NEGATIVE: Suicide Bridge Nets

By “Coach Vance” Trefethen and Katherine Baker

Affirmative plan tells the states they must put up nets along the side of bridges to catch would-be suicide jumpers (or deter them from jumping, since they will get caught in the net and not die). Negative Counterplan redirects all funding in the plan to foreign food aid. It only costs 50 cents per day per person to save a hungry person in a poor country overseas. It makes far more sense, and saves far more lives, to spend money saving millions of people who want to live, rather than a few people who want to die.

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Negative: Suicide Bridge Nets

VOTING CRITERIA – There are 2

1. Net savings of life

If we save more lives than the Affirmative with our Counterplan, then we should win

2. All lives matter

The life of a starving child in Africa is just as valuable as the life of a suicidal person in California.

COUNTERPLAN

Redirect all federal money in the Affirmative plan to food aid to starving people overseas

1. Congress votes to allocate all federal money the Affirmative intends to spend on suicide nets and donate it to the World Food Program.
2. Enforcement through normal means
3. Timeline: same as the timeline in the Affirmative plan
4. Funding: Funding through the Affirmative team’s source of federal funds

ADVANTAGE 1. Better upholding human life

The advantage of our counter-plan is that instead of focusing on a very few people who want to die, we save a huge number who want to live.

One important point about our plan is that we intend it to be mutually exclusive to the Affirmative's plan. If the Affirmative says "let's do both," every additional dollar that the Affirmative wants to spend to try to do both we would take away and spend it on even more food aid and save far more lives. Each time they insist on federally funding their plan, we will take away every additional dollar and divert it to more food aid, since per dollar, food aid saves far more lives than their plan does.

Resources are limited, so if the goal is saving lives, we have to spend it on whatever saves the most lives per dollar. Every dollar spent on suicide nets takes money that could save the lives of many who want to live in favor of a few who want to die. That's a morally repugnant choice. Until we've done all we can for the starving we have the power to save, we can't justify spending even one dollar on their plan. Since the States can't do foreign aid, they are the appropriate agent to do suicide nets.

Why is food aid far more critical than suicide nets? First…

Link: Golden Gate Bridge suicide net cost $45 million

Liza Gross 2013 (journalist) "Don't Jump" SLATE 15 Oct 2013 <http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/medical_examiner/2013/10/golden_gate_bridge_suicide_barrier_controversy_and_cost_over_a_life_saver.html>

Proposals for suicide barriers on America’s legendary landmark date back to the 1950s, but no design stood a chance until 2005, when the [Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District](http://www.goldengate.org/) relaxed its requirement that any deterrent be “totally effective.” Three years later, district officials approved a $45 million net system that would trap a jumper in its flexible stainless-steel cables.

There's 870 million hungry people in the world

Dr Tammy Beckham 2015 (DVM, Ph.D., Dean of the Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine) testimony before the House Committee on Agriculture 4 Nov 2015 <http://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/11.4.15_beckham_testimony.pdf>

In addition to understanding the importance of the agricultural industry in the U.S. and its role in supporting national security, it is also important and critical that we understand the role of global food security in securing the homeland. Currently, 870 million people around the world do not have access to safe and nutritious food in a sufficient supply. Half of all early-childhood deaths from poor nutrition

More than 20 million people face starvation and impacts will last for years to come.

ROBYN DIXON, 2017. (covers sub-Saharan Africa for the Los Angeles Times.) “With 20 million people facing starvation, Trump's foreign aid cuts strike fear” MAR 19, 2017. <http://www.latimes.com/world/africa/la-fg-us-africa-aid-2017-story.html>

Without a massive donor injection of $4.4 billion, aid officials estimate, more than 20 million people face starvation and famine in Nigeria's northeast, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen. The disaster is likely to leave countries fragile for years to come.

President Trump is cutting food aid funding

ROBYN DIXON, 2017. (Robyn Dixon covers sub-Saharan Africa for the Los Angeles Times.) “With 20 million people facing starvation, Trump's foreign aid cuts strike fear” MAR 19, 2017. <http://www.latimes.com/world/africa/la-fg-us-africa-aid-2017-story.html>

President Trump’s proposed budget cuts to the United Nations, which runs agencies such as the World Food Program and UNICEF, come at a time when famine is reaching a crisis point in parts of Africa, and children in some countries are dying of starvation. The timing of the proposed cuts has sent chills through the international aid community, which fears that a retreat by the U.S. in relief funding could make a bad situation worse.

Solvency: Counterplan saves lives, it all depends on AFF funding levels. 50 cents/day saves 1 life from hunger (=$180/year per life). $1 million would save 5,555 lives at that rate.

Dena Gudaitis 2011 (Communications Officer for the UN's World Food Program) 28 Aug 2011 " Photos: World Food Program works to save lives in East Africa famine" <https://news.mongabay.com/2011/08/photos-world-food-program-works-to-save-lives-in-east-africa-famine/>

The World Food Programme is currently experiencing a budget shortfall for the next 6 months. We currently need to fundraise around some $250 million dollars to continue our life-saving work in the Horn of Africa. We can all make a difference: Just 50 US cents per day is enough to feed a hungry child or mother on the edge of survival.

Link: Only 30 people per year commit suicide on the Golden Gate Bridge

Liza Gross 2013 (journalist) "Don't Jump" SLATE 15 Oct 2013 <http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/medical_examiner/2013/10/golden_gate_bridge_suicide_barrier_controversy_and_cost_over_a_life_saver.html>

The Golden Gate Bridge, with its mythic beauty, easy access, and promise of near-certain death, kills an average of 30 lost souls every year, making it among the most popular suicide sites on Earth. Unattached, middle-aged white men are the most frequent victims.

Impact: Counterplan has net benefits better than the AFF plan. Food aid saves 80 times more lives than suicide nets.

For example, the $45 million for the Golden Gate Bridge would save 24,997 lives by feeding that many people for 10 years at 50 cents per day per person, compared to only 300 lives over 10 years saved by nets.

Backup evidence: $30 billion could solve world hunger, but little is being done

ELISABETH ROSENTHAL and ANDREW MARTIN, 2008. (New York Times Reporters) “UN says solving food crisis could cost $30 billion” JUNE 4, 2008 <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/04/news/04iht-04food.13446176.html>

Resolving the global food crisis could cost as much as $30 billion a year and wealthier nations are doing little to help the developing world face the problem, United Nations officials said Tuesday.

ADVANTAGE 2. Moral Advantage

It's better to spend public funds saving people who want to live, rather than saving people who want to die

Liza Gross 2013 (journalist) "Don't Jump" SLATE 15 Oct 2013 <http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/medical_examiner/2013/10/golden_gate_bridge_suicide_barrier_controversy_and_cost_over_a_life_saver.html>

When the bridge district polled residents in 2008, half of nearly 3,500 respondents objected to a barrier, mostly in the belief that it wouldn’t prevent suicide. Many resented spending public funds on people who want to die. “People need to suffer the consequences of their actions,” wrote one commenter. “Better to build a middle barrier for the bridge to help innocent people.” Virtually every article about suicides on the bridge elicits similar sentiments.

TOPICALITY

Definition: Transportation

Oxford Dictionary, accessed 2018. “Transportation” https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/transportation

A system or means of transporting people or goods.

Violation: Nets don’t transport people

Bridges transport people, but the Affirmative team isn’t building bridges. They are building nets on the bridges, which are no more a part of transportation than a candle on a birthday cake is part of dessert.

Impact: No Affirmative team.

Since there is no one advocating for the resolution in today’s debate round, no matter who wins, you should vote Negative

INHERENCY

1. Major bridges already installing nets in Status Quo

Golden Gate bridge

KEITH GRIFFITH, 2017. (Reporter for Daily Mail) “'Do not jump because it WILL hurt': Golden Gate Bridge to get steel suicide prevention nets after more than 1,500 deaths” 14 April 2017. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4412396/Golden-Gate-Bridge-steel-suicide-prevention-nets.html#ampshare=http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4412396/Golden-Gate-Bridge-steel-suicide-prevention-nets.html>

The Golden Gate Bridge is getting upgraded with a set of hard steel nets meant to deter and prevent jumpers from taking their own lives. Work on the $200million project began with a Thursday ceremony at the iconic San Francisco landmark, and is projected to take four years.

Golden Gate Bridge: #1 suicide bridge getting a net already

University of Southern California Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, 2017. (Continuously ranked among top schools of social work. Cutting edge research in aging, artificial intelligence, behavioral health, child welfare, crisis and bereavement, homelessness, human trafficking, management and organizations, serious mental illness, substance abuse, social determinants of health, social adaptation to climate change and man-made disasters, and veterans and military families.)“Can Physical Barriers Prevent Suicides from U.S. Bridges?” October 05, 2017 <https://msw.usc.edu/mswusc-blog/suicide-prevention-on-american-bridges/>

Earlier this year, construction began on “suicide deterrent” nets along the Golden Gate Bridge, long considered the No. 1 bridge for suicide attempts in the United States. The $200 million project is expected to be completed in 2021. Although the idea of adding some kind of suicide deterrent to the iconic San Francisco span has been floated for decades, it was only in more recent years that a plan began to take shape. It was widely debated. Some considered it an exorbitant project or an unsightly addition to an architectural masterpiece.

George Washington Bridge (NY City) getting a net

NEW YORK TIMES 2017. " At George Washington Bridge, a Fence Rises to Deter Suicides" <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/29/nyregion/george-washington-bridge-suicide-fence.html>

The Port Authority Police Department has a new tool intended to prevent suicides from the George Washington Bridge, an 11-foot-high fence connected to netting that forms a canopy over the pathway beyond the traffic lanes.

MINOR REPAIR

Stationing more officers decreased suicide

Associated Press, 2018. (News aggregator) JAN 22, 2018 “Fewer suicides occurring at Golden Gate Bridge” <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-golden-gate-20180122-story.html>

Officials say the number of people jumping to their deaths from the Golden Gate Bridge has decreased thanks to the addition of five officers whose job is to spot people trying to commit suicide. The Marin Independent Journal reports the bridge patrol team last year assisted 245 people who presented a risk of suicide and that there were 33 confirmed suicides. In 2016 there were 184 successful interventions and 39 suicides. The extra five officers brought the span's security detail to 36 people.

SIGNIFICANCE

Jumping only accounts for 5-10% of suicides

EMILY FRIEDMAN, 2008. (Reporter for ABC News) “Inside the Mind of a Suicide Jumper” July 2, 2008. <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/MindMoodNews/story?id=5294404&page=1>

Their method of suicide is relatively unusual. The latest statistics recorded in 2005 show that firearms made up for 52.1 percent of all suicides, hanging for 22.2 percent and poison for 17.6 percent. Jumping from tall buildings or high bridges seems to be reserved for those who are determined to die. "People who think about committing suicide fear that they're going to hurt themselves but not kill themselves, and just make their situation worse," said Adam Kaplin, an assistant professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins Medical Institute, who estimates that only five to ten percent of all suicides are committed by jumping. "Jumping is sort of like using a gun – once you make that decision to [kill yourself], it's pretty much a done deal."

SOLVENCY

1. Displacement cancels solvency

Suicide increases in other places even if you prevent it on a bridge

Mark Sinyor and Anthony J Levitt, 2010. (Mark Sinyor, resident physician Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto, ON, Canada. Anthony J Levitt, psychiatrist in chief Department of Psychiatry, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre and Women’s College Hospital.) “Effect of a barrier at Bloor Street Viaduct on suicide rates in Toronto: natural experiment” Published online 2010 Jul 6. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2897976/>

No suicides occurred at Bloor Street Viaduct in the four years after the construction of a barrier; however, suicide rates by jumping in Toronto were unchanged because of a statistically significant increase in suicides by jumping from other bridges and a non-significant increase in suicides by jumping from buildings. This suggests that the availability of Bloor Street Viaduct was not an essential element for people contemplating suicide by jumping in Toronto. We speculate that a different result may be observed if a bridge holds a more powerful influence on suicidal people. This may be the case for Golden Gate Bridge, for example, although further evidence is needed. A safety net might be installed at Golden Gate Bridge in the near future, so research similar to the present study might be possible in San Francisco. However, logistical challenges may be greater because the major bridges in San Francisco are over water, making it more difficult to obtain accurate counts for suicide. This research shows that constructing a barrier on a bridge with a high rate of suicide by jumping is likely to reduce or eliminate suicides at that bridge but it may not alter absolute suicide rates by jumping when there are comparable bridges nearby.

Example: The Toronto Viaduct. It had lots of suicides until they installed a barrier… then deaths went up at other locations

Robert Olson 2013 (Librarian, B.A., Master in Library Science, Centre for Suicide Prevention) “Jumping” and Suicide Prevention" (ethical disclosure: article is undated but contains references to material published in 2013) <https://www.suicideinfo.ca/resource/jumpingsuicideprevention/>

Glasgow (2008) argues that barriers may save lives at one location, but it has not been shown that these barriers will prevent someone from killing him or herself at an alternative place. This effect is referred to as displacement. He says that a barrier may also fail to prevent someone from using another means to die by suicide. This is called **substitution.** He further stresses that most people who jump suffer from more severe psychiatric illnesses than people who kill themselves by other means. The presence of this additional factor means that these individuals are less likely to be deterred by barriers. A study of the Bloor Street Viaduct in Toronto and the suicides that occurred from 2003 and 2007 found evidence of this type of location displacement. After the barrier was erected in 2002, suicides at the site were eliminated. However, the rate of jumping suicides in the surrounding local area remained unchanged during this period. The authors found that suicides began occurring at other bridges in the area.

Advocate for nets admits: Nets on bridge reduce suicides from that bridge, but offset by suicides elsewhere in town

A. L. Beautrais 2001 ( ) Effectiveness of barriers at suicide jumping sites: a case study. AUSTRALIA / NEW ZEALAND JOURNALY OF PSYCHIATRY Oct 2001 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11551268>

RESULTS: Removal of safety barriers led to an immediate and substantial increase in both the numbers and rate of suicide by jumping from the bridge in question. In the 4 years following the removal of the barriers (compared with the previous 4 years) the number of suicides increased substantially, from three to 15 (chi2 = 8, df = 1, p < 0.01); the rate of such deaths increased also (chi2 = 6.6, df = 1, p < 0.01). The majority of those who died by jumping from the bridge following the removal of the safety barriers were young male psychiatric patients, with psychotic illnesses. Following the removal of the barriers from the bridge the rate of suicide by jumping in the metropolitan area in question did not change but the pattern of suicides by jumping in the city changed significantly with more suicides from the bridge in question and fewer at other sites.

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