

October 2020

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Recommended Citation

Tarlton, Ed; Harper, Robert; Blessett, Brandi; Brian N. Williams; and Carter, Jarrad (2020) "Addressing Social Inequity: A Case Study of Success," *Journal of Public Management & Social Policy*. Vol. 27: No. 1, Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalscholarship.tsu.edu/jpmmsp/vol27/iss1/6>

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Addressing Social Inequity: A Case Study of Success

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Social equity is relatively easy to define but much harder to accomplish. As a result, achieving social equity continues to be difficult in American society and across the globe. We present a case study of a collaborative effort by two nonprofits to conduct a program for public high schools and local law-enforcement agencies across the United States. The program was designed to acknowledge and address the historic harms that impact police-community relations. Our paper delineates the origins of the problem and our approach, presents data that demonstrate the positive impact the program had on bridging gaps, changing perceptions, and lessening social bias and inequity, and concludes with lessons learned.

Values are enduring beliefs that affect the choices made from a range of options (Rokeach 1973) and impact individuals, institutions, and organizations. Although societal values affect organizations regardless of sector, their impact on public sector organizations seems to be more pronounced. Bekke, Perry, and Toonen (1996), Schreurs (2005), and Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007), among others, identify a plethora of espoused values that impact the administration of public sector organizations.

Traditionally, American public administration has embraced three values: economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. These supporting values, which in many ways highlight the separation of administration from politics, are embedded in Wilson's seminal work of 1887 and in the work of subsequent scholars. Yet in response to growing unrest during the

American civil rights movement—and in particular the very visible public protests over issues of racial and class inequality and injustice—an additional value emerged.

In 1968, during the Minnowbrook Conference, social equity was put forward as an additional value of American public administration. Initially defined in 1971 as “activities designed to enhance the political power and economic well-being” of minorities, social equity is now defined as “the fair, just and equitable management of all institutions serving the public directly or indirectly or by contract; and the fair and equitable distribution of public services and implementation of public policy; and the commitment to promote fairness, justice and equity in the formulation of public policy” (National Academy of Public Administration 2005). This value serves as one of the four pillars or cornerstones that support the contemporary practice of American public administration and has been designated a foundational anchor (Svara and Brunet 2005; Blessett et al. 2019).

In the public sector, it is often emphasized that public servants want to make a difference because they are aware of the tensions that arise from the political and economic conditions that impact the people they serve. Historically, however, they have been trained to operate within a framework of administrative responsibility in which neutral competence or neutrality has been emphasized (Wilson 1887; Kaufman 1956). This friction and its effects are apparent when one critically analyzes the contradictions between past values and current conditions, as embodied in Box’s (2008) examination of five regressive-progressive value pairs. This has led to a call for a progressive public administration that integrates values into public service (Box 2008; Kernaghan 2003), as well as a call to actualize social equity in the teaching, research, and practice of American public administration (Blessett et al. 2019).

What, then, is the state of social equity in contemporary American public administration? This question was asked and answered by Frederickson (2005). As a core value in the field, social equity is no longer new. It has grown in stature, but much like Wilson’s thoughts about American public administration in the 1880s, it has not advanced in terms of deportment, behavior, or actions. In particular, social equity has been “missing in action and application” (Blessett et al. 2019) with respect to pedagogy (McCandless and Larson 2018; Gooden 2015a; Wyatt-Nichol, Brown and Haynes 2011); research (Gooden 2015; Blessett et al. 2019); and practice (Ricucci 2009). Many have called for more attention to be devoted to social equity in order to substantiate this skeletal pillar of American public administration (Rosenbloom 2005; Svara and Brunet 2004; Wooldridge and Gooden 2009; Johnson 2011). As Frederickson puts it, now is the time to walk the social equity talk (2005).

As a concept, social equity has been relatively easy to define but much harder to accomplish. Achieving social equity continues to be difficult not only within American society, but across the globe. This challenge presents an opportunity to address social inequity and, in the process, succeed. We present a case study of a collaborative effort by two nonprofits: public high schools and local law enforcement agencies across the United States. The initiative was designed to acknowledge and address the historic harms that impact police-community relations. We describe the origins of the problem and the strategies adopted; present data that demonstrate the positive impact our efforts have had on bridging gaps, changing perceptions, and successfully lessening social bias and inequity; and conclude with lessons learned.

Etiology

The state of police-community relations is perilous, as demonstrated by Grandage, Aliperti and Williams (2017); Greenberger (2016); and Solis, Portillos and Brunson (2009), among others. Traditional and social media accounts are replete with videos, images, and reports of tense, violent—and, too often, deadly—police-citizen encounters and interactions. What is the etiology or genesis of this persistent problem?

As Ward (2016) notes, the past has a presence in the present. In particular, the current state of police-community relations has been impacted by historic harms of the past. In their analysis of the Trayvon Martin—George Zimmerman encounter, Williams, Close, and Kang (2016) examine the social dynamics of America's past to shed light on the present-day U.S. criminal justice system and the relationship between the police and some members of the American public. Their analysis of police-community interactions along the color line converges with the assessments of others (Websdale 2001; Tyler and Wakslak 2006), and their and others' findings question police legitimacy and offer implications for public trust and public confidence.

Race has historically mattered (West 1994) in the formulation and implementation of policies and practices across policy domains (Rothstein 2017; Kozol 1991); in the context of criminal justice and policing, it continues to do so (Alexander 2012). Both sacred (Gabbidon 2015) and secular teachings (Lombroso 2006) have reinforced a national—and, in many ways, global—narrative of black crymythology. This narrative combines myths and pseudoscientific claims to depict blackness as unchangeable, transgenerational, and, thus, permanently inferior and predisposed to criminality (Close 1997). This notion of black crymythology did not occur in a sociopolitical vacuum (Karmen 1980), and much like its trans-generational impact, the historic harms of criminal justice policies and police practices have had a ripple effect. This, in turn, has impacted contemporary, relational policing efforts between segments of the public and law enforcement officers (Lynch, Patterson, and Childs 2008; Tyler and Wakslak 2006; Websdale 2004; Russell 1998).

With this understanding of how the past has affected the present, how do we begin to improve police-community relations? What role should nongovernmental institutions and organizations play? What about individuals? To echo Williams' et al. (2016) question, how can we gain insight from the historical and contemporary darkness that shadows police-community relations? How can we be proactive, in a coactive way, instead of reacting to problems as they arise?

The SCORE Program: Charting a Way Forward

Higher Education & Learning Professional (HELP) Consulting has conducted extensive work in this area. HELP is a federally recognized 501c3 nonprofit, founded in 2011, whose mission is to help students get “to and through” high school, college, and graduate school and on to careers. To accomplish this mission, HELP partners with youth-serving organizations, faith-based institutions, businesses, community leaders, and secondary and postsecondary institutions to enhance college and career readiness levels that will enable students to become productive members of society where they live and work.

HELP partnered with the National Football League (NFL) Foundation, and particularly its Social Justice Grant Matching Program, to design the Shaping Careers with Officers and Relating Experiences (SCORE) program. SCORE's mission is to improve community-law enforcement relations by building collaborative partnerships to enhance social connectivity and increase the college and career preparedness of youth and young adults. HELP was specifically designed to address the need for intentional programming in

support of the NFL’s Inspire Change Initiative. This initiative arose from the protest triggered by Colin Kaepernick’s activism and the vision of the Players Coalition, which sought to “make an impact on social justice and racial equality at the federal, state and local levels through advocacy, awareness, education, and allocation of resources.”

The SCORE program was launched in the summer of 2019 and is a collaborative effort between 32 former NFL players who served as partners, 10 high school football teams from across eight cities in three states, and 11 criminal justice/law enforcement-related agencies. Table 1 lists the partnering entities.

Table 1: Partnering entities

Category	Participants
NFL Player Partners (32)	Tra Battle, DeCori Birmingham, Michael Booker, George Brewer, Tory Collins, Tony Covington, Chris Dishman, Steve Edwards, Phillip Epps, Ray Farmer, Jr., Skyler Green, Rodney Hampton, Rickey Hatley, Jr. Bruce Herron, Liffort Hobley, Al Jackson, Daryll “DJ” Jones, Jorvorskie Lane, Fred Lane, Derek Lewis, Greg Lloyd, Emanuel McNeil, Carl Miller, Emery Moorehead, Cliff Odom, Nate Odomes, Mickey Pruitt, Arthur Ray, Jr., Howard Richards, Ron Smith, Bernard Whittington, Daryl Whittington
Law Enforcement Agency Partners (11)	Arlington (TX) Police; Atlanta (GA) Police; Brazos County (TX) Sheriffs; Bryan (TX) Police; College Station (TX) Police; Columbus (GA) Police; DeKalb County (GA) Police; Fort Worth (TX) Police; Fulton County (GA) Marshals; Fulton County (GA) Superior & Magistrate Court; Texas Highway Patrol
High School Partners (10)	Sam Houston, Arlington, TX; George Washington Carver, Columbus, GA; L. W. Higgins, New Orleans, LA; James Madison, Dallas, TX; Benjamin E. Mays, Atlanta, GA; Ronald E. McNair, Atlanta, GA; O.D. Wyatt, Ft. Worth, TX; Travis B. Bryan, Bryan, TX; Earl Rudder, Bryan, TX; L.G. Pinkston, Dallas, TX;

A two-day workshop was designed and conducted for each of the 10 football teams. A total of 254 students affiliated with high school football teams participated in the workshop (254 on Day 1 alone, and 141 on both Days 1 and 2)¹ and 50 law enforcement officers from agencies that served the jurisdictions in which the high schools are located. Each high school/workshop site for the SCORE program was selected based on state educational data to focus delivery to disadvantaged and low college readiness-performing high schools identified by socioeconomic status (% of students receiving free and reduced lunch vouchers) and low ACT scores. To satisfy the NFL Foundation’s “Social Justice Matching Grant” solicitation, SCORE addressed two of the three grant focus areas: (1) education and economic advancement and (2) community-police relations. Relative to the first, SCORE collected

¹ The total number of students who participated in the SCORE Program was 254. However, because of scheduling conflicts, only 141 were able to participate on both days. Hence, the number used to report student data is 141.

baseline data on students’ noncognitive college and career strengths, learning styles, personality types, and career interests. Participants were also given the opportunity to complete an assessment that would predict their ACT scores. Relative to the second focal area, community-police relations, students’ perceptions of community policing and community-police relations and their feelings about engaging with local law enforcement were captured.

The SCORE program collected similar baseline data from participating law enforcement officers regarding their noncognitive college and career strengths, learning styles, and personality types. In addition, officers’ perceptions of community-police relations and working with youth, as well as their feelings about engaging with local youth, were captured. Tables 2 and 3 provide summary demographics of participating students and officers, respectively.

Table 2: Demographics of Student Participants

Classification & Graduation Year				
	9th Grade - 2023	10th Grade - 2022	11th Grade - 2021	12th Grade - 2020
#	38	84	56	76
%	15	33	22	30
Gender				
	Male	Female		Male
#	252	2	#	252
%	99	1	%	99
Race				
	African American	Caucasian	Hispanic	Other
#	218	15	17	4
%	86	6	7	1

Table 3: Demographics of officer participants

Gender					
	Female			Male	
#	13			37	
%	26			74	
Age					
	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
#	10	17	15	8	0
%	20	34	30	16	0
Race					
	African American	Caucasian	Hispanic	Asian	Other
#	30	13	4	2	1

%	60	27	8	4	1	
Law Enforcement Role						
	Police	Sheriff	Marshal	State Patrol	Lawyer	Judge
#	41	3	5	1	0	0
%	82	7	10	1	0	0
Years in Law Enforcement						
	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+	
#	13	11	12	4	10	
%	26	22	24	8	20	
Highest Education Level Achieved						
	High School Diploma	Associate's	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctorate	
#	9	11	25	5	0	
%	18	22	50	10	0	

Table 4 Operational definitions

CONCEPT	DEFINITION
Blind Spot	When a person’s view is obstructed or blocked based on limited life experiences and exposures.
Dead Zone	When a person can’t hear or appreciate the perspective of another due to interference or a bad connection based on their limited life experiences and exposures.
Equality	Being the same in value, status, rights, and opportunities.
Equity	Being fair, impartial, and just in treating a person or a group of people based on their individual or collective circumstances.
Intersectional Identities	The parts of who we are—such as race, class, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, etc.—that shape how we view the world and make sense to us.
Perspective Prism	One’s view of life or the world based on their lived experiences. An optical device that enhances (improves and brings into focus) and distorts (obscures and moves out of focus) what we see simultaneously.
Social Equity	The fair and equitable provision and impact of policies, services, and programs.
Social Justice	The fair and equitable development, (re)distribution, and provision of opportunities and services to all members of a society regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, sexual orientation, language, socioeconomic status, religion, level of education, or any other social category.

Data-derived Positive Impact

Responses to Closed-ended Questions by Participating Students and Officer

SCORE participants—students and law-enforcement officers—provided pre- and post-workshop data and responded to a series of open- and closed-ended questions. Responses to closed-ended questions were based on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly agree to 5=Strongly agree).

As described above, of the 254 students who participated in the program, only 141 students participated on both days and, as a result, responded to both pre- and post-workshop questions. Therefore, we used these 141 students’ responses in our analyses.

The table below highlights pre- and post- closed-ended questions relevant to the social justice component of the workshop.

Table 5: Pre- and post- closed-ended questions

Question	
1.	I have a basic understanding of social justice and can provide a definition of it.
2	I feel confident that I understand social justice and can overcome obstacles to address issues facing my community.
3	I feel comfortable working with law enforcement to learn strategies on how to lead and manage efforts to address community problems.
4	I would be interested in a career in law enforcement.
5	I know what community policing is and can provide an example of it.
6	I feel comfortable in discussing social justice issues with police officers.
7	I am aware of the social justice issues that affect the community where I live.
8	I trust the police in my community.
9	I have a high level of confidence in the local police in my community.
10.	I would like to work with local police and community organizations to improve my neighborhood.
11.	I understand that police cannot ensure the safety of a community alone and will have more success with the help of community members.
12.	I believe it’s important to have a relationship with someone affiliated with a law enforcement agency.
13.	I would like to have someone affiliated with a law enforcement agency to be my mentor.
14.	I know the "proper protocol" that I need to follow if a police officer approaches me while I'm walking.
15.	I know the "proper protocol" that I need to follow if a police officer approaches me while I am driving or riding as a passenger in a vehicle.

The breakdown of pre- and post-responses to the questions is shown in Table 6. As can be seen, the changes in responses are dramatic.

Table 6: Student social justice pre- & post workshop question data

I have a basic understanding of social justice and can provide a definition of it.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	12	50	48	29	2
Post	84	40	14	1	2
I feel confident that I understand social justice and can overcome obstacles to address issues facing my community.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	28	54	47	9	3
Post	87	39	13	0	2
I feel comfortable working with law enforcement to learn strategies on how to lead and manage efforts to address community problems.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	27	52	46	10	6
Post	87	37	14	1	2
I would be interested in a career in law enforcement.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	9	22	49	33	28
Post	61	30	33	10	7
I know what community policing is and can provide an example of it.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	13	28	49	46	5
Post	84	32	20	2	3
I feel comfortable in discussing social justice issues with police officers.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	31	17	25	53	15
Post	76	41	19	2	3
I am aware of the social justice issues that affect the community where I live.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	28	55	43	13	3
Post	85	36	15	2	3
I trust the police in my community.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	14	35	50	24	18
Post	74	35	27	3	2

I have a high level of confidence in the local police in my community.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	16	33	58	20	14
Post	84	29	26	0	2

I would like to work with local police and community organizations to improve my neighborhood.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	15	34	56	19	17
Post	72	42	21	4	2

I understand that police cannot ensure the safety of a community alone and will have more success with the help of community members.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	15	55	49	14	8
Post	96	41	11	1	3

I would like to have someone affiliated with a law enforcement agency to be my mentor.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	16	36	60	22	7
Post	72	44	20	2	3

I know the "proper protocol" that I need to follow if a police officer approaches me while I'm walking.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	32	58	35	13	3
Post	84	40	14	1	2

I know the "proper protocol" that I need to follow if a police officer approaches me while I am driving or riding as a passenger in a vehicle.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	31	67	31	8	4
Post	92	36	11	0	2

A total of 50 law enforcement officers participated on both Day 1 and Day 2. Table 7 highlights the pre- and post- closed-ended questions relevant to the social justice component of the workshop for officers.

Table 7 Law enforcement social justice questions

Question	
1.	I feel comfortable in discussing social justice issues with youth.
2.	I feel comfortable in discussing social justice issues with youth.
3.	I am confident that I have the tools to help youth develop strategies to meet their personal, academic, and career goals.
4.	I feel confident that I am equipped with foundational principles to work with youth to co-produce community policing strategies to prevent crime.
5.	I am confident that I have a thorough understanding of the challenges that youth face in the community I serve.
6.	I am confident that I have a thorough understanding of the youths' perceptions of police in the community I serve.

The breakdown of officers' pre- and post-responses is shown in Table 8. Similar to student participants, each response shows a striking change in assessment at the end of the two-day workshop.

Table 8 Law enforcement social justice pre- post- workshop question data

I feel comfortable in discussing social justice issues with youth.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	32	17	1	0	0
Post	43	7	0	0	0

I am confident that I have the knowledge to engage youth in identifying solutions to social justice problems in their community.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	25	20	4	1	0
Post	42	8	0	0	0

I am confident that I have the tools to help youth develop strategies to meet their personal, academic, and career goals.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	23	22	5	0	0
Post	40	10	0	0	0

I feel confident that I am equipped with foundational principles to work with youth to co-produce community policing strategies to prevent crime.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	30	17	3	0	0
Post	42	7	1	0	0
I am confident that I have a thorough understanding of the challenges that youth face in the community I serve.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	20	22	7	1	0
Post	37	10	3	0	0
I am confident that I have a thorough understanding of the youths' perceptions of police in the community I serve.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pre	18	24	7	1	0
Post	37	13	0	0	0

The 141 students who participated on both days and the 50 law enforcement officer participants were also asked a series of five questions after the workshop had ended. Like the pre- and post- questions above, responses were ranked on 5-point Likert scale (1=*Strongly agree* to 5=*Strongly disagree*). Student cohort and law-enforcement cohort questions are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Student & Law-enforcement cohort post- assessment questions

Student Question	
1.	The SCORE Program was a valuable use of my time.
2.	The SCORE Program enhanced my ability to have challenging conversations on social justice issues with police officers.
3.	The SCORE Program increased my awareness of social justice issues in my community.
4.	During the 2-day workshop, I believe trust was developed between participants.
5.	The SCORE Program can be used as a model for improving law enforcement interactions with youth.
Law-enforcement Question	
1.	The SCORE Program was a valuable use of my time.
2.	The SCORE Program enhanced my ability to have challenging conversations on social justice issues with youth participants.
3.	The SCORE Program increased my awareness of youths' needs in the community that I serve.

4. During the 2-day workshop, I believe trust was developed between participants.
5. The SCORE Program can be used as a model for improving law enforcement interactions with youth.

The breakdown of post-experience responses by student and officer cohorts is shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Student & Law-enforcement post- assessment questions

Student					
The SCORE Program was a valuable use of my time.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	97	28	11	2	3
%	69	20	8	1	2
The SCORE Program enhanced my ability to have challenging conversations on social justice issues with police officers.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	94	31	13	0	3
%	67	22	9	0	2
The SCORE Program increased my awareness of social justice issues in my community.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	93	33	11	1	3
%	66	23	7	1	2
During the 2-day workshop, I believe trust was developed between participants.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	84	43	10	1	3
%	60	30	7	1	2
The SCORE Program can be used as a model for improving law enforcement interactions with youth.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	96	35	7	0	3

%	68	25	5	0	2
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Law-enforcement

The SCORE Program was a valuable use of my time.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	44	5	0	0	1
%	88	10	0	0	2

The SCORE Program enhanced my ability to have challenging conversations on social justice issues with youth participants.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	36	12	1	1	0
%	72	24	2	2	0

The SCORE Program increased my understanding of youths’ needs in the community I serve.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	33	12	4	1	0
%	66	24	8	2	0

During the 2-day workshop, I believe trust was developed between participants.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	42	7	0	0	1
%	84	14	0	0	2

The SCORE Program can be used as a model for improving law enforcement interactions with youth.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	45	4	0	0	1
%	90	8	0	0	2

The are many takeaways from the post-workshop data. In particular, trust was increased, as evidenced by 90% and 98% of students and officers, respectively, agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. Similarly, 89% of students and 96% of officers either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the ability to engage in challenging conversations on social justice issues was enhanced; 89% of students and 90% of officers either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that their awareness of local community

social justice issues had been increased; 89% of students and 98% of officers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the SCORE program was a valuable use of their time; and 93% of students and 98% of officers either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the SCORE program can be used as a model to improve law-enforcement interactions with youth.

Responses to Open-ended Questions by Participating Students and Officers.
Student and officer participants were also asked three open-ended questions:

1. What do you feel was positive about the SCORE Program?
2. What do you feel needs to change to improve the SCORE Program?
3. What is your overall impression of the SCORE Program?

Responses to questions related to social justice and police-community relations also highlighted the impact of the two-day workshop. Both cohorts agreed on some positive aspects of SCORE. Student responses included “I learned how to see myself and others in a whole new way without judging people;” “It taught me how to solve problems by looking on both [police and community] perspectives;” “Interactions with the Cops;” “Helped us with different points of view in different situations;” “We got to work with police officers;” “We got to learn stuff we don’t address during school;” “The SCORE Program taught me many life lessons and how to deal with the police;” “We got to build relationships with police officers;” “They gave me information on stuff I really didn’t know about myself, social justice and the police;” “It taught me the importance of social justice;” and “They had Cops that were just in their normal lives helping us understand issues in the community.”

Students’ sentiments were shared by the officers—for instance, “I got to interact with kids while being an officer to bridge the gap;” “I feel the positive aspects of the SCORE program were the ability for the participating youth to express themselves freely regarding their perception of law enforcement. It gave us an opportunity to engage in thoughtful discussions about social inequalities they see and allowed them to see the potential career options based on their strengths and preferences;” “Working with the youth of the community;” “It was fantastic to be able to take away the barrier created by the uniform. It allowed me to have engaging conversations with the youth that I otherwise would not be able to have;” and “It allowed the students to learn more about what they could do to help and better the community, instead of thinking they cannot do anything because they are just kids. They were able to work together to identify some of these issues and come up with alternative solutions to them. It also helped lay the foundation to bridge the gap between the kids today and officers.”

In response to the second question (“What do you feel needs to change to improve the SCORE Program?”), both students and officers reported a need for more interaction with each other. Participating officers’ responses included “More interactive activities;” “More small group conversations to express real feelings and emotions;” “More open dialogue;” “Maybe advertising more to get more kids involved and more hands-on activities to keep the kids engaged;” “The program probably should be a three-day course;” and “I would like to see more engagement between the youth and the police. I would like to hear more about the initial feelings the youth have towards police.” The views of officers were shared by participating students: “More time to go over everything;” “More group communication time;” “More hands-on activities;” and “It just needs to keep growing. I wish it would be able to reach out to outgoing seniors.”

Responses to the third open-ended question (“What is your overall impression of the SCORE Program?”) were equally similar and bridged the student-officer divide. Student responses included “It helped me a lot and gave me new perspectives about life and equality;” “It was really good and I liked it a lot even though it was boring at times but I grew as a person;” “The SCORE Program is helpful and can help you relate with others;” “It was a great way for me to not judge the police based off of the things that are happening in the world;” and “I was very impressed with the SCORE program overall. I thought it did a great job with integrating the officers into the program and facilitating a discussion between the officers and the youth.” These views converged with those of officers: “I know this is an excellent program that is truly impactful to the student participants and it is easy to set the program up. I loved participating in the program! I look forward to seeing the growth of the program;” “I love how this is trying to bridge the gap;” “I think it is a great program and the intention of gathering youth with law enforcement is a great concept;” and “Great program and every community could benefit from introducing this program.”

Lessons Learned

Fluid and dynamic values and value sources have evolved with American society (Rosenbloom 1983; Lan and Anders 2000). These have impacted our theoretical (and historical) understanding and the contemporary practice of American public administration. Akin to the unrest during the American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, today swaths of the American public are troubled by many of the interactions between the police and some segments of the communities they serve. This has been brought into high relief by global protests following the recent deaths of unarmed African Americans while in police custody. The troubled times of the past and the present bring into sharp focus the fourth pillar of public administration: equity (Svara and Brunet 2005; Blessett et al. 2019). This value has resulted in a call for, and given rise to, the re-emergence of an externally focused and more inclusive, progressive approach to American public administration.

The SCORE program represents a case study of success that lies outside the exclusive confines of a public institution or organization. It reflects a cross-sectorial and interorganizational response to a national problem. In spite of the historic harms that negatively affect relational policing efforts and the contemporary obstacles and challenges that affect opportunities to co-produce public safety and public order, HELP Consulting, in conjunction with its partnering public and nonprofit organizations, has demonstrated some success in changing perceptions, bridging gaps, revealing inequities, and lessening social bias.

Based on our experiences during the summer of 2019, we offer the following lessons learned.

1. There is a need to be inclusive in understanding and addressing a problem. This requires the collective awareness of individuals and institutions that span the service sector.
2. There is a need to be intentional in co-designing and co-delivering a program to address a problem. This requires a willingness to engage in, embrace, and model a power-with, as opposed to a power-over, approach.
3. There is a need to be innovative. This requires a willingness to take risks in bringing together entities that may not normally work together.

4. There is a need to look beyond the optics: When OPPORTUNITY IS NO WHERE, OPPORTUNITY IS NOW HERE!

At the intersection of past and present, in terms of police-community relations, our case study highlights a path forward to address an urgent problem.

Author Biographies

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Robert C. K. Harper, is the president of The HOPE Initiative. With more than 15 years of leadership experience in higher education, he has a successful track record in preparing students for postsecondary education in the 21st century workforce. As a change agent, his mission is to address social injustice, inequality, and economic differences through workforce readiness and social justice education.

Brandi Blessett, is an associate professor and director of the Master's of Public Administration program at the University of Cincinnati. Her research focuses on administrative responsibility, disenfranchisement, and social equity. Dr. Blessett's research agenda advocates for ethical practices, professional standards, and accountability measures to promote equity, justice, and fairness for all segments of U.S. society.

Brian N. Williams, is an associate professor of public policy in the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy at the University of Virginia. He is the founder and director of the Public Engagement in Governance Looking, Listening and Learning Laboratory (PEGLLLab). As a scholar committed to action research, he examines the interplay between race, policing, and public governance. His efforts are devoted to redesigning the policies and practices that improve police-community relations.

Jarrad Carter, holds an M.S. in Public Leadership and is a doctoral student in Public Administration and Management at the University of North Texas. His research focuses on how the collaborative efforts of public-private partnerships can effectively address community issues and advance innovative approaches in using data to inform programs, public policy, and best practices. Currently, Mr. Carter continues to advocate for social justice with the Dallas County Second Chance Community Initiative Program (SCIIP) and the Urban SERCH Institute at the University of North Texas at Dallas.

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