harder than you expected? Therapeutic interventions and major social programs intended to correct dispositional problems, such as tendencies towards violence or alcoholism also are generally less successful than anticipated. Work supervisors and even parents, who have a great deal of control over the situations experienced by their employees or children, similarly find it surprisingly difficult to control behaviors as simple as showing up on time or making one's bed. My point is not that people never change their minds, that interventions never work, or that employers and parents have no control over employees or children; it is simply that situational influences on behavior are often weaker than expected.

Even so, it would be going too far to claim that the actual "fundamental" error is the reverse, that people overestimate the importance of situational factors and underestimate the importance of dispositions. A more judicious conclusion would be that sometimes people overestimate the importance of dispositional factors, and sometimes they overestimate the importance of situational factors, and the important thing, in a particular case, is to try to get it right. The book under review, *The Myth of Martyrdom* (Lankford 2013c), aims to present an extended example of an important context in which many authoritative figures get it wrong, by making the *reverse* of the fundamental attribution error (though the book never uses this term): When trying to find the causes of suicide terrorism, too many experts ascribe causality to the political context in which terrorism occurs, or the practical aims that terrorists hope to achieve. Instead, the author argues, most, if not all, suicide terrorists are mentally disturbed, vulnerable, and angry individuals who are not so different from run-of-the-mill suicides, and who are in fact highly similar to "non-terrorist" suicidal killers such as the Columbine or Sandy Hook murderers. Personality and individual differences are important; suicide terrorists are *not* ordinary people driven by situational forces.

Lankford convincingly argues that misunderstanding suicide terrorists as individuals who are rationally responding to oppression or who are motivated by political or religious goals is dangerous, because it plays into the propaganda aims of terrorist organizations to portray such individuals as brave martyrs rather than as weak, vulnerable and exploitable pawns. By spreading the word that suicide terrorists are mentally troubled individuals who wish to kill themselves as much or more than they desire to advance any particular cause, Lankford hopes to lessen the attractiveness of the martyr role to would-be recruits, and also remove any second-hand glory that might otherwise accrue to a terrorist group that manages to recruit suicide-prone operatives to its banner.

Lankford's overall message is important. However, the book is less than an ideal vehicle for it. The evidence cited consists mostly of a hodge-podge of case studies which show that some suicide terrorists, such as the lead 9/11 hijacker, had mental health issues and suicidal tendencies that long preceded their infamous acts. The book speaks repeatedly of the "unconscious" motives of such individuals, without developing a serious psychological analysis of what unconscious motivation really means or how it can be detected. It rests much of its argument on quotes from writers that Lankford happens to agree with, rather than independent analysis. It never mentions the "fundamental attribution error," a prominent theme within social psychology that is the book's major implicit counterpoint, whether Lankford knows this or not. The obvious parallels between suicide terrorists and genuine heroes who are willing to die for a cause is noted, but a whole chapter (Ch. 5) attempting to explain how they are different fails to make a distinction that was clear to this reader. In the end, the book is not a work of serious scholarship. It is written at the level of a popular, "trade" book, in prose that is sometimes distractingly overdramatic and even breathless. Speaking as someone who agrees with Lankford's basic thesis, I wish it had received the serious analysis and documentation it deserves, as well as being tied to other highly relevant themes in social

psychology. Perhaps a future book, more serious but less engaging to the general reader, lies in the future. I hope so.

For, the ideas in this book are important. One attraction of the concept of the "fundamental attribution error," and the emphasis on situational causation in general, is that it is seen by some as removing limits on human freedom, implying that anybody can accomplish anything regardless of one's abilities or stable attributes. While these are indeed attractive ideas, they are values and not scientific principles. Moreover, an overemphasis on situational causation removes personal responsibility, one example being the perpetrators of the Nazi Holocaust who claimed they were "only following orders." A renewed attention on the personal factors that affect behavior not only may help to identify people at risk of committing atrocities, but also restore the notion that, situational factors notwithstanding, a person is in the end responsible for what he or she does.

Winning counterterrorism's version of Pascal's wager, but struggling to open the purse

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Abstract: Lankford's essential empirical argument, which is based on evidence such as psychological autopsies, is that suicide attacks are caused by suicidality. By operationalizing this causal claim in a hypothetical experiment, I show the claim to be provable, and I contend that its truth is supported by Lankford's data. However, I question his ensuing arguments about beauty and goodness, and thereby the practical value of his work in counterterrorist propaganda.

Lankford (2013c) presents a thorough and often compelling empirical argument that suicide attackers are motivated by a drive to kill themselves, rather than by a drive to martyr themselves. Along with this argument about truth, however, are less explicit arguments about beauty and goodness, and all three must be recognized to understand the theoretical and practical significance of the myth of martyrdom and Lankford's debunking of it.

Truth. Lankford's psychological autopsies offer fascinating glimpses into the lives and mental states of suicide attackers, and do paint a picture of troubled individuals at risk for suicide. But it is unclear whether such data show that suicidality is the *underlying cause* of suicide attackers' behavior, with ideology affecting merely the form and targets of the attacks. Moreover, it is unclear whether, in a scientific sense, Lankford's central causal claim is even provable.

A helpful approach to this problem is to operationalize the hypothesized cause-effect relation. If an "anti-suicidality" drug – perhaps soon to be actually available (Duval et al. 2013) – were surreptitiously administered to a random half of communities in a terrorist-prone region, the suicidal-terrorists prediction is that, over time, fewer suicide attackers would come from the treatment communities than from the control communities. Various analyses and control groups can be envisioned to address issues of necessity and multiple causation (see Lankford's "requirements" and "facilitators," p. 152), but this rudimentary hypothetical test alone shows that the causal link between suicidality and suicide attacks is provable. Furthermore, we can evaluate Lankford's core empirical argument by asking a follow-up Bayesian question:

Do his data make us expect that the described treatment effect would in fact be observed? I think they do, and by this standard, *The Myth of Martyrdom* succeeds as an argument for suicide attacks being caused by suicidality.

The veridicality of Lankford's causal claim has important practical implications. Understanding the psychology of suicide terrorists should enable us to "explain, predict, and prevent their attacks better than ever before" (p. 152), and Lankford offers several excellent suggestions. A straightforward additional preventative measure to consider would be to encourage the prescribing of antidepressants in terrorism-prone populations. Remarkably, even dispensing analgesics might help (DeWall et al. 2010; Randles et al. 2013) – not a counterterrorism measure likely to be considered without Lankford's revelation that suicidal terrorists typically fear life and desperately need "to escape unbearable pain" (p. 7).

Lankford suggests using Nock et al.'s (2010) implicit suicidality test to screen for suicide terrorists at airports, but this approach would be unnecessarily indirect. In the security context, suicidality is important because it sometimes portends an "attack," "killing," or "terrorism," and the implicit association procedure could just as well test directly for associations between any of these concepts and the self (see Greenwald et al. 1998). Thus, although Nock et al.'s (2010) test might be interesting as a demonstration of the suicidal-terrorists hypothesis, it would not be the best application of the implicit association test in terms of safeguarding the public.

Beauty and goodness. Where *The Myth of Martyrdom* shifts from arguing that suicide attackers are suicidal, to arguing that they are therefore not heroes, the debate about truth subtly becomes a debate about beauty, and ultimately, goodness. The suicidal-terrorists thesis showcases the ugliness of suicide attacks and the evilness of the terrorist organizations perpetrating them, and Lankford echoes Pascal in reasoning that even if his thesis were false, treating it as true would pay off in psychological-warfare terms (p. 172). However, the empirical validity of the suicidal-terrorists hypothesis does not establish the normative validity of Lankford's judgment that, whereas Secret Service agents are laudable heroes, suicide terrorists are vile cowards. No matter how viscerally compelling we may find this judgment, it is essentially an aesthetic one, and Lankford's attempt to substantiate its validity has several shortcomings.

First, heroes are not subjected to the same thorough psychological autopsies that proved so eye-opening in the case of suicide terrorists. If we can find suicidality beneath "terrorist ideology," then perhaps we would find authoritarianism, or megalomania, or some other less-than-noble quality beneath "heroic sacrifice."

Second, the trolley-problem data are not good evidence that taking lives is never heroic. The fact that moral intuitions about an action saving eight lives depend on whether it is described as "throwing a bomb on a person" or "throwing a person on a bomb" (p. 103) does not show that these intuitions are normatively valid. Rather, it shows that moral intuitions can be myopic (Waldmann & Dieterich 2007), and non-robust to framing manipulations.

Third, although Lankford's analysis of sacrifice versus suicide is insightful – the decision-time point alone suggests several lines of research – it fails to demonstrate that what appear to be qualitative motivational differences are not in fact differences of circumstance and opportunity. Becoming a Secret Service agent is, to be sure, a low-probability way of self-orchestrating one's death, but taking a bullet for the president might be one of the few available *and* meaningful ways to indulge a death wish, given the agent's situation and culture. Similarly, Lankford acknowledges the principle that "committing a suicide attack makes the most sense for those who are disabled and can no longer keep up with their comrades" (p. 86), and this would seem to doubly apply to those whose disability is suicidality. A suicide attack is a dubious and indirect way of "saving" one's comrades, but it might be one of the few meaningful *and* available ways to do so in the suicidal terrorist's situation and culture.

Fourth, Lankford's illuminating argument that suicide attackers, unlike heroes, help themselves (to die) but do not really

help their cause and comrades much, does not give enough weight to a crucial way in which suicide attackers do contribute. Like hunger strikers, self-immolators, and some pacifists, suicide terrorists provide their cause with a *symbolic* advantage, or in the case of "escapist suicides," protect their cause from a symbolic disadvantage. As Lankford laments, killing oneself in the name of a cause seems to give the cause added gravitas in the eyes of the enemy, and terrorists recognize this: "Our words are dead until we give them life with our blood" (p. 54).

Suicide terrorism and post-mortem benefits

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Abstract: Lankford claims that suicide terrorists are suicidal, but that their suicidal tendencies are often frustrated by injunctive social norms. Martyrdom represents a solution, and terrorist organizations exploit this. In this commentary, we claim that this argument has not been fully made and that such ideation in itself does not explain a willingness to engage in punitive actions against an enemy. We suggest the psychology of kinship as a possible missing factor.

Lankford's core conceit is that suicide terrorists are essentially little different from other suicidal people, having similar background characteristics such as depression, troubled childhoods, and social isolation (Lankford 2013c). He argues that screening of individuals for suicidal thinking and monitoring of those at risk would be useful counterterrorism strategies. While we consider that all approaches to this difficult issue should be welcomed, we do not feel that it is a complete account of the phenomenon and nor do we think it is fully supported.

The Myth of Martyrdom focuses mostly upon Islamic suicide terrorism, although Lankford does seek to generalize his claim to all suicide terrorists. He notes that within Islamic communities suicide is regarded as immoral, but martyrdom is not. Martyrdom thus provides a way out for some suicidal Muslims, and this can be exploited by terrorist organizations. Data on suicide within Islamic countries would have given some perspective to this argument. Lester has looked at what data there is and found that although percentage suicide rates are notably lower in Islamic countries, attempted suicides rates are equivalent to those in other countries. Moreover, he notes various inadequacies in the way in which deaths are reported in Islamic nations (Lester 2006). While this does not directly falsify Lankford's claim, it does suggest that Muslims can overcome religious and legal stipulations about suicide. If this is so, what other factors might lead to suicide terrorism rather than suicide?

Lankford bases his thesis on a large sample of more than 130 suicide terrorists, published in Appendix A, who, he argues, presented risk factors for conventional suicide. However, the majority of these cases have very minimal information, and the factors identified, such as loss of family members, personal victimization, and so forth, are at least as likely to make an individual angry and vengeful as they are to make that individual suicidal. Indeed, the factors he claims motivate the suicidal urge have a lot in common with the factors identified as motivating people into terrorism in general (McCauley & Moskalenko 2008; Moghaddam 2005), which muddies the water a little. The notion of suicide terrorism achieving certain socio-political ends is largely ignored by Lankford, as are the potential personal motivations of the suicide