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*Article*

# Mission in evolving cultures: Constructively managing music-related conflict in cross-cultural church planting contexts

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## Abstract
The choice of music, an essential element of worship and church life, must be addressed in cross-cultural church planting contexts. As cultures evolve, church planters are faced with choices about musical styles that may lead to interpersonal conflicts within the church. The purpose of this study is to empirically examine factors that may enable cross-cultural church planters to constructively manage music-related conflicts when they arise. Members of church plants, like all people, have various goals when entering into such conflicts. They are concerned about the content of the conflict (i.e., the musical style) and thus have content goals. They are also concerned about social elements of the conflict (e.g., their relationships, their identity and values, and the process used to resolve the conflict) and thus have social goals. The results of this study of 276 evangelical Christians indicate that achieving both content goals and social goals contributes to overall satisfaction across various conflict outcomes. Moreover, the evidence indicates that achieving only a social goal leads to greater satisfaction with the conflict outcome than achieving only the content goal in music-related conflict. This implies that church planters, when faced with music-related conflict, should strive to meet the gospel-congruent social goals of people with whom they are in conflict in order to maximize satisfaction with the conflict outcome.

## Keywords
church planting, church planters, conflict, music, culture, missionary, goals, relationships, identity, justice

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Music has always played a role in young churches, from New Testament times to today (Mat 26:30; Eph 5:19; Rev 15:2). Music in these churches has often been used as a teaching tool or as an aid to worship (Col 3:16), functions that music continues to play today (Lonsdale and North, 2011). However, as culture has evolved rapidly over the last several decades, not only in North America, but throughout the world, musical preferences have changed regularly, which sometimes results in church conflict (Farhadian, 2007; Long, 2001; Palamino and Escobar, 2007; Towns, 1997).

As travel and the use of the Internet increases throughout the world, cultural evolution is accelerating (Mesoudi, Whiten, and Laland, 2006; Rosa, 2003), increasing the likelihood of intergenerational conflict due to differences in musical preferences in almost all cultures. Although most missionaries would like to see their work progress more quickly (Nyquist, 2007), cross-cultural church planting among resistant peoples may be very slow and can take a generation or more before the community can function independently without a missionary presence (Mailloux, 2006; McGavern and Wagner, 1990; Neill, 1964; Woodberry, 1998). Church planting missionaries in such contexts are more likely to experience music-related conflict than are missionaries in contexts where churches can be established in only a few years. The purpose of this study is to empirically examine factors that may enable cross-cultural church planters to constructively manage music-related conflicts when they arise. The data will indicate that focusing on certain types of conflict goals contributes to minimizing the damage in these conflicts. These conflict goals will be present in other types of mission-related conflicts as well.

## The value of music in church planting

In addition to the traditional functions of teaching and mood creation for worship (Col 3:16), music has increasingly played a role in evangelism. By adopting contemporary forms of musical expression, evangelicals have been able to influence members of both secular and religious cultures by using culturally appropriate means to give voice to the biblical call to conversion (Farhadian, 2007; Gormly, 2003; King et al., 2008; Palamino and Escobar, 2007). Music is especially effective for the evangelism of youth (Lau, 2012). Since conversion most often occurs during adolescence in people without a Christian background (Kirkpatrick, 1992), music is rightfully seen as a powerful and effective tool to present the gospel, as well as a means to teach adolescent converts the basics of Christianity and help them resist the secular and non-Christian forces within their culture (Gormly, 2003).

For people of all ages who occasionally or regularly attend churches, music plays a major roll which influences their degree of involvement. Music that is attractive to individuals motivates them to attend church (Katt and Trelstad, 2009), motivating them to come even when other factors are present that act as demotivators. Similarly, music that is not attractive demotivates people vis-à-vis church attendance (Trelstad, 2012), pushing people away from participation.

Lonsdale and North (2011) have found several psychological functions of music which may explain why music acts as a motivator or demotivator to church

attendance. Although people may listen to music for many different reasons (Schäfer et al., 2013), the following functions were among the most common reasons that people cite: emotional management, identity management, and identifying acceptable behaviors. Each of these three are worthy of further examination because of their relevance to cross-cultural church planting.

First, music helps people manage their negative emotions. Many events in life produce strong negative emotions and may even lead individuals to the point of despair (Stein et al., 1998). People often listen to music to attenuate negative emotions and move toward a more positive mood (Lonsdale and North, 2011). This type of phenomena can be observed in Christian worship when individuals feel awed by the presence or goodness of God. Keltner and Haidt (2003: 303–304) argue that the emotion of awe results from encountering anything that is perceived as much greater than the self or one's ordinary experiences such that one feels the need to adjust one's thinking and values to incorporate this encounter into one's understanding of the world. In church planting contexts, encouraging such encounters in both non-Christians and Christians is highly desirable since such emotions and responses can move individuals toward Christ.

A second psychological function of music is to help individuals develop an identity and demonstrate their group memberships (Lonsdale and North, 2011). People form friendships more easily with people who share similar interests in music. Shared knowledge of the music, shared experiences with the music, and shared values expressed in the music enable individuals to form relationships along multiple dimensions. For example, it is likely to be easier for a person who likes Scandinavian death metal to form a relationship with another fan of this genre of music than with a lover of Brazilian Hip Hop because of the likelihood of shared common knowledge, common experiences, and common values. Thus a cross-cultural church planter, in coordination with the emerging leadership from within the church, can incorporate styles of music into the life of a nascent church that are similar enough to the preferences of the non-Christians in contact with the church (typically along the lines of the musical style) to help form relationships, but different enough (typically concerning the lyrics) to help transform their identity to that of Christ-followers.

A third function of music is to provide information concerning what behaviors and beliefs are acceptable (Lonsdale and North, 2011). Youth who have a weak foundation for determining their sexual ethics may listen intently to popular songs in order to figure out what are appropriate ways of expressing their developing sexuality. Similarly, Christian songs may provide information about God or Christ-centered relationships. The apostle Paul was aware of this teaching function and thus exhorted the Christians in Colossae to "teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts" (Col 3:16, NIV). This teaching function of music may also be used by contemporary church planters to teach about God, values, and behaviors that are appropriate for Christ-followers.

The other functions of music found by Lonsdale and North (2011), which include entertainment, relieving boredom, and keeping up with trends, may have fewer

applications to church planting. However, the functions described above (emotional management, identity development, and identifying acceptable behaviors) all correspond to basic needs of young Christians in church plants.

## Dangers associated with music in church planting

Conflict in churches over music is not new. For example, in the 18th century, the young First Presbyterian Church of New York documented the serious conflict they experienced when leadership tried to introduce Isaac Watts's hymnal to the church (First Presbyterian Church of New York City, 2014). Differences in musical preferences between generations and between those who have a Christian background and those who do not are real, and come into play in cross-cultural church planting. For example, the history of the church in Africa is filled with stories of culturally inappropriate music introduced by missionaries (King et al., 2008).

When new music is introduced into a church as the culture evolves, a common fear is that the gospel message will be diluted (Livengood and Ledoux Book, 2004). This may be a legitimate concern to which the church planter must pay attention. Livengood and Ledoux Book (2004) showed that there was a general decrease of unambiguously Christian words (such as Christ, Bible, baptism, Jesus, and gospel) in North American contemporary Christian music from the 1990s to the early 2000s. However, even if popular contemporary Christian songs potentially dilute the gospel message, it remains the responsibility of the church planter, in coordination with emerging leaders from within the church, to ensure that the specific songs chosen for the young church's worship services transmit the message upon which they wish to found the church.

Nevertheless, a more common source of conflict in churches concerns musical styles (Long, 2001; Towns, 1997). Although authors focusing on church planting usually emphasize the importance of music in worship and evangelism, they typically do not address the question of music-related conflict that is likely to occur (Malphurs, 2004; Ott and Wilson, 2011; Stetzer, 2006). These conflicts may occur because the musical preferences of adolescents tend to be stable and change little as they age (Delsing et al., 2008). Because these preferences are strongly influenced by contemporary culture which changes very rapidly, different age groups have different preferences. These changes are not limited to North American churches. For example, Farhadian (2007) reports that remote churches in Papua, Indonesia, are influenced by contemporary Anglo-European music. Palomino and Escobar (2007) describe how for over 40 years, the style of music in the most effective Latin American churches has changed approximately every ten years.

In order to reach the age group which is most open to the gospel (typically adolescents and young adults), church planters and emerging leaders may want to change the style of music used in worship, moving away from the music preferred by senior church members and moving toward a style that can more effectively reach the local community, especially the youth. This, in turn, may lead to significant conflicts between those who wish to introduce novel music and those who wish to retain the music which they perceive to be more valuable. In a church plant, such conflicts, if

poorly managed, are likely to have a very negative impact on the growth of the church and lead to a loss of membership (Dunaetz, 2008, 2011).

## Understanding conflict

Although conflict may occur between groups, conflict between individuals is common in churches concerning issues such as music. One person may introduce a change and another responds negatively to this decision. This is considered interpersonal conflict which can be broadly defined as the "process that begins when an individual . . . perceives differences and opposition between [himself or herself] and another individual . . . about interests and resources, beliefs, values, or practices that matter to them" (de Dreu and Gelfand, 2008). Achieving interests, obtaining resources, expressing beliefs and values, and behaving in specific ways may all be considered *goals* of either of the individuals involved in an interpersonal conflict. It is therefore useful to think in terms of goals when trying to understand a conflict.

Goals may be defined as an individual's "internal representations of desired states" (Austin and Vancouver, 1996: 338). These desired states may vary with time and depend on both the person and the situation. Each individual may concurrently have multiple goals in a given conflict (Ohbuchi and Tedeschi, 1997); these goals may be identified as *conflict-related goals* (Dunaetz, 2014).

## Types of conflict-related goals

Two broad categories of conflict-related goals are *content goals* and *social goals.* Whereas content goals concern readily observed resources and practices (such as the choice of songs to be sung during a worship service, or the style in which they are played), social goals involve psychosocial phenomena. Social goals do not concern the perceived limited resources which may lie at the surface of the conflict, but rather social elements which involve the other disputant or psychological processes within an individual (Jehn, 1997; Pruitt and Kim, 2004). In comparison to content goals, social goals may be much more difficult for an individual to identify and verbalize. Social goals may be classified into three categories: relationship, identity, and process (Dunaetz, 2014; Wilmot and Hocker, 2001).

### Relationship goals

The first category of social goals includes *relationship* goals which concern how the disputants want to relate to and interact with one another. These conflict-related goals focus on desired interpersonal processes and states involving the disputants (Curhan, Elfenbein, and Xu, 2006; Jehn, 1997). These goals may include maintaining or increasing interdependence and having agreeable interactions. In Christian contexts, such goals are closely associated with Jesus' command to love one another (John 13:34; 15:12). In a conflict, people generally want to be trusted and believed, as well as to have pleasant interactions with one another. These are examples of relationship goals.

## Identity goals

A second category of social goals concerns one's *identity*. These goals include how the disputants want to be perceived by themselves and others. They may include saving face or acting consistently with one's own values and behavior (Curhan, Elfenbein, and Xu, 2006; Wilmot and Hocker, 2001). Consistency in one's values and behaviors is an especially important identity goal in a Christian context because values are core elements of one's identity (Hitlin, 2003) and conscious inconsistency in one's values and behavior produces discomfort or distress (Festinger, 1957; cf. Peter in Matt 26:75 and Judas in Acts 1:18). In a conflict, Christians often want to be viewed as competent, morally and logically consistent, and worthy of respect. These are typical identity goals.

## Process goals

A third category of conflict-related social goals concerns the *process* by which the conflict is managed. These goals concern the behavior of the two disputants during the conflict process. People tend to desire the conflict process to be just and fair (Curhan, Elfenbein, and Xu, 2006; Ohbuchi and Tedeschi, 1997). Thus these goals may include the desire to have a voice in the conflict or that an appropriate set of decision-making rules (e.g., biblical norms of behavior) are used (Fisher, Ury, and Patton, 1991; Wilmot and Hocker, 2001). Process goals thus concern how the conflict will be managed and perhaps resolved. The desire to provide input into the situation, the desire to understand how a decision is made, and the desire for fairness are all process goals.

In cross-cultural church planting situations, all of these goals will be present whenever conflicts arise, including music-related conflicts. Church planters, church leaders, church members, and those on the periphery of the church will all have a variety of content and social goals depending on the conflict. The degree to which their goals are achieved in conflict will influence the likelihood that that they will remain in and be committed to the nascent church (Dunaetz, 2011; Harman et al., 2007; Leiter and Maslach, 1988). However, the relative importance of each of these types of goals in music-related conflict among Christians has not previously been examined. This study examines the relationship of content and social goals to satisfaction with the outcome of music-related conflict such as cross-cultural church planters may encounter. Understanding this relationship should help church planters to better manage the conflict and to minimize the damage that could occur.

## Hypotheses predicting what satisfies Christians in music-related conflict

Because multiple goals are present in music-related conflict, it is important that the church planter understand the importance of these goals in order to manage the conflict so that it results in the best possible outcomes for all parties involved. Since both content and social goals are present in music-related conflict, it is likely that the

achievement or non-achievement of each type of goal will contribute to the disputants' level of satisfaction with the outcome:

> $H_1$: In a conflict concerning musical styles, the achievement of content goals and social goals (including relationship goals, identity goals, and process goals) increases satisfaction with the conflict outcome.

If this is indeed the case, church planters, when faced with music-related conflict, need to take into consideration all types of conflict-related goals when attempting to manage the conflict.

Furthermore, because the social aspect of church life is so important, it is possible that conflict-related social goals (e.g., goals concerning relationships, values, or fairness) will be more important to church members than the conflict-related content goals (e.g., goals concerning the style of music used in church). Thus, when both a music-related content goal and a social goal are salient in a conflict, we can hypothesize the following:

> $H_2$: In a conflict concerning musical styles, church members who have a salient social goal achieved, but not their content (music-related) goal, will be more satisfied than people who have their content (music-related) goal achieved but not a salient social goal.

If this second hypothesis is true, it indicates that church planters need to work on finding solutions which prioritize making sure the disputants achieve their social goals, specifically their social goals which are congruent with the values of the nascent church and which do not require limited resources that the church planter may not be able to provide (such as may be the case with a content goal).

## Method

In the context of a broader study examining satisfaction with conflict outcomes concerning conflicts typically found in evangelical churches (Dunaetz, 2014), church members participated in an online role-playing experiment where they were asked to imagine themselves in a music-related conflict. When presented with various outcomes of this conflict, they indicated how satisfied they would be with each outcome.

### Participants

Starting with electronic distribution lists available to the author, people identified as evangelicals received a message inviting them to participate in a survey about their church experiences. Using a snowball sampling technique (Goodman, 1961) known as respondent-driven sampling (Heckathorn, 1997), 276 active members of evangelical churches were recruited and completed an online survey used to present the

experiment to them. Participants were asked to name a non-profit organization of their choice which would receive a $5.00 gift in order to thank them for their time. Wycliffe Bible Translators was the organization chosen most commonly. The participants were encouraged to send the link to the survey to their friends who could also choose an organization that would receive the gift.

The average age of the participants was 50.1 years. The majority were female (64%), had college degrees or above (74%), lived in North America (94%), and identified themselves as White (86%).

## Procedure

After giving their consent to participate in this study, participants were asked to imagine themselves experiencing various conflicts in a church. The music-related conflict was as follows:

> Imagine that you attend a weekly worship service with a style of music that you appreciate very much and which you think is very appropriate for your generation. For the last couple of weeks, the worship leader has been introducing songs that you do not think are appropriate because their style is out of place for the people at the service. You decide to mention something to him. Your goals are to make sure that appropriate music is used in the service, to maintain and even strengthen your relationship with the worship leader, to act in a loving, Christ-like way, and to make sure that decisions are made fairly.

Participants were then randomly assigned to two groups. In one group their content (music-related) goal was achieved, "The worship leader decided to go back to the style of music that you believe is appropriate for your generation . . ." In the other group, their content goal was not achieved, "The worship leader decided not to go back to the style of music that you believe is appropriate for your generation . . ."

Each participant was asked to indicate how satisfied they would be with the conflict outcome for two possible outcomes. In addition to being assigned to groups where their content goal was achieved or not achieved, participants were also assigned to a group where one of their three social (i.e., relationship, identity, or process) goals were achieved or not achieved. They indicated how satisfied they would be with the conflict outcome when the social goal was achieved and when it was not achieved. For example, those assigned to the relationship goal group indicated first how satisfied they would be if the conflict outcome included the achievement of their relationship goal: "he [the worship leader] spoke to you in a way that built up the relationship and made you trust him more." Then they indicated how satisfied they would be if the conflict outcome included the non-achievement of their relationship goal: "he [the worship leader] spoke to you in a way that hurt your relationship and made you trust him less."

Thus each participant indicated their satisfaction with two conflict outcomes. Some were in groups where the content (music-related) goal was achieved and indicated how satisfied they would be if one of their relationship goals was achieved or not achieved. Others were in groups where the content (music-related) goal was not

achieved and likewise indicated how satisfied they would be if one of their relationship goals was achieved or not achieved.

## *Measure of conflict-outcome satisfaction*

To measure a participant's conflict-outcome satisfaction, each participant responded to three questions. First, they responded to the question "What is your global evaluation of this outcome?" on a scale going from 1 (= Terrible) to 6 (= Excellent). Second, they responded to the question "How satisfied would you be with this outcome?" on a scale from 1 (= Extremely Dissatisfied) to 10 (= Extremely Satisfied). Finally they were presented a series of six cartoons of faces which varied from very sad to very happy; they were asked to choose the face that best represented their global satisfaction with the conflict outcome. Scores for these three scales were added, yielding a composite score with a potential range of 3 to 23 with a neutral point of 13 (scores above 13 indicated a trend toward satisfaction; scores below 13, dissatisfaction). For all six conditions (2 content goal conditions × 3 social goal conditions), Cronbach's coefficient of reliability (Cronbach, 1951) for conflict satisfaction outcome was greater than .75 (for details, see Dunaetz, 2014).

## Results

The first hypothesis predicted that the achievement of both the content and the social goals contribute to satisfaction with the conflict outcome. When the content (music-related) goal was not achieved, the mean satisfaction with the conflict outcome (across all social goal outcomes) was only 11.73 ($SD = 3.52$, $N = 276$) while the mean satisfaction when the content goal was achieved was 15.64 ($SD = 3.67$, $N = 276$). This difference, unsurprisingly, was significant ($t = 12.75$, $df = 274$, $p < .001$). However, more importantly, the achievement of the social goal also contributed to satisfaction (across all content-goal outcomes). When the social goal was not achieved, the mean satisfaction with the conflict outcome was only 8.94 ($SD = 3.85$, $N = 276$) but when the social goal was achieved, the mean satisfaction increased to 18.26 ($SD = 4.11$, $N = 276$). This difference was once again significant ($t = 33.62$, $df = 274$, $p < .001$). Whereas achieving the content goal (obtaining the desired style of music in the worship service) resulted in a 3.91 point gain in satisfaction, achieving the social goals resulted in an average gain of 9.32 points across all social goals. Further analyses indicated more specifically that the change in satisfaction gained by achieving the relationship goal (building up the relationship and increasing trust between the parties) was 8.92 points, the change gained by achieving the identity goal (acting in a loving, Christ-like way) was 11.10, and the change gained by achieving the process goal (making sure that the decision was made in a fair and just way) was 6.76 points. All of these differences were significant ($t$s ≥ 24.85, $df$s ranging from 81 to 100, $p$s < .001). Thus the first hypothesis was fully supported.

The second hypothesis predicted that church members who achieved a salient social goal (but not their content goal concerning the choice of music) would be more

satisfied with the conflict outcome than people who achieved their content goal concerning the choice of music but did not achieve a salient social goal. In general, this hypothesis was supported. The mean satisfaction when only the participant's content (music-related) goal was achieved was only 10.40 ($SD = 4.25$, $N = 132$), but the mean satisfaction when only the social goal was achieved was 15.86 ($SD = 3.87$, $N = 144$). Recall that 13.00 was the neutral point. Satisfaction scores above 13 (as was the case when only the social goal was achieved) indicate a tendency toward overall satisfaction with the conflict outcome, while scores below 13 (as is the case when only the content goal was achieved) indicate dissatisfaction. The difference between these two satisfaction scores was significant ($t = 11.16$, $df = 274$, $p < .001$).

Further analyses tested the second hypothesis for each of the separate social goals. When participants achieved their content (music-related) goal but not their relationship goal (the worship pastor spoke in a way that hurt the relationship and made the participant trust him less), the mean satisfaction with the conflict outcome was 9.45 ($SD = 3.83$, $N = 35$). However, when they only achieved their relationship goal (the worship pastor spoke in such a way as to build up the relationship and make the participant trust him more), but not the content (music-related) goal, their satisfaction with the outcome was 17.67 ($SD = 3.01$, $N = 48$). The difference between these two satisfaction scores was significant ($t = 10.93$, $df = 81$, $p < .001$). This means that the relationship with the worship pastor was far more important to most Christians than the choice of worship styles.

Similar results were obtained when testing the second hypothesis with the identity goal. When participants achieved their content (music-related) goal but not their identity goal (they did not act in a loving, Christ-like way when discussing the topic with the music pastor), their satisfaction with the outcome was 8.72 ($SD = 3.33$, $N = 58$). However, when they achieved their identity goal (they acted in a loving, Christ-like way) but not their content (music-related) goal (the new style of worship which they believed to be inappropriate was maintained), their satisfaction with the outcome was 15.68 ($SD = 3.93$, $N = 44$). The difference between these two satisfaction scores was significant ($t = 9.66$, $df = 100$, $p < .001$). This means that acting in accordance with their values was more important for most Christians than their choice of worship style.

Results were less conclusive for the process goals. When participants achieved their content (music-related) goal but not their process goal (the worship pastor refused to discuss how and why this decision was made), their satisfaction with the conflict outcome was 13.74 ($SD = 4.01$, $N = 39$). However, when they achieved their process goal (the worship pastor explained to them how the decision was made in a fair and just way) but not their content (music-related) goal, satisfaction was 14.35 ($SD = 3.89$, $N = 59$). Thus the satisfaction when only the social goal was achieved was higher than when only the content (music-related) goal was achieved, as hypothesized, but this difference was not significant ($t = .72$, $df = 89$, $p = .24$, 1 tailed). This means that a difference in satisfaction scores this large would have a 24% chance of occurring randomly in a sample of this size if, in fact, there was no difference in satisfaction between the two conflict outcomes in the general population.

# Discussion

In cross-cultural church planting contexts, conflicts are likely to arise over a number of topics, including music-related conflicts that may occur when preferences for music styles change with the culture. The church planter's response to these conflicts can have a great impact on the health and future of the young church. In any conflict, both of the conflicting parties have goals. These include the content goals which include the surface-level topic of conflict. But each party also has social goals that are often more difficult to discern. These goals include relationship goals, identity goals, and process goals. This study specifically examined music-related conflict and how the achievement of various goals contributes to satisfaction with the conflict outcome.

When members of a young church are not satisfied, they are more likely to leave the church. Thus in many situations a church planter will want to minimize the damage that can be caused by conflict by doing all that is possible (without sacrificing what is essential) to increase church members' satisfaction with conflict outcomes. This study hypothesized that the achievement of both content goals and social goals in music-related conflict would independently contribute to satisfaction with the conflict outcome. This hypothesis was strongly supported, not only for both content and social goals in general, but also for specific relationship, identity, and process goals. This means that the church planter should not simply focus on the content (music-related) goal, but also on all of the social goals in order to help church members be satisfied with the overall outcome of the conflict.

This study also found good evidence for the hypothesis that if only one goal was achieved (either the content goal or a salient social goal), church members would be more satisfied when only the salient social goal was achieved than when only the content goal was achieved. Church members were much more satisfied when only their relationship goal or identity goal was satisfied; these differences were statistically significant. However, they were only slightly more satisfied when their process goal was achieved compared to when only their content goal was achieved; this difference was not statistically significant. Their process goal was that the decision about music be made in a fair and just way. Perhaps this goal was not considered as important as the relationship goal (maintain or even develop the relationship) or identity goal (act in a loving, Christ-like way) because many of the participants came from large North American churches which often have an opaque decision-making process, habituating church members to not knowing how decisions are made.

## Implications for cross-cultural church planting and other mission contexts

Church planters and other missionaries can become very focused on the content of conflicts. In music-related conflicts, the missionary's content goal may concern the question "What style of worship will attract the most people to the church?" This is an important question and the response may sometimes disappoint existing church members. In situations like this, if the church planter or other church leaders believe

that a change in worship styles is necessary, they need to prepare for possible conflict. This study has demonstrated how important it is to focus on helping the other party achieve his or her social goals. Although church planters may not be able to respond to everyone's musical tastes, they can work on building up relationships, make sure that they and emerging leaders respond in a loving, Christ-like way, and ensure that decisions are made transparently in a fair and just way. It might not be materially possible for all the parties to achieve their content goals, but they can all achieve their social goals in music-related conflict, as well as in most other conflicts encountered in church planting. Although some social goals may be incompatible with the gospel (e.g., getting revenge), church planters should focus on helping those opposed to change to achieve their social goals which are consistent with the gospel, such as those used in this study (i.e., better relationships, acting in accordance with one's values, and fair processes).

In this study, the salient relationship goal was to maintain and even improve one's relationship with the worship leader. Positive relationships are valued by most Christians because interdependence, which tends to define relationships, is a natural and necessary part of human functioning (Kelley and Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult et al., 2004). For Christians, the quality of relationships is especially important because of Jesus' command to love one another (John 13:34–35). Thus in whatever conflicts church planters find themselves, achieving or not achieving relationship goals can have an important impact. This will especially be true for cross-cultural church planters working with people from collectivistic cultures rather than individualistic cultures (Ohbuchi, Fukushima, and Tedeschi, 1999). To help the other person achieve his or her relationship goals, church planters can affirm the importance of their relationship with the other person, acknowledging the legitimacy of the other person's emotions and affirming their commitment to the person and the person's well-being. This may include verbally acknowledging the other person's point of view by briefly summarizing it to make sure that it is well understood. It may also include demonstrating that the church planter is concerned about the same issues that the other person is concerned about such as the content of the songs or the loss of heritage. Developing a mutual understanding of each other's concerns will build common ground and should enable at least some relationship goals to be achieved.

Similarly, to help church members achieve their identity goals (in this study, to respond in a loving, Christ-like way to the music director) in the midst of conflicts, church planters can continually reaffirm to the church what it means to be a Christian and the values that distinguish Christians from non-Christians. If a Christian identity is defined by one's love for God and how one acts toward others, as well as by one's faith in God when the difficulties of life arrive, then the church planter can acknowledge these elements when they are manifest in the lives of the church members when changes to programs (such as worship styles) must be made. However, if the church planter communicates that being a Christian is defined by coming to worship services and upholding traditions, such an identity will be difficult to maintain during times of transition because traditions may be lost and worship services may become less attractive.

## Limitations

This study has demonstrated that social goals (relationship, identity, and process goals) can be more important than content (music-related) goals concerning conflict related to the change of worship styles in a church. The sample consisted primarily of North Americans; it is possible that people from other cultures will see content goals as more important than social goals. This is most likely to happen in cultures or subcultures which are more individualistic than North America (Ohbuchi, Fukushima, and Tedeschi, 1999). However, it is not easy to identify which groups these may be since North Americans tend to be extremely individualistic (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov, 2010). Other unknown cultural values may also influence the reactions of various groups.

This study examined average responses to achieving goals. Most people were much more concerned about their social goals than their content goal. However, this does not mean that every individual in a church will be this way. Some people, even if they achieve their social goals, will still consider their content (music-related) goals more important and leave a church when changes are made. Cross-cultural church planters will never be able to please everyone. Although some people who attend a church may care for little apart from their choice of music, the majority of Christians will gain greater satisfaction from responding in a loving, Christ-like way, improving their relationships with others, and seeing decisions made in a fair and just manner. It is the responsibility of the church planter to make sure that members of a young church are equipped and encouraged to see this happen.

This study has shown that music-related conflict in churches is likely to occur as culture evolves. Cross-cultural church planters, especially in resistant cultures, are likely to encounter conflict based on different generations' musical preferences. Church planters can minimize the damage that may occur from these conflicts by helping people achieve their social goals in these situations. The empirical data presented in this study demonstrate that achieving one's goals concerning relationships, identity, and processes in conflicts is more important than achieving the music-related content goal for most people, even in individualistic cultures. A church planter can use these concerns to transform conflicts into situations which are satisfactory to both those who may not appreciate a change away from established traditions and to those whose primary concern may be attracting the unchurched to contexts where they can hear and respond to the gospel.

## Funding

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