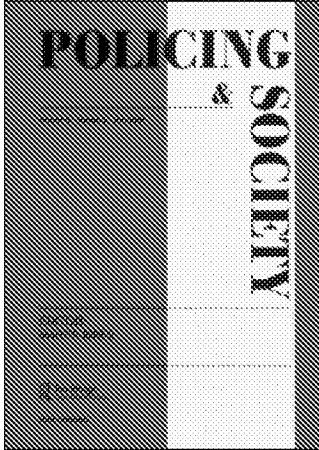


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## Policing and Society An International Journal of Research and Policy

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:  
<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713646669>

### Book Review

Online Publication Date: 01 September 2007

To cite this Article: (2007) 'Book Review', Policing and Society, 17:3, 295 - 297

To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/10439460701497378

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10439460701497378>

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## Book Review

### **Leadership in the LAPD: Walking the Tightrope**

RENFORD REESE

North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2005

pp. 192; ISBN-10: 1-59460-020-1, ISBN-13: 978-1-594 60-020-3

Although very few manuscripts on policing have focused on leadership, many authors either directly or indirectly include it in their analysis (i.e., Dantzker, 1996; Lumb, 1995). Dantzker (1996) sampled police chiefs across the country and found that leadership was cited as the most important skill to possess in order to be viewed as effective. Carter (1994) noted that the most common complaint from the rank and file within police organizations was a lack of leadership from their chief. Leadership is routinely discussed within the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), and has been accentuated within the last five years. Despite the seemingly common acceptance of leadership as a necessary character trait for a police chief, very few texts provide a detailed look at the historical development of the chief's office in a single jurisdiction. Reese's *Leadership in the LAPD* fills that void for one metropolitan department.

In his review of leadership within the LAPD, Reese draws an analogy between balancing administration and politics and walking a tightrope. Reese clearly demonstrates an understanding of this dichotomy, and presents it in a manner that students and practitioners can understand. He clearly explains his definition of leadership as both internal—maintaining the respect and support of the rank and file, and external—maintaining the respect and support of the community. Each chapter then focuses on how individual chiefs since 1978 have fared against his definition.

Reese argues that each chief failed in either his internal or external leadership, thus failing to lead. Reese argues, "Parks, like Gates and Williams, failed in the important exercise of balancing internal and external forces". Using this artificial dichotomy, he fails to consider two major points that affect every chief of police in major metropolitan areas. First, the vast majority of all chiefs from large urban areas serve only approximately five years. The reality of serving as a chief of police in modern times is that it is a political position that is often short-lived. Chiefs who remain longer often have a laundry list of affronts to the public, similar to those Reese offers as evidence that Chief Daryl Gates had violated the public's trust one too many times.

Reese notes that statements made by Gates when he was commenting on the chokehold were widely perceived as derogatory toward African-Americans and Latinos early in his tenure. Coupled with the rationalization of the shooting of Eulia Love by police officers, and finally the Rodney King case, Reese states that Chief Gates' "ouster was the culmination of more than thirteen years of insensitive remarks, excessive force, and controversial incidents".

A more detailed look at the politics of the decision-making within the LAPD and the City of Los Angeles would allow for a much clearer picture of Gates' resignation. For example, Chief Gates was adamant against moving away from the chokehold as a non-lethal use of force option in large part because of the alternative, the baton. He considered the use of the baton as much more barbaric and hypothesized that using such a weapon would result in more problems than the use of the chokehold. Against his urging, the Police Commission voted to stop using the chokehold, with the exception of life-threatening situations, in favor of the baton. Almost a decade later, the misuse of the baton in the Rodney King case dealt the final blow to Gates' career as Police Chief. Taken in this context, Chief Daryl Gates was a casualty of a political decision that he not only had no control over, but also vehemently opposed.

Second, Reese presents support of the rank and file and the public as absolute without discussing the intricacies. He states, "Gates had the overwhelming support of the rank and file, but he ultimately lost public support". The "balancing act" is much more capricious in nature. The support of the public may waver from month to month, and simply crossing into a majority of the populace (51%) does not necessarily denote public support. Likewise, overwhelming support does not necessarily denote 95% approval. It seems Reese has perhaps lost a wealth of information that could easily be re-introduced as evidenced in his presentation of the statistics at the time of Chief Gates' resignation. He quotes two studies, "At the end of Gates' tenure, a poll showed that 85 percent of Angelinos no longer trusted him; and he had a disapproval rating of 81 percent" (Cannon, 1997: 537; Wood, 1992: 9).

Renford Reese provides a valuable look at the history of leadership in a major metropolitan organization. The addition of a more thorough look at the political forces that sometimes color the tenure of a police chief, and the variations in support both internally and externally, would provide a more complete picture of the intricacies of leadership that are currently missing. Nonetheless, Reese has developed a basis for the evaluation of police leaders that should be utilized in the future.

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