

## Community policing and 'by the book' not incompatible

William McManus, For the Express-News

Published 12:00 am CDT, Sunday, August 26, 2018



Photo: KIN MAN HUI /SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS

SAPD sergeant Tom Alonso, right, gets a handshake from a homeowner off Hackberry during a patrol of the Problem Oriented Policing (POP) Unit on Mar. 16, 2010. The man appreciated the extra presence of police in the area.

Re: "Empathetic policing carries hidden cost,"  
Another View by Shefali V. Patil, Wednesday:

This commentary reveals a lack of understanding of modern-day policing. Drawing her conclusions from watching body-worn camera footage, she dismantles nearly three decades of hardworking police officers' efforts to collaborate and partner with their communities.

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The author's premise behind why police departments have chosen to work with citizens to address crime and quality of life issues is simply wrong. Her wide-ranging assumptions omit the benefits of police working with the people we protect.

Ms. Patil poses that cops resort to "gentler policing philosophies" when they believe they are misunderstood and underappreciated. Police do not partner with communities because we feel underappreciated and misunderstood. We do it because it improves our collective ability to deter and solve crime.

Communities and police departments that have a healthy working relationship have fewer problems, and the problems that do arise are easier to resolve. Communities that work closely with their officers feel safer, as well.

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I've never known the victim of a violent crime not to appreciate an empathic and compassionate officer or detective. Working together with homeowners



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associations and other neighborhood groups does not prevent or hinder officers from “doing things by the book” as Ms. Patil asserts. Training, rules, regulations and the law require a “by the book approach.” Community policing is in no way a deterrent to that approach.

Community policing philosophies do not lead police officers to be “less cautious and make more mistakes.” A strong relationship with the community and neighborhood leaders makes our work easier and creates a safer environment for officers to work in.

Any

redirection of Department of Justice grant funds should come only after consultation and discussion with law enforcement professionals, and not simply because of a psychological assumption based solely on viewing body-camera footage as this op-ed advocates.

I do agree with professor Patil that police work is, foremost, a matter of protecting human life. I know this firsthand after seeing the results of officers and communities working closely together to make neighborhoods safer.

William McManus is San Antonio's police chief.

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