Haidt 2012), which identifies a plurality of natural psychological systems from which moral judgments emerge. Although proscriptions against harm are the most prototypical moral concerns (Gray et al. 2012), they cannot account for the full range of the moral domain. For example, certain harmless actions (e.g., atheism; eating a dead dog; same-sex marriage) are denounced because they are deemed defiling and impure (Brandt & Reyna 2011; Haidt et al. 1993; Koleva et al. 2012). These purity-based moral judgments involve neural, emotional, and computational signatures that are qualitatively distinct from those underlying harm-based evaluations (Parkinson et al. 2011; Rozin et al. 1999; Young & Saxe 2011). For example, moral judgments about purity issues are closely associated with the emotional reaction of disgust, while moral judgments about harm issues are closely associated with anger (Rozin et al. 1999; Russell et al. 2013; Seidel & Prinz 2013).

The identification of the basic moral foundations of harm and purity suggests that even when suicide terrorism is condemned rather than praised, it will never be denounced in the same way as conventional suicide. In particular, while suicide terrorism is considered immoral because of the harm it causes, our recent research demonstrates that conventional suicide is (perhaps surprisingly) considered immoral because of purity-based concerns. Specifically, regression analyses conducted on participants' evaluations of a series of obituaries – rated according to how morally wrong each death was, how angry it made them feel, how disgusted it made them feel, how much harm had been done, and how impure the victim became – demonstrated that individual differences in the moral condemnation of suicide were predicted by ratings of *disgust* and *impurity* rather than anger and harm. When we ran the same regression analyses on homicide obituaries, we instead found that harsher moral judgments were predicted by ratings of harm. Our finding that suicide is a purity-based concern has been replicated several times, and this result holds true even among participants who are non-religious and politically liberal, suggesting that beliefs about the wrongness of suicide are cognitively natural rather than culturally instilled (Rottman et al. 2014; in press).

The distinctive purity-based nature of suicide blame and its accompanying disgust reaction have important implications. In particular, the condemnation of suicide is likely to be enduring and linked to negative assessments of the suicidal person's character (Russell & Giner-Sorolla 2011), as well as perhaps leading to extreme dehumanization (Harris & Fiske 2006; Haslam 2006). This contrasts with moral judgments of suicide terrorism, for which the locus of condemnation is the harmful act rather than an individual's nature, and which produces the shorter-lived emotion of anger (Giner-Sorolla & Maitner 2013; Skitka et al. 2004). In addition, given that people have strong natural intuitions that the self is fundamentally comprised of a soul that persists beyond death (Bering 2011; Bloom 2004; see also Emmons & Kelemen, in press), the belief that a suicide victim defiles his very essence in perpetuity is no small matter.

Based on the discrepant moral evaluations of suicide and suicide terrorism, Lankford (2010; 2013c) suggests that "martyrdom" could be made more disgraceful by exposing potential suicide terrorists as deserving the stigmatization of conventional suicide. Although we appreciate that this recommendation could plausibly help to deter potential suicide terrorists, we close with a note of concern about this normative advice. Publicly denigrating potential suicide terrorists for being suicidal would likely exacerbate the purity-based stigma against non-murderous suicidal individuals, as well as worsening the already intensified and complex grieving process for those who have lost loved ones due to suicide. Because of the disproportionately greater number of deaths caused by conventional suicides as compared to suicide terrorism, this would be a concerning outcome. If suicide terrorists are truly suicidal, as Lankford claims, then a much more productive solution would be to increasingly provide helpful resources for individuals at risk for suicide.

The myth of the myth of martyrdom

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Abstract: Lankford asserts that suicide terrorism is attributable to suicidality. We argue in this commentary that this assertion is not well supported theoretically or empirically. In addition, we suggest that failure to acknowledge religious beliefs as motivationally causal for suicide terrorism may place innocent people at risk of murder in the service of political correctness and multiculturalism.

Lankford asserts that suicide terrorists are suicidal individuals who *just happen* to use terrorist organizations to execute their death wish (Lankford 2013c). We propose in this commentary that this assertion is false and, moreover, may be dangerous insofar as it distracts from a more important causal factor: religious belief. Methodological inconsistencies and unsubstantiated assertions may generate an unfounded confidence that "we may understand suicide terrorists better than they understand themselves. Which means we should be able to stop them" (p. 149).

Lankford declares that we cannot trust what suicide attackers and their families say, but then supports his arguments by doing just that: directly quoting them. This double standard reflects a methodological problem that renders the evidence Lankford presents as anecdotal cherry-picking. For example, Lankford discounts failed suicide terrorist Wafa's explicitly stated desire to kill dozens of Jews, but accepts as reliable her statements that she did not care about politics or which terrorist organization sponsored her attack (p. 25). Lankford comments that 9/11 hijacker al Nami's family "feared a bipolar disorder" (p. 88), apparently corroborating Lankford's assertion that the terrorist was suicidal. Thus, despite his assertion that we cannot take terrorists or their families at their word, Lankford does precisely that.

Lankford argues that the suicide terrorists' primary motive is suicidality. He avoids implicating religious beliefs as a cause of suicide terrorism, asserting that mention of religious motivation for these attacks promotes the terrorists' agenda (pp. 38–39). Yet, beliefs about martyrdom and a glorious afterlife are crucial in motivating suicide terrorism. All one has to do is listen to what the terrorists say, *verbatim*. There are countless examples of suicide terrorists announcing their goal: Kill many infidels, incidentally sacrificing their physical bodies, to reach paradise. Here are samples from YouTube:

- "God would have given me paradise… It is written in the holy Quran to do jihad against the infidels" (Charlesmartel686, 2007, video times 1:55, 4:55).
- "Yes, I will [kill via suicide bombing]… Even if it includes my family… Those who are not taking part in Jihad are not innocent…" (Umer123khan, 2009, video time 1:21)
- "I wanted to be a martyr for God… God would have given me happiness in paradise." (Rehov, 2009, video time 3:05).

Harris (2005) and Dawkins (2001) note what might otherwise be obvious but for political reasons is not often stated: Religious beliefs motivate suicide terrorism. Currently, these are typically Islamic beliefs, which include explicit concepts of martyrdom and jihad that explain the character of suicide terrorism. Suicide bombers often receive extensive training and deploy calculated attacks that require sophisticated mental capacities and incredible courage. Dawkins raises the issue of identifying the source of this courage, and much of what we know about Islam suggests that it would be dangerous to disregard the direct link between doctrines of Islam and suicide terrorism. Lankford warns that a sponsoring terrorist organization on U.S. soil, "regardless of its ideology," would be successful because 34,000 Americans commit suicide

each year (p. 166). Local terrorist organizations are a danger – not because thousands commit suicide, but because political correctness favors pandering to religions, especially those easily offended.

The claim that, "[W]e may understand suicide terrorists better than they understand themselves" (p. 149), may be presumptuous and does not reflect a clear understanding of modern psychology. It may not be reasonable to pose hypothetical situations that require the reader to pretend to be in the suicide terrorist's situation (e.g., pp. 1–2, 6, 46) because there are contextual factors (e.g., religious indoctrination) not available to the reader. Such mental exercises might be especially questionable if, as Lankford claims, suicide terrorists are not psychologically normal, whereas most readers are. It also might not be appropriate to speculate on what would be *better* to do (in hindsight) to maximize casualties (see, e.g., p. 25) or what others would have done in the "exact same circumstances, regardless of the odds or options" (p. 138), because that was not part of the suicide attacker's psychology. Perhaps the person who knows best what was going through his mind is *that* person. Finally, the many references to ill-defined concepts and phenomena in the book – for example, "at some deeper level they know their high-risk behavior will eventually end their lives, and they are comforted by this fact" (p. 147); "even in the most desperate of situations, human beings have an amazing capacity for hope" (p. 138); "If you would really do *anything* to succeed … that's not a sign of courage or commitment. It's a sign that you lack the character and principle required for true heroism" (p. 104) – are not consistent with theoretical and empirical advances of modern psychological science.

Lankford uses emotional, hyperbolic language to promote or support claims and assertions: "The truth is out there… So let's keep digging" (p. 63); "We need to know how to recognize the next Mohammad Atta – before it's too late" (p. 88). Furthermore, beyond asserting that "they simply don't know what they're talking about" (p. 170), Lankford frames his arguments such that those who disagree with him are spreading terrorist propaganda (e.g., pp. 38–39, 49); labeling suicide terrorists as "sacrificial" or as "martyrs" "plays directly into the hands of the terrorist leaders, increasing the power of their propaganda" (p. 8).

Lankford states that "setting the record straight is not just important for educational purposes – it's also the best chance we have to deter future suicide terrorists" (p. 173). We agree, but there is no need to expose what is well-documented: Suicide terrorists are motivated by their religious beliefs. Lankford asserts that once suicide attackers recognize they will be judged mentally ill they will "think twice" about volunteering (p. 174). This claim does not take into account the psychological stranglehold that religious indoctrination commands.

Lankford's *Myth of Martyrdom* exposes the myth of the myth. His claim that the cause of suicide terrorism is the attackers' suicidality and that this insight is the key to stopping terror, is not substantiated theoretically or empirically. A failure to acknowledge religious beliefs as a motivating cause for suicide terrorism may place innocent people at risk of murder in the service of political correctness and multiculturalism.

Individual differences in relational motives interact with the political context to produce terrorism and terrorism-support

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Abstract: The psychology of suicide terrorism involves more than simply the psychology of suicide. Individual differences in social dominance orientation (SDO) interact with the socio-structural, political context to produce support for group-based dominance among members of both dominant and subordinate groups. This may help explain why, in one specific context, some people commit and endorse terrorism, whereas others do not.

We agree with Lankford (2013c) that one cannot understand suicide terrorism without considering individual factors as well as contextual ones, and must distinguish perpetrator from audience effects. Nevertheless, although being willing to kill oneself is a necessary condition for executing suicide bombings, this need not imply that what really drives suicide bombers, rampage shooters, and other self-destructive killers is simply suicidality proper, conveniently disguised as political terrorism in cultural and religious contexts that ban individual suicide. Firstly, in the case studies he uses to make the latter point, Lankford not only seeks to estimate reliable predictors of suicide – such as prior suicide attempts, expressed death wishes, and debilitating depression – but also includes many "soft" risk factors such as the deaths of parents or siblings in childhood, unemployment, divorce because of infertility, and even disciplinary problems in school. Without knowing the base rates of both kinds of factors among the general population, it is impossible to evaluate the degree to which they lead people to commit suicide, let alone suicide terrorism, particularly when considered in the often war-torn, occupied settings from which Lankford draws many cases.

Just as a suicidal mental condition is insufficient to drive suicide terrorism, so it may likely be unnecessary. The case of Anders Behring Breivik – who shot 77 teenagers at a political youth camp after seeking to blow up the Norwegian governmental building – demonstrates the uncertainty of clinical judgments based on interpretations of written or limited data records. Although Lankford concludes that Breivik was clearly suicidal because his writings named the plight of conservative "brothers and sisters" being pushed toward suicide, and because he anticipated dying during his terror mission, a final forensic-psychiatric assessment (following extensive clinical interviews and 24 hour observations) not only concluded that Breivik was not psychotic, but found absolutely no evidence that he was suicidal (NTB, Norwegian News Agency 2012). Breivik expressed fear of getting killed by the police on being taken captive.

What clearly is necessary for committing any such acts of terrorism is the willingness to kill civilian others. We agree that this homicidal intent is likely fueled by rage and that cultural and ideological endorsement facilitates suicide terrorism. But both respond to the political reality in which a community finds itself. For example, Pape (2005) argues that suicide terrorist attacks in Lebanon ebbed and flowed with the absence and presence of the Israeli occupation (whereas suicidal intent presumably remained fairly stable). Dismissing this as simply being the result of increased access to weapons and enemy targets ignores the role of the political context in fueling rage towards an enemy group: relationally motivated moral outrage (Rai & Fiske 2011) that *they* are subordinating, humiliating, discriminating against, victimizing, persecuting, and killing *us*, or threatening to do so, culminating in the intended killing of perceived enemy civilians.

Such political context effects may play a role even in cases of *remote identification* with group members suffering at times of conflict or oppression (Sheehy-Skeffington 2009). For example,