

Yvette M. Johnson

Cohort Capstone Project

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Alliance University

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Abstract

Despite the vast number of churches within marginalized communities, the increase in Crime still plagues the underserved and the disenfranchised. The failure to evaluate, address, and bring a solution to this intersection has caused the marginalized to face hardship, poverty, and a lack of empathy. Data has shown that since COVID-19, Crime has increased in immeasurable numbers as church engagement has diminished tremendously. Research has provided insight into the cause, effect, strategies, and desired outcome to eradicate the breach between the underserved and the church. The following study has identified the history of the problem in the hopes of getting to the root cause of the issue and compounding solutions that will serve both the church and the underserved within marginalized communities. The associative approach presents evidence that can unite, develop and help the church identify its purpose as it relates to engagement within marginalized and underserved communities.

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Chapter One -Introduction

Since the Corona Virus, also known as COVID-19, various cities within the United States have reported increased crime rates, and churches have experienced a significant decline in their social and spiritual presence within the community of underserved communities. Fewer families attend church, and the work of the ministry has been dramatically affected.

Today, churches suffer from low membership and attendance, despite their mission statements. An example (one that Jones Chapel Christian Church stands by) is "To prepare God's people for the work of the ministry that the body of Christ may be built until we all come into the unity and the faith and knowledge of Christ." These have become less ubiquitous week after week, as programs and event opportunities that once made political and social accessibility to underserved communities non-existent.

The biblical mandates of evangelism and discipleship are slim to none because church members have given up hope, fallen through the cracks, and become comfortable with the new norm of doing church from a social media standpoint is what keeps the churches within the body of Christ from being effective. The church is suffering from a lack of knowledge, and the camaraderie of its surrounding community is perishing. The church's lack of training, equipping of the disciples, and governing rules has tainted its relationship with the commitment to those suffering within the underserved community.

Criminal justice organizations throughout the nation have exhausted their solutions to keep underserved communities safe and crime-free. At the same time, the marginalized, whose socio-economic is less than the median threshold, and the underserved, that are discriminated against systematically, have suffered greatly.

As a researcher and an associate minister of Jones Chapel Christian Church, the aim is to present research and evidence to help identify the loopholes and identify what strategies can be put in place to make the church a model within the community. Effectively, other churches can bring Vance County, North Carolina, back to a community that once cared for one another as Jones Chapel Christian Church becomes the training ground to prepare and equip its leadership and the body of Christ. By this method, the once blurred lines of the community can be more precise and constructed into partnership with the criminal justice system, businesses, and industries to restore the City of Henderson in Vance County, North Carolina.

Capstone Focus and Rationale

The commitment needed to serve the disenfranchised and meet the needs of those in underserved communities within the church is lost.

Second Timothy, Chapter Three, Verse One through Seven, is more profound amongst churches today than ever, as the church is known to be more committed to titles and the number of congregants than it is to bringing deliverance, healing, and restoration to those in need within the community. The conviction of the great commission no longer burns in the heart of leadership as it once did in times past; Stewardship, commitment, and sacrifice have no significance as it pertains to the church's ordinances. The underserved need emotional, spiritual, and physical needs, and the marginalized communities suffer due to the lack of spiritual and biblical perspectives.

Sadly this margin of truth and the accurate understanding of what this scripture means has yet to be understood. Every Christian must apply and live out the scripture in Second Timothy 2:15, which states, "Study to shew thy self-approved unto God, a workman that needeth

not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." While the underserved lack education, employment, healthcare, mentorship, and guidance, societal morals are misplaced, and the leadership of churches today has not preserved the commitment to which they were ordained to go out and make disciples of all nations. The lack of application of this truth is why the underserved do not view the church as the answer. It is impossible to make a difference, as the church has lost its zeal and enthusiasm and confined itself to the four walls of the edifice with stained glass windows. Even worse now, after the Corona Virus /COVID-19, the church hides behind the four walls of its living quarters (called home), unwilling to labor for the harvest and to view church through a screen as evangelism is no longer the goal.

Research Question

Can the church be equipped to strengthen and build the foundation through biblical principles, address the underserved needs, and bridge the gap between Crime and societal norms within marginalized communities?

Definitions

Detriment: damage, harm, or disadvantage; something that causes injury, harm, or disadvantage

Marginalized: to take or keep somebody or something from the center of attention, influence, or power.

Societal Regulations: relating to society or social relations; an official rule, law, or order stating what may or may not be done or how something must be done.

Economic Expenditures: relating to or affecting material goods and financial resources; an amount of money spent, reduces a whole or on a particular thing.

Political Constituents: relating to civil administration or government; somebody who appoints another to act on his or her behalf

Fiscal Spending: relating to public revenues; to pay out money in exchange for goods or services

Scope of Problem

Unfortunately, Crime is unavoidable and happens in pretty much any community; however, the probability of it upsetting the marginalized and underserved is greater. In order to address the issues of how Crime has significantly impacted underserved communities, there needs to be awareness. A problem will not be identified adequately without exposing its impact and detriment on the marginalized. The impact of Crime has a triangular effect on communities, victims, and families, as well as economically, physically, and emotionally.

Some of the existing issues could be more security, as individuals affected by Crime in their area tend to take matters into their own hands, feeling a lack of safety, and align themselves against the established societal regulations and laws. Fiscal Spending, which is economic expenditures to serve and improve the community, are used to provide preventative combat and restore the repercussion of criminal activity. Health issues amongst the underserved as fear, stress, anxiety, and depression, rob the underserved and cause a decline in the health and welfare of those affected. Within the community's arena of local religious leaders, political constituents, and law enforcement, the underserved lack expectation, and belief in these entities. The problems amongst those affected by Crime within the community leave them with a lack of hope and faith to believe that nothing will ever change. As children in underserved communities are influenced by what they see, experience, and emulate, they, too, develop what seems to be a usual way of

life. This mindset continues from one generation to the next. There will only be change when we seek solutions and strategies and confront them to gain a resolution.

Chapter Two – Historical Informed Analysis

History of Problem

Crime in the United States has existed for several decades; in the state of North Carolina, Crime has increased in the last four years. Vance County has a population of 30,435, and the City of Henderson has 15,563. According to crime data, the overall crime rate of Henderson, including Murders, Robbery, Rape, Assault, and Burglary, makes it one of the most dangerous regions in the United States. Crime is ranked on a scale of 1 as low Crime and 100 as high Crime. From 2016 to 2022, the murder rate increased from 26.1 to 53.8, and the Rape rate from 39.3 to 60.5. Compared to the United States, Henderson's crime rates of 64.1 to the United States 22.7 and Property and Burglary 95.1 to the United States 35.4.

Sociological Crime is an endless social phenomenon as it has become a societal norm to today's generation, as they don't view Crime as the former generations before them. Physiologically, it is not perceived as a disadvantage to the strength of society. "The popularity of social media platforms such as Face book, Twitter, and Snapchat have transformed how we understand and experience crime and victimization." (Gordon F; McGovern A; Thompson C; Wood MA, 2022, 'Beyond Cybercrime: New Perspectives on Crime, Harm and Digital Technologies', *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, vol. 11, pp. I - VIII,) Crime is viewed more as an opportunity to get more likes on Social media than it is to the disgrace of a community.

Causes

Many factors contribute to the cause and increase of Crime in underserved communities, the pandemic as it has in many caused economic hardships leading to poverty; others include drug addiction, the inherited generational curses within the family composition, destitution within a poor urban community and last but not least parental neglect. The attitude of people abiding by the law is shaped and developed by their environment, which is why the needed changes are at the core and root of the problem and not the surface. Social issues must be acknowledged, and a cease-fire for all opportunities for crimes must be ineffective. Starting at the root means addressing the policies and governing rules that prevent the marginalized from getting the support needed to rehabilitate themselves and the entire community. Two causes of Crime that can be strategically resolved are racial discrimination and poverty, by the implementation of unbiased social services and appropriate rehabilitation programs for addiction as well as mental health and programs that provide educational resources that give the underserved the ability to better their lives.

Consequences

Crime poses an enormous cost to the criminal justice system. The extent of Crime has massive consequences within the family; Crime destroys the structure of the household due to lost wages and improper child rearing when a parent is absent due to incarceration. Crime in underserved communities places a stigma and provokes discrimination among those affected. According to the American Action Forum (2022, Tara O'Neill Hayes, the Director of Human Welfare Policy.) "The expense of operating the different components of the criminal justice system is exceptionally high. "The United States spends nearly \$300 billion annually to police communities and incarcerate 2.2 million people.

The societal costs of incarceration—lost earnings, adverse health effects, and the damage to the families of the incarcerated—are estimated at up to three times the direct costs, bringing the total burden of our criminal justice system to \$1.2 trillion." Ambiguous costs are also related to housing, feeding, clothing, rehabilitating, and providing medicinal services to incarcerated offenders. All this is funding that can be implemented to provide for the needs and endorse the welfare of the marginalized. Another consequence is the lack of involvement in churches within marginalized communities; what better way to address the problem than to introduce the underserved community to their creator and instill ethical biblical principles? The church plays an important role when it comes to crime prevention. According to Warner, B. D., & Konkel, R. H, in their research about churches having a positive impact on crime prevention, they stated that churches are argued to be "the most common and widespread institution in our society" (Cnaan,2002, p. 9). A significant consequence is that a church is a vital part of the community yet is not recognized enough to assist in the implementation to address the needs and problems plaguing the marginalized. Funding to bridge the church and state gap would be an excellent solution for the underserved.

Another finding states that "Although churches focus on religious activities, such as worship and religious education, they also engage in many other activities beneficial to sustaining both members of the congregation and the broader community in which the church is located. Several studies examining the role of churches in the broader community have shown that churches are commonly connected to the wider community in a variety of ways (Ammerman, 2002; Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Cnaan, 2002; Hodgkinson, Weitzman, &Kirsch, 1993; Printz1998)

Role of Organizations, Policies, Practices, Funding

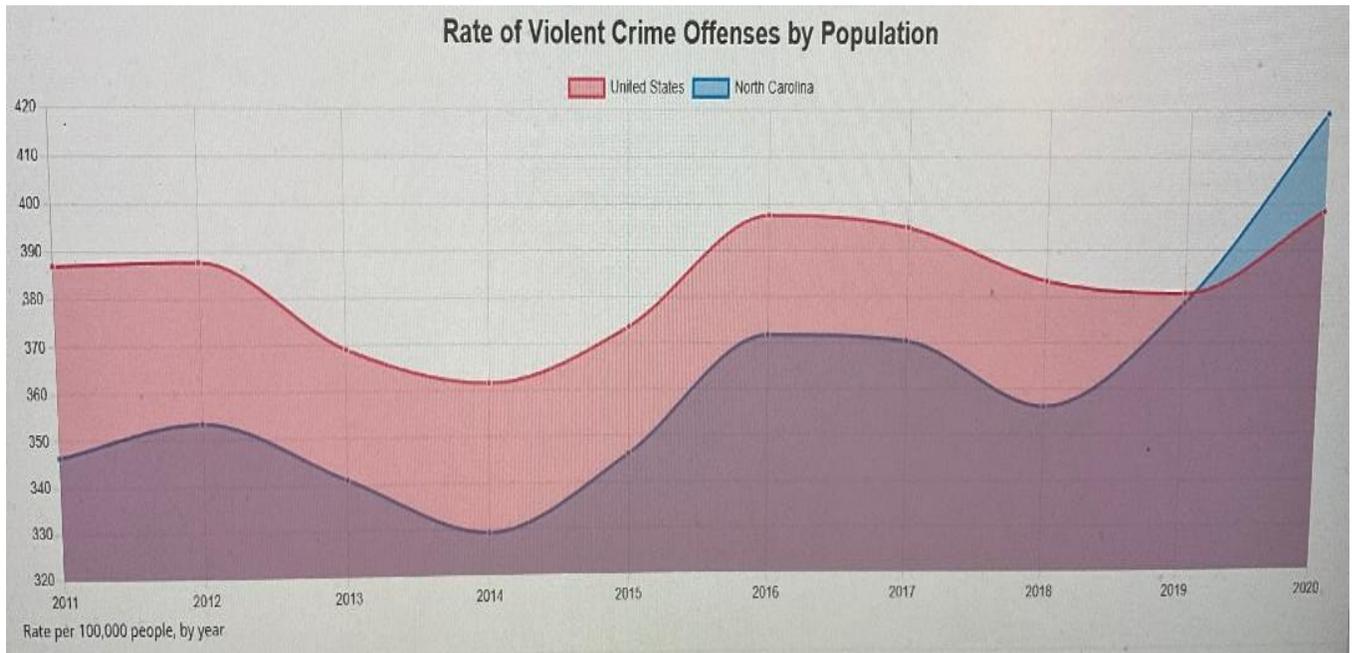
As stated previously, the involvement of the institution of church engagement and its role in assisting in changing the development of Crime within the underserved is essential. Although research has found that "Based on the argument that religious institutions encourage the transmission of conventional societal values and norms, as well as aid in the accumulation of social capital, several researchers have investigated the effect of neighborhood churches on measures of crime; however, few have examined their impact on social outcomes related to crime prevention." (e.g., Sampson, 2012; Slocum, Rengifo, Choi, & Herrmann, 2013)

Despite the few findings that the church plays a minimal role in the decrease of Crime, it is only fair to suggest that through biblical principles, the teaching of God's Word, and church engagement, it promotes family morals, establishes conviction of biblical truth and promotes faith and hope within the marginalized communities. The established principles within the church's ordinance can provide solutions to the root cause of Crime within the underserved, and the governing policies within the city legislation and judicial system can bridge together to reach a common goal to serve better and build up the marginalized communities.

Chapter Three – Data Trend Analysis and Interpretations

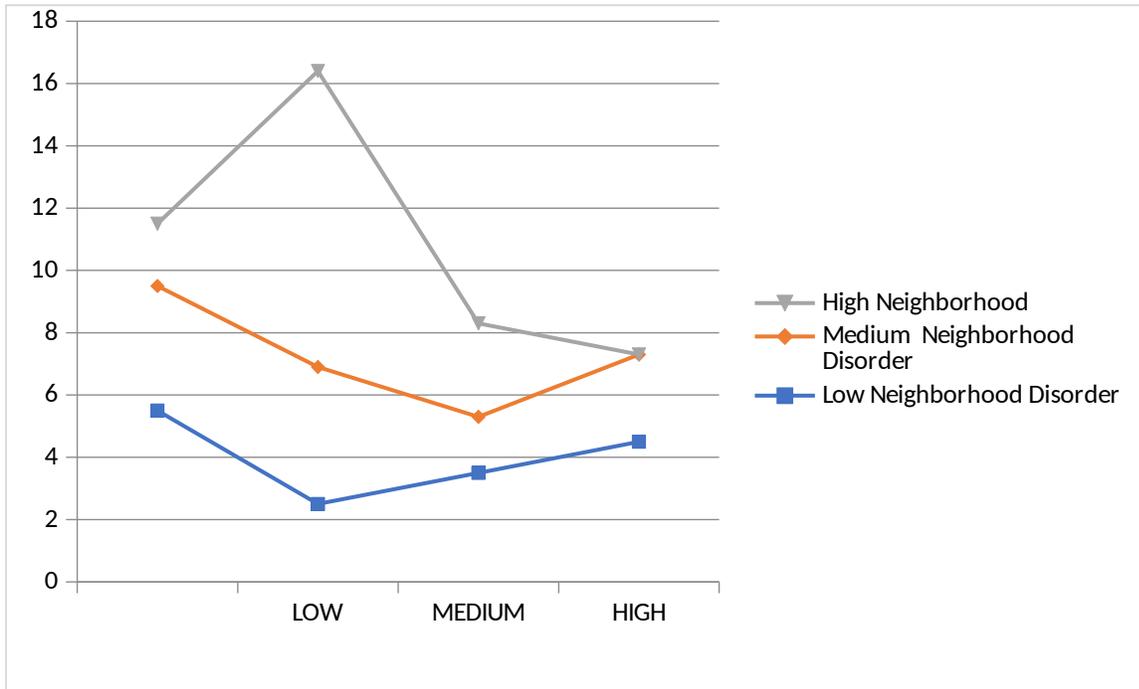
It is vitally important to consider the many factors that influence the increase of Crime within marginalized communities. The Federal Bureau of Investigations has data from its database that presents evidence that interprets reported crimes, although not extensive. Researchers within the bureau must identify various factors that lead to Crime to establish the data from being less misleading. Some things to consider are population size, economic conditions, and employment rates, prosecutorial, judicial, and correctional policies. Some others are the investigation of law enforcement, administrative and citizens' attitudes toward Crime and policing, and the adequate strength of the police force.

Graph 1 shows Crime data for North Carolina are derived from National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) reports voluntarily submitted to the FBI. In **2021**, the FBI estimated crime statistics for North Carolina are based on data received from **387** of **531** law enforcement agencies in the state that year.



This graph represents an accurate account of the spike in violent criminal offenses by population between 2018 and 2020 of the United States compared to the state of North Carolina.

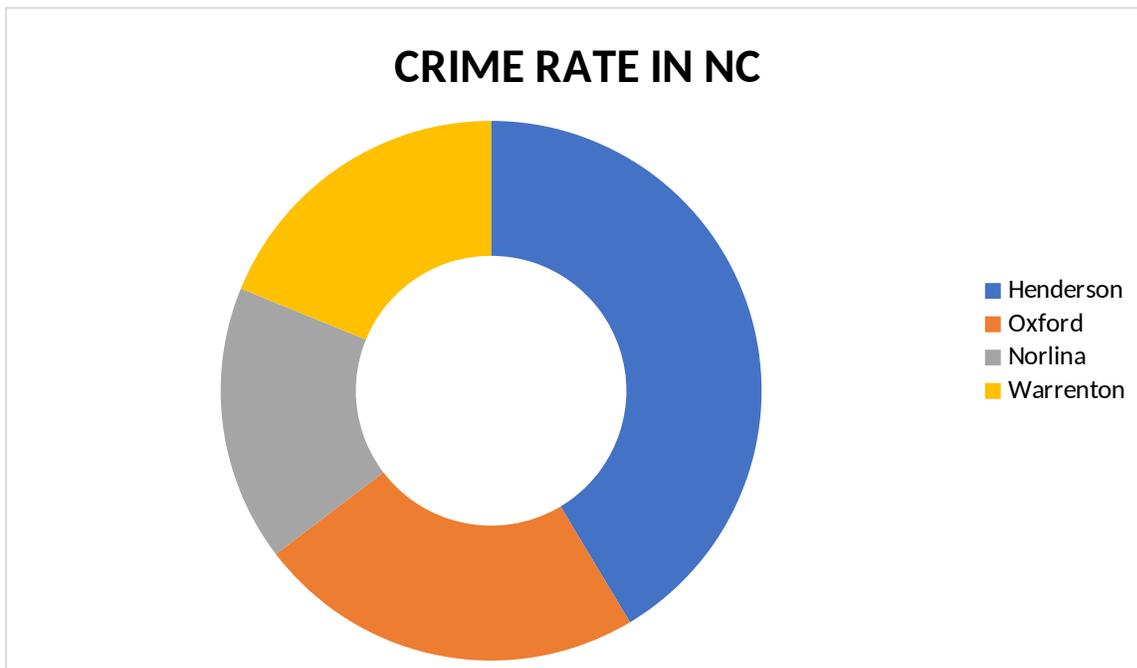
Graph 2 shows the marginalized neighborhood disorder and how it has a significant impact on general Crime within North Carolina.



The effects of religious involvement on Serious Crime at Low, Medium, and High Levels of Neighborhood Disorder a Religious Involvement Serious Crime Medium Neighborhood Disorder High Neighborhood Disorder Low Neighborhood.

Neighborhood disorder has been interpreted as a need for order and required control in a neighborhood. When neighborhoods present visible signs of a disorder, it refers to the breakdown within the marginalized communities. Observably, signs of this breakdown include physical and social, great populations of the community gathering on street corners, the selling and taking of drugs which promote menace to societal morals, as well as disruption of the peace and safety with the marginalized communities.

Graph 3 shows crime rate in Henderson, NC the 2019 crime rate in Henderson, NC is 754 (City-Data.com crime index), which is 2.8 times greater than the U.S. average. It was higher than in 98.8% U.S. cities. The 2019 Henderson crime rate fell by 10% compared to 2018. The number of homicides stood at 8 - a decrease of 2 compared to 2018. In the last 5 years Henderson has seen increasing violent Crime and rise in property crime.



Implication

Based on the statistical data, it seems that North Carolina is no longer known for the Bible belt state it once was referred to. In between 2018 and 2020 also known as the years the Corona Virus COVID 19 impacted our nation the area where churches are no longer engaged has proven the detrimental need for outreach and involvement within the undeserved and marginalized. Crime rates in North Carolina alone catapulted above crimes committed in the United States as a whole, and Church engagement also diminished. Research shows that the lack of church engagement makes a negative impact on how the underserved are affected.

Chapter Four - Recommendations

The Role of the Organization

Based on the data and historical knowledge, the involvement of the institution of church engagement and its role in assisting and changing the development of Crime within the underserved is essential. As research shows in the data that a lack of church involvement within the marginalized communities results in a higher number of crimes. The role of the church is to build up and not tear down. One of the issues is the establishment of the church, and it's lost of classification and purpose as to why it exists, this lost of purpose causes the church to be insensitive to those disenfranchised. It will take more than soup kitchens and food pantry's to solve the conditions and circumstances the marginalized communities' faces as a whole. When the identity of the church is tainted with superficial human morals and not Christian principles, the wrong missions is conveyed. Those attending church regularly become disconnected and fail to remember that the solution to reach the community is the same solution used that cause their hearts to yield to the truth and be transformed. Another issue is that the underserved community doesn't view the church as a solution to alleviate the struggles, bigotry, disregarded concerns and impoverished conditions experienced by those disenfranchised.

Some strategies to resolve and seal the gap between the church and underserved are to equip church leaders with the necessary tools and education to reach and establish connections with the marginalized. Showing care and concern for and towards the underserved establish relationships. Promoting big sister, big brother teams to go out into the community and evangelize in ways that cultivate and not judge. Establish programs that address the needs and provide educational resources that will foster engagement. Provide one on one, face to face sessions involving community leaders, all while sharing the Word of God.

Provided events that include children, establish pen pals to those incarcerated, and provide necessities to those within the homeless arena.

The rationale in promoting these strategies will birth cause and effect, the foundation groundwork to break out from behind the confines of the four walls of the church and set in motion the effect and affect that God can and will have on the disenfranchised marginalized community.

The Challenges

Some of the challenges that the church will face is identity crisis, understanding that the body of Christ, sole purpose is not just singing in the choir, listening to good preaching and paying tithes. The church must understand the true nature of evangelism, that engaging initially does not mean converting, but simply showing and presenting love, attention and consideration to the underserved agony within marginalized communities.

Some challenges the underserved may have is trust issues, in view of the fact that for many years churches have isolated themselves away from engagement, convincing themselves of remaining safe, and tending to their own affairs.

Ways to address these challenges is absolute engagement, involvement and walking out the Word as stated in the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 5:42 which say “Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. Embracing this charge by serving those who are in distressed situations is a great approach to engage with the community, and glorify God through selflessness.

Resources needed would be training, bible study, recognizing the purpose of the church, debunk the mythology of minding my own business and attending to my own affairs and tradition of

doing church and not being the church. Collaboration, willing heart to be the change one wants to see and being doers and not just hearers only.

Desired Outcomes

Making a major impact as a fortify front to annihilate every work of the enemy. Collaborate plans that will bring together Church leaders along side Community leaders to devise a plan that provides more funding for increased development and decrease the rate of Crime. Annual Forecast planning to implement new strategies within the community for the marginalized to produce a greater outcome.

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