Understanding and Managing Conflict in Leadership Teams within the African-American Church

A Thesis Project Submitted to
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

By
Damian A. Hinton, Sr.

Lynchburg, Virginia
May 2021
Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

__________________________________________
Dr. Bryan Ray

__________________________________________
Dr. R. Peter Mason
THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT
Damian A. Hinton, Sr.
Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, 2021
Mentor: Dr. Bryan Ray

The African American church has been the cornerstone of many urban centers since its birth in the United States. While it has been a haven for so many, the African American church (or Black church) has faced conflict, especially among its leaders. Senior Pastors and staff are keys to ministry progress in urban centers. This study utilized data from leaders within the African American church in the form of surveys, focus groups, and private interviews to identify the sources of conflict between Senior Pastor in the church and their ministry staff or team members. The results showed that while there is conflict between Senior Pastor and staff, it is more indirect than direct and that the majority of the respondents acknowledged there was more interpersonal conflict within the church leadership. Further, the results showed that familial upbringing and nurture has a definite impact on the way African American church leaders manage conflict. These results suggest that African American church leaders need to focus on developing conflict resolution training specifically directed toward their ministry staff and volunteers.
## Contents

### Chapter 1

1. Introduction  
   - Ministry Context  
   - Problem Presented  
   - The Role of the Senior Pastor in the African American Church  
   - Purpose Statement  
   - Basic Assumptions  
   - Definitions  
   - Limitations  
   - Delimitations  
   - Thesis Statement  
   - Conclusion

### Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

19. Review of Literature  
   - Defining Conflict  
   - Conflict Within the African American Church  
     - The Roles that Leaders Play in Conflict  
     - Theological Foundation  
       - Character  
       - Roles of Leaders  
       - Biblical View of Conflict  
     - Theoretical Foundation  
   - Different Types of Conflict  
   - The Effects of Negative Conflict  
   - Conflict Resolution Theories

### Chapter 3: Research Methodology

44. Methodology  
   - Intervention Design  
   - Research Population
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Research</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Resources for Resolving Conflict</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB Approval Letter</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved Consent</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charts</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figures</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DMIN</td>
<td><em>Doctor of Ministry</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUSOD</td>
<td><em>Liberty University School of Divinity</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

viii
Chapter 1

Introduction

In 1980, Robert Newbold wrote an article entitled “Conflict in the Black Church.”¹ Newbold spent an evening in free-flowing conversation with a number of Black laypersons as they expressed their opinions about the causes of and cures of conflict in the Black Church. As the evening went on, Newbold observed that the basic elements of conflict cross the boundaries of race, denomination, polity, size, and color but there are some specific problems unique to the African American or Black Church.² What he discovered about the Black Church is that conflict is viewed as sinful and that the person causing the conflict is the agent of the devil. He also discovered that leaders and members have not had the courage to address conflict for fear of escalation. Ultimately, conflict can hinder the progressive fulfillment of the vision and mission of the church.

The African-American church is one of the most significant organizations in the African American or Black community. It is a source of strength, hope, and confidence as it fulfills the “Great Commission.”³ While it has been historically the center of the community and significant in the work of ministering to the poor, the disenfranchised, and the racially oppressed, it has also been a place where the community has developed leaders and engaged the community. However, like most institutions and organizations, conflict remains an issue to overcome. According to Philip Graham Ryken,

² Ibid.
³ The “Great Commission” is the commission or command Jesus gave to the apostles shortly before He ascended into heaven, and it essentially outlines what Jesus expected the apostles and those who followed them to do in His absence. This instruction is found in Matthew 28:19-20 and elaborated upon in Acts 1:8.
The devil has many other plans for running your church, all them equally insidious. Satan wants you to believe that the ministry of God’s Word is insufficient in itself, and that therefore it needs to be supplemented by human methods of spiritual change. He wants you to be more and more perfunctory in your prayers, until finally you give up talking with God at all. He wants you to get so distracted by internal disputes that you hardly have time to go out and meet people with the gospel.  

The apostle Paul says it this way, “if you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other (Galatians 5:15 NKJV).”

In most churches, conflict can arise from the pew to the pulpit, or between the pulpit and the pew. The issues can be as significant as moral failings or as insignificant as the color of chairs. The truth is that conflict is unavoidable, even within the confines of the church, regardless of its racial, ethnic, or denominational makeup. Digvijaysinh Thakore suggests that “As long as organizations continue to use work teams, conflict cannot be avoided since it is an inevitable aspect of work teams. Conflict is an outcome of behaviors. It is an integral part of human life. Whenever there is interaction there is conflict.”

Conflict can arise from a combination of different sources like differing values, ideas, desires, and nurture.

Conflict is an issue that has delayed, interrupted, and hindered the vision of many churches. Son goes further by stating, “Church conflicts are an inevitable and often necessary aspect of church life, but if they are not handled constructively, they can be damaging to church morale and vitality or even destructive to its existence.” The challenge for the church is not whether or not conflict will exist but it will be how to recognize its sources and how it affects the

---


vision and the mission of the African American Church, and how to effectively manage the conflict. Leaders are important to the work of ministry and play a vital role in managing conflict.

Leadership is also essential to the fulfillment of the mission and vision. While focus is often placed upon senior pastoral leaders, which is to be expected, the support team surrounding that leader is as important. Fulfilling the mission given to churches in urban centers requires a team of individuals who share vision and understand the mission of the church.

While it is evident that there is conflict within every church, the objective of this project is to understand and evaluate conflict that exists within the leadership of the church, between senior leadership and secondary leadership. More than any other conflict in the church, this can immobilize, divide, and frustrate the flock of God.

Ministry Context

African American churches are diverse in their religious expressions especially as it relates to scriptural interpretation, ritual development, and their religious expression. The Black Church is largely protestant with predominately Black or African American leadership.\(^7\) While the Black Church does not deviate from the systemic values of all other Christians, the Black church is more expressive in its worship style. Black churches have a distinctive atmosphere for worship. Congregants in predominantly Black churches are more likely to call out “amen” or other expressions of approval, which is known as call and response.\(^8\) They also are more likely to feature expressive forms of worship that include spontaneous dancing, jumping, or shouting. And the majority of those who label themselves Protestants in Black congregations say the

\(^7\) Angelique Harris, “Conflicts Within the Black Church,” *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender*, May 2014, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199664153.013.019

services they attend feature speaking or praying in tongues, a practice associated with Pentecostalism.9

For African Americans, the church is more than just a place where worship and fellowship take place; it is a place of social engagement, community activism, leadership development, and economic empowerment. It is a place that brings together individuals from various backgrounds and experiences to accomplish goals, to build community, to strengthen families, to meet the needs of the community, and to share the Gospel. It is also through the church that African Americans incorporated their identity and found therapeutic relief from social pressures they underwent throughout American history.10 The church has remained the primary institution in which Black people experience prestige, authority, and rank.

For African Americans, the Church has long stood as a beacon that a better day is coming. While there are churches all around the world that are filled with Black people, the ‘Black or African-American Church’ is uniquely American. According to Thabiti Anyabwile, the author of Reviving the Black Church, "Life comes from God to the church through His Word and Spirit by faith in Jesus Christ."11 The Church in the African American community serves as a hub where Black life struggled to fit into American life. The Church was more than a vehicle for spiritual encounters but for social and political change. In many cases, it was the only institution that was independently owned and controlled by African Americans. As a result, the church is a

---

9 Ibid.


place that continues to be the center of life where the challenges and the issues of individuals and communities are still being addressed and confronted.

In addressing the issue of conflict within the leadership of the African American churches that hinders growth and the fulfillment of mission and vision, it is essential to understand this research project's context. The African American Church is the foundation of the African American community. As a historical institution, the Church has been influential in areas of community engagement, leadership development, and political activism. It has also, of course, been the central place of worship, prayer, fellowship, and discipleship within the African American community. The African American Church has a long history of incorporating African American heritage, cultural values, vibrant worship, inspired and passionate preaching, along with a focus on community engagement.¹²

The theology of the African American church is rooted in Black liberation theology, which centers on the lives and experiences of historically marginalized and devalued groups. Barnes suggests that the objective of “liberation theology is to change the beliefs and behavior of the oppressed to promote individual and collective empowerment and social action, while at the same time challenge individuals and groups that are directly and/or indirectly involved in the oppression of others.”¹³ Black liberation theology is associated with the development of social programs which address the issues that are common in Black communities.

Further, healthy African American Churches are concerned with developing healthy individuals and healthy families that are aware of their heritage and faith in God and their


responsibility to the community. As a church, the traditions of the black religious experience have been handed down through symbols, language, and shared experience.\textsuperscript{14} For African Americans, religious faith is more than a system of thoughts and beliefs, but an experience that is lived by integrating biblical faith into the life in which they live. As believers, Christ is more than a Savior who is saving them from their sins, but a God who is able to solve their problems. He is a deliverer who has the power to move them through difficult moments and bring them into a place of provision and grace. This is what Paul intimated in his Epistle to the Romans: “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Romans 8:37 NKJV).”

The African American church remains to be at the center of the community as the church continues to be intertwined with both the spiritual and secular society. With the ongoing issues of police brutality and systemic racism the church is the prophetic voice that engages culture and articulates a need to bring change. The black community continues to look to their religious leaders for pastoral leadership during critical moments that will impact their communities. Therefore, the African American church’s role is essential to the fabric of the community and the nation as it fulfills the instruction given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount,

\begin{quote}
You are the salt of the earth…You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:13-16 NKJV).
\end{quote}

The churches participating in this study are from several denominational backgrounds and worship experiences in the City of Baltimore, which has experienced a number of challenges in the past few years; the Church's response has been a necessary bridge toward healing and reconciliation. Like so many other urban centers on the East Coast, Baltimore has had a strong

\footnote{\textsuperscript{14} George Barna and Harry Jackson, Jr., \textit{High Impact African American Churches: Leadership Concepts from Some of Today’s Most Effective Churches} (Grand Rapids, MI: Regal Books, 2005), Loc. 440.}
history of African American churches being engaged in social change, economic empowerment, and diversity. According to Harry Jackson, the author of *High Impact African American Churches*, "the black community contains a potpourri of socioeconomic realities. Black adults range from very wealthy to dirt poor-circumstances are improving for blacks, but the balance is still tipping toward the less affluent…"\(^{15}\) While the church has been at the center of change and transformation, it has also struggled through the number of changes, especially as the African American upper middle class has expanded. Many of the families that were once active members of urban churches have now chosen to live in the suburbs and often disconnecting from their urban roots. However, the urban African American church or the Black Church is still recognized as centers where the necessities like food, clothing, shelter, and financial support are being provided.

The churches examined in this study are 25 years old or younger and are being led by the founding pastor; this study also examines churches that are over 25 years old that have had multiple pastors and have experienced a change in leadership and ministry culture. The churches range in size from 20 members up to and including churches that are 300 or more members who attend Sunday worship services. These same churches have ministry staffs that range in size and scope of responsibility.

**Problem Presented**

Since the arrival of African slaves to the east coast of now what is called the United States, there has been a struggle to enjoy authentic equality fully. The inequality that has been experienced throughout the African American experience has had an adverse effect on those that have experienced racism, inequity, and economic disparity. The challenges that African

\(^{15}\) Ibid., Loc. 2129.
Americans would face did not dissipate with the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, the Civil Rights Act of 1866, and the Civil Rights Act in 1964, but have remained in some form and have in many ways impacted and imposed a deep sense of social-cultural and mental pressure. The issues that were to follow consisted of discontent, dissatisfaction, and distrust. These embedded issues find their roots in the historical past of a people have played a role in the life of African Americans and their internal and external interactions. The damage has left lingering effects in the way individuals and collective bodies respond to the cultural and systemic stimuli that they experience on a day-to-day basis.

While life and culture have presented challenges for African Americans, they were able to find strength through their faith in God and the Church. It was in the Church where African American believers found worth and value. Michael Dantley, the author of Successful Leadership in Urban Schools, suggests that African American spirituality engages more than Biblical truth but is steeped in culture, politics, and establishes what is morally acceptable in society.\textsuperscript{16} He adds, "African American notions of spirituality are laced with pronouncements of liberation and overcoming suffering and oppression."\textsuperscript{17} It is within language and the heritage of faith that those of African-American descent have found the strength to continue and find measures of success. Even in today’s culture and time while churches appear to be digressing in membership and attendance, African Americans are more likely to believe in God, attend church, and stress the importance of faith.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} “Faith And Religion Among Black Americans,” Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project.
It is within the walls of the church that the minister was given a place of privilege within Black civil society. With all the external pressures that life produced, the Church lay at the center of many African American communities and were the arbiters of civil rights, community engagement, and business development. The African American church provides a wide range of interactions with the community, especially in urban centers, by providing resources to families like child-care, social engagement, and financial assistance. It is within the context of African spirituality that Black personhood and humanity which has aided in the development of mechanisms of survival. But more than anything, the Church is a place where the community gathers to worship, pray, and hope. In the words of Harold Carter:

And wherever Black people would bend their knees in prayer, whether in a big church or a small storefront, they would have the same expectation from God and the same desires of their brothers and sisters. Their prayer meeting was their vehicle to community affirming their personhood and keeping alive their hope for a better day.

Given the fact that the Church has been the epicenter of the African American communities, it must be understood that conflict is no stranger to the Church. As the Black middle class is expanding, the role of the Church within the African American community is being redefined. Historically, the church leaders served as preachers, part-time politicians, social workers, and spiritual supporters. Besheer Mohamed adds that Black church has a historical place in Black communities and the Black pastor has a had historical role as a leader in the Black communities.

---

community. But due to changes in culture and economics, what the Church has experienced is a dearth or at least a shift in the quality of leadership. Because of the migration of African-Americans into the suburbs and an abandonment of urban centers, urban churches are struggling to retain and realize the giftedness of potential church leaders. Oneya Okuwobi, a researcher who studies the sociology of organizations, race, and religion states that “If we lose the spiritual heritage of the Black church as people and resources flow to other expressions, we will all be impoverished in the process.”

In evolving environments, certain issues will arise, especially conflict driven by division. The differences can stem from a number of problems that can consist of finance, community engagement, civic involvement, evolving values, music styles, attire, unclear organizational structure, among other issues that can impact the unity of the Church.

The problem in the local African American Church is conflict among leadership. The purpose of this DMIN action research thesis is to evaluate and understand the varying causes of conflict with local African American church leaders. If the issue of conflict can be resolved, then we, as African American churches, can successfully fulfill our church's mission and vision through effective collaboration.

In the local African American Church, progression is often hindered as a result of conflict among those in leadership. The local Church attempts to put leaders in place to fulfill the purpose of the Church without a full understanding of the importance of unity and relationship among those that have been placed in leadership. The leadership roles can be among the elders.

---


or senior leaders, the diaconate, or even the servant leaders. Congregations see leaders as those that are most visible in managing the business and spiritual culture of the Church. It is difficult to move forward with vision when there is conflict among co-laborers. The prophet Amos presents a powerful question in regard to this particular issue "how can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3 NKJV). Where there is disagreement, substantial delay can hinder the ministry from fulfilling its commissional responsibility.

The challenge for the Senior Pastor or lead pastor is that he or she is usually the one that is responsible for most if not all leadership decisions. They are the lead worship leaders, lead teachers, and the lead fundraisers in the local church. This can prove to create a challenge as other leaders such as associate pastors, deacons, and other staff members may either not be involved in the leadership decisions of the church or if they are, they may have limited voice.

The Bible says that we should 'know those that labor among us (1 Thessalonians 5:12 NKJV).’ The challenge is that some leaders will fill positions without adequate preparation and understanding of the skills a person may or may not have. The assignments were done without leadership development and without adequate opportunities for leadership to get to know one another outside of the church roles that are tasked to occupy. Relationships are formed when there is a purposeful and planned opportunity to get to know and understand those you work with. I think that without this opportunity, we create leaders that operate with less understanding of their counterpart, and less understanding can result in more misunderstanding, miscommunication, and offense.

The Role of the Senior Pastor in the African American Church

The Senior Pastors role within the African American Church is one that has unique origins within the context of American Christian church. Historically, in keeping with the
African tradition the pastor is seen as a tribal leader, priest, father, and chieftain.\textsuperscript{25} According to H. Beecher Hicks,

The vast power of the priest in the African state is well known; his realm alone—the province of religion and medicine—remained largely unaffected by the plantation system. The Negro priest, therefore, early became an important figure on the plantation and found his function as the interpreter of the supernatural, the comforter of the sorrowing, and as the one who expressed, rudely but picturesquely, the longing and disappointment and resentment of a stolen people.\textsuperscript{26}

Jackson adds that a chieftain had the responsibility to lead his people into the fight against evil and injustice.\textsuperscript{27} The heritage of the African priest explains the position of the preacher as a representative of black people before the Lord and a leader in every part of black life. The black church became the new clans along with the black preacher becoming the new priest. Evans agrees that the African American church pastor were not just employees but rather they were “royal tribal leaders for the community.”\textsuperscript{28}

It was widely understood and accepted that after the abolition of slavery that the Pastor was one of the few people who were literate in the community and due to his value, they were responsible to meet the spiritual needs of the those in the community. As a result, the community was encouraged to tend the needs of the Pastor and his family. For more than a century after the abolition of slavery and well beyond the 20\textsuperscript{th} century the black pastor had a coveted position which was highly respected.

\textsuperscript{25} Barna and Jackson, Jr., \textit{High Impact African American Churches}, Loc. 577.

\textsuperscript{26} Tony Evans, \textit{Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, The Kingdom, and How we are Stronger Together}. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011), 165.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{28} Evans, Michael, \textit{Leadership in the Black Church: Guidance in the Midst of Changing Demographics}, (Fort Worth, Tx: Austin Brothers Publishing, 2018), Loc. 130.
For African American church leaders separating the spiritual from the secular, the 
religious from the political has not been a simple process. African American pastors had to 
become advocates for justice and engage with disputes within the community that they serve. As 
a result, the African American Pastor has experienced great amount of prestige, privilege, and 
freedom while he leads a congregation.

Unlike, their pastoral counterparts in other racial and cultural environments, there is an 
expectation that the African American pastor will fulfill two dynamic functions – the Priestly and 
the Prophetic. C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya define the priestly function as the 
“maintenance function, a function that addresses the worship and spiritual needs of its 
members.” Whereas they define the prophetic function as it “leads to involvement in politics 
and participation in the affairs of the larger community.” The Priestly functions includes 
activities concerned with worship and maintaining the spiritual life. The Prophetic function 
refers to involvement in socio-political concerns and activities in the community; typically, 
prophetic activity has meant pronouncing a radical word of God’s judgment. Some churches are 
closer to one end than to the other. Priestly churches are mainstays of survival and prophetic 
churches are networks of liberation.

29 Ibid.
30 Anyabwile, Reviving the Black Church, Loc. 1803.
31 Ibid.
32 C. Eric Lincoln, Lawrence H Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (Duke 
Purpose Statement

In the African American Church, there are a number of issues that contribute to conflict, causing an interruption in the fulfillment of vision and purpose. However, when conflict arises within the leadership of the church, this inevitably creates a problem that causes significant challenge and delay. Pastoral leadership, along with subordinates who work together to fulfill the mission of the church, face times of conflict or disagreement because of leadership style, spiritual maturity, ineffective communication, education, social differences, values, and economic differences. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the various issues that contribute to conflict and their roots and to provide tangible solutions that will enable the Church to fulfill its mission and vision.

Filling in this research gap will aid urban African American churches in recognizing the potential issues that lead to conflict between Senior Pastors and their ministry staff.

Basic Assumptions

There are a number of assumptions that will be presupposed in this research study. This research project assumes that the respondents are African American Christian church leaders who are at least 18 years of age or older. The church leaders should be open to share the thoughts openly and honestly. Also, this project expects that the respondents will answer truthfully and without any prejudice. Further, this research project recognizes that conflict is a common issue within the culture of the African American church.

Therefore, it is the goal of this project to acknowledge the problems that contribute to this conflict. The churches will vary in size and immediate demographics. Different pastoral leaders will lead the churches with differing styles of leadership and with staff members with varying types of personalities from diverse backgrounds.
Definitions

_African American Pastor._ A pastor with an African American origin serving in an African American church, or a church that is predominantly African American.

_Associate Pastor._ An associate pastor is a church employee who assists the senior pastor with the church's daily operations. His tasks include managing events for church ministries, supervising church volunteers, and assisting with all church services and ceremonies.

_Believers/Congregation._ A group of people who believe in God and show some commitment to serving Jesus Christ, at least through adoration and service.

_Black Church/African American Churches._ Christian churches that have historically and still currently minister predominantly to African American believers within the United States.

_Church._ A designated place where Christians, sharing the same beliefs, gather to worship and adore God.

_Clergy._ A person who is licensed to lead and conduct religious worship in a Christian congregation. The words clergy and Pastor may be used interchangeably, although they might not mean the same thing.

_Collaboration._ Is working together on one clear objective or project.

_Communication._ A process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of words, symbols, signs, and/or behaviors.

_Conflict._ Conflict is a disagreement between two or more parties within a family, community, or organization.

_Conflict management._ Conflict management is the process that —involves designing effective strategies to minimizing the dysfunctions of conflict.
Conflict Resolution. Is the attempt to resolve, reduce, eliminate, or terminate conflict between individuals or groups.

Cooperation. Is when individuals and groups share responsibility and work together in an organized and productive fashion to accomplish a task.

Culture. Culture is the composite values, ideas, attitudes, and other meaningful symbols produced by a people group that shape our behavior and the objects of that behavior as they are transferred from one generation to the next.

Godly or Christian Service. A service to others and self that is consistent with God's Word and glorifies His name.

Interpersonal conflict. Interpersonal conflict is conflict between two individuals, especially those who are from different hierarchal levels.

Indirect Pastoral Conflict. Conflict with the leader/Pastor of the church that is not direct but is demonstrated through negative interaction with pastoral decisions or staff members.

Leadership. The act of influencing or serving others to accomplish a specific purpose for the benefit of a team of people or groups.

Leadership Team. A group of administrators, associate ministers, and other leaders who make important decisions and coordinate activities.

Ministry Staff. A member of a ministry team which can include Associate Pastors, Deacons, or administrative team members.

Mission. Mission is what ministry or church does, and from it come the objectives and finally, what it takes to reach those objectives.

Lead Pastor/Senior Pastor. A pastor is the shepherd and leader of a congregation. He or she provides counsel, support, direction for a local church or assembly.
Systemic Inculturalization. A learned system of behavior usually by a group who develop shared beliefs, values, and assumptions for the purpose of survival within a dominant culture.

Vision. A goal that has been set to achieve.

Limitations

In this action research project, to maintain the integrity and empirical nature of this study, there will be limitations placed on this research project. While conflict is a very common challenge throughout the Church and other secular institutions, this study focuses primarily on the African American churches located within the Baltimore Metropolitan area, which means that the data will not necessarily apply to other types of congregations or those in other locations.

Delimitations

The following study focuses on the conflict that exists within the African American Church leadership and how said conflict may prohibit missional success. As a result, the participants are expected to be affiliated with the Church, especially African American pastors, and church leaders. The findings of this study will focus on the issues that affect African American churches in Baltimore, MD, and may not be applicable in a broader context. Also, the findings may be impacted by cultural, economic, and social influencers that may not be present in all circumstances.

Thesis Statement

The African American church remains the pillar of the black community, especially in areas of social engagement, community interaction, and spiritual nurture and development. When leaders of the Church are engaged in internal conflict, the mission and vision of the Church will be delayed and threaten the impact of the Church within its community of influence.
Conclusion

The objective of the church is to fulfill the “Great Commission.” The challenge that African American churches need to overcome is any issues that would prohibit it from advancing the Kingdom of God and meeting the needs of the community. When there is conflict or when there is a decentralized focus, the church can suffer delay. Today’s church must be united to complete its God ordained purpose. It is the intention of the researcher to understand the issues that create conflict within the African-American church leadership teams and how these issues can prevent or hinder the progress of the ministry.
Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Review of Literature

The objective of this research project is to evaluate, understand, and develop strategies that will address the problem of conflict within the leadership of African-American churches. While there has been a significant treatment of the issue of conflict within the Church, there has been very little work explicitly directed to the African-American Church, especially relating to conflict between staff members. This research is designed to provide an understanding of the issues that create the environment of conflict and to provide a means of addressing those issues so that the Church can thrive and continue to have a significant impact in the urban communities.

Defining Conflict

There has been significant work throughout Christendom concerning the issues of division and conflict. A considerable number of resources have been dedicated to managing conflict within the Church. The African-American Church is a pillar in the African American, but like many institutions, goes through conflict, especially amongst its leadership, which has an adverse impact on the way it functions and fulfills its mission and purpose.

Conflict is best defined as “a difference of opinion or purpose that frustrates someone’s goals or desires.” Further, conflict, especially in organizations, is best described as a behavior that is intended to obstruct the achievement of another person's goals or objectives. The truth is that conflict within an organization is inevitable. Appelbaum, Abdullah, and Shapiro add to this...

---

33 Tara Klena Barthel and David V Edling, Redeeming Church Conflicts: Turning Crisis into Compassion and Care, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2012), 16.
34 Thakore, “Conflict and Conflict Management,” 7.
definition by suggesting that the conflict is a process of social interaction. Rahim suggests that conflict is a natural outcome of human interactions when two or more individuals or groups become incompatible or when they have a desire for a similar resource that is in short supply. Lastly, Pruitt and Kim summarize conflict as “perceived divergence of interest, a belief that the parties’ current aspirations are incompatible. In other words, conflict is a belief that if one party gets what it wants, the other (or others) will not be able to do so.”

Doug Bixby defines conflict as "a disagreement between two or more parties within a family, community, or organization." A conflict is a natural event within the sphere of human experiences, and therefore it is not necessarily the avoidance of conflict, but how it is managed and addressed. Conflict is a necessary reality in the course of leading a church. Conflict can contribute to the health and vitality of our churches. The issues belie on primarily on the methods that are used to solve or address that conflict or challenge that is presented to us. Bixby argues against the notion of relational triangulation or the involvement of a third party to resolve a dispute. He further adds that much of church conflict rests on who is responsible for making decisions. To address these issues, churches need to improve governance and establish effective leadership practices. Pastors and other church leaders struggle because, in their attempts to protect people, they form emotional triangles that invariably cause more pressure and stress and further the conflict. Edwin Friedman writes,

For leaders, the capacity to understand and think in terms of emotional triangles can be the key to their stress, their health, their effectiveness, and their relational binds. Almost every

---

36 M. Afzalur Rahim, Managing Conflict in Organizations (New York, NY: Taylor and Francis), 15.
37 Ibid.
38 Doug Bixby, Navigating the Nonsense: Church Conflict and Triangulation (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), 3.
39 Ibid., 140.
issue of leadership and the difficulties that accompany it can be framed in terms of emotional triangles, including motivation, clarity, decision making, resistance to change, imaginative gridlock, and a failure of nerve.\textsuperscript{40}

The key for Bixby is that direct communication, clearing up misunderstandings, and reaching decisions in appropriate ways about essential matters are methods by which we limit or minimize conflict.\textsuperscript{41}

Christena Cleveland, the author of \textit{Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart}, states that conflict in the Christian Church exists primarily due to disunity and segregation, which occur within the context of ministry.\textsuperscript{42} And not only do we affirm division but generally create areas of intragender issues, and this can be extended to intra-racial points.\textsuperscript{43} Cleveland further suggests that conflict arises when there is a competition between groups who are competing for the same resources.\textsuperscript{44} Invariably, this struggle breeds conflict within a local church, as we focus only on our needs and reject to see the needs of others in a given situation. Everist affirms this fact, stating that "Conflict comes from having not only a strongly held personal belief but also an unwillingness to see the situation from the other person's perspective."\textsuperscript{45} The author further states that "Conflict happens when people choose to see things only through their set of lenses."\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
Thomas Hammond and Steve Wilkes suggest that conflict is not a new issue in the Church. The authors remind us that "As early as the time of the Acts of the Apostles, the conflict has been a part of the Church. When conflict surfaces, it can prevent any church from fulfilling the Great Commission and reaching her full potential."\(^{47}\) The authors further suggest, Conflict is a common occurrence in congregations of every denomination across America. It happens to traditional, blended, and contemporary churches for a variety of reasons, with the capacity to reach extreme levels of intensity. Its impact on a congregation can be devastating. Relationships are damaged, friendships strained, and many decide to stop attending. The Church's ministry and evangelism efforts are usually brought to a standstill, leaving a divided fellowship that has taken its eyes off the harvest and has become distracted from fulfilling the Great Commission.\(^{48}\)

Not only does conflict hinder progress and mission fulfillment, but it causes decreased satisfaction and joy. Hunsinger and Latani add, "When the church is bogged down in what seems to be an intractable conflict…it is little wonder that so few imagine conflict as an opportunity to find mutual satisfaction, growth, or joy."\(^{49}\)

Oluwaseun Afolabi brings to light that conflict within the Church is unavoidable, especially when we understand that the members of a church come from diverse backgrounds and often have differing opinions.\(^{50}\) Further, when most conflicts arise within the Church, it is generally with people who have known each other.\(^{51}\)


\(^{48}\) Ibid., 4.


While the average onlooker will consider that conflict is detrimental to a church, it may reveal that the Church is moving toward its vision and mission. Phillips suggests that "conflict is inevitable with a church within strong kingdom commitments." Churches that engage in conflict should not be overwhelmed but view the battle as an opportunity to grow and develop.

**Conflict Within the African American Church**

The problem that lies within the African American church may not necessarily be foreign to the rest of the Body of Christ but must especially be considered in light of the history of the Black Church in America. The Black Church has been the cornerstone of the African American community. The Black church has been the place where lawyers, doctors, businesses, and politicians have arisen. It has also been at the center of social, political, and economic reform. Johnson states that "Through the church, African Americans subsumed their identity and found relief from social pressure they underwent are a part of American history." The author further adds, "The modern Black Church is an organizational and cultural hybrid created through the experiences and needs of its members. Its organizational foundation is rooted in the participation of slaves in their masters' religious life and in their secret worship services." For long, the Church has remained the primary institution in which black people experience prestige, authority, and rank. He adds, black churches were self-financed, built, and controlled by African Americans. As a result, these institutions have been resources for the African American

---


55 Ibid., 213.
community to enter into social institutions that have been historically blocked.\textsuperscript{56} Also, the Church remains to be a place where people are developed and trained to become leaders. However, the challenge remains that while African Americans are gathered within the Church and share certain innate qualities, there still challenges when it comes to culture and social influence that may determine the style of leadership. Toth emphasizes,

Paradoxically, these same features may also create increased opportunities for intra-congregational conflict due to the close-knit associational ties which these factors facilitate. In other words, the same characteristics which make the Black Church appealing to African Americans (e.g., myriad opportunities for direct participation, social support, educational and political training) may also lead to a greater likelihood of conflict or power struggles.\textsuperscript{57}

The difficulty that is faced within the Black Church is best described by Toth, who states, “To compensate for the structural constraints of racism, African American men sought to dominate positions of power in the Black Church. Under these circumstances, African American women and men sometimes competed for leadership roles. Competition inevitably leads to varying degrees of conflict.”\textsuperscript{58} This fact alone causes challenges for those who have been historically disempowered and come into an environment where some systems and structures are well developed, which can create divisive problems between pastors and subordinate leaders. The lack of leadership opportunities in mainstream society for black men and women contributed to them seeking and finding positions of power within the church. The challenge that they faced was that there were even fewer positions to occupy. Simply stated, a disempowered people who have been rejected by external racism and limitations find that there are fewer opportunities to lead which creates internal conflict within the church.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
Toth and Johnson agree that racism has played a role in the conflict narrative of the African American church, especially amongst its leaders. The issues that surround structural racism and finding solace in the black Church have been both beneficial and detrimental. It is beneficial in that African Americans had a venue in which they were able to flourish and have influence. Harmful in that it allows for individuals to have competition, which can lead to conflict.

For most, the assertion would be that simple racial, cultural, and social identification should prohibit conflict. Still, according to Cleveland, "Our interactions with people who are different from us or who violate our expectations are laden with uncertainty and are cognitively taxing." When individuals or groups are cognitively taxed, the result can be either unbridled resistance or disassociation.

Norma C. Everist evaluates the core issues that illustrate the causes of conflict remain deeply embedded in our family of origin, birth order, our life experiences, our religious beliefs, and our own self-perception. According to the author, there are at least seven different types of conflict: (1) Intrapersonal conflict, (2) Interpersonal Conflict, (3) Conflict Over Issues, (4) Conflict over Facts, (5) Conflict over Values, (6) Conflict over Goals and (7) Conflict over Means. The author explains that these issues are static throughout the Church.

According to Capozzoli and Rahim there are seven causes of conflict: (1) Team members bring culturally diverse values to their work teams. (2) Team members have different attitudes that result in different goals for team members. (3) Team members have different needs that are not met, which result in frustration that exacerbates conflict. (4) Various expectations of the team

---

59 Cleveland, Disunity in Christ, 29-35.
60 Everist, Church Conflict, 17-18.
61 Ibid., 29-37.
members are not met and result in conflict. (5) Team members have different perceptions that result in differing interpretations of the same information. (6) Limited resources often result in an increase in conflict. (7) Team members have different personalities that clash with each other.

The Roles that Leaders Play in Conflict

Leaders play an essential role in managing conflict. Afolabi, the author of Alternative Dispute Resolution, describes leadership as the reaction to individual personalities. He further adds that active leadership serves in two capacities, one in the way the leader impacts subordinates, and the way that the leader guides and motivated his or her subordinates.62 Blackaby asserts that spiritual leaders seek to lead people to find God's way and to fulfill God's plan.63 Adetunji adds that leadership in the Church is planning and uniting people to achieve the goals set for the Church in scripture.64

The conflict between pastors and subordinate leaders or other leaders in the Church can hinder the progression of the ministry, especially where the desire is to advance the mission and vision of the Church. Several issues can undermine the advancement of the local Church. These include division because of differing ideas and opinions, and mistrust which can lead to conflict.

Differing opinions are the product of culture, nurture, and belief. In a local church assembly, the challenge that every leader will face is how he or she can effectively guide a group of individuals who differ in opinion about matters such as politics, economics, social issues, and culture. Everist addresses this by redressing the fact that the calling of every Christian leader is to create and maintain an environment where people with differing ideas and opinions can work

63 Thabiti Anyabwile, Reviving the Black Church, (Nashville, TN: Crossway, 2001), Loc 3977.
64 Ibid.
together.\textsuperscript{65} The author adds that leaders must take the time to observe, listen, pray, and create a culture where all voices can be heard as the truth is pursued.\textsuperscript{66} Leaders must be willing to be sensitive to the voices of those who are serving them. Hunsinger encourages compassionate leadership where leaders see others in their humanity, which establishes empathy and honesty.\textsuperscript{67} The author further adds that as we lead congregations, we will need to rely on the Spirit of God, who will ultimately lead us through challenging situations.\textsuperscript{68}

Another issue that leads to conflict is mistrust. Bixby states clearly that, “Mistrust can be devastating to our ministries. This is why establishing trust needs to be the primary goal in this first stage of any ministry.”\textsuperscript{69} Mistrust in any context can prove to be devastating, especially in areas where people have been placed in situations where distrust is prevalent. Anyabwile brings light to the fact that victimization has led to this distrust. The author suggests that because of the racial climate and challenges of our day, mistrust has become a byproduct.\textsuperscript{70} Unresolved issues such as abuse, misconduct, and other events can cause an individual not to trust those in leadership positions.\textsuperscript{71}

According to Hakanen, Hakkinen, Soudunsaar, trust is defined as "a commitment to cooperation without certainty about the actions of trusted people."\textsuperscript{72} The authors further state, "Trust building is a long process, but it can be broken fast. Trust is dynamic and needs to be

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{65} Everist, 32.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 77.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Hunsinger, 18.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Bixby, 9.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Anyabwile, Reviving the Black Church, Loc.3977.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
consciously monitored. The key areas for trust-building are personal knowledge, regular face-to-face interaction, empathy, respect, and genuine listening.” Again, past experiences affect trust, and shared trust can begin to disintegrate through negative or uncomfortable experiences.73 If Pastors and leadership teams want to be effective and overcome issues that lead to conflict, it will require them to develop and maintain trusting relationships. Bixby affirms this when he states, “Leaders, especially Senior Pastors, need to share authority and responsibility with leaders who trust each other enough to share power and accountability can have a dramatic impact on any congregation.”74

Leaders play an essential role in managing conflict. The responsibility is to lead their respective ministries through compassion and collaboration. Everist suggests this process is navigated through confrontation, which leads to collaboration. Where there is collaboration, the mission of the ministry can be achieved. Collaboration requires direct communication between individuals who are engaged in conflicting conversations or who are having an issue in which they are unable to resolve.

The key for every leader throughout the Church or ministry will be building strong relationships so that there will be collaboration and clarity when there are times of miscommunication—developing strong relationships by forging opportunities to dialogue not just about tasks but about the issue that challenge individual leaders so that the connection and the relationship will not solely be in the heat or in the task that has been sat before each leader.

73 Ibid.
74 Bixby, Navigating the Nonsense: Church Conflict and Triangulation, p. 38.
Theological Foundation

Leadership in the local Church is essential for its survival and its productivity. As we consider the importance of identifying, managing, and overcoming conflict in church leadership must be clearly defined and understood leadership. While there are a number of definitions that are presented in reference to leadership, Sherwood Lingenfelter describes leadership as "how one lives within a structure, respecting the people, accepting their differences, and engaging them in ways that inspire trust and transform yet sustain relationships and structure."\(^75\) To be a leader in the Lord's Church is more than merely obtaining a title but a person who understands that his or her role in the Church is to lead and direct the people of God by developing effective relationships that produce the will of God.

Character

In order to lead in the Lord’s church character must be exemplified. In Paul’s first letter to Timothy, he takes the time to explain and express the qualities necessary to lead in the church. Paul writes:

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Tim. 3:1–7)

A full elucidation of the text reveals that leaders in the church need to understand that it is first a “noble task” and those that serve in the position as leaders must be “above reproach.” To be

---

“above approach” means to be blameless, and to live a consistently spiritual and moral life. Leaders must be “able to teach” and “not recent coverts” which reveals a level of Christian maturity, not someone who is merely gifted but can handle the rigors of the Christian life. The leader’s character should be demonstrated in his personal, public, and family life. A leader needs to be an example that others can follow especially in being a one-woman man, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, and hospitable. In his public life the leader should display that he is a peacemaker, gentle, and “not a drunkard, not violent, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money.” As a leader your character must be displayed in your family life in the way you manage your own home, as well as the way you interact with those who are on the outside. Godly character is at the center of Paul’s messaging about Christian leaders.

Roles of Leaders

The roles that leaders fulfill begin with the understanding that serving is at its core and is further expressed through descriptive functions and title which delineate responsibility within the Church. To this, John MacArthur adds the leadership that the most authentic kind of leadership demands service, sacrifice, along with selflessness.76 This standard is affirmed by what Jesus states in Matthew 20:25-28:

But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:25-28 KNJV)."

Jesus emphasizes that the most important key to leadership is not found in dominance or position but in service to one another. The fact that Jesus points out that leadership will not be from the position of pride, pomp, and prestige but rather from the perspective of how we serve

those whom we are called to lead. While Jesus himself was sent to demonstrate and lead unbelievers and believers into a relationship with the Father, he would also demonstrate that leadership was best exemplified in how we humbly serve one another. Efrain Agosto, the author of *Servant Leadership: Jesus and Paul*, agrees when he postulates that authentic leadership is not void of having followers, but it should focus on the understanding of those that follow, especially as it relates to their dreams, hopes, goals, and purposes.\(^\text{77}\) Therefore, not power or prestige that defines the leader, it is his ability to serve those and model for those to whom he is called to serve.

Further, there is a theological emphasis that as leaders' conflict must be addressed as to not allow the ministry to fulfill its mission. Theologically, there is a framework that supports this very notion of managing conflict. In the Old Testament, the Proverb writer states that "A hot tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel (Proverbs 15:18 NIV)." Conflict is a natural byproduct of connecting to different values, ideals, and objectives within a group of people. Conflict is maintained by individuals who either have strong feelings about a particular issue, misunderstand a particular problem, or lack the ability to embrace someone else's point of view. As result, strong feelings and emotions can cause division and hinder ministry progress or cause significant delay. Jesus suggests that conflict resolution is a necessary part of serving and worship. Matthew 5:23-24 states, "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23-24 NKJV)."

Biblical View of Conflict

In the beginning of the early church, conflict arose between two different groups of widows which required intervention. In Acts 6:1 "Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution” (Acts 6:1 NKJV). This conflict had the potential to damage the Church because it appeared to show partiality between the Greek-speaking widows and the Aramaic-speaking widows when it came to the distribution of food. John Stott explains,

The issue was more, however, than one of cultural tension. The apostles discerned a deeper problem, namely that social administration (both organizing the distribution and settling the complaint) was threatening to occupy all their time and so inhibit them from the work which Christ had specifically entrusted to them, namely preaching and teaching. Stott acknowledges that the tension potentially could have caused not only a delay but also had the potential to hinder the work of Christ. Their response to conflict was to appoint individuals who would act as arbitrators in this matter of conflict. Thomas Hammond and Steven Wilkes agree that conflict can prevent any church from fulfilling the Great Commission and reaching its full potential.

Conflict is addressed as a subject through the New Testament, especially in the letters written by Paul. In 1 Corinthians 1:12 there was obvious within the Church at Corinth. The people were saying "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Christ." The spirit of division and conflict almost destroyed the infant church; however, Paul stems the issue by addressing the source of the conflict recognizing its potential harm. Also, in the Church at

---


Philippi Paul addresses not only issues of division, especially noting the issue between two of his fellow workers Euodia and Syntyche. With a simple phrase, Paul addresses his fellow workers by stating, "I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord (Philippians 4:2 NKJV)." With this simple statement, we recognize that there was conflict and that Paul addresses it by saying simply "have the same mind," or "stay focused or refocus."

Again, conflict is not an uncommon attribute, especially among those that are fellow workers in the mission. In any case, where there is conflict within the Church, especially among the leadership of the Church, there needs to be an earnest desire to see it resolved.

For Christian leaders, there should always be a desire to exemplify biblical principle and Christian character especially as it relates to addressing conflict and disunity. As believers in Christ Jesus, Christians are called to maintain unity for God’s glory (John 17:14-24), and so that the love of God is revealed (John 13:34-35). When conflict involves rebellion, sin, or misaligned priorities, we as believers are called to resolve and restore as soon as possible (Matt 18:15-20; Luke 17:3-4; Acts 20:31; Gal 6:1-3). Lastly, unity releases a blessing to the local body or church, and to the universal body of Christ (Psalm 133).

Lastly, it is the nature of God to have human relationships reflect his nature – peace. Throughout scripture, God’s sovereignty is over everything, including conflict, so it teaches us that the Lord’s purposes contain peace. God’s purpose for peace is eminently evident in his name. He is called the “God of peace” (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:6–9; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20). In Paul’s epistle to Roman (Romans 15:33) he does not merely say “God be with you,” but “the God of peace be with you all. Amen.” After dispensing his salutations to the church, he encourages them with this statement, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Rom. 16:20). These were not just encouraging words but
passionate prayers offered in full awareness of the tensions between Jews and Gentiles in the newly formed church. In Paul’s awareness, he wanted to remind the church at the root of God's nature is the peace or the desire for shalom. Also, in Paul’s address to the Corinthian church, a church known for numerous conflicts, he concludes his counsel by reminding that church: “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace” (1 Cor. 14:33). In these passages, Paul reminds the church how we should purpose peace in our lives with one another because it is God’s nature.

Alfred Poirier agrees when he states,

We should not overlook the significance of this divine attribute. Since peace is grounded in the nature of God, peace is not a human construct nor an ideal state of affairs captured only in dreams and wishes. Nor is it merely a redemptive result. Rather, as a divine attribute, peace is a fundamental reality. Conflict, sin, disorder, and confusion are aberrations in God’s good creation.80

Theoretical Foundation

In God's sovereign plan to reconcile and redeem mankind, he sent his son to die so that he could fill the chasm that separated man from his Creator. Jesus is the bridge that provides fallen man the way to enter into a relationship with God. Because of God's love for his creation, he sent Jesus to reconcile the broken relationship between man and God. It is through this example that we recognize the importance of reconciliation and conflict resolution. According to apostle Paul, we have been given the ministry of reconciliation, "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18 NKJV). Reconciliation ought to be the same substrate by which all believers should govern their lives, as we should exemplify or instead embody the desire of being reconciled with others. While this should be the natural byproduct of experience,

reconciliation, and forgiveness of our sins and trespasses, it is sadly not natural to us. As a result, conflict is a natural part of our fallen world.

Ken Sande, president of Peacemaker Ministries, in an article entitled The High Cost of Conflict Among Christians, states the following statistics:

- Born-again Christians in the United States file 4 to 8 million lawsuits every year. Many of those lawsuits involve Christians suing other Christians.
- There are 19,000 scarring church conflicts in the United States each year.
- There are 1,224 Christian divorces per day in the United States. This is virtually the same amount as in the general population.
- In the United States, fifteen hundred pastors are forced to leave their assignments every month, and the seven primary reasons for forced exits all involve some form of conflict. 81

With these stats in mind, the church must be deeply challenged by the issues that lead to conflict and develop methods that can lead to resolution. In the following, we will observe some of the possible problems that lead to conflict within the African American church and what theoretical approaches can be used to understand and produce resolve.

Different Types of Conflict

Conflict within an organization is not uncommon. An organization that is growing and or progressing will usually face some type of conflict. Conflict within the church will differ and therefore need to be understood within the context of the experience. Conflict can be summed up into four categories: intraindividual, conflict from within, interpersonal, a conflict between two

---

or more people, intragroup, a conflict between members of a group who share the same goals, and intergroup, a disagreement between two or more groups. Pnueman describes major issues that cause conflict within a congregation:

**Disagreement about values and beliefs.** Differences in values and beliefs are a significant source of conflict in churches. When leaders, staff, and congregations disagree on church values and core beliefs, it can cause strong disagreement.

**Conflicting roles and responsibilities of the Pastor.** A lack of clarity about the role of the Pastor's conflict can ensue. When there is no definition of the Senior Pastoral leader's role, it can cause confusion, especially when the Pastor is not meeting the perceived responsibilities of other leaders in the church.

**Organizational structure.** The organizational structure must be clear. The way a church is structured primarily relates to the roles and responsibilities of clergy, staff, and volunteers. There is ambiguity in procedures, roles, and responsibilities. Conflict will inevitably arise.

**Leadership style.** Leadership style can create conflict within the church. While Pneuman discusses a new versus an older pastor, the challenge can lie simply with a Pastor who is either task-oriented or relationship-oriented. Further conflict can arise among staff members who lack the skill or ability to relate effectively with their team. If the leadership style is abrupt and non-relational, most congregants and staff members may reject a leader who will cause conflict within the church.

---

Inadequate communication. Ineffective and insufficient communication is both the product of conflict and the cause of conflict. When there is a failure to communicate clear expectations between the Pastor and the staff, or there is a lack of clear communication between fellow staff members, it can cause unnecessary conflict. It can further cause factions to develop within the church, which will lead to more conflict.

Poor financial management. Mismanagement of church funds is another cause of conflict. After members or staff members financially supported a church event or a financial campaign only to discover that there has been no fiscal accountability. Especially when there has been misappropriation of funds, the conflict will be the outcome.

Lack of vision. Conflict will arise between a pastoral leader and his or her staff because of a lack of confidence in the church's vision or direction. A lack of clearly stated vision will cause a lack of confidence and create factions within the church. Clearly stated and defined vision will produce focus and allow for team members' structural dynamics to work collaboratively.

The Effects of Negative Conflict

In an article featured on iEduNote, Conflict: Positive and Negative Effects in Organizations, the author defines conflict in organizations and its positive and negative effects.\(^3\) The article also explores the different types of conflicts and conflict management techniques. Below are four negative effects of negative conflict.

Emotional well-being. Conflict in an organization can result in members becoming frustrated, especially when they feel there is no solution or if they feel that their thoughts or ideas

---

are unimportant to others in the organization. Team members may have developed issues with sleeping, loss of appetite, overeating, headaches, or become unsociable. Team members can become stressed, which may affect their professional and personal lives. Also, organization members may avoid meetings to prevent themselves from experiencing stress and stress-related symptoms.  

**Decrease in Productivity.** When an organization spends much of its time dealing with conflict, members take time away from focusing on the core goals they are tasked with achieving. Conflict causes members to focus less on the project at hand and more on gossiping about conflict or venting about frustrations. As a result, organizations can lose money, donors, and access to essential resources.

**Members Leave Organization.** Organization members who are frustrated with the level of conflict within an organization may decide to leave or resign. This is especially disadvantageous when members are a part of the leadership team. In severe cases when members leave an organization can risk the dissolution.

**Distract Primary Purposes.** When an organization experiences conflict, it can distract individuals and groups from their primary purposes, leaving them with less time and resources for other activities.

**Conflict Resolution Theories**

Oluwaseun O. Afolabi states the following "Disputes within the church are unavoidable since members come from diverse backgrounds which make their opinions and ways of viewing
issues different and sometimes conflicting.” In his article *Alternative Dispute Resolution: A Tool for Managing Leadership Conflict*, Afolabi expresses the significance of utilizing this theory of conflict resolution. He suggests that Alternative Dispute Resolution (or ADR) is a fundamental methodology in addressing conflict in the church. McManus and Silverstein explain ADR’s history:

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in the common law tradition has its origins rooted in English legal development. As early as the Norman Conquest, legal charters and documents indicate that English citizenry instituted actions concerning private wrongs, officiated by highly respected male members of a community, in informal, quasi-adjudicatory settings.

While the foundations of ADR have existed for extensive periods, it was not formally established as a conflict resolution method until the late nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, ADR grew in popularity as an alternative to the litigation process. As of the twenty-first century, the American Bar Association survey showed that most law schools have some type or form of ADR-related programs.

ADR comes in several forms ranging from the highly formalized to the very informal. However, at its base, it can be divided into three fundamental categories: adjudicative, evaluative, and facilitative. Below is an overview of the three categories:

- Adjudicative ADR proceeding, a quasi-judicial facilitator, called the "neutral," serves as the adjudicator or decision-maker. This participation by an outside, impartial third party is often desirable to parties unwilling to negotiate yet preferring to avoid formal litigation.

---

88 Afolabi, “Alternative Dispute Resolution.”
89 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
• Evaluative ADR is a process in which lawyers and litigants present their version of a particular case and receive feedback on their claims and arguments' strengths and weaknesses.

• Facilitative ADR, the neutral does not render a binding decision, nor does he or she actually "reach the merits" of a dispute. Instead, a neutral serves more as a referee or advisor to the parties to encourage discussion, dialogue, and settlement.92

Afolabi suggests that applying ADR to leadership conflict will help churches address issues that have created adversarial differences. While ADR typically focuses on negotiation, conciliation, mediation, and arbitration, instead Afolabi suggests that conciliation, meditation, and arbitration is more effective in the church. Within church leadership conflict, the application of ADR would focus on the cause of the issue, refocusing on the vision and goals, and moving towards conciliation, mediation, and arbitration. As a process for the church, this aligns with the teaching of Jesus found in Matthew 18:15-17:

Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church (Matthew 18:15-17 NKJV).

The process Jesus encourages requires a progressive attempt to resolve conflict or find grounds for conciliation. The objective of the biblical resolution is to explore alternatives and varying options to find a resolution.

While there are several methodologies to conflict resolution, there must be an understanding that conciliation is a method to dissolve or mitigate conflict in organizations.

---

92 Ibid.
There is the thought that conflict can be utilized or at least managed effectively to benefit an organization or any collective body with a singular mission and purpose.

M.A. Rahim suggests that organizational conflict "is often said to be functional for organizations, most recommendations relating to organizational conflict still fall within a spectrum of conflict reduction, resolution, or minimization."93 Likewise, Roloff and Rahim suggest that conflict is an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or discord with or without individuals or groups.94 In addressing the nature of the conflict, we must be aware that while conflict can be viewed as a completely external effect, it must be noted that conflict can be intraindividual or conflict from within. A more detailed exploration of conflict reveals:

1. A party is required to engage in an incongruent activity with his or her needs or interests.
2. A party holds behavioral preferences, the satisfaction of which is incompatible with another person's implementation of his or her preferences.
3. A party wants some mutually desirable resource in short supply, such that everyone's wants may not be satisfied fully.
4. A party possesses attitudes, values, skills, and goals that are salient in directing his or her behavior but are perceived to be exclusive of the attitudes, values, skills, and goals held by the other(s).

---

94 Ibid., 207
5. Two parties have partially exclusive behavioral preferences regarding their joint actions.

6. Two parties are interdependent in the performance of functions or activities.\textsuperscript{95}

Wall and Callister approach conflict by suggesting that it has no necessary value to an organization. However, this fact goes against Eisenhardt, Kahwajy, Bourgeois, who suggests that conflict in top management is inevitable and valuable.\textsuperscript{96} What is essential to understand about conflict is that it does not need to be eliminated but rather managed. Wall and Callister fall into that category of conflict resolution, which points to reduction or elimination. Conflict management should be the preferred option. Rahim states

Conflict management does not necessarily imply avoidance, reduction, or termination of conflict. It involves designing effective macro-level strategies to minimize conflict's dysfunctions and enhance the constructive functions of conflict to enhance learning and effectiveness in an organization.\textsuperscript{97}

The reasoning that Rahim falls in line with a biblical practice in the first-century church is that the emphasis is on growing, learning, and developing. In Acts 15:1-5, we discover that there is conflict within the church over circumcision, an issue that could have easily derailed the movement. It was a matter of culture and law. Instead of allowing the problem to move into avoidance or simply resolving the issue between the concerned parties, it is a moment to redefine the objectives and explore God's intention concerning particular people. In Acts 15:6-21, the church gathered in Antioch were able to use the conflict to develop new strategies, redefine and establish a doctrinal position. Instead of merely settling or avoiding the issue, they were able to use the conflict as an opportunity for growth.

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
It is God's intention for us to resolve conflicts regardless of the challenge that is before church. As churches move through conflict, they must establish criteria for conflict resolution, including organizational learning and effectiveness, conflict management should meet the needs of the constituents, and the organization must have strong ethics. Developing effective conflict management models will invariably provide an opportunity for the church to fulfill its mission, but it also allows for growth and progress.

---

98 Ibid.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Methodology

This chapter includes a detailed and comprehensive description of the research project's methodology, which is focused on addressing the issue of conflict between Senior Pastor and their ministry staff in African American churches. While there have been many books written about conflict within the Church, there have been few resources to address conflict within the African American church, especially those serving as leaders. Following this brief description, this chapter's balance will describe the intervention design and will conclude with the details of the implementation of the research design.

Intervention Design

The research project is designed to address the conflict between Senior Pastors and ministry teams. In order to understand the issues contained in the thesis, the researcher's methodology is to utilize the qualitative method. According to Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research is a multi-method conducted by the qualitative researcher and the members of a community who are seeking to understand the issue and find practical solutions to address the issue.99 This process's benefit will allow the stakeholders, those who are deeply invested in the churches that they represent, to explore their respective experiences and gain greater clarity and understanding of events and activities. Utilizing the qualitative research method will allow the researcher and the participants to work collaboratively on a practical methodology.100

100 Ibid., 58.
Research shows that conflict is a natural by-product of individuals and groups working together who may not agree on methodology or outcomes. The discovery process requires that the subjects and participants in the study understand that conflict is a part of an organization's growth but can also be damaging if not managed effectively. Conflict is an unfortunate reality as individuals within a community learn how to manage conflict differently by implementing various strategies and approaches that address conflict or resolve the dispute. In Baltimore, Maryland, African American churches are not void of conflict issues within the congregation or leadership teams. The challenge before the church is learning how to manage conflict, especially in light of the systemic inculturalization, or learned behaviors within a dominant culture. Most leaders within the Christian community have not been taught how to manage conflict in their respective churches.

The African American Church or the Black Church has historically been the hub where leaders are trained and developed for community service. The challenge that has faced African American churches is conflict within the ranks of leadership, especially amongst the Senior Pastor and subordinate leaders, which has often caused the mission of the Church to be lost. As a result, the progress of the Church can be stifled. John Toth, the author of *Power and Paradox in an African American Congregation*, suggests that the Black Church historically offered the leadership opportunity, especially in light of the historical inequalities in American culture.\(^\text{101}\) The study of conflict within the Black Church is a subject that has limited treatment, and it is within this study that the matter will be evaluated and understood. Therefore, the Church needs to develop essential strategies that will recognize the different issues that cause conflict and develop effective strategies that will allow the conflict within the Church to be either productive

---

or managed effectively. When managing organizational conflict, the intention of the Church should focus more on the diagnosis and the ultimate intervention. Intervention is designed to ascertain and reduce conflict at every level so that the ministry's work can continue without hindrance or delay to missional objectives in the local Church.¹⁰²

When implementing Intervention Design, Stringer, the author of *Action Research*, suggests the research facilitator needs to establish a non-threatening position so that the facilitator is not viewed as an intruder but as a partner.¹⁰³ Further, he suggests that the facilitator needs to take a neutral stance and create a non-threatening situation.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, as the researcher, a clear relationship with those being interviewed must be developed so that the interview is free from the encumbrances that ultimately lead to a lack of information. The study targets will be men and women serving in local churches either as Senior leaders or as subordinates within the Church in Baltimore.

Another aspect addressed within the study is understanding the different churches and their cultures. A clear picture of the churches is included in this study, providing proper context. Understanding the Church's relationship both professionally and interpersonally will give the researcher a broader view of the relational dynamics. Each Church's liturgy and structure will be evaluated to understand their respective dynamics and the issues impacting the leadership team are assessed.

**Research Population**

This study's research population consists of Pastors and church leaders from Life Changing Ministries, Haven of Rest, Sanctuary of Praise, New Day Worship Center, and

---

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 83.
Lighthouse Worship Center. The churches had to meet the following qualifications to participate in the study:

1. The Church must be located in Baltimore City, MD.

2. The Church's population must consist of members who are of African American descent or be considered to be African American.

3. The Church must have responded to the researcher with a willingness to participate.

4. The Church must be willing to grant access to their Senior Pastor or Lead Pastor, Associate Pastor, Deacons, Associate Ministers, and their ministry leadership team for focus groups and personal interviews.

5. The participating churches must provide the names and email addresses of participants.

6. The participating churches must be willing to participate in an electronic survey.

**Participation and Sampling**

Martin Marshall explains that choosing a study sample is an important step in a research project. Establishing a clear methodology toward sampling significantly affects the outcome of the research. Therefore, in preparing for this research project, a clear delineation needed to be drawn as to the methodology. There are two paths research can take: quantitative or qualitative. The goal of the quantitative is to test or examine pre-determined hypotheses and general results, whereas qualitative research is focused on providing illumination and understanding to complex psychosocial issues which affect the why and how of human life. A quantitative research project consists of much larger numbers to obtain an adequate sampling size, and its sampling is

---


106 Ibid.
done randomly.\textsuperscript{107} In a qualitative research approach, the inquiry focuses on small sampling selected for a particular purpose. While quantitative sampling would focus on avoiding any bias, within the qualitative sampling, bias is not a negative but an important contribution to the research model.

The research project will also utilize purposive samples. Purposive samples select people or groups who have an awareness of the situation and meet specific criteria important to the research project.\textsuperscript{108} Patton explains that purposeful sampling provides information-rich data that offer depth to a project.\textsuperscript{109} In addition, Palinkas et al. adds that “participants who meet or exceed a specific criterion or criteria possess intimate (or, at the very least, greater) knowledge of the phenomenon of interest by virtue of their experience, making them information-rich cases.”\textsuperscript{110}

The selection process, as with any scientific process, must foster transparency, consistency, and meeting specific criteria if the sample is to be reflective and representative of the targeted community. It will be extremely important that the participants be comfortable to share their experiences or criticize church leaders. Some may fear stigmatization or ostracization by their church community for any criticism of a leader, according to Curtis Johnson.\textsuperscript{111}

For this study, the participating churches are categorized as African American Christian Churches with a membership that ranges from 50 – 200 members in weekly attendance, and be

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Sensing, 83.
\textsuperscript{109} Michael Patton, \textit{Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods} (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2015), 264.
\textsuperscript{110} Lawrence A. Palinkas, Sarah M. Horwitz, Carla A. Green, Jennifer P. Wisdom, Naihua Duan, and Kimberly Hoagwood, "Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research," \textit{Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research} 42, no. 5 (2015): 533.
\textsuperscript{111} Curtis Johnson, “The Struggle for Leadership in the African American Church,” DMin diss., (Liberty University, 2019).
\end{flushleft}
located in Baltimore, Maryland.112 This community of churches is dynamic due to the wide range of social and systemic differences, such as economic and relational differences. Baltimore City churches are a mixture of denominations such as: African American Episcopal (AME), Southern Baptist, American Baptist, Presbyterians, Church of God (COG), Assembly of God (AOG), Church of God in Christ (COGIC), Nondenominational or Independent churches among other groups. The churches in the city are also monoracial, biracial, multiracial, multiethnic, and multigenerational as it relates to their population. Other demographic differences like age, experience, and family origin will allow for a wider swath of information. The sample group will be from individuals who attend churches that are predominately African American and led by African American Pastors.

In order to reach the purposive sample, the researcher's email and contact information was provided to pastors who were willing to participate. Pastors and other ministry staff members were emailed the participant survey information, complete with instructions about the research project and participant consent form. The researcher handled the email distribution to qualifying churches and leaders.

**Location**

The original plan for the interviews, focus groups, and training sessions were to be conducted at Life Changing Ministries. Life Changing Ministries is a church located in Southwest Baltimore City. Life Changing Ministries was granted permission to utilize the facility through the Executive Pastor. The Church permitted the use of the fellowship hall along with classrooms as needed. However, due to Covid-19, many planned in-person gatherings were required to be rescheduled in light of local, state, and federal guidelines for gathering. While

112 Sensing, 84.
some of the participants were willing to participate at Life Changing Ministries, others felt more comfortable participating by remote access.

The training seminar was held on January 9, 2021, by way of streaming service. The conference was conducted by way of Zoom Video Conferencing. The participants attended the seminar and were able to respond to the information that was presented by way of open discussion.

Once IRB approval was granted, the researcher scheduled focus groups and interviews. On February 19 - 21, 2021, the focus groups meet and the researcher also conducted private interviews. The focus group meetings were conducted by way of Zoom, and the subsequent interviews were also conducted by way of Zoom Video Conferencing.

Table 1: Timelines and Durations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Length of Activity</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 9, 2021</td>
<td>10:30 – 12:30</td>
<td>Conflict Resolution Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 19-20, 2021</td>
<td>Less than 3 minutes</td>
<td>Online Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 19, 2021</td>
<td>11:30 -1:15</td>
<td>Focus Group 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 19, 2021</td>
<td>2 pm – 4 pm</td>
<td>Personal Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 20, 2021</td>
<td>12 – 1:15 pm</td>
<td>Focus Group 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 20-21, 2021</td>
<td>1:45 – 3:30</td>
<td>Personal Interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ethical Consideration**

With all research that involves human subjects the researcher needs to be attentive to the ethical manner in which the research is executed.\(^{113}\) Fowler suggests that the researcher should

make sure that those who are being interviewed should not suffer adversely as a result of their participation. The ethical considerations of this study were necessitated using human subjects. As a consideration and requirement for the type of research, strict adherence to ethics must be practiced. Ethics in research ensures that no harm comes to those that have participated in the project, as well as validates the nature of the study.

The researcher bears the responsibility of presenting the research to respondents and provide safety to those who will participate in the project. The researcher needs to always provide full and accurate information about the project; therefore, the researcher must not be deceptive, misleading, or inaccurate. Lastly, the researcher should never allow the participant to feel pressured to do anything that may place the respondent in a harmful environment or situation that may produce a lack of safety.

The study operated under voluntary participation, which allowed the participants to engage honestly and without fear of retaliation. Each participant was required to fill out an informed consent form that allowed the individuals to participate in this free choice exercise, free from pressure, coercion, or manipulation. It is important that confidentiality as well as protection be provided to all who participate in this research project. As a part of the process of full disclosure the researcher will provide clarity as to how the participants information will be used. The basis of this principle is based in the second great commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:31 NKJV)." As a participant in the study, informed consent

114 Ibid.
115 Ibid., 144.
116 Sensing, Qualitative Research, 34.
allows the participants to grant the researcher permission to use their words, insights, and actions as a part of the research.\textsuperscript{118}

The benefit to the respondent is purely intrinsic as it will provide an internal reward of contributing to a worthwhile effort.\textsuperscript{119} There was no promise of enrichment, greater opportunity, or external reward for participation. The researcher clearly presented to each participant that they have the right to leave the project at any time. This research project was approved through Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB review is designed to protect the researcher, subjects, and the institution.\textsuperscript{120}

\textbf{Collection of Data}

The study will use three primary methods to collect data which will be personal interviews, focus groups, and electronic surveys. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the interviews and focus groups will be conducted by way of Zoom, a video conference and online chat program. Using Zoom, the interviews and focus groups will be recorded, reviewed, and transcribed via software. Where interviews or focus groups can be held in person, the interviews will be recorded and transcribed.

\textbf{Focus Group and Personal Interviews}

The questions that will be administered will be open-ended so that the respondents in both the focus group and the personal interview can answer freely. The focus group interview allows for interaction and engagement between the participants. As the group conversation develops, it will provide for a richer conversation. Sensing suggests that “the synergy of the

\textsuperscript{118} Sensing, \textit{Qualitative Research}, 34.
\textsuperscript{119} Fowler, \textit{Survey Research}, 143.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
group will provide richer data than if each person had been interviewed separately.”¹²¹ The reasoning for this approach is that it allows for the participants to provide unanticipated answers, reveal their real views, and it allows for expansive conversation beyond the closed questions of a survey.¹²²

**Interview and Focus Groups**

The focus group interview agenda will begin with prayer, introductions, and the explanation and purpose of the group. The group will consist of a mixture of African American Senior pastors, Associate ministers, Deacons, ministry staff, and others who serve in the church. There will be two focus groups and they will consist of 4-12 members. The researcher will ask questions and moderate the discussion to maintain a flow of the conversation. The researcher will also act as the notetaker. The following questions will be presented to the focus group:

**Exploration**

1. When you hear the word conflict, what does it mean to you?
2. Can you give an example of Conflict in the Church?
3. What thoughts, feelings, and associations come to mind when you think about conflict within leadership teams in African American churches?
4. Do you think there is conflict between Pastors and ministry staff members?
5. Do you believe that life experience can impact the way we interact with leaders? – education and life experience, victimization, generational differences, lack of community, good or bad individualism, entitlement

¹²¹ Sensing, Qualitative Research, 119.
¹²² Fowler, Survey Research, 87.
Follow-up

1. How do you think churches should handle conflict?
2. What would you do to manage conflict between church leaders?
3. Can you add anything to the conversation?

Exit Questions

1. Is there anything that you would like to add to the conversation?

During the question and answer, the researcher will be taking notes.

Electronic Survey

The electronic survey link will be sent by email to the participants once they have reviewed the informed consent and agreed to participate in the research project. The method that will be used to collect this information will be a survey engine called Survey Monkey. The questions within this survey are meant to acquire statistical analysis about those who serve in the church. The categories and questions are meant to evaluate position, involvement, issues with Senior leaders, and different issues of conflict. The advantage of electronic or computer assisted collection is the ease of input and the evaluation of the data collected. The benefit of the survey is to gather information about the group in question. The answers to these questions will be kept on the server and the confidentiality of the participants will be maintained. (The questions will be provided in the Appendices).

Analysis of Data

Swinton and Mowat define analysis as “the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the complicated mass of qualitative data that the researcher generates during the

---

123 Ibid., 108.
124 Sensing, Qualitative Research, 115.
The responsibility of the researcher will be to find areas of agreement or convergence as well as areas of disagreement. The information that will be analyzed will be data such as positions, gender, longevity, cultural influence, family nurture, experience, and sources of conflict within the church. The chosen tools will be necessary in order to understand the issues that lead to conflict within the African American church leadership teams.

There are three processes utilized to analyze data. The first system that will be utilized to analyze the data received will be Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey is an online survey software that allows researchers to collect and gather data from random users or targeted groups. Within the software, there is data collection and analysis tools that allow the researcher to measure responses and create customizable charts. The second will be to manually analyze the focus group data which will be compiled through the questions and answer sessions. Lastly, the researcher will evaluate the data created from personal interviews with individuals who have participated in the aforementioned devices.

In order to evaluate and understand the data that is produced during personal interviews and focus groups, the researcher will utilize a transcription service to translate voice data. Once the data is transcribed, the researcher will employ Atlas.ti to code data for retrieval during analysis. The coding of data will allow for the researcher to take the data and make it applicable to the subject. Sensing suggests “collecting and identifying themes is the primary way researchers process and analyze data.”

Charts and graphs will be utilized to illustrate the results from data collected.

---


126 Sensing, Qualitative Research, 202.
Addressing the Slippages

Slippages can occur as a result of methodological approaches to interpreting data. The objective is to interpret the information as it is received from subjects and asking specific follow-up questions that will bring clarity to the responses. Lisa Chan et al. suggests “The standardization of the systematic review process maximizes the objectivity of the review and limits many of the researchers’ biases from affecting the results.”\(^{127}\) The difficulty is that the interpretation of the outcome of a meta-analysis may vary, even if the protocols are well developed. Variation within the data can lead to discordant conclusions and recommendations, even if the methodology may be objective, subjectivity is inherent in the process. Therefore, slippages will also be addressed by looking for patterns and contrasts within the data that has been received throughout the research process.\(^{128}\)

Interpreting Silences

In order to address the silences or the unstated information or data. While the obvious and well-presented information is vital to the research process, it is the unspoken information that may invariably shape the narrative. Sensing suggests that the gaps in the story may be the most significant aspects of the narrative.\(^{129}\) Lisa Mazzei suggests that there are multiple silences such as polite silences, privilege silence, intentional silences, unintelligible silences, and veiled silences.\(^{130}\) The researcher will need to observe the varied silences, especially silences where the

---


\(^{128}\) Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 200.

\(^{129}\) Ibid.

subject may want to avoid answering or is masking an answer through avoidance. Therefore, the researcher will not only seek to interpret the knowable and visible data that is presented but will understand the underlying and understated information that is not made available.

**Implementation of the Intervention**

For this study, the project focused on four churches that are located in Baltimore, MD. The initial observation of the researcher is the response from the participants that responded and participated in the study. Of the churches participating in the study, two of the churches were led by female lead pastors, and the other two were led by male lead pastors.

The leadership style of each church is Single-Elder rule. Paige Patterson describes single-elder rule as “a congregational church led by a single elder/pastor, primary leadership in all decisions and doctrinal determinations is vested in a single leader.” Malphurs adds “the congregation has no power, not even when it acts corporately…the pastor has individual power over all individuals in the church but not corporate power over the church.” Each church maintains a group of associate ministers, deacons, administrative staff, and volunteers.

All four of the churches that participated in this study are extremely active in their communities and provide care and resources to members of their church and their respective communities. The worship styles of the churches that participated in this project are considered to be low church, or a type of worship that does not follow a certain liturgical pattern, developed ritual, ceremony, or vestments.

---


Participating Churches

Church A is led by a male pastor who started the church with his wife in the city of Baltimore. The church's population is approximately 130 members and the church has approximately 15-20 staff members. The church is approximately 20 years old and it is congregation is predominately African-American. The members of the church vary in age.

Church B is led by a female pastor who started the church over 25 years ago with her husband in the city of Baltimore. The church’s population is approximately 80-100 persons and the church staff is approximately 8-10 persons. The church membership varies in age.

Church C is led by a female pastor who started the ministry in Baltimore with her husband over 12 years ago. The church is approximately 40–50 members and the leadership team consist of approximately 8-10 persons. This church is predominately African American with a congregation that varies in age.

Church D is led by a male pastor who started the church with his wife over 13 years ago. The church is predominately African American and its membership is about 80–100 persons. The leadership team is approximately 12 persons. This church is located in Baltimore City.

All four churches participated in research project. Church D did not identify church staff participants, however the Lead Pastor did participate in the online survey. Church A fully participated in the training for conflict management. Churches B and C were not available for conflict training session.

The training session was made available through Zoom because of covid-19 restrictions and was attended by ministry staff and senior leaders. The session lasted approximately 45 minutes with a question-and-answer period that lasted for approximately 20 minutes. The training program was based upon Ken Sande’s *The Peace Maker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving*
*Personal Conflict* along with a compilation of information gathered by the presenter in reference to developing effective communication.

There were over 13 participants who were very engaged, but due to training environment, I was unable to observe the body language or facial discomfort. The one observation that the researcher was able to observe was that the participants were very engaged in the topic and the responses were lively. One participant stated, “I wish I had learned this years ago it may have helped me in many of my relationships.” Based on the responses, it appeared that the training session was well received.

During the training session, it was extremely difficult to identify individuals who may have struggled with the concepts that were provided as resources for conflict resolution. As a result, there were not many significant responses that would have impacted the research from the training session. An outline of the presentation is available in the appendices.

**Focus Group**

The focus group participants were Senior Pastors, Associate Ministers, and deacons who were already acquainted with one another. The group session was held on Zoom over two days. The choice of this medium of communication was in light of Covid-19 restrictions and the comfort of the participants. Participants were allowed to show their faces or use avatars for their own comfort but need to identify themselves while they were talking. The individuals were open in their dialogue sharing their respective experiences with any anxiety or fear. The researcher would need to limit the participant from time to time. Each participant was given space to answer the questions in a roundtable method. This method was utilized in order to maintain participation. However, midway through the focus group, the comfort level of the group was evident and they began to share openly and to interact with one another.
Survey

The online survey link was sent by emails which were provided by the Pastors of the four participating churches. The individuals who agreed to participate in the interview process were required to submit a consent form. Once the consent forms were completed and received the link was sent to the survey site. The survey consisted of thirteen multiple choice questions which consisted of the following: questions 1-3 focus primarily on the ministry function and experience of the participant, questions 4-7 address the issues of conflict that may or may not have been experienced, questions 8-11 address how the participant may handle conflict within the context of the Church or with a church leader, and questions 12-13 address conflict training and response.

As the group members became more comfortable with the dialogue, each person exhibited more transparency, which allowed for the researcher to discover areas of conflict, as well as the varying sources of conflict with each participant. The silences that were experienced generally centered around the issues of conflict with a pastor. The participants were extremely cautious about public conversations in reference to their negative interactions with Pastoral leaders.

The personal interviews were extremely candid and focused. The candidates who participated in the focus group also made themselves available for private interviews. The interviews did not reveal any new information, except in two cases. The participants were extremely consistent about the challenges and issues that they have experienced as leaders in the African American church. The interviews were conducted by Zoom at designated times that were chosen by the participants. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and provided the participant the latitude to discuss freely without any rebuttal or interruption from the
researcher. During the personal interview, the exploration of conflict resolution strategies was discussed and presented to the participant.

**Details of Study**

**Instrumentation**

The instrumentation that will be utilized is important to the researcher and the outcome of the project. The instrumentation increases the quality of the findings. The instrumentation will be both open-ended and closed-ended. The objective of employing both avenues of inquiry is that it allows the interviewees to answer both structured responses and to reveal their own perspectives with little to no limitation.\(^{134}\)

The questions sought to discover the roles, responsibilities, and causes of conflict within the African American Church. Questions 1-3 focus primarily on the ministry function and experience of the participant. Questions 4-7 address the issues of conflict that may or may not have been experienced. Questions 8-11 address how the participant may handle conflict within the context of the Church or with a church leader.

**Focus Group Questions**

The personal interview will be the follow-up to the focus group conversation. Interviews yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge.\(^{135}\) The research instrument that will be relied upon will be the interview process. The interview will allow people to describe their "situations and put words to their interior lives,

---

\(^{134}\) Ronald J. Chenail, "Interviewing the investigator: Strategies for addressing instrumentation and researcher bias concerns in qualitative research." *Qualitative Report* 16, no. 1 (2011): 255.

\(^{135}\) Sensing, 18.
personal feelings, opinions, and experiences that otherwise are not available to the researcher by observation."¹³⁶

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter will focus on the evaluation of the research. It will analyze the collection of the data from the interviews, focus groups, and surveys. This chapter will also go on to provide an analysis of said data and discuss the implications of the research. The objective of the researcher is to discover the links between data collected through interviews and surveys. It is ultimately through the intersection of data and process that the normal causes of conflict can be addressed and overcome.

Participants

The churches that participated in the research project understood that this project the objectives of this study. During the process of communicating with Pastors in Baltimore, Maryland it was important to communicate with leaders who were willing to participate. The challenge was coordinating a time to communicate with all participants, but once the times were set, then we could proceed. The four churches that were involved in the research project are African American churches in the Baltimore City. These same churches are led by African American Pastors.

Table 2: Participating Church Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Congregation Size</th>
<th>Leadership Style</th>
<th>Worship Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHURCH A</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>100 - 130</td>
<td>Elder Rule</td>
<td>Low Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHURCH B</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>80-100</td>
<td>Elder Rule</td>
<td>Low Church</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were a total of nineteen (19) participants in the survey. The participants in the survey are as follows:

**Table 3: The Description of the Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions/ Function</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Percentage % of Participants</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Pastor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder/Associate Minister</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deacon</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay Leader</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 19 participants, four (21%) participants were Senior Pastors, or the Lead Pastor in their respective churches, eight (37%) participants were Associate Pastors or Associate Ministers, seven (42%) were Deacons in the churches they attend. There were no respondents who consider themselves staff, lay leaders, or volunteer staff. The survey took approximately 2
minutes to complete and it provided necessary information such as the types of conflict that are experienced in the African American church.

Table 4: Focus and Interview Participants and their Pseudonyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Church Position</th>
<th>Approximate Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandra A</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>45 - 55</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred B</td>
<td>Deacon</td>
<td>45 - 55</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda B</td>
<td>Deacon</td>
<td>55 - 65</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose K</td>
<td>Deacon</td>
<td>29 - 35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy K</td>
<td>Deacon</td>
<td>30 - 40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda F</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>45 - 55</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minister</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron L</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>65 - 75</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minister</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawn O</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>30 - 40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minister</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger K</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>35 - 45</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minister</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl E</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>64 - 74</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis K</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>60 - 70</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan L</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>45 - 55</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rayna</td>
<td>Deacon</td>
<td>35 - 45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further analysis of those that participated in the focus group and personal interview shows that there were nine women (69%) who responded to the invitation in contrast to the four men (30%). Again, this is a factor that could be because of poor communication by pastors of the churches, timing of the events, or the willingness to participate in the study. The age range for the participants was approximately 30-75.

*Chart 1: Participant Length of Service*

The length of service in the varying churches is important. Tenure of service is another important factor to observe when it comes to conflict within a leadership team. As shown in the graph below the of the 19 respondents, the four Pastors have served in their respective churches a minimum of 10 years. Eight respondents have served as associate ministers for one year to at least 15 years, and those who responded as deacons for a minimum of four years.
Survey Results

The results of the data provided by the participants was clear that conflict exists within the church. Every participant in the research all stated that there is conflict within the leadership teams of their respective local churches. There was cohesion as to the facts of what they view as conflict in the local church; however, there were very few surveyed that said they have conflict with Senior Leader or Pastor. Those who were surveyed all suggested that they have great working relationships with their pastor and the pastors all suggested that they have good working relationships with those who work with them in ministry.

![Conflict Between Pastors and Staff](image)

*Chart 2: Conflict Between Pastors and Staff*

In the preceding chart, 18 of the 19 respondents stated that they have good working relationships with their Senior Pastor, and only one did not respond. The reason for the lack of response is unknown but it could suggest that the participant was unwilling to answer. But the overwhelming response is that pastors and staff members enjoy a positive working relationship.
Survey respondents also revealed the many areas or sources of conflict within ministry teams. In the survey conflict was described as “a clash between individuals arising out of a difference in thought processes, attitudes, understanding, interests, requirements and even sometimes perceptions.” When asked to rank the sources of conflict, respondents overwhelmingly stated that poor communication, personality differences, and lack of accountability were among the top three issues. Below are the overall responses.

**Chart 3: Reasons for Conflict**

In the bar graph above, there are a number of variables that contribute to conflict. The 19 participants, both men and women, had the opportunity to choose the issues that they believed were the sources of conflict. The number one issue that respondents recognized was poor communication. Seventy Eight percent (78%) of the respondents agreed that poor communication was a significant issue when it comes to conflict, while issues like incentive responses, prejudice, lack of value, and harsh feedback rank at the bottom at five percent (5%). What is most interesting is that personality differences (58%) appear to be an issue to 11 of the
respondents. Within organizations, personality differences appear to be an issue that over half of the respondents agree can cause conflict in a church.

When asked “Do you avoid conflict?” A surprising number of respondents said no. Eight of the 19 or 42 percent of those surveyed said that they do not avoid conflict, which is extremely surprising in light of biblical teaching to address conflict. What may be suggested at this point is that in the average African American church conflict may be a normal occurrence. In contrast, we are also able to see that the majority of respondents (58%) attempt to avoid conflict.

![Chart 4: Do you Avoid Conflict?](image)

The question that lies at the center of the study is “Has conflict stopped a project at the church where you serve?” This question may prove to be the most important in the survey because it shows the damage and the impact of unresolved, unaddressed, or mismanaged conflict.
Chart 5: Has Conflict stopped a Project

All 19 participants of the survey answered this question and the results are interesting. Eleven of the respondents agreed that conflict has stopped a project in the church; eight clearly responded that conflict did not impact the work of the church. The latter of the two responses is important because it does show that churches know how to move around conflict or at least have learned how to manage conflict especially in light of the church's overall mission and purpose. However, the majority of respondents still show that conflict can hinder the work of the church.
The bar chart above shows the impact of conflict in an African American church. The participant in the survey were asked “Have you ever left a church or ministry position because of internal conflict?” The answers to this question were much different than anticipated. The survey shows that when faced with conflict in the church, 14 (75%) respondents left their positions, whereas only five (25%) of the respondents stayed in their positions. The response to this survey demonstrates that the majority of leaders are willing to endure conflict for the benefit of the church or ministry.

In the survey, the participants were asked if they were taught how to manage conflict? This question was meant to get a simplistic picture of whether the individuals in the study had been taught how to address or manage conflict. The chart below shows the outcome of the question:
Have you been taught how to manage conflict?

The results show that the majority of participants (79%) have been taught how to handle conflict. Approximately 21% of the participants in the survey acknowledge that they have not been involved in any training or at least have not participated in any type of conflict resolution training. The last question offers a look into the way African American churches prepare and train their teams and members how to handle conflict. The question was asked “Does your church teach, train, or prepare staff to manage conflict?” The responses to the questions are as follows.
The bar chart illustrates that of the 19 participants and of the four churches that participated in the survey 74% of those who responded stated that their church does actively have training and preparation on how to address conflict and manage conflict. Only 26% state that their church does not offer training on addressing conflict. Effective conflict resolution training will aid those who are serving in the church to manage difficult moments as Senior Pastor and their staff work through very difficult issues.

Focus Groups

The focus group discussions' goal is to provide a forum to openly discuss the topic of conflict within the African American Church. The focus group will allow the mutual exchange

of ideas about conflict and how we have developed methods of managing conflict from community and culture. The group interaction with the topic will aid the researcher in gathering data.\textsuperscript{138} The focus group questions will be addressed in three sections the exploration, follow-up, and exit.

The focus group and interviews consisted of thirteen African American church leaders who serve in a variety of roles within the participating churches. During the focus groups, there were a number of themes that arose during the dialogue: understanding conflict, learned behavior, direct pastoral conflict, indirect pastoral conflict, negative responses to conflict, and conflict resolution. The following participant responses grant us an understanding of the nature and impact of conflict within the African American church. The questions for the sessions were presented and the respondents shared their thoughts as they engaged one another. Once the focus groups ended, those who were willing to participate in the interviews had the opportunity to continue the discussions in private.

Table 5: Explanations of themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Exemplar Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Conflict</td>
<td>The difference of opinion, practice, behavior, or attitude that can produce a zero-sum situation.</td>
<td>When I think of conflict, obviously, it's a difference of opinion, difference of perspective, difference of values, difference of priority between either two individuals or two organizations or two</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 3.
nations. I think of conflict that way, we go through that all the time. We hear about that on the news all the time. You know, but in the church, you think of conflict, it could be you know, between two to ushers, you know, or two deacons? You know, or two people in the music ministry, they have a difference of opinion on how to do something or how not to do something.

**Conflict Management is learned behavior.**

Conflict management is learned from nurture and culture. I think that the handling conflict at home for me, was shutting down. You know, acting like it didn't happen, and things like that, not talking about it. And just hoping, you know if we didn't talk about it, it would pass. But then those things that weren't talked about … eventually, as growing up and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Direct pastoral conflict.</strong></th>
<th>Direct conflict is to be described as conflict between a pastor and staff or two individuals or groups are engaged in oppositional behavior.</th>
<th>“Usually, when there is that second tier, they have a disagreement with the pastor and not really sure how to bring resolution because of positions.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect personal conflict.</strong></td>
<td>Conflict is not directed at the pastor but at their choices, decisions, and appointed personnel.</td>
<td>“One of the conflict issues that I have seen is when there is a leader in place, and has that title and someone or others think that that leaders shouldn't be in that position”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative responses to church conflict between pastor and staff members.</strong></td>
<td>Negative response to conflict between leaders in the church.</td>
<td>I left a church when I was mistreated by church leaders and the pastor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict that impacted vision and mission.</strong></td>
<td>Conflict response that impacted vision and mission of the ministry or church.</td>
<td>Conflict between the Senior Pastors and leaders can cause division. A division that could</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding Conflict

In order to establish the conversation and proceed in an effective dialogue with the participants, the researcher asked the question: “When you hear the word conflict, what does it mean to you?” The responses to this question were varied. While each respondent answered differently, they shared similar thoughts.

Sandra A shared: “When I hear the word conflict, the first word that comes to my mind is a disagreement that has difficulty in resolution… So, I hear that there are at least two individuals involved with opposing thoughts. And there needs to be a resolution between them seeking a solution, but conflict is just at least two individuals with opposing ideas, thoughts or values.”

Rayna shared: “Unresolved disagreements morph into something else.”

Fred B: “Conflict is a situation where two individuals are in disagreement, and they haven't come up with a resolution.”

Brenda F: “When I hear the word conflict, I think of an unresolved problem or an issue and resolve the issue.”

Joan L: “When I hear the word conflict, I think of an argument between two people that has ensued and has gotten out of hand.”

Conflict occurs when groups are unable to find agreement or share the same values. The engagement in this group allowed people to share their opinions about conflict. The group further discussed the various sources of conflict that they have experienced. For the majority of those that were impacted by interpersonal conflict, the conflict discussed the most was between
individuals and not groups. All of the participants were extremely willing to discuss issues of conflict that had experienced while they have been serving in their leadership roles in their respective churches. Alexis K, pastor of Church B, states,

Well, for me in reference to conflict, it entails a diversity of aspects. Difference of opinions, postures, attitudes, facial expressions, but I have found that conflict if it is not managed, well can cause unnecessary division. Yes, and confusion. And so, conflict is the lack of meeting of the minds.

While there are no congregations regardless of ethnic or racial makeup that are void of conflict it is important to note that conflict can be disruptive. And can ultimately cause unnecessary confusion.

Conflict Management is Learned Behavior

When the participants were asked “How did you manage conflict while growing up?” The responses were varied. None of the respondents signaled that they were taught how to manage conflict, but rather it was learned through family interactions. Of the 13 participants in the focus group, everyone agreed that they learned how to manage or not manage conflict through family engagements. Three (23%) stated that they were not taught how to manage conflict, and the remaining 10 (77%) were taught to address conflict.

Table 6: Description of learned conflict behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>How did you learn?</th>
<th>What did you learn?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandra A</td>
<td>Family/Community</td>
<td>Address/Confront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred B</td>
<td>Family/Community</td>
<td>Address/Confront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda B</td>
<td>Family/Community</td>
<td>Address/Confront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose K</td>
<td>Family/Community</td>
<td>Address/Confront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy K</td>
<td>Family/Community</td>
<td>Avoid/Suppress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda F</td>
<td>Family/Community</td>
<td>Avoid/Suppress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron L</td>
<td>Family/Community</td>
<td>Address/Confront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawn O</td>
<td>Family/Community</td>
<td>Avoid/Suppress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger K</td>
<td>Family/Community</td>
<td>Address/Confront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl E</td>
<td>Family/Community</td>
<td>Address/Confront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis K</td>
<td>Family/Community</td>
<td>Address/Confront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan L</td>
<td>Family/Community</td>
<td>Address/Confront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rayna</td>
<td>Family/Community</td>
<td>Address/Confront</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the four (23%), one of the respondents, Brenda F., stated:

I think that the handling conflict at home for me, was shutting down. You know, acting like it didn't happen, and things like that, not talking about it. And just hoping, you know if we didn't talk about it, it would pass. But then those things that weren't talked about …eventually, as growing up and things like that, it caused other things to happen.

For all of the participants in the focus group, unaddressed issues prove to be problematic in the future. While the majority of the participants in the study clearly stated that their conflict resolution strategies came from their nurture, they also understood that not all of their learning was positive but it did give them a framework by which to build upon.

Direct Pastoral Conflict

Of all the questions that were asked of the participants whether in survey, focus group, or private interviews there was minimal conversation about direct conflict with a Senior Pastor of an African American church. It would appear that the vast majority of ministry staff persons avoid the very issue of direct conflict. While there was mention of direct conflict with other staff members, very little mention was given to conflict with a senior pastor of an African American church. The closest comment to address this type of conflict is mentioned by Sandra A who
stated: “Usually, when there is that second tier, they have a disagreement with the pastor and not really sure how to bring resolution because of positions.” None of the participants rebutted or disagreed with this statement. Disagreements and issues with African American pastors appear to be a subject that is publicly viewed as difficult as a result of his or her position in the church.

Indirect Pastoral Conflict

After listening to interviews and focus group discussions, I discovered that there was an underlying coefficient—conflict with a subordinate that was appointed by the Senior Pastor. This conflict can be considered to be indirect pastoral conflict. Conflict that may not be outwardly displayed towards a leader but is demonstrated towards an instruction and or person that has been appointed by the Senior Pastor. A number of the respondents suggested that they all have good working relationships with the Senior Pastor or Lead Pastor but the conflict arise with his or her appointees, or his decisions.

Several participants (15) stated that they have experienced the rejection of a Pastor’s choice to execute a task or to lead an auxiliary. Sandra A explained, “There is usually conflict between staff members when a job or task that they feel could be done better or more efficiently by someone else. Even if the appointment was given by the Senior Pastor. I have witnessed team members refusing to follow Pastoral directions.” Joan agrees with this when she states, “Everyone wants to lead but no one wants to follow.” This rejection or conflict often delays a project or the fulfillment of a task. A number of respondents added that the challenge they have witnessed is that this type of conflict is not overtly witnessed by the Senior Pastor but is often experienced out of the view of the team.
Negative responses to church conflict between pastor and staff members

The African American Pastors and staff members who were interviewed in the research shared that they have experienced or witnessed negative interactions between Senior Pastors and staff members. The issues were described as uncomfortable and awkward. Most negative issues were resolved without significant damage or impact to either the leader, staff member, or ministry. Of the fifteen participants only four (23%) openly shared their personal experiences of conflict with a staff member or with a senior pastor. One of the four (7%) of the participants had a conflict issue which ended with their departure from the church.

Conflict that Impacted Vision and Mission

All the participants agreed that conflict can have an adverse impact to the vision and mission. There were a number of issues that could be identified (a) the emotional well-being of the leadership team, (b) ministry departures (c) division amongst the leadership team, and (d) division amongst the church. The participants discussed that when conflict is present, it does not encourage effective fellowship and it robs Christian leaders of the joy of ministry. They also shared that conflict could cause ministry departures by losing quality leaders who are unable to manage conflict. Lastly, the participants discussed how conflict can lead to division with the leaders, which can then spread throughout the church.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Research Purpose

The initial objective of this research project was to discover the sources of conflict between African American Pastors and their ministry teams that hinder vision and mission of the church. The intent was to understand the dynamics and the issues that can hinder the church from fulfilling the “Great Commission” and meeting the needs of the communities in which these churches have been called to serve. As has been previously stated, the African American church or the Black Church is an important institution, especially in urban centers. Today, the average Black church is still deeply embedded in meeting the basic needs of their communities which consist of more than just Christian fellowship but in meeting the natural needs of urban communities which encompass food, medicines, financial assistance, family support and social justice.
Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

In order to understand this the researcher, choose a small sample size of African American churches in Baltimore, MD. The research approach was first to provide a training session about conflict resolution with its target being African American churches in Baltimore. The subsequent task was to discover how the participants understood conflict and how they learned how to manage conflict, and how that conflict impacted the service in the African American church. The results of the study were both intriguing and necessary as we now understand the importance of conflict resolution training in the church. Of the four ministries and ministry teams that participated in the study it was important recognize the consistency of the issues throughout the varying churches. While the varying churches are located throughout the city of Baltimore their conflict issues were consistent especially amongst its leadership teams. Further, all of those who attended the training and those who participated in the study acknowledged the importance of developing and maintaining conflict resolution classes or instruction.

Many of the participants stated they had never attended or participated in any type of conflict resolution classes. The majority of their discovery and knowledge of their conflict resolution was the product of their nurture and not a structured process where they could experience some level of coaching and training which would allow them to manage difficult circumstances and issues that arise within the confines of the church.

In the average participant's nurture and home life, it appears that the majority learned conflict management through negative experiences. The difficulty with this phenomenon is that if the participant had developed bad techniques and habits when it comes to conflict it could have adverse effects on the way they manage conflict within all realms of social engagement. With
each participant, both men and women described that their experiences have impacted the way the process adverse moments even now.

While the intent of this was not to separate Senior Pastors from those whom they serve and work with, there were moments where the researcher could recognize the discernable differences between those who serve as staff members and those who lead local congregations. At times there were moments where lead pastors were very careful at how they explained a critical moment within their churches, and you could notice how those who serve on ministry staffs responded with care as to not trigger a response.

Impressive throughout the study was the deep and mutual respect that pastors had for their staff members and the compassion each staff member had for their respective pastors and churches. The one question that stood out was the survey question that asked about their relationship with staff and their pastor; all answered it was a good working relationship.

Throughout the study it was extremely clear that there was an attempt to avoid any negative expressions about Senior Pastors. This is an understood factor, especially in the African American church where the Senior Pastor is highly regarded and respected. In the African American church, the Pastor still merits a measure of respect regardless of the moral failures of some clergy.

The participants who serve as staff members also revealed that most of their conflict did not arise out of direct conflict with their Senior Pastor, but with fellow staff members and members of the church. The issue that seemed to be most prevalent relate to interpersonal conflict more than any other area of conflict. Interpersonal conflict has often been a consistent issue within local churches, an issue that has been addressed in a number of resources. Most conflict issues have more to do with personality and very little to do with substantive
disagreements. The areas of conflict that are most prevalent center more on power, control, or lack of power. Whereas in varying church arenas where issues such chair color, carpet color appear as issues it is apparent that more times than not that those individuals who are not graced to handle authority, communicate effectively, respect authority, or have not learned how to love biblically are usually candidates for experiencing conflict.

The other challenge may relate to the fact that if there is any conflict with the Senior Pastor it may be more related to indirect pastoral conflict. This is an important finding. Indirect pastoral conflict is conflict that is experienced by an adherent or expressed through emotions, attitudes, and behaviors that can and will impact the work of the ministry. Indirect pastoral conflict is best defined as conflict with a Senior or Lead Pastors decisions or choices that are not directed at the pastor by an adherent or staff member but are directed at his or her choices. Indirect conflict can be revealed through aggression, negative behavior, or an unhealthy disposition that could impact others within that person sphere of influence or social circles. The influence of a leader who has not handled conflict will invariably produce damage to the vision and mission of the local church.

Senior Pastors who participated in this study shared their experiences through the lens of leaders who have had to deal with subordinate conflict. While many of their examples were managed well, it is clear that the number of responses and historical experiences have encouraged them to manage conflict with a different measure of God’s grace. Not only have they learned how to pray more effectively, but they recognize the need to set in place conflict resolution strategies. One Pastor stated “in the military there is a book on how to handle every issue, including conflict…” The recognition by the Pastors that there is a very serious need for
teaching in the area of conflict resolution churches reveals they have experienced the issue of conflict.

As leaders, Senior Pastors and staff recognize the need to have better strategy and resources when it comes to conflict resolution. In this study, less than 80% of those surveyed has experienced conflict resolution as a training in his/her local church, which may prove to be a statement on the church as to its focus on biblical teaching. In the participants’ experience, conflict within the Black church has been detrimental to progress in our churches as well as in our communities.

Implications

Having a clearer picture of conflict within the African American church has afforded the researcher the opportunity to understand the need for developing conflict management resources for churches and ministry leaders, especially in urban centers. In reference to this study, the researchers offers the following implications for potential practices.

1. African American churches in urban centers need to conduct research and evaluation on the issues of conflict in their churches among the leadership of their church. This evaluation will aid them in training team members how to manage conflict within the congregation and between one another.

2. African American churches need to develop a curriculum that may focus more on the needs of African Americans in urban centers who need more training on how to manage conflict. These courses should be focused and targeted so that the participants can learn and apply so that the local body can be productive.
3. African American churches may need to develop community focus groups where families in the community can benefit from conflict resolution strategies. One of the findings of this research is that so many African American families are not able to teach their children how to manage conflict which allows for the level of verbal violence that urban centers experience.

Applications

Based on the findings of this study, I recommend the following:

1. African American church leaders need to pursue personal development when it comes to conflict resolution. By purchasing books and other material which may aid them in their personal development.

2. African American church leaders need to do a better job of communicating with Senior leadership about the issues they may be experiencing.

3. African American church leaders need to take more time to pray and ask the Lord for strength when it comes to managing conflict.

4. African American church leaders need to evaluate their own internal issues so that they display the love of God regardless of the issue.

5. African American church leaders need to maintain their own emotional health if they are going to lead effectively.

Research Limitations

The research study was limited to African American church leaders within Baltimore City, MD. The study did not include every African American church leader in every urban center in the United States. Findings and conclusions should not be applied to all African American church leaders.
Further Research

In reference to this study, and its analysis, findings, and conclusions, I offer the following suggestions for further research:

1. Conduct a study to understand and analyze the impact of African American families who live in urban centers who have not been exposed to conflict resolution.

2. Conduct a study on the feasibility of teaching and or offering conflict resolution as a course option for elementary, middle, and high school students.

3. Conduct a study on inter-organizational conflict between churches of differing ethnicities.

4. Conduct a study on the impact of family nurture on African American Christian leaders.

5. Conduct a study to understand conflict between Senior Pastors and staff members of churches that have 1000 or members.

6. Conduct a study to understand conflict between Senior Pastors and staff in Suburban churches with a congregational majority of African Americans.

7. Conduct a study to understand whether there is a difference in conflict management relative to the gender of the Senior Pastor.

Recommended Resources for Resolving Conflict

1. Developing a mentoring program with mature or more experienced Pastoral leaders.
2. Require staff members to read and review books that emphasize the importance of conflict resolution.
Bibliography


Chenail, Ronald J. "Interviewing the investigator: Strategies for addressing instrumentation and researcher bias concerns in qualitative research." *Qualitative Report* 16, no. 1 (2011): 255.


Phillips, Calvin L. "Creating a Climate for Consensus," Leaven 9, no. 4. 
https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1577&context=leaven.


https://doi.org/10.1177/1542305018822959.


Appendix A

Communication and Conflict Training

Different Types of Conflict

1. **Intrapersonal Conflict.** Intrapersonal is conflict within an individual. The experience takes place in a person’s mind. It is conflict with our self-desires versus what God desires of us.

2. **Interpersonal Conflict.** It refers to a conflict between two individuals. This occurs typically due to how people are different from one another. These are the conflicts on personal grounds, such as between church members, staff, and leadership.

3. **Intragroup Conflict.** It refers to conflict among members of a group or between two or more subgroups within a group in connection with its goals, tasks, procedures, and so on. Such a conflict may also occur as a result of incompatibilities or disagreements between some or all the members of a group and its leader(s).

4. **Intergroup Conflict.** It refers to conflict between two or more groups within an organization. Conflict between line and staff, production and marketing, and headquarters and field staffs are examples of this type of conflict.

How to manage conflict?

Conflict is a natural event that happens between two or more people who have a different opinion or ideas. Handling conflict is necessary to fulfill ministries and life.

1. **Glorify God – Philippians 4:2-9**

   Instead of focusing on our own need to be right, rejoice in the Lord and seek to bring him glory by maintaining a loving, forgiving, and merciful attitude.

   Ask yourself “How does this glorify God?”

2. **Get the Log out of your Eye. – Matthew 7:3-5**

   Instead of blaming others for a conflict or resist correction – We must accept responsibility for our contribution to the problem.

   Whether you contributed 100% or 90% to the problem; own it. Take responsibility for any action that you may have contributed.

3. **Gently Restore. – Proverbs 19:11, Matthew 5:24**

   Instead of pretending that conflict doesn’t exist or talking about others behind their backs – We must seek to restore them.
We will overlook minor issues or talk with the person and seek to restore them rather than condemn them.

When we have an extended issue that can’t be resolved in private, we can get others involved to settle the issue in a Christ-like manner. Matthew 18:15-16

The goal is to restore a brother or sister back to their rightful place in your life.

4. **Go and be reconciled. Matthew 5:23-24, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19**

Instead of letting relationships die and wither, we should actively pursue peace and reconciliation.

Reconciliation is the process by which we bring separated parties together to a position of agreement.

**How to have winning team communication?**

Communication is to make thoughts, feelings, intentions, and understandings known to another person. Proper communication means that someone learns, receives, and understands what is being said can be utilized or effectively processed.

1. **Communication**

   Communication must be effective, purposeful, and clean. Let your speech always be gracious and seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. Col 4:16

   a. Watch your words
   b. Watch your tone
   c. Watch your expression
   d. Watch your posture

2. **Listen attentively to what is being said.**

   My dear brothers and sisters take note of this - Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

   **How to listen well:**

   a. Focus on the one who is speaking
   b. Withhold the urge to interrupt, while someone else is speaking.
   c. Make eye contact if possible
   d. Body language is important when listening
   e. Take mental or physical notes in order to remember what is being said.
3. **Be aware of filters.**

Filters are words, postures, and facial expressions. They can trigger emotions that you may be unaware of.

a. Filters are experiences or interpretations that process what is being heard, or information being sent.
b. The sender must be aware of filters, or the experiences of the hearer.
c. The receiver must be aware of their own filters.

4. **Ask questions when you don’t understand?**

As the listener we must always be clear to what we have heard. Never be afraid to ask questions when you don’t understand, or because you need clarity. My third-grade teacher once said, “The dumbest question is the one you don’t ask.”

**Reasons to ask questions:**

a. Clarity
b. Order of responsibility or response
c. Demonstrates you were listening
d. Reaffirms the objective of the communication.

5. **Rehearse what you have heard.**

While this sounds redundant, it creates clarity. There are some people who tend to repeat but reassure them that you just want clarity.

a. a. Review the instructions or the requests
b. b. Thank the speaker for taking the time
c. c. Let them know the task, actions, or adjustments will be handled.

**Twelve Common Mistakes made in Communication (Prov.15:1)**

1. An assumption of equal information.
2. Incomplete or disconnected thoughts.
3. Lack of repetition.
4. Misunderstanding of context which can lead to deception.
5. The use of slang or phrases that are unfamiliar
6. Language barriers
7. Attempting to communicate in a threatening or a stressful environment.
8. Lack of patience to listen to what is being said by others.
9. Attempting to communicate at the wrong time.

10. The tone of your communication. Sounding condescending or aggressive can frustrate the hearer.

11. Insensitivity to the emotional state of the hearer. They may have had news delivered or be dealing with other issues or be dealing with other issues that are causing them not to hear effectively.

12. Not listening completely, before you are ready to interrupt. Hear the whole thought before answering.

**How to have effective communication:**

1. **Preparation**
   Preparation is a must. Do you best not to lose your temper by prepare what you will discuss in advance. Proverbs 17:27

2. **Greeting**
   Be sure to introduce the subject or issue of concern as to defuse a threat or intimidating environment.

3. **Information**
   Be sure to have accurate, information that is firsthand. Never use secondhand information.

4. **Explanation**
   Simple and specific presentation of information without anxiety, deception, or manipulation

5. **Avoid Deviation**
   Do not allow new things to emerge that are not a part of the initial conversation. Stay on topic and do not deviate.

6. **Feedback**
   Allow the person to rehearse what you have shared. Give them space to explain what they understood.

7. **Rehearse**
   Don’t allow frustration if the person does not understand. Be patient and explain again until there is comprehension.

8. **Edify**
   Once there is clarity to our communication, affirm them and display pleasure so that this builds in the future.
Appendix B

Online Questionnaire/Survey:

1. What is your position at your Church?
   a. Senior Pastor or Lead Pastor
   b. Associate Pastor or Associate Minister
   c. Deacon
   d. Administration
   e. Volunteer Staff

2. How long have you been serving in your current position?
   a. 1-3 years
   b. 4-5 years
   c. 6-10 years
   d. 11-14 years
   e. 15 or more

3. Are you full-time, part-time, or volunteer?
   a. Full time
   b. Part-time
   c. Volunteer
4. Do you have a good working relationship with the Senior Pastor or with the ministry staff?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. Do you agree that conflict is defined as a clash between individuals arising out of a difference in thought processes, attitudes, understanding, interests, requirements, and sometimes perceptions?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not sure

6. Have you ever encountered conflict while serving in the Church?
   a. Yes
   b. No (skip to question 8)

7. What was the reason for the conflict? Check all that apply.
   a. Poor communication
   b. Clash of values
   c. Lack of role clarity
   d. Lack of accountability
   e. Lack of honesty
f. Poor leadership

g. Lack of Value

h. Personality differences

i. Lack of mission clarity

j. Fear of failure

k. Missed deadlines

l. Personal or private issues

m. Feeling unappreciated

n. Power Struggles

o. Prejudice

p. Dissatisfaction with responsibility

q. Harsh feedback

r. Insensitive responses

8. Do you avoid conflict?

a. Yes

b. No

9. Do you look to resolve conflict?

a. Yes
b. No

10. Has conflict stopped a project at the Church where you serve?
   a. Yes
   b. No

11. Have you been taught how to manage conflict?
   a. Yes
   b. No

12. Does your Church teach, train, or prepare staff to manage conflict?
   a. Yes
   b. No

13. Have you ever left a church or ministry position because of internal conflict?
   a. Yes
   b. No
Appendix C

Focus Group Questions

Exploration

1. When you hear the word conflict, what does it mean to you?

2. Can you give an example of Conflict in the Church?

3. What thoughts, feelings, and associations come to mind when you think about conflict within leadership teams in African American churches?

4. Do you think there is conflict between Pastors and ministry staff members?

5. Do you believe that life experience can impact the way we interact with leaders? – education and life experience, victimization, generational differences, lack of community, good or bad individualism, entitlement

Follow-up

1. How do you think churches should handle conflict?

2. What would you do to manage conflict between church leaders?

3. Can you add anything to the conversation?

Exit Questions

1. Are there any other points that you would like to make about conflict?

2. Is there anything that you would like to add to the conversation?
Appendix D

Questions for Interview:

1. What is your name, and what is your position at your current Church?

2. How long have you been serving in your current position?

3. What are your current responsibilities in your position?

4. Are you full time, part time or volunteer staff?

5. Do you have a good working relationship with the Senior Pastor? Or members of ministry staff?

6. What are some of the issues that you have had with fellow staff members?

7. Have you had negative experiences outside of Church and/or ministry that has shaped your view of leadership?

8. How did you manage conflict growing up?

9. How do you resolve issues of conflict?

10. Does your Church teach, train, or prepare staff to manage conflict?

11. Have you ever left a church or ministry position because of internal conflict?

12. If you could have conflict management taught at your Church, would you be open to it?

13. Is there anything you would like to add?
Appendix E

Sample Permission Request

Permission Request

February 2021

[Recipient]
[Title]
[Company]
[Address 1]
[Address 2]
[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The title of my research project is “Understanding and Managing Conflict within the African American Church within Leadership Teams” and the purpose of my research is to understand the issues, and challenges which cause that impact African American churches in Baltimore, MD which prohibit ministry vision and mission fulfillment.

I am writing to request your permission to contact members of your staff/church to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be asked to complete the attached survey or contact me to schedule an interview. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to xxxxxxxxx or call xxxxxxxxxxx. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Your Title]
Permission Letter

September 2020

[Recipient]
[Title]
[Company]
[Address 1]
[Address 2]
[Address 3]

Dear [Researcher’s Name]:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled, “Understanding and Managing Conflict within the African American Church within Leadership Teams,” I have decided to grant you access to our staff and invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☐ [The requested data WILL BE STRIPPED of all identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.]

☐ [The requested data WILL NOT BE STRIPPED of identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.]

☐ [I/We are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.]

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Your Title]
[Your Company/Organization]
IRB Approval Letter

IRB-FY20-21-179 - Initial: Initial - Expedited
irb@liberty.edu <irb@liberty.edu>
Fri 2/5/2021 8:08 AM
To: Ray, Bryan (Rawlings School of Divinity Instr) <bray16@liberty.edu>; Hinton, Damian A <dhinton1@liberty.edu>

February 5, 2021

Damian Hinton
Bryan Ray

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY20-21-179 Understanding and Managing Conflict in African American Church within Leadership Teams

Dear Damian Hinton, Bryan Ray:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the date of the IRB meeting at which the protocol was approved: February 5, 2021. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make modifications in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update submission to the IRB. These submissions can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

https://outlook.office.com/mail/id/AAQkAGU0MjdjMjRmLTUSNDYzZC05WQtQnQmEwNjM5MWNlZGQANjCjXynGNPljSqM03zc%3D
**Title of the Project:** Understanding and Managing Conflict in the African American Church within Leadership Teams  
**Principal Investigator:** Damian Alexander Hinton, Sr., MDiv. Doctor of Ministry Candidate at Liberty University

---

### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be at least 18 years of age, and be an active member of a leadership team for at least one year in an African American church. You must be serving as a senior/lead pastor, associate pastor, minister, deacon, administration, or volunteer staff within your church. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to understand the issues, and challenges that impact African American churches in Baltimore, MD which prohibit ministry vision and mission fulfillment.

### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in a recorded interview with the researcher. This should take approximately 30 minutes.
2. Complete an online survey that will take approximately 5 minutes.
3. Take part in a focus group interview with other participants. The focus group will be recorded and will last approximately 45 minutes.

### How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. The societal benefits of this study are intended to benefit local congregations and the church at large by engaging in the discourse on the process and practice of conflict resolution within church leadership.

### What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

### How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
### Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Participating church characteristics</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The description of the participants</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The description of the focus and interview participants and their pseudonyms</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Explanation of themes</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Description of learned conflict</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Charts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Chart 1</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Chart 2</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Chart 3</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Chart 4</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Chart 5</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Chart 6</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Chart 7</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Chart 8</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figures</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fig 1</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>