonial thinking, manipulated concepts like multiculturalism and interculturality, or charity, solidarity, and social work was shown earlier in section 2.2.3.

In this background, how effective and just is it for the Church to maintain the same language, the same binary centre/margins? As it is problematic a 'war language', evocative of military power without considering the effects of such a power in today's world, so is problematic a centre/margins thinking. Even the much-acclaimed invitation from Pope Francis to go to the peripheries presupposes the existence of a centre that, in the reading of decolonial theory, is the root cause of those peripheries.

The previous sections, specifically, highlighted the political and relational dimension of the margins, which are sites of suffering, resistance, and resilience, where a new imagination is continuously born. Whether the Church through her pastoral practitioners, including members of MCCJ and CMS, choose and dwell in the margins with this political understanding should be a matter of honest discussion. A continuous reference to Jesus' life and ministry offers some features of the newness that could arise from the margins. Choosing and dwelling in the margins is not just a matter of "better understanding of relationship patterns in marginalized spaces" (Adams, 2014, p. 471). It is a conscious commitment to critical reflection in that "privileged epistemological base" (Adams, 2014, p. 471) for a rethinking of hegemonic forms of power and knowledge production.

From the margins of Galilee, Jesus reached the centre of Jerusalem neither because of climbing towards recognition, nor to make the final step towards an armed revolution. With the vision gained from the marginalised and his unique relationship with God, Jesus questioned the very existence of such a centre and its peripheries. It was not a mere change or adaptation of the empire, a call for greater solidarity, or even the attempt to move the centre and recreate it somewhere at the peripheries. It was a total transformation of the world as it was and is known, the birth of a society and a religion based not any more on hierarchical separations but on the full recognition of the dignity, diversity, and equality of each and every person, a friend "taught by God" (Is 54:13; Jn 6:45). The realism that the Gospel offers is what, according to Pope Francis, triggers a new imagination that is able to follow the movements of the Spirit, without remaining trapped in fixed and outdated schemes of thought and modalities of action (Francis, 2020).

Therefore, if it is the relocation at the peripheries and the relationship with the marginalised that initiate critical reflection from the peripheries of society, this relationship must be the core of the 'mission' of the Church ('mission' remains a very problematic terminology still in use). It is a relationship, which must exist before any action for social transformation. Pastoral plans should be imagined based on the relationships being created at the peripheries, in a very inclusive manner, and not the other way around, as it prevalently happens today, when relationships are shaped by the pastoral projects, and by the hierarchical roles played in them. Only a relationship-centred community life can overturn a mission-centred approach (what is to be done to 'save', 'help', 'empower' the needy, the 'not yet' people) and eliminate the risk of exalted identity and mission (which brings along the eternal problem of activism).

Therefore, the focus must be on the relationship of the pastoral practitioners within the same community, as well as with the people of the same Christian community. Listening to and connecting the different stories of each one as the first step and understanding the origins of such stories as well as their contexts in the complexity of this world, will help in reflecting and finding new ways of living and transforming together. It is the self-evident truth (although data and experience show that it is not) that any group of people who want to work together effectively must first become a community where personal stories are listened to, acknowledged, valued, and connected. In this understanding, the community is formed and kept together by the people and their stories, and not by their pastoral action.

Bringing people and their stories to the forefront is a critical step also for the Church as a whole. People, and particularly those living at the margins of any hierarchical order, which discriminates and excludes, are those having the power of a new imagination. "Marginality (is) a site of deconstruction" of the Church, which is reconstructed in a new way, more inclusive and equal (Vinayaraj, 2016). Kaunda recalls that "in many African societies, the liminal spaces, where traditional marginal spaces are sites for negotiating between the physical and the spiritual, were used as critical pedagogies" (2016, p. 63).

The principle of relationality, based on a both/and approach and focused on interconnections and complex relationships, is one of the six key dimensions of intersectionality presented by Collins and Bilge (2016), which Kim and Shaw consider useful to shape an intersectional theology (2018, pp. 9–10). The others are social inequality, power, social context, complexity, and social justice. In the framework of social critical consciousness, both/and thinking, or intersectional thinking becomes crucial in a multicultural community "as it challenges singular thinking that is exclusive and embraces thinking that is multiple and inclusive" (G. J.-S. Kim & Shaw, 2018, p. 84). It means a community with open boundaries, welcoming and enjoying different epistemologies, and, most importantly, not ignoring the differences, asymmetries, disagreements, and historical legacies. Kim and Shaw call this an intersectional community, which refuse marginalization but always tries "to identify those places where people suffer at the intersections, where people are unaware of privilege, and where power works to maintain systems of domination" (G. J.-S. Kim & Shaw, 2018, p. 84). It is a thinking that is deeply connected with a spirituality able to acknowledge and accept the paradox, which is embedded in the complexity of reality, and empower people to live with the questions, more than looking for definitive answers (Barron, 2016; Winter, 2015).

The same intersectional thinking and attention must extend to the MCCJ and CMS Institutes, and the Church as a whole, in their practical theology and pastoral action.

Conclusion

The interpretation of the themes emerging from the data analysis has considered how MCCJ and CMS pastoral practitioners tend to ignore multiple social identities to the benefit of a single-layered charismatic identity. This preference, to the point of its exaltation compared to other

aspects of the pastoral practitioners' personalities, leads almost unavoidably to the exaltation of the mission derived from such a charismatic identity.

After introducing the concept of complexity in today's world, the discussion considered how pastoral practitioners engage or avoid such a complexity encountered in both multicultural relationships and the reality, in which they exercise their pastoral action. Aspects (among others) like unawareness of privileges linked to their social identities, de-politicisation of pastoral action, and de-contextualisation of training have highlighted some urgencies, which need to be addressed through new strategies for social transformation. They are the need of "restorying" the pastoral practitioners, becoming political, reconnecting personal stories (acknowledging positionality) with pastoral action, and re-centring collaboration as a form of allyship. Lastly, the need for a critical pedagogy capable to address not only the personal psycho-spiritual growth, but also the complexity of multicultural relationships and the dominant neo-colonial system, in which the person is inserted. The next chapter proposes some strategies in this direction.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

Introduction

The analysis and interpretation of data, accompanied by the theological reflection, has led to the following aspects: acknowledging the complexity of reality and relationships, the critical importance of positionality, the necessity to recover the political dimension of any pastoral action, the urgency to evoke a faith consciousness and spiritual experience that can imagine a different world/Church/community. All these must lead to a praxis that is truly transformative of all levels of society and of the Christian community. Searching for strategies for social transformation in the Church context, specifically among pastoral practitioners in international missionary congregations, calls for an important step in the integration of the outcomes of the present study within the methodology of the Pastoral Cycle, showing the specific contribution of Social Critical Consciousness. However, renewing the methodology for transformative pastoral action with the contributions of social critical consciousness is important, but not enough. It is crucial to offer some pedagogical recommendations, which can help to bring the theory to the level of concrete implementation. It is probably at this level that the multidisciplinary approach is most evident, as the pedagogical strategies draw heavily from the experience of civil movements for human rights and from other practices in critical pedagogy. This section also considers the contribution to pedagogy coming from the African wisdom, expressed in the concept of ubuntugogy. Lastly, the chapter addresses the limitations of the study and offers suggestions for possible future developments.

6.1 Recommendations: Strategies for Social Transformation

6.1.1 A social critical methodology: Integrating Pastoral Cycle Methodology and Social Critical Consciousness

While both PCM and SCC operate in the context of social transformation, the discussion shows that the Pastoral Cycle as it is, and the pastoral approach of MCCJ and CMS, miss the impact of the individual's story. The positionality of the person is not taken into account. On the contrary, the tendency is to consider immediately and almost exclusively the charismatic identity and the direct action. This research contends that it is here where SCC gives a new and significant

contribution to the development and application of the Pastoral Cycle. To the traditional, four steps of PCM (insertion, social analysis, theological reflection, and action), the present study adds a new one. This is called 'social critical consciousness' and comes after the insertion. In this step, pastoral practitioners are invited to critically explore their multiple social identities and their positionality within both the multicultural community and within the complex social environment where they exercise their ministry. Within this step, the community of the pastoral practitioners is built, in an ongoing process of connecting personal stories through critical listening, intersectional thinking, theological reflection, and life celebrations.

While SCC enriches the pastoral methodology, it is also enriched by the integration with PCM. Besides the two dimensions of the positionality of the pastoral practitioners (recovering and appreciating one's subjectivity and story by recognising others as they are) and their social and political analysis towards an effective political engagement, SCC is enriched with the step of 'evoking an alternative consciousness'. The concept of alternative consciousness comes from a religious perspective, by no means abstract and spiritualised, but deeply incarnated in history. Indeed, it is not enough to analyse and criticise social structures of power, to know oneself and the other, and to position oneself in today's multicultural world. A new, alternative consciousness is also needed, which is capable of imagining a different world, relationships, and actions, and leading towards a greater humanisation and enhancement of life. This is the specific contribution of faith. Hence, the five steps of PCM are as in table 10 (the mutual contributions of PCM and SCC are highlighted in bold italic):

Table 10

Integration of Pastoral Cycle Methodology and Social Critical Consciousness

Society's feature	**Pastoral Cycle**	**Acritical social action**	**Critical social action**	**Pastoral action's features**
Complexity	Insertion	Excessively simplified	Acknowledging complexity	Pluri-disciplinary
Multiculturalism	***Social Critical Consciousness***	De-cultured	Recognising oneself and the other	Positioned
Coloniality Intersectionality	Social Analysis	De-politicised	Becoming political	Political
Religion and society	Theological reflection	Domesticated Spirituality	***Evoking alternative consciousness***	Prophetic

Society's feature	Pastoral Cycle	Acritical social action	Critical social action	Pastoral action's features
Humanitarianism of emergency Temporary and local doing good	Action	Unreflective activism	Transformative praxis	Practical

Each feature identified in society (first column) corresponds to a possible pastoral answer offered by the methodology of the Pastoral Cycle (second column), which can be an acritical or critical social action (third and fourth column), depending on the level of the pastoral practitioners' awareness of SCC and their critical reflection. The final column indicates features, emerged from data analysis and discussion, that are considered essential for the relevance of the pastoral action.

The five elements present in the critical social action are explained in details:

Acknowledging complexity can happen only through critical reflection and multidisciplinary analysis of structural causes of inequality and of the intersectionality of power in the community/Church. First, it requires complex thinking, and acknowledging that a simplistic understanding of reality and people does more harm than good.

> We need to recognize how we are implicated or complicit in the problems we are trying to address: how we are all both part of the problem and the solution (in different ways). We need to learn to enlarge our referents for reality and knowledge, acknowledging the gifts and limitations of every knowledge system and moving beyond 'either ors' towards 'both and mores' (Andreotti, 2012).

Second, it requires the pastoral practitioners' relocation (insertion) at the margins, the liminal spaces of society, which besides being geographical, must be epistemological. Remaining in contact with personal and social reality, and valuing all experiences in their diversity means acknowledging and dwelling in the complexity of reality in an attitude profoundly attentive to everything that happens around. It is the opposite attitude of domestication, inurement, and indifference. It also requires both/and, systemic thinking.

Recognising oneself and the other is the moment of "restorying" the people, within or outside the community. It requires the appreciation of individual subjectivity, the recovery of personal and collective stories, worldviews, experiences, biases, fears, aspirations and epistemologies, which shape one's vision and understanding of the world. Important attitudes are intellectual humility, namely being open to different points of view, and social humility, accepting

to listen to those different perspectives (Charaniya, 2012). A critical aspect of recognising one's positionality is the identification and acknowledgement of privileges. "Restorying" requires qualitative time to sit with one another, listen, and share.

Becoming political is what Isin (2002, p. 276) defines as the "moment when one constitutes oneself as being capable of judgment about just and unjust, takes responsibility for that judgment, and associates oneself with or against others in fulfilling that responsibility". Hence, this step requires three movements: (1) Judgment of the reality, in a multidisciplinary approach to analysis; (2) Taking responsibility, that is, the ethical call to a responsible action for a common good that is always greater than one's gain and satisfaction; and (3) Associating with anyone who is also fulfilling the same responsibility. This last step implies the necessity of networking and collective political engagement (see the next section on social critical partnership). It also foresees and accepts the conflictual dimension of this engagement, because associating with the advocates of social transformation unavoidably means associating against those who want to maintain the status quo. Becoming political requires the pastoral practitioners to position themselves against social structures of power and privileges.

Evoking an alternative consciousness is the step that includes, in the social critical consciousness, a prophetic theological reflection capable of offering a different imagination, rooted in the prophetic biblical tradition (Brueggemann, 2001, 2012) and Church social tradition. It links to Mignolo's expression, "an-other thought, an-other logic, an-other thinking" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b). Once again, it is important to underline that new consciousness, alternative to the dominant one is not possible if there is no awareness of how the system has succeeded to manipulate and domesticate religion and solidarity (Ducker, 2008; Swanson, 2004). "The task of prophetic ministry – writes Brueggemann – is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us" (Brueggemann, 2001, p. 3). Mindful that the present world is organised without considering God's agency, the new consciousness, or new imagination, must have the power of imagining "the world as though YHWH were a real character and the defining agent in the life of the world" (Brueggemann, 2012, p. 132).

Transformative praxis or social critical action is the pastoral praxis for social transformation. It is practical in the sense that it is planned, implemented, and evaluated according to specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-based objectives. Each of the steps

(complexity, multiculturalism, political efficacy, and alternative consciousness) also becomes a criterion of evaluation. Nevertheless, the most important aspect of transformative praxis is that it is not thought from the top and offered to the people, seen as mere beneficiaries. On the contrary, it is envisioned, planned, implemented, and evaluated by the people with the support of pastoral practitioners. This aspect is developed more with the concept of allyship, a social critical partnership, which is developed in the next section.

6.1.2 A social critical partnership: Shifting from protagonism to support for the struggle of the marginalized

The very first step of the social critical methodology is the territorial and epistemological relocation of pastoral practitioners at the margins, among the people who are marginalized by the same system that pastoral practitioners wish to transform. Allyship is a concept, which underlines the reality of privilege of those who want to support marginalized groups. It fits in the discussion of this study because the participants belong to a privileged social group and yet they desire to ally with poor and most abandoned. It is known by now that un-acknowledged privileges are a passive form of oppression; hence knowing one's privilege can reduce one's participation in oppression.

Allyship "is a practice of unlearning and relearning, and is a life-long process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals or groups" (PeerNetBC, 2020). The important aspect of the idea and practice of allyship is the recognition of marginalized others as the full subjects of the action for social transformation, while others join in to support their work. The idea has very practical consequences, which are probably not yet fully considered in religious environments, where the religious community and the clergy, in particular, are still considered (and see themselves) as the ones in charge.

Starting from the language used, pastoral practitioners show their awareness of not being the ones doing the job nor planning action. On the contrary, they show support to the particular group of the marginalised, who are already acting to end their situation of injustice. Other concrete practices of allyship are acknowledging privileges and discussing them, listening more and speaking less, taking guidance from the people (not the other way round), constantly researching the causes of oppression and injustice, and growing in the capacity of receiving criticism for mistakes done. Allyship also requires the identification and embracing of emotions emerging from the process of listening, learning, and collaborating with the marginalised. Being guided by the people they wish to support, pastoral practitioners should not expect any special recognition, but

rather consider their own needs (material, emotional, and spiritual) secondary to the ones of the people. (PeerNetBC, 2020)

Lastly, one very important aspect of allyship is "being called out" (PeerNetBC, 2020), namely being shown a mistake done. This is a painful but great opportunity for growth, and it is a great act of responsibility and care by the one who is calling out. It is tremendous help, and grace, especially in Church environments where the tendency is to consider the clergy (or the missionary community as a whole) infallible and unaccountable. This practice requires a Christian community that is critical of the pastoral action and of the different roles played in it. The Christian community is invited to freely speak and call out individuals to be accountable for their behaviours and attitudes, and be transparent in the pursuit of social transformation.

The community, therefore, assumes a central role in collaborating with those who engage injustice and oppression, and, at the same time, in recognising its privileges and complicities. The next section shows a possible strategy to form a social critical community.

6.1.3 A social critical community: Shifting from mission-centred to community-centred approach

Abdul Karim Bangura, a Sierra Leone born, but naturalized a US citizen, is a political scientist and researcher, who proposed the term and practice of ubuntugogy. It is "the art and science of learning and teaching that is undergirded by humanity towards others" (Bangura, 2005, p. 31). The term transcends pedagogy (child-focused learning), androgogy (adult-focused learning), and heutagogy (the study of self-determined learning), though these different forms are not necessarily in conflict or contradiction (van der Walt, 2010). It is inspired by the concept of Ubuntu, widely present in African thought, which means that a human being is and becomes so through other human beings. Bangura explains, "Being an individual, by definition, means being-with-others. 'With-others' is not an additive to a pre-existent and self-sufficient being; instead, both this being (the self) and the others find themselves in a whole wherein they are already related" (Bangura, 2005, p. 33). Such an understanding does not lose the importance and uniqueness of each person, falling into a sort of collectivism.

The fact that one of the pillars of ubuntu is dialogue, implies the existence of relation and distance, hence the preservation of otherness. Ubuntu philosophy and ubuntugogy "merely discourage the notion that the individual should take precedence over community" (Bangura, 2005, p. 34). Van der Waalt (2010) brings some relevant points to the discussion by affirming the

necessity for Ubuntu philosophy in general, and Ubuntugogy in particular to update for the challenges typical of the 21st century. A return to "what was" or "what used to be" in education in Africa seems to be unrealistic in the present times, which require a more specialized education. If Ubuntugogy wishes to be and remain relevant in modern, globalised, and industrialised societies, it has to find the right balance between African and Western values, weaving them into something new, the updated version of Ubuntugogy (van Binsbergen, 2001; van der Walt, 2010). As important as it may be, the task is to find new solutions to today's new challenges of complexity, a decolonial perspective that questions the idea that Africa must "keep up with scientific and technological developments in the Western world" (van der Walt, 2010, p. 258). Not only does ubuntugogy challenge how the Western world developed – at the expense of the Global South – but also the very idea of development (Melber & Schöneberg, 2019). The topic is very wide and well beyond the objectives and possibility of this study, but it has to be kept in mind. This is because the Ubuntugogy vision perfectly fits with both the previous concept and practice of allyship and the Comboni understanding of community. Even more, it connects with the shift from mission-centred to relationship-centred approach, which is proposed in this study.

MCCJ and CMS evangelise as a community, and they make common cause with the people, with whom they live and work. The Comboni community is the subject of evangelisation, respecting the single individualities, but decisively transcending them towards "an enlarged humanity" (Bangura, 2005, p. 35). Making a community, as shown in the interpretation of the data, must take precedence over any pastoral action. The next section proposes some possible strategies for a social critical training towards such a reality.

6.1.4 A social critical training: Shifting from universal, banking education to site-specific knowledge

Despite the impact that Freire's pedagogy has had on popular movements engaged in social transformation, seminaries and theological academic centres seem to have remained behind. The pedagogical practices seem to remain focused on content-based knowledge, previously established and controlled in its output; informative learning over transformative learning, able of challenging and changing one's frame of reference; intellectualisation over praxis; producing dependence over empowerment and critical thinking (Charaniya, 2012; Faggioli, 2019; Gaillardetz et al., 2018; C. Myers, 2001; O'Loughlin, 2020).

In the learning dimension, the social critical methodology must include the necessary step of "troubling the narrative", that is "moving beyond simplistic, convenient narratives and wrestle with complexity and nuances" (Brown, 2020). Acknowledging privileges also includes recognising which and how theological and missionary narratives have contributed to maintaining asymmetrical power structures.

The attitudes and concrete steps required by ubuntugogy do not differ from what is required for Freire's shift from a banking education system to problem-posing education. Learning and teaching are considered part of the same process, in which knowledge, interests, and real-life situations of both learners and teachers become part of the learning situation. In this context, knowledge is "site-specific" knowledge, correcting the "Eurocentric tendency to universalise knowledge around Occidental centres and sites of knowledge which are privileged to the disadvantage of others" (Bangura, 2005, p. 38). The recognition of these other sites of knowledge is part of the epistemic turn discussed earlier and contributes to creating "a truly multipolar world of global knowledge drawn from all sources of human endeavour" (Bangura, 2005, p. 38).

Two conditions appear essential for proper ministerial and academic training: (1) a conducive environment and (2) learning from the margins. In a training context, a conducive environment can only be a small community, located among the marginalised, as marginality is the site of deconstruction and reconstruction of the community itself, and the source of new knowledge and understanding. Renouncing any of the two conditions means falling back into an informative system, which is neither practical nor transformative. Only a multicultural, stable, small group of learners (both students and educators) can implement educative strategies that have the real power to create a community and facilitate the learners' reflection on their values, attitudes, assumptions, and behaviours. This can happen through connecting the stories of the individual members of the group. First-person narratives are important because they holistically engage students (experience, knowledge, emotions, reflection), stimulate a constructive engagement of everyone, foster the capacity of listening, and enhance empathic connections with others (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009). In such a context, the team of educators must not act as the sole source of knowledge and must be conscious of the risk of imposing opinions and values, even if unconsciously. Teaching and learning are always bidirectional.

However, Kumagai and Lypson warn that connecting stories to foster identification with others is not enough, and it does not automatically lead to justice as well as internal and external

transformation; only a concrete action does. They refer to the concept of cognitive disequilibrium, which is similar to Mezirow's disorienting dilemma: "Significant learning and personal growth may occur when one encounters an experience, idea, perspective, or identity with which one is unfamiliar – when one goes through… a cognitive disequilibrium" (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009, p. 786).

Sites of marginality and borderlands, as shown earlier, can provide such situations of cognitive disequilibrium or disorienting dilemma, the possibility of concrete action in support to people's struggle, and initiate a critical reflection on one's values, assumptions, and experiences in the local and broader context. Therefore, these sites are places of new learning, struggle, resistance, and transformation (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008; Park, 2016; L. T. Smith, 2012), which is enough reason why they must become the places where training of future pastoral practitioners happen. Life itself, when properly lived and reflected upon, is formative and transformative. Community life at the liminal space of borderland, in allyship with the people living and working there, combined with an ongoing critical reflection on both that life experience and those relationships should be the first source of learning. This source must be complemented by the formal theological curriculum required for priestly ordination or any other professional academic studies. However, with today's technological advancements, this could easily be done in a blended format: regular courses online and two or three weeks of physical presence in the university campus, twice per year. This format of studies has proved effective in the program of Master of Business Administration, with students simultaneously engaging in professional work in their fields and studying. Such an organisation of academic studies would show that study is the supporting tool (not the centre) of the experience happening on the ground. Even more, it should be so for theological training, in which life experience and pastoral action have always been considered, at a theoretical level, a constitutive part of the academic formation.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

The study was meant to be descriptive of the awareness of social critical consciousness of the pastoral practitioners in social transformation. However, from the exploration, recommendations for future improvements of the process of social transformation as well as possible educational strategies for transformative training of pastoral practitioners can be drawn.

The positionality of the researcher as an expatriate might have been a limitation in the sense that it may have hindered the process of interviewing local people. Transparency on the positionality of the researcher, clear rules and methodology, together with the proper information for the participants in the interview, however, created a suitable climate of trust and mutual collaboration.

The exploration of biases, assumptions, and attitudes, especially when it revealed positions that the participants consider unacceptable in the light of their faith and vocation, could have led to resistances, closure, and fear to face the truth. Participants may have tended to tell what makes them feel good, or what is more consonant with their missionary vocation. Probing questions served to explore deeper certain explicit answers and reactions; however without making the participants feeling that they are forced in any way.

The limitation of the study is intrinsic in the qualitative research methodology. The data collected are limited to a relatively small group of participants, all but one located in Kenya. Moreover, there is an evident predominance of male participants. The fact that the researcher belongs to the missionary Institute, which is part of the study group could also have influenced the participants, despite the steps taken and ethical considerations to avoid such an influence. In any case, all participants showed the greatest availability and openness throughout the process of data collection. However, traits of personal character may have had an impact on the level of participation, engagement in interviews and FGD, and personal critical reflection on the topics presented.

6.3 Way Forward for Further Research

The discussion of the themes emerging from data analysis has necessarily been limited by the objectives of the research, the space available, and the knowledge of the researcher. Undoubtedly, there is an ample margin to expand each of the themes and strategies, making them more concrete at the level of implementation. The findings that emerged from the data and their discussion in the light of the existing literature have highlighted concepts that may be relatively new in a Church context. That is why further discussion and deepening of such concepts must continue and lead to concrete programs of implementation in the exercise of social pastoral action.

One such area is in the recommendations for a social critical training. These need to be developed further. Such an undertaking would require a more in-depth and broader study of the

documents of MCCJ and CMS and, most importantly, the involvement of the people undergoing the training process. However, at the same time, it would require a deeper analysis of the training strategies within social groups (not necessarily faith-based) engaged in social transformation.

Similarly, other future fields of research may concern the level and quality of allyship of MCCJ and CMS with other practitioners in the praxis for social transformation. Specifically, the exploration of strategies for action and training adopted by social movements in the field of human rights, anti-racism, gender equality, political engagement, and their application to Church environments would be of great interest.

Lastly, a deeper and wider analysis of the situation of the Catholic Church concerning the praxis for social transformation and its implications on the ecclesial structures of governance and management is also of critical importance. Moreover, the focus, which in the present study has been only on the Catholic Church, can and should be extended to other Christian Churches and, more widely, to other religions. Undoubtedly, praxis for social transformation remains a privileged field where fruitful encounters and dialogue can happen and do happen.

Conclusion

The chapter offered recommendations for implementing the themes, which have emerged from data analysis and discussion. The social critical perspective has been maintained in all recommendations as the new approach demanded in today's complexity and is the key determinant for a truly transformative praxis.

Considering SCC as an essential dimension of pastoral action requires its incorporation into the methodology of the Pastoral Cycle. For this, the new step of social critical consciousness has been introduced right after the first step of insertion.

Another recommendation considered the importance of a social critical community, capable of exploring its frame of reference in the social context where it is located. It is suggested that the praxis of the pastoral practitioners has to shift from being mission-centred to social critical community-centred.

The same social critical attention was given to partnership in pastoral action, through the concept of allyship, and to the training of future pastoral practitioners. In this last aspect, the chapter highlighted the necessity of focusing on problem-solving, experiential, adult learning as

pedagogical strategy in theological formation and the urgency that such a formation be supportive of a community life located – geographically and epistemologically – with the marginalized.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION FORM

Tangaza University College

Date: …….....

Name of the student	Stefano Giudici
Reg. No.	15116S
Institute	Institute of Social Ministry in Mission
Title of the Research Project	Exploration of the Link Between Social Critical Consciousness and the Transformative Dimension of Pastoral Ministry. A Case Study of the Comboni Family in Kenya and Uganda.
Type of Research Project	PhD
Supervisors	1. Rev. Prof. Francesco Pierli 2. Rev. Dr Patrick Ryan

The checklist:

		YES	NO
1.	Will you involve human participants?	✓	
2.	Will you ask private and confidential questions?	✓	
3.	Will you require human/anima tissue?		✓
4.	Will you involve young people below age 18?		✓
5.	Will you interview patients or medical staff?		✓

N.B.

i. If you have answered NO to ALL the above questions, then you DO NOT need ethics approval from TUCREC;
ii. If your answers to Questions 1, 2 and 4 are YES, then you need ethics approval from TUCREC;

iii. If you have answered YES to questions 3 and 5, then you need approval from the Relevant Boards in the country of research.

Additional information:

Applicant's signature ……..……. Date ……

1st Supervisor's signature …… Date …….

2nd Supervisor's signature ……...…… Date ……..

APPENDIX A1

ETHICAL APPROVAL FROM TANGAZA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

TANGAZA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa

DIRECTORATE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES & RESEARCH

E-mail: dir_pgsr@tangaza.ac.ke Website: www.tangaza.ac.ke

OUR Ref: DPGSR/ERC/11/2018 **Date:** 20th November 2018

Stefano Giudici
Reg. No. 15116S
Institute of Social Ministry in Mission
Tangaza University College

Dear Giudici,

Re: Exploration of the link between social critical consciousness and the transformative dimension of pastoral ministry in Comboni family in Kenya & Uganda

Reference is made to your request dated 14th *November 2018* for ethical approval of your thesis proposal research tools by Tangaza University Ethics Review Committee.

We are pleased to inform you that your proposal and the research tools have gone through the ethical review committee as requested and the approval has been granted. In line with Tangaza University College Research policy, you will be required to submit a copy of the research study to the Director of Research for records.

Before proceeding to the next stage, ensure that all the comments that were made regarding your research tool have been addressed to the satisfaction of your supervisors. Note that it is an offence to proceed without addressing the concerns of the Ethics Review Committee.

This approval is valid for one year from *20th November 2018*.

We request that you get clearance from NACOSTI before proceeding to the field for data collection.

Yours sincerely,

Director - Research & Postgraduate Studies
20 NOV 2018
Sign:
TANGAZA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Daniel M. Kitonga (Ph.D)
Director, Post-Graduate Studies & Research

CC: Prof Francesco Pierli – PhD in Social Transformation Programme Leader

P.O. Box, 15055 - 00509 Langata, Nairobi Kenya
Tel: 254 20 8067667/ 0732 897000/ 0738 685059/ 0722 204724/ 0714 610777
Email: inquiries@tangaza.org
Website: www.tangaza.org

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION OF RESEARCH FROM NACOSTI

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone:+254-20-2213471, 2241349,3310571,2219420
Fax:+254-20-318245,318249
Email: dg@nacosti.go.ke
Website : www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

NACOSTI, Upper Kabete
Off Waiyaki Way
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref: No. **NACOSTI/P/19/76271/27323**

Date: **14th January, 2019**

Stefano Giudici
Tangaza University College
P.O. Box 15055-0509
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on ***"Exploration of the link between social critical consciousness and the transformative dimension of pastoral ministry. A case study of the Comboni Family in Kenya and Uganda"*** I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **all Counties** for the period ending **14th January, 2020.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioners and the County Directors of Education, all Counties** before embarking on the research project.

Kindly note that, as an applicant who has been licensed under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 to conduct research in Kenya, you shall deposit **a copy** of the final research report to the Commission within **one year** of completion. The soft copy of the same should be submitted through the Online Research Information System.

GODFREY P. KALERWA MSc., MBA, MKIM
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioners
All Counties.

The County Directors of Education
All Counties.

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation is ISO9001:2008 Certified

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS CONSENT FORM

Name of the Participant: _____

Research title: Exploration of the Link Between Social Critical Consciousness and the Transformative Dimension of Pastoral Ministry. A Case Study of the Comboni Family in Kenya and Uganda.

Researcher: Stefano Giudici (reg. no. 15116S)

Contacts of the Researcher: +254 720526952, stefanogiudici@gmail.com

Supervisors:

Institute of Social Ministry in Mission – Tangaza University College

Participant's Consent and Declaration

1. I accept to take part in the above research having read the participant's information sheet. I further declare that I understand my role and my rights fully in this research and that all my concerns have been adequately addressed by the researcher.
2. It has been made clear to me that I can withdraw from the research at any time I choose to do so without giving any reason.
3. I have been assured of utmost confidentiality and that the information I provide shall be safeguarded.
4. It is my right to ask any question at any time before, during and even after the research.
5. I have been shown the research permit granted by the relevant authorities of the Country in which the research is being conducted.
6. I have also been provided with a copy of this consent form and the participant information sheet.

Data Protection: I declare that I have allowed Tangaza University College to process personal data which I have provided. I further allow the University to process such data for academic purposes as it has been clearly explained to me.

Name of Participant _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Cut along the line

Withdrawal from Research

If you wish to withdraw from the research project, kindly complete and sign the brief form below. Submit the duly signed form to the researcher you have been assisting with information.

Research title: Exploration of the Link Between Social Critical Consciousness and the Transformative Dimension of Pastoral Ministry. A Case Study of the Comboni Family in Kenya and Uganda..

Dear Sir,

I wish to withdraw from your research due to personal reasons.

Thanks for the collaboration so far.

Name of Participant _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Cut along the line

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of the Research Project: Exploration of the Link Between Social Critical Consciousness and the Transformative Dimension of Pastoral Ministry. A Case Study of the Comboni Family in Kenya and Uganda.

Purpose of the Research: The general objective of the qualitative research is to explore the link between SCC and the pastoral ministry for social transformation in the Church. Achieving the general objective will hopefully lead to recommendations for adequate training of international pastoral practitioners to effectively live and work in multicultural environments and to a refinement of the PCM.

Researcher: Stefano Giudici (reg. no. 15116S)

Contacts of the Researcher: +254 720526952, stefanogiudici@gmail.com

Supervisors: Rev. Dr Francesco Pierli; Rev. Dr Patrick Ryan

Institute of Social Ministry in Mission

Tangaza University College

In my research, I am addressing the link between social critical consciousness and Church pastoral ministry for social transformation. Particularly, I am interested in exploring the subjective experience of multiple social identities and the subject's interaction with other members of a religious community or a pastoral team, in an international, multicultural context.

Multicultural communities and work team are today a global reality, especially within the Comboni Family. Daniel Comboni had envisaged missionaries from any nationality or social status, with faith and mission activity being the only glue keeping them together.

I am interested in finding out more about the personal, subjective experience of multiculturalism in the context of mission communities or teams, especially when the members are involved together in actions for social transformation. I hope that the research will contribute to a greater understanding of subjective worldviews, power, and differences in human relationships.

You are invited to participate in the study because of your experiential knowledge on the topic. If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to participate in a focus group with other participants in the research and in an interview with me, for about one hour, about your experiences in the areas I have described. The interview will be guided by some open-ended

questions while the discussion in the focus group will be facilitated by general guidelines for the group. You are invited to talk about what you think and feel is important to you on the topic of the research.

Both the interview and the discussion in the focus groups will be taped and transcribed. All information gathered during the interview will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. A form of identification and use of data in the research will assure your anonymity. The tapes and transcripts will be kept in the researcher's office until the exam board will announce the result of the dissertation. You will have access to the transcripts of your conversations and the possibility to edit or correct it.

Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary, and you are free not to answer questions, end the interview, or withdraw from the research at any time. If you do, this will not affect you in any way, and there will be no penalty whatsoever. At any stage of the research, your interest and involvement are respected and appreciated.

Should you have any issue or question, you can contact me at any time by phone (0720526952) or email: stefanogiudici@gmail.com. You are also free to gather further information on the research and the way it is conducted by contacting Dr Daniel Kitonga, Director Research and Postgraduate Studies, at Tangaza University College (email: dir.pgrs@tangaza.ac.ke).

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE

In-depth interviews address objectives 1 and 2: (1) To explore the level/situation of awareness of the individual pastoral practitioner's own social critical consciousness in the multicultural context of the Comboni community; (2) To explore the individual pastoral practitioner's perceived dynamics of the influence of social critical consciousness on social transformative action.

Objective	Variable	Specification	Questions	Probing questions
1	Social identity	*Self-perception*	1. Please, describe yourself, both how you see yourself and how you think others see you.	
		Preliminary perception of privileges/ disadvantages	2. Are there areas or situations in which you feel advantaged or disadvantaged?	
		Belonging to social categories	3. Please, describe yourself in relation to each of the following: • age • developmental and acquired disability • religion • ethnicity and race • social status (including socio-economic status, formal education, urban-rural origins, family name) • sexual orientation • indigenous origins • national origins • gender	*Perception of privileges* 3.1 In which of these and/or other areas of your life do you experience yourself as being a privileged position? Please, describe your experience of this. *Perception of disadvantages* 3.2 In which of these and/or other areas of your life do you experience yourself as being a disadvantaged position? Please, describe your experience of this.
1	Positionality	*Perception of multicultural context*	4. Please, describe your community and/or pastoral team.	You may refer to the areas indicated above.
		Intercultural interaction	5. Please, describe your inter-cultural interaction with other members of your community and/or pastoral team.	5.1 How do you see yourself in relation to the other members of your community/team? 5.2 Was there a situation in which you felt that you met

				something unfamiliar to you? Describe this experience, or experiences (emotions, thoughts, behaviours).
		Interpersonal relationships	6. How would you describe the inter-personal relations in your community/team?	
2	Social transformative action	*Perception of ministry*	7. Please, describe your role in the community/team and your ministry.	7.1 Which problem/situation are you trying to address through your ministry? 7.2 How is your ministry connected to the social mission of the Church? 7.3 And to the Comboni charism?
		Effectiveness of ministry	8. How do you see the effectiveness of your ministry?	8.1 What is the greatest success? 8.2 What is the greatest challenge?
		Involvement of community	9. How do you see the involvement of your community?	9.1 Is it a positive involvement? What do you think are the reasons? 9.2 Is it a difficult involvement? What do you think are the reasons? 9.3 Is there no involvement? What do you think are the reasons?
		Multicultural community impact on ministry	10. According to you, how does the diversity of your community impact on your ministry?	
Final question			11. Is there anything you would like to add?	

APPENDIX F
FOCUS GROUPS GUIDE

Focus Group Discussions address objectives 3 and 4: (3) To examine the complexity of social critical consciousness as a multicultural community; (4) To explore the Comboni community's perceived dynamics of the influence of social critical consciousness on social transformative action.

1. Consent Process: Consent forms (Appendix E) for focus group participants are completed in advance by all those seeking to participate.
2. Introduction and Logistics
    a. Welcoming the participants. Introduction of the researcher and the note taker (if any). A Sign-In Sheet with a few quick demographic questions (age, gender, congregation/group, years in the congregation/group, present location of ministry) is sent around to the group.
    b. Introduction of the work of the Focus Group: Who we are and what we're trying to do; what will be done with the collected information; why you were asked to participate.
    c. Explanation of the process:
        i. Ask the group if anyone has participated in a focus group discussion before.
        ii. Importance of each one's contribution. Encourage active participation.
        iii. We do not try to achieve consensus, we're gathering information. There will be no harm or penalty for what we say in the group. Maximum confidentiality, from the research and the participants.
        iv. The project uses both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The reason for using both of these tools is that we can get more in-depth information from one-to-one interview and a smaller group of people in focus groups. Focus group allows to understand the dynamics of our relationships when dealing with the topic of this research.
    d. Logistics
        i. The discussion will last approximately between 45 to 60 minutes.
        ii. Inform the participants that the discussion will be tape-recorded. Explain what happens with the collected data.

iii. Participants are free to move around.
iv. Indicate the location of bathroom.
v. Participants are free to help themselves to refreshments.

3. Ground Rules: Ask the group to suggest some ground rules. Make sure the following are on the list.
    a. Everyone should participate.
    b. Information provided in the focus group must be kept confidential.
    c. Stay with the group and please don't have side conversations.
    d. Turn off cell phones if possible.
4. Discussion
    a. Ask the group if there are any questions before we get started, and address those questions.
    b. Introductions: each participant briefly introduce himself/herself to the group (name, congregation/group, mission, type of ministry…).
    c. Questions
        i. Let's start the discussion by talking about our communities. What is the composition? Is it a multicultural community?
        ii. In your experience, what are the advantages/disadvantages of living on a multicultural community?
        iii. Briefly describe your ministry to the other participants. Do you think it is an important, relevant ministry? Why?
        iv. What do you consider essential in the vision and practice of your ministry, something that you would never leave out?
        v. Do you think your community acknowledges this importance? How? Have you ever experienced divergence of opinion (vision, methodology, and implementation) concerning your ministry (or the ministry of another member of the community)? Can you share about it?
            1. What was the divergence about?
            2. What were the causes?
            3. Did you manage to solve the divergence? How?

vi. Would you say that your community helps/doesn't help you in your ministry? Why?

d. Conclusion, evaluation: Thank all the participants for coming and sharing your thoughts and opinions. Present a short evaluation form for all participants. Possibility to write on the form any additional information that you did not get to say in the focus group.

APPENDIX G

PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHIC MATRIX

Table 11
Participants Demographic Matrix

Number	Tool	Pseudonym	Age Group	Years in the Institute	Continent	Ministry	Gender
1	I	Dave	41-60	15	AM	Mission Animation (MA)	M
2	I/FGD	Mark	20-40	5	Africa (AF)	Pastoralists (P)	M
3	I/FGD	Jack	20-40	16	Europe (EU)	P	M
4	I/FGD	Brad	41-60	7	America (AM)	Education (E)	M
5	I/FGD	Steve	20-40	7	Asia (AS)	P	M
6	I/FGD	Burt	41-60	25	AF	P	M
7	I/FGD	Karl	61-90	67	EU	P	M
8	I	Arnie	41-60	15	AS	M	M
9	I	Ben	61-90	45	EU	Media (M)	M
10	I	Jude	41-60	16	AF	M	M
11	I	Carl	41-60	25	EU	Rehabilitation	M
12	I	Luke	61-90	55	EU	U	M
13	I	Max	20-40	12	AF	Youth Ministry (YM)	M
14	I	Ross	41-60	20	AF	E	M
15	I	Jim	20-40	13	AF	MA	M
16	I	Cole	41-60	26	AF	U	M
17	I	Dan	20-40	6	AF	U	M
18	I	Neil	41-60	23	AF	U	M
19	I/FGD	Alex	41-60	17	AF	P	M
20	I/FGD	Hank	20-40	16	AF	P	M
21	I/FGD	Bert	41-60	19	AF	P	M
22	I/FGD	Larry	20-40	14	AF	P	M
23	I	Kurt	41-60	17	AF	P	M
24	I	Erik	61-90	50	AM	P	M
25	I	Eddy	61-90	46	EU	P	M
26	I	Sam	41-60	28	AM	P	M
27	I	Jill	41-60	7	AM	Formation (F)	F
28	I	Judy	41-60	31	AF	F	F
29	I/FGD	Joan	41-60	26	AF	E	F
30	FGD	Lara	20-40	14	AF	Admin. (A)	F

Number	Tool	Pseudonym	Age Group	Years in the Institute	Continent	Ministry	Gender
31	FGD	Lena	41-60	23	AF	Medical (M)	F
32	FGD	Liza	61-90	30	AM	Urban (U)	F
33	FGD	Nora	61-90	57	EU	U	F
34	FGD	Suzy	61-90	59	EU	M	F

APPENDIX J

TABLE OF THE CODES

Table 12

Codes

Name	Description
01 Defining the concepts	Definition of concepts from archival documents.
011 Multiculturalism_Pluralism	
0110 Prerequisites to positively engage in multicultural contexts	What is seen (in archival documents) as needed to live and to positively interact in multicultural contexts (multicultural community).
0111 Strategies in theory	Strategies identified in archival documents to facilitate/enhance multicultural relationships.
0112 The multicultural community	As defined in principles and objectives in archival documents
0113 Transculturality	
012 Charism and cultures	Influence of the charism (belonging to an international missionary congregation) on culture and intercultural relationships. And vice versa.
013 Culture	
014 Difficulties and challenges	
015 Faith and cultures	
016 Identity	
017 Interculturality	
018 Mission and cultures	
019 Person, personality and culture	
02 Exploring the self	Identity. Everything concerning the participant's perception of his/her identity.
021 Single-layered identity	It indicates a certain lack of awareness in the participants of his/her multiple identity. He/She describes himself/herself in one way, looking at one aspect (dimension).
022 Multi-layered identity	It indicates the participant's awareness of his/her multiple (multi-layered) identities.
023 Privileges	Perception of the question whether personal identity(ies) is (are) the source of privileges or situations of disadvantage in the community and society
0231 Lack of privileges or disadvantages	
0232 Privileges & advantages	
024 Personal transformation	The personal transformation in the individual

Name	Description
025 Family influence	
03 Encountering the other	Positionality. Everything concerning the participant's encounter with the other.
031 Attitudes Behaviours	
0311 Ambiguous attitude	Attitudes associated with seemingly contradictory statements.
0312 Collaborative attitude	
0313 Discriminatory attitude (victim of)	The way the participant feels to be victim of discriminatory attitudes (including racist attitudes).
0314 Learning attitude	
0315 Open to diversity	
032 Feelings	Feelings expressed when encountering or relating with the different other.
033 Awareness of my identity, diversity	Being aware that I am different from the other, sometimes belonging to a minority.
0331 Indigenous_Insider	Fully into my original culture.
0332 External_Outsider	Socialising (and ministering) within a community different from the one I live in.
0333 Indigenous_Outsider	Experiencing assimilation into a different culture, remaining connected with my original culture.
0334 External_Insider	Rejecting my original culture to endorse another culture (adopted insider).
034 Awareness of others' identity, diversity	Being aware of how the other is different.
035 Narrating the multicultural community	Description of the multicultural community
0351 Advantages of multicultural community	The advantages of living in a multicultural community.
03511 Discovering diversity (the other) as richness	
03512 Greater diversity as advantage	
03513 Learning and changing through the others	
0352 Challenges in multicultural context	Challenges encountered in a multicultural context.
Acceptance of graduality	
Age factor	
Communication, unspoken issues	
Different pastoral methodologies	
Discriminatory attitudes	e.g. racism, paternalism, sense of superiority, excluding others
Diversity as challenge	

Name	Description
External factors	External factors can be historical (also within the congregation - initial separation from non-European) or political (political relationships among Countries)
Food	
Not knowing each other	Not knowing each other; not knowing how to interpret different behaviours; lack of integration; cultural background.
Prevalence of one culture	Mainly in the sense of Eurocentrism; risk of uniformity (putting all cultures in one basket).
0353 Religious goal of the community	
036 Community transformation	The transformation happening in the community
037 Prejudices&Stereotypes	
038 Relationships	Description of relationships in the community
0381 Intercultural relationships	How relationships are affected by cultural background; positionality
0382 Interpersonal relationships	Relationships at human level (personalities)
04 Engaging in ministry	Ministry. Everything concerning ministry in the perception and narration of the participants, and in the context of a multicultural community and diverse social environment.
041 My ministry	Participant's understanding of ministry and its essential values
0411 'Being with the people' approach	
0412 Essential values	What I consider essential in the practice of my ministry.
0413 Top-down approach	
042 Community and Ministry	Community/People and my ministry: involvement, impact, sharing of essential values
0421 Impact of community diversity on ministry	
Negative impact	
Positive impact	
0422 Involvement of the community in ministry	
No involvement	Community not involved
Positive involvement	Community involved
0423 Shared values	If the values considered essential by the individual are shared by the whole community.
043 Effectiveness in ministry	Various ways of ministry effectiveness in the understanding of the participant
05 Receiving the charism	Everything concerning the participant's perception and understanding of the charism in concrete personal, communal, and missionary experience.

Name	Description
06 Social Transformation	The participants' understanding of social transformation. Social dimension of ministry. Link to social mission of the Church.
In relation to people_relationships	
In relation to reality_structures	
In relation to self	
In relation to the church	
07 Strategies in practice	Strategies implemented with the others for improving the way of living together and enhancing effectiveness in ministry. They come from the concrete life experience of the participants.