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# Deifying the Dead and Downtrodden: Sympathetic Figures as Inspirational Leaders

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# LEADERSHIP AT THE CROSSROADS

Joanne B. Ciulla, Set Editor

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# 11

# Deifying the Dead and Downtrodden: Sympathetic Figures as Inspirational Leaders

SCOTT T. ALLISON AND GEORGE R. GOETHALS

*There is nothing sweeter than to be sympathized with.*

—George Santayana

*In my country, we go to prison first and then become President.*

—Nelson Mandela

This chapter proposes that leaders often derive their most inspirational qualities from events or actions that transpire before and after, rather than during, their tenure as leaders. These events or actions engender sympathy, emotional support, and adoration for the leader. We identify three types of individuals whose effectiveness as leaders stem from actions that elicit sympathetic responses from others: underdog leaders who attract sympathy from their ability to overcome significant obstacles before they assume their leadership; deceased leaders who attract sympathy and whose deaths elicit reverence and inspiration long after they are gone; and martyrs who make the ultimate sacrifice for noble causes and whose appeal is derived from combined elements of both underdog and deceased leaders. We propose that the self-sacrifice of all three types of leaders cements these leaders' positive legacy, and that these leaders' values both reflect and become a central part of their community's social identity.

A vast body of leadership research has focused on inspirational leaders and the actions they take, during their tenure as leaders, to motivate and arouse passion among their followers (see Avolio & Yammarino, 2002, for a review). These leaders have been characterized as charismatic (Shamir, 1991), transformational (Burns, 1978), or inspirational (Yukl, 2006), and they connect emotionally with their followers by engaging behaviors such as articulating a clear and appealing vision (Raelin, 1989); persuading followers to fulfill that vision (House & Shamir, 1993); using strong and expressive forms of communication (Nadler, 1988); acting confidently and optimistically (Mumford & Strange, 2002); expressing confidence in followers (Eden, 1990); using symbolic, dramatic actions to emphasize key values (Yukl, 2006); leading by example (House & Howell, 1992); and empowering people to achieve the vision (Riggio & Conger, 2005).

Whereas these inspiring actions occur during one's term as leader, we argue in this chapter that a leader's most transforming actions often occur *before* and *after*, rather than during, his or her tenure as leader. To be effective sources of inspiration, these actions must be emotionally powerful to followers, engendering sympathy, respect, and veneration for the leader. A prominent example is the leadership of Nelson Mandela, who endured 27 years of imprisonment before assuming the presidency of South Africa. While imprisoned, he and other inmates performed hard labor in a lime quarry. Prison conditions were harsh; prisoners were segregated by race, with black prisoners receiving the least rations. Political prisoners such as Mandela were kept separate from ordinary criminals and received fewer privileges. Mandela has described how, as a D-group prisoner (the lowest classification) he was allowed one visitor and one letter every six months. Mandela's ability to prevail after such long-term suffering made him an inspirational hero. His remarkable triumph over adversity, occurring before his presidency, propelled him to international fame and adoration.

Whereas Mandela's inspirational qualities derived from events that transpired before his formal leadership, other leaders inspire others based on occurrences after their tenure as leaders. Consider the intriguing case of Missouri governor Melvin Carnahan, who was elected to the U.S. Senate on November 7, 2000. Ordinarily, there is nothing noteworthy about voters electing an individual to office, except in this instance the individual had perished in a plane crash three weeks prior to the election. Even more extraordinary was the fact that Carnahan was trailing his opponent by several percentage points in opinion polls just prior to the plane crash. Polls clearly showed that his popularity soared as a result of his death. How could Carnahan have achieved a level of support in death that he could not achieve in life?

We argue that Mandela and Carnahan inspired their followers largely because their experiences engendered sympathetic responses. According to

Eisenberg (2004), sympathy is "an affective response that consists of feeling sorrow or concern for the distress or needy other" (p. 678). Typically, the target of the sympathetic response has experienced a significant setback or suffered a calamitous outcome. Sympathy often derives from empathy, a related affective response that Eisenberg defines as "the comprehension of another's emotional state" that leads the perceiver to feel emotions that are "identical or very similar to what the other person is feeling or would be expected to feel" (p. 678). Batson and his colleagues have found that people display preferential treatment toward those with whom they sympathize. Specifically, sympathizers value the welfare of the persons in need (Batson, Turk, Shaw, & Klein, 1995) and allocate resources preferentially to targets of sympathy, even if these allocations violate principles of justice (Batson, Klein, Highberger, & Shaw, 1995).

From these considerations, it appears that targets of sympathetic responses are often the beneficiary of prosocial actions. When a person suffers, observers vicariously feel some of that suffering and may come to care deeply about the ultimate fate of the affected individual. But if the person faces a challenging situation over which observers have no control, they may be relegated to noting how the challenged person responds to the setback. For those challenged individuals who triumph over their setbacks, our sympathy and prosocial wishes for them can evolve into respect, admiration, and even adoration. If the setback is death itself, our sympathy can evolve into reverence and idealization. In short, negative outcomes experienced before or after one's tenure as leader can engender strong sympathetic responses and have a transforming, inspiring effect on followers.

In this chapter, we identify three types of individuals whose effectiveness as leaders derive from actions that elicit sympathetic responses from others. The first is an *underdog leader,* of which Mandela is a classic example. People sympathize with underdogs and admire those underdogs who defy expectations by overcoming significant obstacles. The second type of leader who attracts sympathy is a *deceased leader.* As in the case of Mel Carnahan, death invokes sorrowful responses and elevates the status of the deceased. The third type of leader who elicits sympathy is a *martyr,* who makes the ultimate sacrifice for a noble cause and whose appeal is derived from combined elements of both underdog and deceased leaders. We describe each of these three leader types in some detail below.

## UNDERDOGS AS INSPIRATIONAL LEADERS

*Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome.*

—Booker T. Washington

Although most social psychological theory and research has focused on the human tendency to associate with winners and successful others (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1976), our recent research findings point to the opposite tendency, namely, the appeal of the underdog (Kim et al., in press; see also Vandello, Goldschmied, & Richards, 2007). Stories about underdogs seem to touch something deep in the human psyche (Spencer, 1873). People, animals, and even inanimate objects that face difficult challenges, against a strong opponent or a demanding situation, inspire our support. The publishers of the children's classic *The Little Engine That Could* (Piper, 1930) suggest that the phrase "I think I can" is as central to our collective culture as "I have a dream" and "One small step for man."

What are underdogs, and why might people sympathize with them? We define underdogs as social entities whose struggles engender sympathy with others (Kim et al., in press). The notion of struggle is central to the definition of an underdog; the struggle can be against either a difficult situation or a formidable opponent, which we define as the top dog. Across many cultures underdog stories abound. Many cultural narratives relate stories of people facing difficult challenges, such as King Sisyphus condemned in Hades to roll a stone toward the top of a hill for eternity. Similarly, "The American Dream" and the Horatio Alger stories of "rags to riches," embodied by individuals such as Andrew Carnegie, captivate our dreams to overcome the imposed limitations of underdog status (Scharnhorst, 1980). Cultural icons featured in films such as *Rocky, The Karate Kid, Erin Brockovich, Seabiscuit,* and *Million Dollar Baby* provide sympathetic and inspiring portrayals of successful underdogs. We believe that such narratives reflect an archetype of struggle, derived from the Jungian hero archetype (Jung, 1964), and that these archetypical narratives elicit sympathy and support. These heroic accomplishments of underdogs inspire us and may underscore our hope that the world can be a fair place in which all individuals have the potential to succeed.

Are underdog leaders more inspirational than top dog leaders? To answer this question, Allison and Heilborn (2007, Study 1) gave participants descriptions of business and political leaders and experimentally manipulated the biographical backgrounds of the leaders, with half the participants learning that the leaders endured an impoverished upbringing (underdog condition) and the other half learning that the leaders enjoyed an affluent upbringing (top dog condition). Although participants did not differ in their ratings of the basic competence of underdog and top dog leaders, they did differ significantly on measures of sympathy and inspiration. Specifically, participants reported that they sympathized more with underdog leaders than with top dog leaders, and that they liked and respected underdog leaders more than top dog leaders. In addition, participants were significantly more inspired by the underdog leaders, more motivated to work for underdog leaders, more

inspired by the underdog leader's vision, and more convinced that the underdog leaders would achieve long-term success.

Allison and Heilborn (2007, Study 2) also asked a different group of 50 participants to generate lists of real-world underdog and top dog leaders. The five underdog leaders most frequently mentioned were Muhammad Ali (listed 27 times), Steve Jobs (24), Martin Luther King Jr. (23), Nelson Mandela (21), and Oprah Winfrey (17). The five top dog leaders most frequently mentioned were Bill Gates (28), George Steinbrenner (20), Donald Trump (20), George W. Bush (19), and Michael Bloomberg (12). These ten individuals were then rated by other participants on dimensions of sympathy, liking, respect, competence, and inspiration. The results showed that, compared to the group of top dog leaders, the group of underdog leaders were significantly more sympathized with, liked, respected, and inspiring.

Do all underdogs—leaders as well as nonleaders—inspire us? We have conducted several studies showing that people are significantly more likely to root for and sympathize with many types of underdog entities (e.g., teams, artists, and businesses) than they are to root for and sympathize with top dog entities (Kim et al., in press, Study 1). Most importantly, we found that people's sympathy for the underdog was the psychological mechanism responsible for this underdog effect (Study 3). It is noteworthy that increased sympathy and emotional support for the underdog does not translate into increased perceived competence for the underdog. We found that although people were more likely to root for an underdog artist than for a top dog artist in an upcoming competition, they judged the top dog artist's painting to be superior in quality to that of the underdog (Kim et al., Study 2). Importantly, we have found in a follow-up study that this negative view of the quality of underdogs' work may be limited to pre-outcome measures of quality. When people are asked to judge the quality of underdog and top dog work *after* the successful outcome of a competition, we discovered that people judge underdogs' work as superior to that of top dogs. These findings suggest that underdogs attract our sympathy but must prove themselves worthy of our admiration by triumphing over their obstacles.

One of our most revealing studies underscored the psychologically powerful effect of underdogs on human judgments (Kim et al., in press, Study 3). Employing a methodology reminiscent of that used by Heider and Simmel (1944), the study involved showing participants clips of animated shapes that appeared to chase or bump other shapes. Heider and Simmel's participants inferred causality from the movement of these shapes and also assigned dispositional attributes to the shapes as a result of their behavior toward each other. The beauty of Heider and Simmel's work is that it illustrated just how pervasive and natural the attribution process is, emerging in judgments of simple lifeless objects. We presented their participants with moving shapes

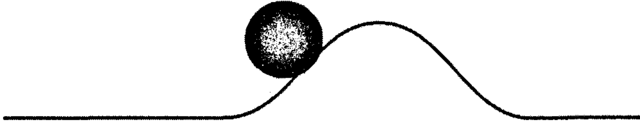

**Figure 11-1 A geometric shape appearing to struggle to attain a goal**

to determine whether people naturally bestow underdog status and underdog qualities upon shapes that move more slowly than others. The study included four conditions: (1) a single nonstruggling geometric shape (see Figure 11-1); (2) a single struggling geometric shape; (3) a struggling geometric shape together with a benign nonstruggling shape; and (4) a struggling geometric shape together with a "malicious" nonstruggling shape that appeared to intentionally block the struggling shape (see Figure 11-2).

The results of this study showed that people showed more emotional support for a single struggling shape than for a single nonstruggling shape. This finding suggests that an entity's struggle, by itself, is enough to engender support, even when the entity is by itself. Kim et al. also found that the social context heightened participants' emotional support for the struggling entity, such that participants were especially likely to root for a struggling entity when paired with a nonstruggling one. Finally, the strongest underdog effect emerged when participants viewed a struggling shape whose progress toward achieving its apparent goal was overtly thwarted by a nonstruggling shape (Figure 11-2). Even more importantly, for the purposes of this chapter, Kim et al. found that participants were more likely to sympathize with the single struggling shape than with the single nonstruggling shape. Moreover,

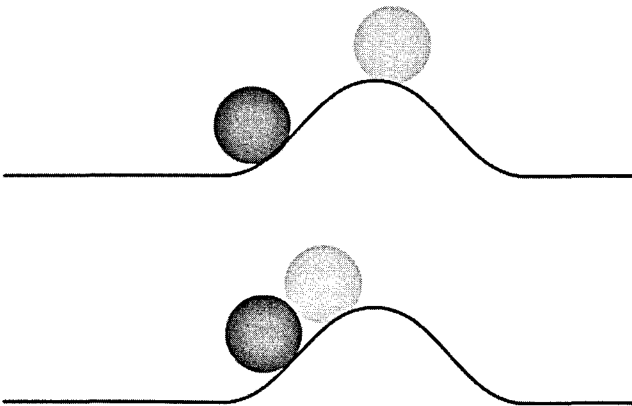

**Figure 11-2 A struggling geometric shape's goal appearing to be thwarted by a nonstruggling shape**

participants showed the greatest degree of sympathy for the struggling shape paired with the malicious circle that impeded the struggling shape's progress.

In summary, the results of several studies suggest that underdogs are viewed as highly respected and inspirational leaders. They derive their appeal from their ability to overcome difficult situations that attract our sympathy. Underdogs who prevail over their circumstances and later become leaders have earned our respect and support, and they are judged to be inspiring leaders.

## THE DEAD AS INSPIRATIONAL LEADERS

*Death openeth the gate to good fame.*

—Francis Bacon

In June 2004, the death of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan triggered an outpouring of praise and admiration from former political allies and adversaries alike (Von Drehle, 2004). These tributes and adulations caught many anti-Reagan liberals by surprise (Troy, 2005). One study of media coverage of Reagan found that it was significantly more positive after his death than during his tenure as president (Lichter, 2004). The media were rarely kind to Reagan and his policies during his presidency, and yet the very same media posthumously showered him and his legacy with many accolades. In fact, a 2007 Gallup poll ranked him as second best all-time U.S. president, trailing only Abraham Lincoln (Polling Report, 2008). How has Reagan attracted more widespread respect in death than he was able to attract in life?

In several studies, we have found that people form more favorable impressions of dead leaders than of equivalent living leaders (Allison, Eylon, Beggan, & Bachelder, in press; Allison & Eylon, 2005; Eylon & Allison, 2005). This finding, moreover, emerges in evaluations of fictitious leaders as well as real-world leaders, and it emerges in judgments of competent as well as incompetent leaders. The results of these studies also show that positive judgments of the dead are significantly correlated with judgments of sympathy. Interestingly, the only condition we have been able to identify under which the death positivity bias does not appear is in evaluations of immoral leaders, who are judged *less* favorably after death than in life. We have proposed that the death of immoral individuals engenders far less sympathy than the death of moral individuals, thus leading to posthumous judgments that are less favorable for the immoral dead (Allison et al., in press).

We have called people's tendency to inflate their evaluations of the dead *the death positivity bias* (Allison et al., in press). The death positivity bias nicely explains why Reagan's posthumous media coverage was so positive, and why Carnahan was able to come from behind posthumously to defeat his

opponent in Missouri's 2000 U.S. Senate election. Reagan's and Carnahan's deaths elicited sympathy and activated the norm of speaking only "well" of the dead. We have found that this norm may explain why press coverage of dead celebrity leaders, such as Princess Diana, John F. Kennedy Jr., and Tupac Shakur, is significantly more positive after death than before death (Allison et al., in press, Study 3). We speculate that the death of young leaders is especially likely to heighten death positivity biases. Moreover, death not only inflates our evaluations, it also makes them impervious to change, a phenomenon we call the *frozen in time effect* (Eylon & Allison, 2005).

Philosophers have long been keenly aware of this norm prescribing reverence for deceased individuals. For example, the great playwright Sophocles warned his audiences "not to insult the dead." Athenian statesman and legislator Solon echoed this sentiment when he implored citizens to "speak no ill of the dead." The eminent Greek historian Thucydides went beyond this simple admonition by observing that "all men are wont to praise him who is no more." In more modern times, American poet John Whittier noted that "death softens all resentments, and the consciousness of a common inheritance of frailty and weakness modifies the severity of judgment."

Our analysis of death positivity phenomena is consistent with the theoretical mechanisms implicated in terror management theory (Arndt, Greenberg, Schimel, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 2002; Solomon, Cohen, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, Chapter 3 of this volume). Terror management theory proposes that when people think about death, they experience terror and thus engage in worldview-validating behaviors aimed at reducing the terror. As Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski (1997) note, "Cultural worldviews ameliorate anxiety by imbuing the universe with order and meaning, by providing standards of value that are derived from that meaningful conception of reality, *and by promising protection and death transcendence* to those who meet those standards of value" (italics added, p. 65). In short, a person's cultural worldview allows behaviors deemed valuable to take on higher order meaning, providing the person with a means for achieving symbolic immortality (Arndt et al., 2002).

This tendency to support one's cultural worldview when thinking of death leads to a more favorable evaluation of those who uphold the values and norms of the worldview, and harsher judgments of those who violate the worldview (Rosenblatt, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Lyon, 1989). Although terror management researchers have not yet investigated positivity biases in evaluations of dead targets, it seems reasonable that if a deceased target were a meaningful contributor to society—and hence affirmed the perceiver's worldview—then the perceiver may be motivated to form heightened posthumous appraisals of the deceased target. Following the tenets of TMT, when perceivers honor the dead, particularly dead leaders whose

actions in life affirmed and validated the perceiver's cultural worldview, these enhanced evaluations may mitigate perceivers' own terror of death that arises from the sheer exposure to the thought of death. Honoring dead leaders who upheld the perceiver's worldview allows the perceiver to evoke the sense of security provided by adhering to the cherished principles of the cultural worldview. It may also serve to reduce peoples' fear of their own mortality by assuring them that they will be well regarded after their death.

Effective leaders have long been known to shape the values and emotions of those who follow (Dasborough, 2006), and the death positivity bias may represent one source of emotional connection between leaders and followers. To the extent that leaders embody the values of their groups or organizations, their deaths may inspire followers to create permanent positive remembrances of their leaders. These remembrances can take the form of statues, shrines, buildings, city and road names, epic stories, and visages on currency and stamps. Actions taken to honor dead leaders are consistent with the tenets of terror management theory and its emphasis on the impact of mortality salience in validating one's cultural worldview (Arndt et al., 2002). A great leader affirms the values of the group (Hogg, Chapter 4 in this volume), and when the leader passes away, followers may be motivated to ensure that these affirmations endure by elevating the status of the leader beyond that which existed when he or she was alive (Allison & Eylon, 2005).

## MARTYRS AS INSPIRATIONAL LEADERS

*The tyrant dies and his rule is over; the martyr dies and his rule begins.*

—Soren Kierkegaard

Surprisingly, very little research has been conducted on the psychologically rich concept of martyrdom. We define martyrs as people who sacrifice their lives in support of a principle or cause. Droge and Tabor (1992) have outlined three defining characteristics of a martyr's death. First, the death usually occurs as a sign of persecution and is seen by similarly persecuted others as noble and heroic. Second, martyrs die with the notion that others will benefit as a result of their suffering. Third, martyrs make their sacrifice with the expectation of an eternal vindication, which is often their prime motivation.

Martyrdom has its roots in ancient Greek and Roman cultural values. Socrates, called the "saint and martyr of philosophy" by Gottlieb (2000), willingly accepted his death sentence and took his own life to uphold his belief system. The suicide of Socrates "has stood for 2400 years as a symbol of dying for one's principles" (DeSpelder & Strickland, 1996, p. 455). Greeks and Romans valued the idea of meeting death with both courage and acceptance. Romans revered both the bloody deaths in the gladiator arenas as well as

intellectual suicides in the tradition of Socrates. The Roman belief system contained the idea that life "was a treasure that gained value or power only when expended" and that martyrdom "transformed weakness into power" (Cormack, 2001, p. 26).

In modern times, martyrdom is probably most often considered in the context of religious extremism, but this religious context also has ancient origins. Two thousand years ago, Christianity was metamorphosed from a peripheral offshoot of Judaism to a beleaguered underdog religious sect. Early Christians were put to death in great numbers for preaching their illegal faith to their fellow Roman citizens. This era of persecution spurred the growth of Christianity, as each publicly executed martyr attracted a new cult of converts. For early Christians, the suffering and death of Jesus held a "fatal attraction" (Kastenbaum, 2004, p. 62) and was a strong advertisement for a threatened faith. Paralleling the choice of martyrs, Jesus willingly chose his suffering and death, according to the Gospel of John (10:18): "No one takes my life, but I lay it down of my own accord." The redemptive value of suffering became part of the "Christian heroic ideal" (Cormack, 2001, p. 43). Martyrs did not just expect to be resurrected in the next life, but also for their memories to be resurrected for all of time. The unshakable determination of these early Christian martyrs shamed the Roman Empire's tactics of brutality, garnered sympathy for the Christian cause, and fueled the growth of Christianity.

Virtually all religions feature at least some history of martyrdom or suggestion of martyrdom in their belief systems. In Scripture there are numerous accounts of Jewish martyrs resisting the Hellenizing of their Seleucid overlords, being executed for such crimes as observing the Sabbath, circumcising their children, or refusing to eat pork or meat sacrificed to idols. In Hinduism, the term *sati* refers to a woman's act of immolating herself on the funeral pyre of her husband, as remaining alive after one's husband's death carries with it the feared social sanction of being "an alluring or lustful widow who might tarnish the family reputation" (Cormack, 2001, p. 120). Satis are venerated as martyrs for being those who "embody and affirm the truth" (Cormack, 2001, p. 119). The Islamic conceptualization of martyrdom delineates specific rewards for those who would die for their God; the Qur'an specifies that the Muslim martyr, or *shahid*, is spared the pain of death and receives immediate entry into paradise. Islam accepts a much broader view of what constitutes a martyr, including anyone who succumbs in territorial conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims. There is widespread disagreement in the Muslim community about whether suicide bombers should be considered martyrs (Cormack, 2001).

Martyrs who die for their causes would appear to derive much of the sympathy and support they attract through mechanisms associated with the

death positivity bias (Allison et al., in press). Moreover, from our review of the history of martyrdom, it appears that most martyrs embrace underdog causes. Indeed, a "top dog martyr" would seem to be an oxymoron, inasmuch as the desperation of dying for one's cause suggests a minority or underdog position under great siege. Thus martyrs may be especially powerful in attracting sympathy because they derive it from mechanisms implicated in people's responses to the sacrifice and suffering of underdogs and of the dead.

Witnessing others make extreme sacrifices appears to be psychologically powerful. A prominent example can be found in our evaluations of those who died in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Hundreds of firefighters, emergency rescue workers, and law enforcement personnel sacrificed their lives to save others from the World Trade Center. Although roughly 3,000 people perished in this tragedy, a disproportionate amount of media attention, and national mourning, focused on the loss of these emergency personnel. Their morally courageous and heroic actions at the time of their deaths sealed our impressions of them forever. Clearly, living emergency rescue workers have our great admiration, but our greatest veneration is reserved for individuals whose deaths occur in the performance of their moral, altruistic services.

We investigated martyrdom in the laboratory by asking participants to evaluate an individual who died while engaged in a fierce political fight against poverty. Half the participants learned that this individual was a financially disadvantaged person (underdog condition), whereas the other half learned that this individual was a financially advantaged person (top dog condition). Moreover, half these two groups of participants learned that this person took his own life for the cause he championed (suicide condition), whereas the other half learned that this person was killed by opponents of his cause (nonsuicide condition). The results revealed that the martyr who attracted the highest degree of sympathy and support was the underdog martyr whose death was caused by the opponents to his cause. Martyrs who took their own lives—whether underdog or top dog in status—were viewed the least sympathetically and received the weakest emotional support. The top dog martyr who died at the hands of his opponent was the recipient of a moderate amount of sympathy and support. As in our studies of the underdog - (e.g., Kim et al., in press), we found that sympathy judgments mediated the effects of underdog status on support judgments.

These findings suggest that martyrs can inspire others, but they also underscore an important boundary to the effect, namely, that (at least among our American participants) committing suicide to advance a cause is viewed as unacceptable regardless of underdog or top dog status. The most powerful martyrs are those whose deaths occur at the hands of their opponents, and

these deaths are viewed especially sympathetically when the martyrs are underdogs. As noted above, this finding may be culture specific. For example, Palestinian suicide bombers have been treated like celebrities, their legacies cemented by community-wide celebrations, and their personal items coveted as objects of worship-like devotion (Israeli, 2003).

In summary, martyrdom has a long and storied history in human tales of sacrifice, heroism, and religious persecution. Martyrs inspire others, and their self-sacrificing actions often promote their causes so effectively that their beliefs can become a central part of their community's social identity. The death of a martyr can attract sympathy and support for the martyr's cause, but death by suicide is far less likely to tug on the heartstrings of western observers than death caused by opponents of the cause.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING COMMENTS

*Next to love, sympathy is the divinest passion of the human heart.*

—Edmund Burke

Leaders of all three types described in this chapter—underdogs, the dead, and martyrs—share in common the experience of great sacrifice and suffering. Underdogs face daunting challenges and must sacrifice their time, energy, and strength to overcome those challenges. Leaders who perish make the ultimate sacrifice, as do martyrs. We propose that the self-sacrificing actions of all three types of leaders cement these leaders' positive legacies to such a degree that their values become imbedded into their community's social identities. Borrowing a phrase from Aronson and Mills's (1959) classic study of cognitive dissonance, suffering does indeed lead to liking.

Our three types of leaders embody some of western society's most cherished values. Successful underdogs are a living testament to the puritan work ethic, and dead leaders and martyrs nourish our images of fallen heroes who sacrifice themselves for the greater good. Effective leadership and moral conduct are inextricably linked (Burns, 1978), and our analysis would seem to have several implications for promoting better and more responsible leadership. First, the death positivity bias would underscore the importance of leaders proactively engaging in activities aimed at validating the moral values of the group or organization. A leader's moral conduct may be a more central determinant of perceived leadership effectiveness than other, more traditional, criteria for evaluating leadership (Allison & Eylon, 2005). A second implication of the death positivity bias is that enhanced posthumous evaluations of a leader may influence employee attitudes and behavior in the workplace long after the leader has passed away. Leadership has long been known to shape the values and performance of those who follow (Gardner, 1995),

and moral leadership posthumously inspires followers. A third implication of the death positivity bias is that it suggests strategies for leaders to craft constructive posthumous legacies for themselves and for their organizations (Allison, Eylon, & Markus, 2004). Although firms and individuals work hard at building reputations, it is clear that the focus needs to be on long-term meaningful issues (e.g., morality) that will eventually elicit respect and sympathy from followers.

We would like to end this chapter on a cautionary note. Although the resounding message from the research reported here points to the propensity of sympathetic figures to attract emotional support and adulation, there is the possibility that these responses to sympathetic leaders have a fragile quality. As we have noted, Kim et al. (in press) did find that people show strong emotional support for underdogs, but Kim et al.'s Study 4 demonstrated that under certain conditions people's emotional support did not translate into *behavioral* support. Specifically, when the outcome of a competition had important consequences for perceivers, the top dog received significantly more tangible, monetary support than did the underdog. Only when the outcome had no effect on perceivers did perceivers' emotional connection to the underdog translate into increased behavioral assistance to the underdog. Leaders should take note that suffering may lead to liking, but it does not always lead to unconditional following.

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