Forced Pastoral Exists: An Exploratory Study

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This exploratory study examines the results of the Pastors-in-Residence-Confidential Survey submitted by 108 pastors of evangelical churches across denominational lines. The exploratory findings generate data on demographic information such as age, education, and marital status on pastors who experience a forced termination from their post. The study examined the antecedents: (a) conflicting visions for the church (LaRue,1996), (b) personality conflict with others in leadership and/or the congregation(Goodwin, 1997), (c) interpersonal incompetence (Schuller, 1985), (d) unrealistic expectations, (e) lack of church discipline (Crowell, 1995) and (judicial procedures(Goodwin, 1997), and (f) contentious individuals and power groups (Willis, 2001) as well as examined the effects of forced pastoral exits on the pastor's life and ministry. The data suggests that the greatest impact on pastors as a result of a forced exit are a reduction of trust in others and a reduction in self esteem, while the two greatest lessons learned by the pastors is that they must understand unrealistic expectations placed on the pastor by the church and the need to recognize conflicting visions early on in the duration of the position. The research conducted in this paper expands the current literature by examining and confirming central antecedents while generating more questions based on data collected to generate further research.

According to Crowell (1990) one in four pastors experiences a forced termination from the pastorate in America's evangelical churches. A 1984 Southern Baptist study (Willis, 2001)reported an average of 1056 involuntary terminations of pastors a year and a follow up study of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1988 (Brentwood, 1988) with responses from 35,812 of the denomination's nearly 41,000 churches showed an increase of nearly 400 more forced pastoral terminations per annum. According to LaRue (1996) this phenomena is a chronic problem with 91% of 593 surveyed pastors knowing of another pastor who was terminated or forced to resign. In addition, LaRue confirms that almost one quarter (23%)of the pastoral respondents had been ousted from their position at least once over the span of their ministry. It is no surprise then that Rainer's(2001) survey of pastors throughout America found the average tenure in a local church to be a short 3.8 years. High pastoral turnover through forced exits underscores a need for further investigation because if we can understand this phenomenon we may be able to help churches and seminaries prepare congregations and pastors for greater longevity,

thus strengthening pastor-church relationships and ministry effectiveness within the church for the 21st century.

Wickman, one of the authors of this study, prepared the Pastor-In-Residence Confidential Survey (PIRCS) building questions and response items from his anecdotal research with pastors who experienced a forced exit via his organization – Pastors in Residence, a ministry designed to help counsel pastors through the effects of a forced exit and to facilitate pastors' return to the ministry. For this exploratory study 108 pastors who experienced a forced exit provided data on 55 main items with some questions asking the participants to respond to up to 24 sub-questions/comments yielding a total of 218 discrete responses from participant.

The data was collected via WWW forms (http://www.regent.edu/acad/cls/survey/pastorexit1.html and http://www.regent.edu/acad/cls/survey/pastorexit2.html) and advertised on the Pastors in Residence WWW site (http://www.pastorinresidence.org/) as well as advertised at conferences for pastors attended by Wickman. While this article does not report all

the data from all 218 items, it does present the *Forced Pastoral Exits: An Exploratory Study* – findings that seem to hold the greatest insight and opportunity for further investigation. The purpose of this research is to add to the literature by confirming or disconfirming central antecedents and effects as a result of forced pastoral exits on the pastor and his/her family while exploring other noteworthy observations from PIRCS that would warrant further research. To achieve this purpose this paper presents: (a) a working definition of forced pastoral exit, (b)antecedents of forced pastoral exits, (c)presentation of data mined from the explorative survey, and (d) recommendations for future research to more fully understand the phenomena associated with forced pastoral exit on the pastor and his/her family.

Forced Pastoral Exit: A Working Definition

A forced pastoral exit is a process by which a congregation, a personnel committee, or individual leader within a church terminates or forces the resignation of a minister from a position of ministry (LaRue, 1996). Furthermore a pastor may abdicate his post due to the constant negativity found in personal attacks and criticism from a small faction within the congregation from whom the minister feels psychologically pressured to step down from his or her service of ministry (Goodwin, 1997).

Antecedents of Forced Pastoral Exits

A review of the literature yielded six categories of antecedents to forced exits and this paper examines each of the categories (a) conflicting visions for the church (LaRue, 1996), (b)personality conflict with others in leadership and/or the congregation (Goodwin, 1997), (c)interpersonal incompetence (Schuller, 1985), (d)unrealistic expectations, (e) lack of church discipline (Crowell, 1995) and (judicial procedures (Goodwin, 1997), and (f) contentious individuals and power groups (Willis, 2001) in sequence.

Conflicting Visions for the Church

When the pastor's "clear and challenging picture of the future of a ministry" (Malphurs, 1992, p.31) strongly differs from one or more members of a congregation, conflict can result. For example, in his 1992 study, Detweiler notes how the Holy Cross Lutheran Church experienced conflict between the missions pastor and members of the church. The missions pastor held strong convictions against the Masonic order and would not permit membership in this order by the church's members. This led to a pattern of pastor-congregation clashes that precipitated the high turnover of pastors throughout its history.

Der (2001) conducted a quantitative analysis of ethnic churches of various sizes representative of every state. In addition he conducted a series of qualitative interviews with 12 subjects found through referrals. According to Der (2001) a disagreement concerning vision can be due to cultural differences. Ethnic Chinese Churches throughout the Untied States often deal with conflicting visions induced by different levels of cultural assimilation among its members, subsequently contributing to the high dropout rate among American Born Chinese pastors serving with first generation Chinese immigrant pastors. Significant cultural differences frequently exist between Overseas Born Chinese and American Born Chinese leaders resulting in irreconcilable philosophies regarding the direction and mission of the local church.

Another aspect connected with conflicting visions for the church is extracted from Dudley's(2003) research on religion in the United States today. As one of the most extensive studies on religion in the United States, his data represented 41 denominations and faith groups with 26 surveys of individual congregations in six broad areas. Within the area of leadership and organizational dynamics, Dudley found that major organizational changes promote conflict that tends to negatively impact the growth of membership. In one example he cites that "changes in worship often prompt serious congregational conflict." (Dudley, 2003, p. 25).

For example, a pastor might have a vision for his church to become a more seeker sensitive

church, and strongly push for a more contemporary worship service in order to reach the un-churched. However, the lay leaders might prefer a more traditional style of worship geared towards the edification of believers. A major organizational changed from one style to another could prompt conflict between major players in the church and division among its members. evidence collected in this exploratory study supports this concern for conflicting visions.

Personality Conflicts

Personality conflicts may include clashes between the pastor and one or more members of the church, or there maybe occasions when the senior pastor collides with the personality of aboard member, or staff member (LaRue, 1996; Goodwin, 1997). According to Voges and Braund (1995) people are different and fall under one of four major personality types. Each type has a unique sense of perception, motivation and needs. Consequently, different people's varying personalities directly impact their relational and leadership styles, and those with opposite temperaments will encounter greater levels of interpersonal conflict with each other. For example, a pastor who has a "dominant" personality may be perceived as being overbearing to a member who embodies the "steady" type personality, resulting in resistance to the pastor's leadership.

Furthermore Willis (2001) also documents personality conflicts as one of the major reason for pastoral terminations. Our exploratory study indicates that 35% of pastors found personality conflicts with board members to be a significant source of tension and when asked for the main reason for their forced exit, approximately 31% of the pastors participating in this current study claimed personality conflict with board members (see Table 17).

Interpersonal Incompetence

According to Schuller (1985) only 6 to 13% of ministers studied failed as a result of professional incompetence (i.e. leadership, preaching, administration). However, 46% failed as a result of interpersonal incompetence (i.e. relating to others), 50% falling into the categories of being either too autocratic or too passive. Schuller explains the steps towards interpersonal incompetence resulting in pastoral failure. First, the pastors failed to listen and observe and therefore did not understand the situation well enough to provide proper feedback. As a result they were unable to recognize how they were actually making the situation worse by their inappropriate responses.

Second, they failed to accept personal responsibility, blaming others instead. Third, these individuals neglected to properly delegate by either not delegating tasks at all or over-delegating responsibilities inappropriately. Fourth, it was extremely difficult for them to connect with people in such a manner as to form common loyalties. Fifth, they were incapable of maintaining congruency in their words and behavior. In other words, their statements were often vague or they were unable to follow through with promises. Sixth, they needed to have approval from everyone all of the time in order to find emotional support. Seventh, these ministers were not able to interpret the present circumstances in terms of reality. Their perspectives were often shaded by internal struggles that clouded their perception. Eighth, those who did not think the same way easily intimidated them. Ninth, these ministers themselves failed to support others emotionally while disagreeing with people on an intellectual level.

Our data in this exploratory tends to support Schuller's findings with regard to interpersonal relationships. However, our data does not discern if this is a function of the pastor or the environment in which the pastor found him/herself.

Contentious individuals or rival power groups

Contentious individuals are those persons who strive to use whatever means necessary to control the church. If a pastor is a threat to their control then these individuals may rally a small group of power brokers to push the pastor out (Willis, 2001). One ex-pastor describes this situation in his church: This hidden crisis is the proliferation of congregational conflicts in which the pastor is the target. Particularly in the so-called free churches, in which decisions to

hire and fire clergy rest with the members and not with denominational officials, clergy are vulnerable to assault by small but committed factions of critics. I am referring not to situations in which a pastor's poor performance or scandalous behavior has ignited a controversy, but to conflicts that arise from unhealthy congregational dynamics, and that target pastors who are innocent of malfeasance and are usually caught unawares (Smith, 1994) Crowell (1990) confirms that powerful people within the congregation are active in the forced exits as well. He found throughout a series of interviews with ousted pastors four categories of contentious individuals. The first he describes as the "hegemony of powerful individuals or groups" (p. 78). Second are the individuals who play power games with a motive of revenge. The third were those who use "ploys which stem from lingering emotional ties to a previous pastor" (p. 78), and the fourth, non-committed members who make major decisions at church business meetings.

Our exploratory study found that 34% of the pastor respondents perceived a small faction behind their forced exit as the largest driving force behind their ousting (see Table 1). At least 87% of those that were forced out through the pressure of a small faction indicate that this group was made up of 10 people (see Table 2).

Furthermore, 26% of the respondents held individual staff or board members responsible for their forced exit. Therefore, contentious individuals or small factions (10 or less people) were the force responsible for at least 60% of pastoral exits.

Table 1:
Driving Force Behind Pastoral Exit (n=108)

Driving Force	Count	Percent
No Selection	20	18.52
Senior Pastor	12	11.11
Staff Member	3	2.78
Board Member	13	12.04
Small Faction	37	34.26
Large Faction	1	0.93
Denomination	7	6.48
Own conviction	15	13.89

Table 2:
Size of Small Faction (n=55)

Size of Faction	Count	Percent
1 Person	3	2.78
2 – 5 People	25	23.15
6 – 10 People	20	18.52
11 – 20 People	7	6.48

This is significant considering that about 48 out of 108 of these pastor/leaders were at churches where over 100 congregants attended during the Sunday morning worship services (See Table 3) and yet the vast majority forced out by a faction were forced out by small factions of 10 or less. Although the size of the churches were almost equally divided between those less than and those more than 100 attendees, most of the forced out pastors were driven out by a fraction of the regular worshippers.

Table 3:

Size of Sunday Morning Attendance (n = 108)

Attendance	Count	Percent
No Selection	3	2.78
Under 50	13	12.04
50-100	24	22.22
101-200	21	19.44
201-300	8	7.41
301-400	8	7.41
401-500	1	0.93
501-1000	6	5.56
1001-2000	4	3.7

Lack of judicial procedures and church discipline

Goodwin (1997) purports that ethics are routinely compromised in the undertaking of a forced pastoral termination. First, churches most frequently flounder following the instituted

processes for evaluation, conflict resolution or procedures of reviewing the pastor's ministry effectiveness in a fair objective manner. Second, members or boards gravitate towards misrepresenting information in regard to the reason behind the forced termination. This opens a window for pastors to be compelled to leave their post without due process or accountability and can ultimately hinder his/her present ministry relationships and future careers.

Chandler (2002) observes a remarkable similarity in the stories told by ousted pastors at numerous retreats he lead over the years and highlights three common and dynamic patterns that took place. First, each pastor had been "blind-sided" as a small group came to the minister with the recommendation that he should resign due to his ineffectiveness. This small group represented themselves as special messengers of the whole church. Second, after delivering the shocking message this small group loaded guilt on the pastor requesting that their conversation be kept secret to protect the church from splitting, and implying that any negative effect from the pastor's resignation would be his/her fault. Third, the group proceeded to place undue pressure on the minister to make an abrupt decision while using the possibility of withdrawing a severance package if the pastor did not comply with their wishes. Crowell (1990) makes some intriguing findings arguing from moderate statistical significance that pastors who serve mainly in churches that practice discipline "experience 39% fewer forced exits" (p. 72) than those who serve at churches that do not exercise church discipline. In other words "with 96% confidence church discipline is a statistically significant factor in reducing forced pastoral exit rates" (p. 74).

This current exploratory study did not find data that supported this category of antecedent, but neither did it report data to the contrary. This, then, remains an area for further study.

Unrealistic Expectations
Shoff (2002) argues that though standards throughout the years have been set high for the pastor, he believes today's culture is raising the bar to even higher levels. A pastor in contemporary culture has many unrealistic expectations to fulfill in his ministry, and according to Shoff, this is a contributing factor to pastoral exits: He is expected to be chief executive officer, counselor, community leader, preacher, teacher, theologian, arbiter, chaplain, model parent and husband, to mention the most obvious. Perhaps it is this unrealistic expectation on the part of both the congregation and the pastor himself that is contributing to the current avalanche of ministerial dropouts. (p.1)

Dudley (2003) also observes that congregations that "enact their faith without explicit expectations for members experience less vitality and more conflict" as well (p. 2).Perhaps both pastors and parishioners at time shave expectations that are beyond reach.

Croucher (2003) summarizes recent literature that consistently documents various types of unrealistic expectations that contribute to pastoral stress and burnout in ministry. First, due to a lack of clearly defined boundaries around tasks that are never quite complete, an incongruity forms between the hard realities of ministry and unrealistic expectations both imposed on oneself and imposed by members. Second, Croucher outlines what he calls the 'bed-at-the-church syndrome.' This is when the pastor is so consumed with finding significance through his vocation that he becomes a workaholic. Third, is the overwhelming feeling of inadequacy in providing competent leadership to members, or the 'Peter-Principle.' Fourth, the pastor struggles with the double-bind type expectations of being a strong leader yet being a humble servant at the same time. Fifth, he or she may struggle to measure progress in many intangible areas of ministry. Sixth, role identity confusion with his/her self-image can set in as a pastor places too much weight on performance as a basis for self-esteem. Furthermore, time management problems, inability to produce win-win conflict resolutions, tyranny of the urgent and administrative overload all contribute to, and are, by-products of unrealistic expectations, causing a vicious cycle.

The review of the literature points to several predominant reasons for forced pastoral exits,

some of which are discussed above. However, in terms of current research, LaRue (1996) and Crowell (1995) offer the most reliable quantitative data on antecedents of forced terminations of pastors. Table 4 is a synopsis of the numerous antecedents to forced pastoral exits, some of which were discussed above. It is interesting to see some of the similarities between these findings and this current exploratory study (See Table 4). One of the most significant observations shows that LaRue(1997), Crowell (1995) and this current study all ranked conflicting visions (values) in the top 1 or 2 spot in the 40-60 percentile range.

Table 4:
Comparison of Three Forced Exits Studies

Researchers:	Current Study		LaRue (1997)		Crowell (1995)	
	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%
Music/worship style differences	1	47.22				
Conflicting visions for the church	2	40.74	1	46	2	66
Personality Conflict with board member(s)	3	30.56	2	38		
False charges of moral failure	4	28.70				
Unrealistic expectations	20	8.33	3	32		
Personality Conflicts (not with board members)	5	27.78	5	22		
Personality conflict with senior pastor	10	16.67	7	19	4	31
Lack of clear expectations	19	8.33	4	24		
Theological differences/doctrine	15	13.89	6	21	6 2	5
Powerful minority of members					1	75

Having reviewed the six antecedents found in the literature this paper presents the data collected in the current exploratory study making general observations concerning antecedents of forced exits as well as other significant observations.

Exploration of Data Collected from PIRCS

Through various networks across denominational lines (See Table 7), vocational Christian workers who encountered at least one forced termination were asked to complete the survey.

In the following subjections we present demographic observations of (a) age, (b) education, (c) denominational affiliation, (d) current status and (e) tenure in ministry, followed by self-ratings on (a) ministry skills, (b) financial survivability, (c) characteristics of forced terminations, (d) sources of tension and (e) reasons for forced exits.

Age

Ninety-six of the 108 participants indicated thei rage category. Those between the ages of 45 and 54 total 51% of the respondents, whereas those 25-29 were 1%, and those 55-59 were 5%. The data seem to suggest that those in their mid-forties and early fifties are more likely to experience a forced exit (see Table 5). The smaller number of respondents under age 30 who have experienced a forced exit could reflect the possibility that there are less numbers of pastors in that age range, or perhaps forced pastoral exit is a phenomena associated with more experienced years in ministry. In any case, more research is needed in this area before further assertions can be made about age correlation to forced pastoral exits.

Table 5
Forced Exits by Age Group (n=96)

Age Group	Count	Percent
25-29	1	1.04
30-34	11	11.46
35-39	15	15.63
40-44	15	15.63
45-49	26	27.08
50-54	23	23.96
55-59	5	5.21

Education
Education seems also to be a factor in the likelihood of a forced exit. 35% of ousted pastors held a Seminary degree (the most popular level of education held), 18% had postgraduate study obtaining a Master degree and 19% were in the process or had completed a doctorate of philosophy. The conclusion at the least is that more education does not necessarily protect one from a forced exit, and to a point actually may increase the likelihood of it.

Table 6:
Forced Exits by Education Level (n = 94)

Education Level	Count	Percent
Attended College	5	5.32
4-yr sec. college degree	3	3.19
4-yr bible college degree	12	12.77
Postgraduate Study (MA)	18	19.15
Seminary Degree	33	35.11
Grad. Degree (not Seminary.)	4	4.26
Doctoral Study	7	7.45
Doctorate	12	12.77

Denomination
The 108 participants stretch across denominational lines with Baptist having the largest representation of approximately 24%, Presbyterian with nearly 14% and Lutheran at 9% as shown in Table 7.

Table 7
Denominational Group Frequencies in Survey (n=108)

Denomination	Count	Percent
No Selection	10	9.26
Assembly of God	6	5.56
Baptist	26	24.07
Church of Christ	1	0.93
Church of God	1	0.93
Congregational	2	1.85
CRC	1	0.93
Evangelical Cov.	2	1.85
EVFree	4	3.70
Four Square	1	0.93
Friends	1	0.93
Independent	8	7.41
Lutheran	10	9.26
Mennonite	1	0.93
Methodist	9	8.33
Pentecostal (not AG)	1	0.93
Presbyterian	15	13.89
RCA	1	0.93
Other	7	6.48

Current Status and Tenure in Ministry
Of the 108 respondents, over 44% are not presently in a ministry position while nearly 33% currently are serving as pastors in the local church. The respondents also have been in ministry from a range of 0 to 33 years with the average tenure being 13 years. Further, the respondents have served an average of 3 ½ years at their present position ranging from less than 1 to 27 years.

Table 8

Forced Exits by Years in Ministry (n=107)

Years in Ministry	Count	Percent
4 or less years	22	20.56
5 to 10	24	22.43
11 to 15	21	19.63
16 to 20	16	14.95
21 to 25	14	13.08
26+ years	10	9.35

Self-Ratings on Ministry Skills
Participants were asked to rate their effectiveness in communication, diplomacy, leadership (vision), management (administration), pastoral care, preaching, saying "No", and visitation. All ministry items had ratings of 'good' or 'excellent' by 50% or more of these pastors in each ministry item with the exception of he 'Saying No' category (See Table 9).

Table 9:

Overall Self-Ratings on Ministry Effectiveness (n=108)

Self-Rating Categories	N/A	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Communication	0	1	12	58	37
Diplomacy	0	7	40	49	12
Leadership (vision)	0	7	22	44	35
Management (administration)	0	15	35	44	14
Pastoral care	1	5	26	51	25
Preaching	0	2	8	42	56
Saying "NO"	1	21	50	27	9
Visitation	1	16	36	40	15

In addition, the three highest self-ratings included 91% of the pastor/leaders rating themselves 'good' or 'excellent' in 'preaching', 88% 'good' or 'excellent' in 'communication' and 73% good or excellent in 'leadership (vision/direction)'. The three lowest self-ratings included 'Saying No' a mere 33% ranking good or excellent, 'Visitation' at just over half and 'Management (administration)' at 54%. (See Table 10)

Table 10
Ranking of 'Good' or 'Excellent' on Effectiveness (n=108) Self-Rating

Categories	Count	Percent
1. Preaching	98	90.74
2. Communication	95	87.96
3. Leadership (vision)	79	73.15
4. Pastoral care	76	70.37
5. Diplomacy	61	56.48
6. Management (admin)	58	53.70
7. Visitation	55	50.93
8. Saying "NO"	36	33.33

Called vs. Non-Called on Self-Ministry Ratings
A significant difference was found between those respondents who believed God called them to ministry. They rated their ministry skills in leadership (vision and direction) significantly higher than those who did not believe God called them to ministry. A one-way ANOVA was run with an alpha level of .005. As shown in Table 11 the Tests of Assumptions reveal that the Kurtosis and Omnibus normality of residuals were accepted along with the Modified-Levene Equal-Variance Test. However, the Skewness normality of residuals was rejected.

Table 11

Tests of Assumptions for Self-Ratings of Leadership Skill (Vision) of Called vs. Non-called

Assumption	Test Value	Prob Level	Decision (.005)
Skewness Normality of Residuals	-2.2318	0.025627	Reject
Kurtosis Normality of Residuals	-0.7207	0.471124	Accept
Omnibus Normality of Residuals	5.5004	0.063916	Accept
Modified-Levene Equal-Variance Test	0.1183 0.731561		Accept

Kruskal-Wallis One-Way ANOVA offers two hypotheses. The null hypothesis (Ho) that all medians are equal was rejected. Therefore the substantive hypothesis (Ha) that at least two medians are different is accepted. The median for those who believed they are called is 3.06 (Good range), where as for those who did not believe they were called the median is 2.3 (Fair range). This proves a difference of 0.76, nearly a full point on the Likert scale (see Table 12).

Table 12

ANOVA Group Detail of Z-Value and Medians between Called and Non-called on Leadership (Vision)

Group	Count	Sum of Ranks	Mean Rank	Z-Value	Median
Called	98	5558.5	56.72	2.3053	3
Non-called	10	327.5	32.75	-2.3053	2

However, in order to confirm this significant observation Hintz (2001) suggests the Kruskal- Wallis Z test, which further assesses the difference of pairs of medians following the Kruskal-Wall test. This Z test is a distribution free multiple comparison test which renders the assumption of normality as not necessary therefore minimizing the affect that the rejection of the Skewness Normality of Residuals may have on the one-way ANOVA. Furthermore both sample sizes met the minimum requirements of five. Hintz (2001) remarks that the multiple comparison test uses average ranks rather than means in its calculations.

The Kruskal-Wallis Z test confirms a significant difference between the medians (See Table 13). Both the regular and Bonferroni Tests point to a z-value of 2.4440. This value is greater than the significance level of 1.96. Therefore the medians are confirmed to be significantly different.

Table 13

Kruskal-Wallis Multiple-Comparison Z-Value Test:

Leadership (Vision) Rating of Called vs. Non- Called

1	0	2.444
2	2.444	0

Regular Test: Medians significantly different if z-value > 1.9600
Bonferroni Test: Medians significantly different if z-value > 1.9600

Although it seems that those who believe they are called to vocational ministry have a greater self-efficacy in their leadership abilities, there was no significant difference found between the two subgroups (Called vs. Non-Called) in terms of pastors' self-ratings in areas of communication, diplomacy, management, pastoral care/counseling, preaching, saying "No" and visitation.

Financial Survival of Ousted Pastors
If any one of these pastors were suddenly forced out of their present positions 39% could survive financially for no more than a month. An incredible 75% could not survive longer than four months (see Table 14). About 5 out 10 of

these pastors actually received a severance package from 1 to 6 months. 25% of the participating pastors chose not to answer this question.

Table 14
Financial Survival if Suddenly Forced Out (n=108)

Length of Time	Count	Percent
No Selection	27	25.00
1 month or less	42	38.89
2 months	12	11.11
3 months	7	6.48
4 months	20	18.52

Characteristics of Forced Terminations
Among the 108 pastor/leaders who have left a ministry post, 9 of them were terminated while 40 were forced to resign. Another 37 respondents resigned as a result of perceived, but not overt, pressure (See Table 15). Moreover, nearly half (44%) claimed to have received an ultimatum that they needed to resign or that they would be fired.

Table 15
Forced Exit by Type (n=108)

Type of Termination	Count	Percent
No Selection	22	20.37
Terminated	9	8.33
Forced to Resign	40	37.04
Resign/Perceived Pressure	27	24.26

Among pastors who were forced out, 41% were terminated once. 19% had it happen twice, 3% had it occur a third time, and just 2% were ousted a fourth time (See Table 16). When these pastors were asked the number of other pastors they know to have been forced out of their ministry position, 53% knew of at least one to as many as six pastors who experienced a forced exit. 63% felt that the churches were not justified in causing the pastor to leave.

Table 16
Number of times Terminated from Position (n=108)

Number of Times	Count	Percent
No Selection	38	35.19
Once	44	40.74
Twice	21	19.44
Three Times	3	2.78
Four Times	2	1.85

Sources of Tension and Reasons for Forced Exit
According to these 108 respondents the top four most significant sources of tension in the ministry include unrealistic expectations (45.37%), personality conflict with board members (35.19%), conflicting visions for the church (41.67%), and personal financial strain(34.26%). When asked how likely these issues would force them out of their position, 50% said that is was somewhat or very likely to occur.

Further, when asked what things were closest in describing reasons for their forced exit, 47.22% cited music/worship style differences were the main cause. Other elements include conflicting visions for the church (40.74%), personality conflict with board members (30.56%), and conflict with people not on board (27.58%).

Though unrealistic expectations and personal financial strain were significant sources of tension, they do not seem to be a dominant cause in the exit of these pastor/leaders. In addition, conflicting visions for the church and personality conflicts with board members are more potent in being a significant source of tension and in leading to a forced exit (see Table 17). Finally, the survey participants were asked to narrow down the reason for their forced exit.

The top four reasons for the forced exits include:(a) conflict with board members (11.11%), (b)conflict with people not on the board (10.19%),(c) conflict with the senior pastor (10.19%), and(d) conflicting visions (8.33%).

There were also a number of other factors addressed in the survey that contributed to the pastors leaving their position. Two noteworthy factors that contributed to their decision to leave were the erosion of trust and certain perceptions by others. 58.33% felt that they were unable to trust those around them and 36.11% were somewhat or significantly impacted by others in which the pastor felt perceived by others as

being insensitive, abrasive and intimidating (see Table 18).

Exited Pastors' Sources of Support
The participants were surveyed regarding sources of support and encouragement during the crisis of their forced exit (see Table 19) that implied 61% claimed their family was somewhat to very supportive in helping them through their difficulty. 60% felt specifically that their spouse was somewhat to very supportive. Incidentally, 35% of the wives of these oust pastor/leaders preferred to, or were very eager to leave with only 10% being reluctant to leave the church. 49% of pastors described their relationship with their spouse to be warm and supportive. This reveals the importance of the quality a pastor's family life, both immediate and extended. The stronger his family ties, the greater support base for the pastor when dealing with church difficulty. Coming in third and fourth were friends in the congregation (54%), and fellow pastors outside the church (44%). These are also weighty networks of support outside of family on both a personal as well as a professional level. More research is needed to discover why these four groups are found to be most supportive to the pastor. Unfortunately, 61% of pastors were not a part of a support team when forced to exit their church.

Table 17
Comparison of Source of Tension vs. Actual Reasons for Forced Exit (n=108)
Source of Tension Actual Reason for Forced Exit

Category	Source of tension		Actual reason for exit	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
Unrealistic expectations	1	45.37	20	8.33
Conflicting visions for the church	2	41.67	2	40.74
Personality conflict with board member(s)	3	35.19	3	30.56
Financial strain on me	4	34.26	13	12.96
Gold fish bowl existence	5	26.85	21	4.63
Personality conflict with people not on board	6	25.00	5	27.78
Entitlement attitude of the congregation	7	25.00	12	13.89
No pastor/confessor	8	24.07	18	9.26
Need to prove self as a hard worker	9	22.22	9	19.44
Spouse conflict over ministry	10	22.22	6	25.93
Lack of clear expectations	11	22.22	19	8.33
Theological differences	12	19.44	11	13.89
Financial strain on church as whole	13	19.44	8	20.37
Not able to work in giftedness	14	19.44	16	12.04
False charges of moral failure	15	17.59	4	28.70
Music/worship differences	16	16.67	1	47.22
Proliferation of activities	17	12.96	14	12.04
Actual moral failure	18	12.96	15	12.04
Conflict with senior pastor	19	11.11	10	16.67
Conflict with staff members	20	11.11	17	11.11
Your conflict with spouse over ministry	21	10.19	7	23.15

Table 18:
Ranked Contributors to Decision to Leave (n=108)

Contributing Factors	Some Effect	Significant Effect	Combined Total	Combined Percent
I could not trust those around me	32	31	63	58.33
Others would say that I was insensitive, abrasive, intimidating	31	8	39	36.11
Others would describe me as cold, aloof, arrogant, and impatient	18	7	25	23.15
I was overly ambitious, seeking more than I should have	16	9	25	23.15
I could not think strategically. I did not know the right...	21	4	25	23.15
I could not adapt to a Senior Pastor who had a different management style	4	13	17	15.74
I could not leave others to manage their work affairs. I got too involved	12	3	15	13.89
I could not staff effectively. I did not hire the right people	8	6	14	12.96
I was over-dependent on a mentor in the Church	2	3	5	4.63

Table 19
Ranking of Sources of Support for Pastors (n=108)

Place of Support	Somewhat Supportive	Very Supportive	Combined Total	Combined Percent
Family	17	49	66	61.11
Spouse	8	57	65	60.19
Friends in the congregation	18	40	58	53.70
Fellow pastors outside of church	16	31	47	43.52
Christian Counselor	14	23	37	34.26
Others (did not fit a category)	6	18	24	22.22
Support team	7	14	21	19.44
Fellow staff member	8	13	21	19.44
Denominational leader	8	11	19	17.59
Church board	13	5	18	16.67
Professional consultant	9	8	17	15.74
Senior pastor	3	4	7	6.48

Impact of Forced Exits on the Ex-Pastor
When asked about the impact of the forced exit, respondents claimed their own and their family's ability to trust people (71% and 67% respectively), their financial stability (69%), and their self-confidence as a pastoral leader (59%) were affected the most (see Table 20). Their emotional health (59%) and ability to trust their denomination (57%) was also significantly impacted. The theme of eroding trust, whether in people or organizations, seems to be dominant in the devastation experienced by the exiting pastor.

Another area examined regarding the impact felt by a pastor during and after a forced exit is emotional stress. Out of 108 respondents, 100 participants responded to the questions about stressors felt after leaving the ministry with six of 22 adjectives returning responses of 60% or above: (a) 'betrayed', (b) 'sad', (c) 'frustrated', (d) 'lonely', (e) 'forgotten', and (f) 'depressed.'

It seems that forced exits seem to take a significant emotional toll on a pastor's being. Salvaging the pain and distress of a forced exit, these pastors/leaders reported a number of lessons learned through the challenge of their termination (see Table 22). Those items in the 80 percentile and above included 'care for staff' (92%), 'hire more staff carefully' (90%), 'leave sooner' (89%), 'introduce new ideas gradually' (88%), and 'connect with your leaders' (82%).

These items seem to reflect the importance of careful staffing, both in the hiring (administration) and in the development (interpersonal) of staff once hired. Discernment in timing issues is another theme of lessons learned. Finally, these pastors learned that knowing when to stick it out through the ups and downs of ministry and when to leave, as well as perceiving the proper time to bring about changes in the church is also critical.

Table 20

Ranking of most affected areas by forced exit (n=100)

Area of Impact	Somewhat Negative Effect	Very Negative Effect	Combined Total	Combined Percent
1. Ability to trust people	46	25	71	71
2. Financial stability	20	49	69	69
3. Family's ability to trust	41	26	67	67
4. Confidence as a pastoral leader	33	26	59	59
5. My emotional health	27	30	57	57
6. Ability to trust denomination	23	33	56	56
7. Commitment to stay in the ministry	27	20	47	47
8. Ability to trust fellow peers	29	14	43	43
9. Spouse's emotional health	29	14	43	43
10. Prayer life	26	14	40	40
11. Children's emotional health	22	12	34	34
12. A growing vibrant faith	17	16	33	33
13. Sense of call	19	10	29	29
14. Ability to be a loving spouse	15	4	19	19
15. Ability to love people	13	6	19	19
16. Ability to be a caring person	12	4	16	16

Table 21

Ranking of stresses felt after leaving ministry (n=100)

Stress Felt	High	Extreme	Combined Total	Combined Percent
1. Betrayed	13	57	70	70

2. Sad	24	43	67	67
3. Frustrated	24	41	65	65
4. Lonely	23	40	63	63
5. Forgotten	18	43	61	61
6. Depressed	22	38	60	60
7. Angry	17	39	56	56
8. Failure	19	34	53	53
9. Uncertain	20	33	53	53
10. Criticized	23	28	51	51
11. Confused	25	26	51	51
12. Shocked	13	33	46	46
13. Defensive	25	20	45	45
14. Spouse still hurts	20	25	45	45
15. Inferior	20	22	42	42
16. Useless	19	20	39	39
17. Ashamed	13	24	37	37
18. Guilty	13	18	31	31
19. Ambivalent	11	14	25	25
20. Disloyal	9	7	16	16
21. Phony	8	7	15	15
22. Worldly	8	4	12	12

Table 22
Ranking of Things Learned Through Forced Exit (n=100)

Lesson Learned	Yes	No
1. Care for staff	92	8
2. Hire staff more carefully	90	10
3. Leave sooner	89	11
4. Introduce new ideas gradually	88	12
5. Connect with your leaders	82	18
6. Develop leadership/conflict resolution skills	69	31
7. Have only godly people in leadership	63	37
8. Deepened prayer life	61	39
9. Put family first	60	40
10. Love even enemies	59	41
11. Deal with problems upfront	57	43
12. Can't fix everything	54	46
13. Find more about church before	52	48
14. God is sovereign	52	48
15. Humility	48	52
16. God did call me to ministry	47	53
17. People can be cruel	46	54
18. Can always trust God	38	62
19. God still loves me and will provide	34	66

Miscellaneous Observations
Nearly 40% of these participants perceived their theological position as conservative before entering the pastorate, while, in contrast, only 28% continued to view their theological position as conservative. Nine out of 10 of the respondents believed God called them to vocational ministry. These pastors/leaders moved an average of 2.95 times throughout their

ministry careers with 78 of the respondents moving two or more times.

One quarter of the respondents have left the pastorate previously and returned. Furthermore, 56% of all total respondents saw themselves as permanently in the pastorate. 56% of the respondents reported that their church had previous forced exit incidents in their past. 38% have used outside professionals to mediate conflict of which 23% used another outside pastor or someone else in the their respective denomination. Of the 39 who responded on the success of the mediator in their situation 21(54%) pastor/leaders found the mediator to be somewhat or very helpful. 30.56% of the participants are somewhat or very fearful they are being forced to leave their present ministries.

A surprising 55% did discuss the reason(s) for being forced out with those involved before they left. However, only 7% found their discussions somewhat helpful while 40% believed the discussion to be not at all helpful.

Recommendations for Further Research

As this paper addresses a brief review of the literature on antecedents of forced pastoral exits and explores the data collected from the PIRCS Survey not only are observations made but many more questions are raised. One major question remains to be answered as a limitation of the study. The sources surveyed in the exploratory section of this paper were from the pastors themselves. Further research is needed ingathering data from lay people who were also involved in the forced exit process. It is recommended that researchers design a survey for the laity that could be used in conjunction with a survey for pastors.

Other recommendations for further research include subsequent study on the effect of moderating variables such as a pastor's sense of calling, age, education, previous secular employment, marital status, theological convictions on a forced pastoral exit. Furthermore research is needed to bring greater understanding on the short and long-term impact of a forced termination on the pastor and his or her family.

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