

Strategic Leadership Academy Topeka/Shawnee County, Kansas

*Police-Community Relations Initiative
October 2019*



A collaborative initiative designed to demonstrate how a community can successfully work through heated community issues by utilizing strategic concepts to maximize the strengths of our diverse citizenship.

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Introduction

This initiative came about as a result of the Strategic Leadership Academy (SLA) Class I selecting Police-Community Relations as their class project. After researching and gathering information pertaining to Police-Community Relations, the class concluded that in addition to the initiative being a worthwhile project for the class, it would be beneficial to the community for there to be a high level of community engagement around the issue. Therefore, the decision was made to develop an initial plan, this document, with the intent of sharing it with members of the community and soliciting partnership from those interested in improving Police-Community Relations in our community.

SLA is a relatively new organization in the community, so we would like to provide some background and context for those who are not familiar with our goals and objectives. SLA is a community leadership program designed to assist Shawnee County minority residents of color with the requisite skills and knowledge to partner with other community leaders and organizations to positively shape the future of our community. SLA provides a combination of in-depth issue-based seminars and skills presentations designed to enhance awareness of community issues, as well as, self-awareness of leadership traits and characteristics. The program provides community immersion experiences and advanced skill development, which will enable participants to explore critical issues in Shawnee County's governmental, non-profit and business environments. Each member of the class participates in a class project designed to apply lessons learned in the classroom and community settings. As graduates and active members of SLA, our members gain the knowledge, skills and expertise to proactively engage community partners such as elected, government, corporate, non-profit leaders and the community at-large to create positive outcomes for the community. In addition to gaining the requisite knowledge, members also gain a network of knowledgeable and influential leaders who are making a difference in our community. The Police-Community Relations initiative affords the members of SLA to positively engage and partner with other community leaders and organizations, fulfilling a significant part of SLA's objective and mission.

After vetting several ideas, discussing and voting, Police-Community Relations was selected as the class project. The fact that this "class project" has expanded to the point that we are soliciting partnership from members of the community is a testament to not only the challenge at hand, but also our commitment to address the tough issues facing our community. The relationship between law enforcement and the public has reached a tipping point in many communities, resulting in individuals seeking out and purposely harming law enforcement officials. On the other hand, there has been numerous high-profile incidents wherein law enforcement officials have improperly exercised the unique authority that is entrusted to them. Our goal is to become active participants in building bridges of support, respect and trust between local law enforcement and citizens of our community.

Historical Perspective

The concept of Police-Community Relations can be found as far back as 18th century London, England, wherein citizen volunteers, referred to as “constables” would police the local parish. When in need of assistance, these volunteers would summon support from others, simply by yelling, summoning any able-bodied member of the community to assist in the apprehension of an individual believed to be in violation of the law. In those days, community members were duty bound to respond to any call for help. For those familiar with American history and western television shows/movies you know that in the late 19th century American West that law enforcement officials would call upon their posse. The posse was a group of armed citizens who assisted law enforcement officials with apprehending fugitives of law or for providing support for community defense against violent criminals. However, these practices are counter to a trend being established by some governmental bodies in the U.S. today. For over 147 years California residents were required to assist law enforcement officials when summoned; in September 2019 the State of California passed a law which made it acceptable for its residents to turn down law enforcement officials who ask for help with an arrest.

Impact of Relationship

The relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities have to be strong and based on mutual trust; the quality of this relationship is critical to maintaining public safety and good policing. Our (the public) willingness to put our trust in law enforcement depends on whether the citizens believe that police actions reflect community values; specifically, as it relates to treatment and engagement of the citizenry. On the other hand, law enforcement officials are reliant upon and receive unmeasured success when community members provide timely and relevant information regarding neighborhood concerns and crime. Law enforcement also routinely involves community members in the review and development of solutions for issues that law enforcement has jurisdiction via various programs and outreach efforts.

Clearly, the legitimacy and role of law enforcement has been questioned by many communities as a direct result of recent incidents involving the use of force and other actions taken by law enforcement. Large and small cities alike have held large protests, some resulting in riots, regarding the public’s perception of inappropriate action of law enforcement personnel. It is in the best interest of the citizens of our community to work toward improving Police-Community Relations, which will save lives, save valuable resources and facilitate positive outcomes for our community.

Community First

SLA’s primary goal in developing this particular document is to generate interest in our community coming together to put the community first. If community leaders choose to develop strategies for building trust between law enforcement and our community it can become a win-win for all parties. Together we can create initiatives specifically designed to meet the needs of our community; affording everyone an opportunity to participate from

inception to execution. Some of the topics to be discussed and addressed include, but are not limited to:

- Identifying and valuing the importance of sustainable Police-Community Relations;
- Identifying and acknowledging specific challenges in our community;
- Identifying and developing strategies where visibility of Police-Community Relations is most valuable to the community;
- Defining what transparency and accountability look like for both law enforcement and the community;
- Identifying opportunities to reduce biases that exist in the community and within law enforcement agencies;
- Developing cultural competency strategies designed specifically for our community;
- Identifying existing gaps and opportunities for enhanced Police-Community Relations;
- Identifying community resources, both within and outside of law enforcement organizations;
- Assisting law enforcement with targeted recruitment efforts;
- Partnering with community organizations to enhance their opportunities to receive external resources (grants, experts, training materials, etc.); and
- Identifying additional funding resources; etc.

Steering Committee

Conceptually, SLA will assume the responsibility of facilitating all of these activities in collaboration with community partners. Various subcommittees will be formed and chaired by the citizenry who will report to a steering committee that will consist of a diverse representation of the community to include, but not limited to:

- Victims/family members of crimes;
- Victims/family members of inappropriate actions taken by law enforcement;
- Law enforcement officials;
- Community/neighborhood leaders;
- Business leaders;
- Leaders from Education;
- Leaders of the faith community;
- Local government appointees;
- Citizens at-large;
- Attorneys; and
- Others, as deemed appropriate.

The steering committee's make-up should be broad and representative of our community; therefore, the above listing will most likely need to be expanded. All members of the steering committee will be required to participate in a series of training events to be eligible to serve on the committee. The purpose of the training is to equip the members with a shared and common experience so that as they engage the community regarding this issue, they will be

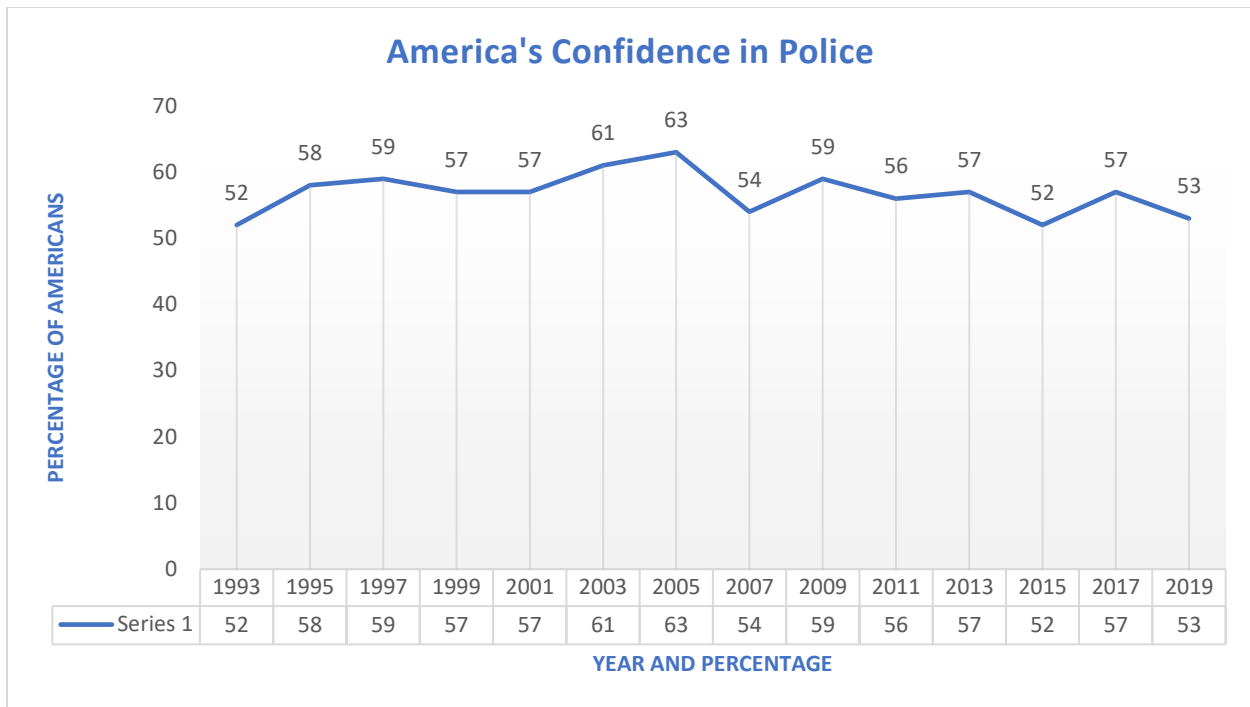
engaging from a sound basis of knowledge. It is hoped that this knowledge will assist the committee with understanding how to develop a strategic approach to address our community's concerns. Members will learn how to identify their bias, participate in key training events that local law enforcement officers are required to participate, study detailed information and lessons learned regarding specific issues within our community contributing to tensions between law enforcement and the community, participate in basic conflict management practices, etc. The steering committee members may be asked to participate in a Citizen's Police Academy. All formal communications to the public will come from the steering committee, utilizing its approved processes. The steering committee will be critical to accomplishing the goals of this initiative; therefore, much dialogue and care will be taken to ensure that the steering committee's structure, goals and objectives are clearly communicated and routinely measured, where applicable.

Confidence in Police

A significant part of the failures associated with Police-Community Relations is directly related to the lack of strategic community engagement for the continuous and changing demands of law enforcement as it relates to community policing. The failure to proactively and systemically manage these changes as a community does impact the public's confidence in the police. At a minimum, our approach should include:

1. Solutions for today's concerns and
2. A means to project and prepare for changes in advance for the purpose of mitigating the negative effects of surprises.

Even with the high profile national and local differences between the community and law enforcement, there still remains a high level of confidence in law enforcement. This fact is confirmed via numerous surveys, polls and studies. In fact, Gallup's 2019 poll indicates that a majority of Americans remain confident in the police, 53% expressed "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in the institution of policing. The 2019 statistics is 1% higher than it was in 2015 and 4% lower than it was in 2017. In 2015 the confidence in police was tied to a low in Gallup's 22-year (1993) trend regarding confidence in police. As you may remember, there have been quite a few significant and well publicized incidents involving white police officers and members of minority communities across the country since 2015. The chart below provides a historical reference regarding America's confidence in Police from 1993 through June 2019, odd numbers years only.



Source: Gallup 2019

To find out more information about Gallup’s survey methods and/or information attributed to Gallup in this report, you can visit Gallup’s website at:

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx>

When Gallup first began measuring Americans' confidence in the police in 1993, it was 52% at the time. One would think this rating, to some degree, was reflective of the trial of four Los Angeles police officers for the beating of Rodney King and violation of his civil rights just two years earlier. As you can see from the chart above, confidence in the police rose as high as 63% in 2005. While the above chart only identifies the odd numbered years, confidence in police rose to its highest of 64% in 2004. Since then, confidence in police has slipped, to included matching its all-time low of 52% in 2015. Again, it can be presumed that this reduction, in part, is due to the increased national events involving white police officers and minorities.

Given the high number of consistent negative news stories involving several incidents in which the actions of police officers resulted in the deaths of individuals and other incidents where use of force was questioned, the majority of Americans continue to express confidence in police. Therefore, while confidence in police is low in comparison to its historic average, its placement when compared to other American institutions demonstrates that a community of volunteers can make a difference. Citizens can positively influence law enforcement’s actions by working in collaboration with law enforcement to ensure a safer community; thereby, increasing the confidence citizens have in law enforcement based on measurable and objective results. While

these statistics are a reflection of the country's sentiment, the citizens of Topeka can strategically and methodically work to improve not only the statistical level of confidence, but also create a model of increased trust and partnership that is results oriented; especially in times of conflict.

As the above table indicates, in 2017 Gallup reported that overall confidence in the police had risen slightly in the previous two years, reporting that 57% of Americans had "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in law enforcement. The report also confirms what others have confirmed over the years as it relates to historical perceptions based on one's race and/or politics. Specifically, Whites had a higher level of confidence in the police than nonwhites, and the gap between the racial groups widened as Whites' confidence was 61%, while Blacks were at 30% and Hispanics were at 45% between 2015-2017. The 2012-2014 Gallup data indicates that Black and Hispanic confidence was much lower, respectively 35% and 59%, while that of Whites increased from 58%. Recent data also indicates that there also exist significant differences based on age, basically conveying that older citizens have more confidence in police than younger citizens.

The erosion of confidence in America's institutions is not unique to police. Lack of confidence effects both our public, as well as, private institutions. It is clear that U.S. citizens are not satisfied with the performance of our institutions in general, indicating an erosion of overall trust in America's institutions. Even with its current low confidence as a U.S. institution, the police remain among the highest-ranking institutions, trailing only the military and small business among the institutions surveyed in the 2019 Gallup poll. The public's confidence in police far exceeds that of institutions such as banks, organized religion, Congress, the Supreme Court and the Presidency. The listing below illustrates those institutions surveyed by Gallup and the public's level of confidence in them during 2019.

The implication of the Gallup survey for Topeka as a community is twofold: 1) with a majority of Americans having confidence in the police, our community can leverage this fact to enhance Police-Community Relations in Topeka; and 2) in comparison to other communities, Topeka and Shawnee County do not have some of the serious problems commonly known of other communities.

When combined with the desire of local elected and appointed leaders, local law enforcement and the community to positively influence Police-Community Relations the wind is at our backs. Now is the time to fully engage our community partners regarding Police-Community Relations. We, our community in partnership, can build an infrastructure that not only prevents and reduces conflict between law enforcement and the community, but also respectfully and fairly resolve conflict in a civil manner.

Confidence in America's Institutions

<i><u>Institution</u></i>	<i><u>Respondents with a "great deal or "quite a lot" of trust in the institution</u></i>
The Military	73%
Small Business	68%
The Police	53%
The Supreme Court	38%
The Presidency	38%
The Church or Organized Religion	36%
The Medical System	36%
Banks	30%
Organized Labor	29%
The public schools	29%
The Criminal Justice System	24%
Big Business	23%
Newspapers	23%
Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO's)	19%
Television News	18%
Congress	11%

Source: Gallup 2019

Community Resources and Action

SLA's initial review of public resources reveals some of the challenges faced by our community, mostly articles from various media sources. It is hoped that as this committee matures those who were actively involved in these challenges will educate committee members regarding their experiences. The lessons learned from these experiences can be incorporated in our future efforts. Class One also compiled a listing of potential resources, external to our local community, which will be shared with the appropriate committees in the future. Again, SLA is willing to assume responsibility for facilitating and organizing the efforts of this initiative; however, it is a community initiative, which will have to be branded, communicated and executed in accordance with the will of the steering and subordinate committees.

The work of local community and law enforcement leaders around the country has been very valuable and efforts in Topeka should be applauded; however, if our desire is to get ahead of this issue it is time to widen the net with a much more comprehensive approach. Topeka/Shawnee County is not like New York, Kansas City or any other community; therefore, we must develop programs and training to specifically address issues in our community. Systematically building an infrastructure and engaging community partners to include, but not limited to, law enforcement, community neighborhood associations, non-profit and other community groups will improve our Police-Community Relations.

Experience has proven that placing blame on any one person or group is unproductive. This initiative is different in that our hope is to encourage all parties within the community to execute a self-evaluation/reflection as one of the first steps in this process. By self-reflecting we will be forced to look at these issues with an eye toward how can we contribute as opposed to blaming others for their real or perceived failures. This initiative begins an era in Police-Community Relations that has as one of its foundational pillars valuing and understanding what others bring to this discussion. By valuing everyone's contributions we enhance the opportunity to realize the safe community we all visualize for ourselves, our family and our neighbors.

Initial outreach to the community must be comprehensive, as there are individuals, community, governmental, private and non-profit organizations who are presently engaged in some level of Police-Community Relations. These individuals and the organizations they represent have a wealth of knowledge and experiences that are vital to fulfilling the goals of this initiative. The efforts of this initiative to bring many of these resources together has the potential to exponentially address and resolve Police-Community Relations conflicts in their infancy.

If you are interested in participating in this community-wide initiative, please email your contact information (name, organization, position in organization, any expertise you have regarding this Police-Community Relations, email address and telephone number) to strategicleadershipacademy@outlook.com.

We plan on initiating efforts to reach out to the public over the next few months to develop a data base of members who are interested in participating in this initiative. We will be reaching out to all interested parties in the 1st quarter of calendar year 2020.

Additionally, I would like to encourage you to forward this document to others and encourage them to read and provide their contact information if interested.

Thanks for investing your time to review this document, I hope to work with you as we partner to improve Police-Community Relations in Topeka, Kansas.

Sincerely,

Cain Davis

Cain Davis
SLA Chairperson

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