

Passion and moral disengagement: Different pathways to political activism

Jocelyn J. Bélanger¹  | Birga M. Schumpe¹ | Noémie Nociti² | Manuel Moyano³ | Stéphane Dandeneau² | Pier-Eric Chamberland⁴  | Robert J. Vallerand²

¹Department of Psychology, New York University Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

²Department of Psychology, Université du Québec à Montréal, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

³Department of Psychology, University of Cordoba, Cordoba, Spain

⁴Department of Psychology, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, Trois-Rivières, Quebec, Canada

Correspondence

Jocelyn J. Bélanger, New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD), A2 1109, PO Box 129188, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
Email: jocelyn.belanger@nyu.edu

Abstract

Objective: Four studies examined the relationship between motivational imbalance—the degree to which a goal dominates other goals—and political activism.

Method: Based on the dualistic model of passion (Vallerand, 2015) and recent theorizing on violent extremism (Kruglanski, Jasko, Chernikova, Dugas, & Webber, 2017), we predicted that obsessive passion (OP), which facilitates alternative goal suppression, would increase support for violent political behaviors. In contrast, we predicted that harmonious passion (HP), which facilitates the integration of multiple goal pursuits, would increase support for peaceful political behaviors.

Results: Study 1a demonstrated that OP for environmentalism was positively associated with moral disengagement, which in turn predicted violent behaviors. HP was positively associated with peaceful behaviors. Political activism among Democrats yielded similar findings in Study 1b. Study 2 replicated Studies 1a–1b using an implicit measure of moral disengagement. Study 3 replicated Studies 1–2 by demonstrating that experimentally inducing a harmonious (vs. obsessive) passion mindset indirectly reduced violent behaviors through the attenuation of moral disengagement while directly promoting peaceful behaviors. Study 4 conceptually replicated Studies 1–3 by experimentally manipulating moral disengagement.

Conclusions: These results offer insights into the workings of radicalization and suggest theory-driven methods of reducing political violence.

KEYWORDS

moral disengagement, passion, political activism, radicalization, violence

1 | INTRODUCTION

Recent American history has witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of protests on its territory. According to the Crowd Counting Consortium (CCC, 2018), there have been over 8,700 protests in 2017 involving more than 5.9 million people across the country. Although considerable attention has been given to the rise of populism and right-wing

movements, the lion's share of these protests (about 89% according to the CCC) is linked to the upheaval caused by Donald Trump's 2016 election and his stance on issues such as climate change, immigration, and race relations. As a result, a large number of galvanized left-leaning citizens such as Democrats and environmentalists have taken to the streets amidst social discord and strife. Until now, most protests have been peaceful and orderly, however, some clearly have

turned sour, with protesters resorting to destructive behaviors—property destruction, aggravated assault—to further their cause. One critical question for psychological science is why people engage in violent, as opposed to peaceful, political activism. This is a pressing issue considering that, in its most virulent form, political activism polarizes and divides members of society.

According to Kruglanski, Jasko, Chernikova, Dugas, and Webber (2017), “a major determinant of extremism is *motivational imbalance*, the degree to which a given need comes to dominate the others” (p. 218). When a given focal need or goal (e.g., the furtherance of a political cause) takes precedence over other considerations (e.g., career, family, health, etc.), it liberates goal pursuit from its constraints and allows one to select means (e.g., risky behaviors such as violence) that would have been otherwise restrained (Köpetz, Faber, Fishbach, & Kruglanski, 2011; Kruglanski et al., 2014). In line with this theoretical proposition, we posit that passion for a cause (St-Louis, Carbonneau, & Vallerand, 2016) plays a vital role in shaping different pathways to political activism. Building on prior research linking obsessive (but not harmonious) passion with alternative goal suppression (Bélanger, Lafrenière, Vallerand, & Kruglanski, 2013b; Bélanger, Schumpe, & Nisa, 2019), we propose that motivational imbalance is a feature of obsessive passion (OP) that makes individuals prone to violent activism, whereas motivational balance is a feature of harmonious passion (HP) that is conducive to peaceful activism. Because OP is unconstrained by alternative considerations, we propose that the relationship between OP and violent political activism is mediated by moral disengagement—the deactivation of moral self-regulatory processes, allowing unethical behaviors to be carried out without self-reproach (Bandura, 1999, 2016). In contrast, we propose that HP promotes greater attunement to moral values and thus acts as a protective factor against violent behaviors.

2 | THE DUALISTIC MODEL OF PASSION

Passion for a cause is defined as a “strong inclination toward a self-defining cause that is loved and valued, and in which people invest a significant amount of time and energy” (St-Louis et al., 2016, p. 263). The dualistic model of passion (Vallerand et al., 2003) distinguishes between OP and HP, which can be differentiated in terms of how the passionate activity is regulated and balanced with other life domains.

OP refers to a strong and uncontrollable desire to engage in the activity that one loves. The passionate activity is related to contingencies of self-worth making people prone to rigid (flexible) task engagement (Vallerand et al., 2003). As a result, the activity becomes difficult to regulate and integrate with other life domains, and ultimately produces conflict and

tension (Séguin-Lévesque, Laliberté, Pelletier, Blanchard, & Vallerand, 2003). Activities pursued obsessively produce a state of motivational imbalance—they dominate over alternative goals by inhibiting them and monopolizing attentional resources (Bélanger et al., 2013b, 2019).

HP also refers to a strong desire to engage in the activity; however, the person remains in control of the activity and can thus decide when to, and when not to, engage in it. The activity occupies a significant, but not an overwhelming space in the person’s identity. As a result, the activity is well balanced, does not interfere with other aspects of the person’s life (Séguin-Lévesque et al., 2003), and other considerations are not automatically suppressed.

Empirical findings suggest that both OP and HP are positively correlated with valuing the activity, seeing it as a passion, and recognizing it as part of one’s identity (see Marsh et al., 2013; Vallerand, 2010, 2015 for reviews and Curran, Hill, Appleton, Vallerand, & Standage, 2015 for meta-analysis). However, OP and HP have been found to be differentially associated with different outcomes. HP has been shown to be positively associated with the experience of flow (Lafrenière, Jowett, Vallerand, Donahue, & Lorimer, 2008), positive emotions (Mageau & Vallerand, 2007), and general psychological well-being (Rousseau & Vallerand, 2008; Vallerand, 2012). In contrast, OP is negatively related to these features (Vallerand, 2008; Wang, Khoo, Liu, & Divaharan, 2008). Although OP and HP are relatively stable over time, experimental findings suggest that OP and HP is a mindset that can be situationally and temporarily induced by asking participants to think of a time when their passionate activity was in conflict (as opposed to well-integrated) with other life domains (see Bélanger et al., 2013b; Bélanger et al., 2019).

Bélanger et al. (2013b, 2019) have also described evidence supporting the notion that activities pursued obsessively tend to suppress other goals that vie for consideration—a phenomenon also referred to as goal shielding (Shah, Friedman, & Kruglanski, 2002). Goal shielding is an automatic self-regulatory strategy that helps manage conflicting goals and prevents diversion of attentional resources from the focal goal. In their research, Bélanger et al. (2013b) found that when passionate individuals were subliminally primed with their passionate activity, greater OP led to greater alternative goal inhibition, meaning that people took longer to recognize other goals that were important to them. No such effects were found with HP, which suggests a more balanced activation of focal and alternative goals.

In the context of political activism, St-Louis et al. (2016) found that OP for a cause was positively related to self-neglect, which in turn predicted activists’ physical injuries. Regarding the type of behaviors activists engage in to support their cause, Rip, Vallerand, and Lafrenière (2012) found that Quebec nationalists who scored higher on HP preferred peaceful and democratic political statements, whereas those scoring higher on OP endorsed aggressive and radical

statements. In the next section, we contend that part of the reason why OP predicts political violence is because it overshadows other considerations, especially moral ones.

3 | MORAL DISENGAGEMENT

People generally like to think of themselves as ethical and honest (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Inasmuch as they harbor this belief, they are less likely to violate their personal moral standards to avoid self-condemnation and preserve their self-worth (Bandura, 1999). Yet, under certain circumstances, people do act immorally—they cheat, lie, and hurt others. According to Bandura (1999, 2016), this is facilitated through many cognitive maneuvers that deactivate moral self-regulatory processes, allowing unethical behaviors to be carried out without self-recrimination.

One mechanism that facilitates moral disengagement is *moral justification*. Through this mechanism, unethical behaviors are perceived as legitimate because they are portrayed as serving a noble and vital cause. A second mechanism consists of using *euphemisms* to disguise harmful conducts as if they were benign or even laudable. Immoral actions may also be downplayed through *advantageous comparisons* (e.g., comparing unethical behavior with worse alternatives), giving people the impression they are choosing the lesser of two evils. Self-exoneration also happens when people *displace the responsibility* of their actions to the dictates of an authority figure or group. In similar ways, moral control can be weakened through *diffusion of responsibility* either because immoral actions are divided into smaller, benign tasks or because they occurred in group settings whereby the “harm done by a group can be attributed in large part to the behavior of other members” (Bandura, 2004, p. 133). People may also *disregard or misrepresent harmful consequences*, and thus minimize the impact of their actions onto others. Finally, unethical behavior appears more permissible when victims are *dehumanized*—considered lesser beings—unworthy of empathy, and even responsible for their sorry plight.

A large body of empirical findings lends support to the role of moral disengagement in the expression of violent, harmful, and unethical behaviors for reasons of personal gain or social pressure (see Bandura, 2016). For example, moral disengagement has been positively associated with academic cheating (Detert, Trevino, & Sweitzer, 2008), being counterproductive at work (Samnani, Salamon, & Singh, 2014), and more serious offenses such as stealing (Hystad, Mearns, & Eid, 2014). Moral disengagement has also been shown to mediate the relationship between emotions (anger, hostility) and aggressive behavior (Caprara et al., 2014; Rubio-Garay, Carrasco, & Amor, 2016). It predicts aggressive behavior in children (Gini, Pozzoli, & Hymel, 2014) and developmental pathways toward delinquency (Bussey, Quinn, & Dobson,

2015), independent of psychopathy (DeLisi et al., 2014). But moral disengagement truly finds its *raison-d'être* in the study of intergroup conflicts, whereby individuals equipped with a convincing rationale to inflict pain on others can elude the severe emotional distress associated with perpetrating appalling atrocities (Bandura, 1990, 1999). For example, Aquino, Reed, Thau, and Freeman (2007) found that “moral disengagement effectively reduced the extent to which participants experienced negative emotions in reaction to abuses of Iraqi detainees by American soldiers” (p. 385).

Thus far, research on moral disengagement has mainly focused on explaining how people engage in unethical and inhumane behavior. However, research on the antecedents of moral disengagement is still embryonic and few studies have studied its correlates. That said, recent progress has been made. For example, in a longitudinal study where infants were followed from ages 1.5 to 17, Hyde, Shaw, and Moilanen (2010) found that rejecting parenting, neighborhood impoverishment, and childhood empathy predicted moral disengagement later in life. Research by Moore, Detert, Klebe Treviño, Baker, and Mayer (2012) also indicated that moral disengagement was positively related to Machiavellianism and negatively related to moral identity, perspective taking, and empathetic concern. Detert et al. (2008) found that empathy and moral identity negatively predicted moral disengagement, whereas trait cynicism and chance locus of control orientation (i.e., the belief that life experiences are a result of fate or luck) were positively correlated with it.

4 | OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

The main thrust of this research is to understand the relationship between passion and political activism. We hypothesized that, because OP is related to the suppression of alternative considerations (Bélangier et al., 2013b, 2019), individuals that pursue a cause obsessively would cast aside anything that would impede them from furthering their cause, including moral considerations for others that do not share their belief system. In line with this reasoning, we predicted that OP would be related to greater moral disengagement, which in turn would be related to greater support for violent behaviors. In contrast, because HP promotes the seamless integration of multiple life domains and is unrelated to goal conflict (Séguin-Lévesque et al., 2003), we predicted that the more people pursue a cause harmoniously, the more they should be in tune with their moral values and thus refrain from using violence to further their ideology. Furthermore, we predicted that HP should be positively related to peaceful behaviors.

We conducted four studies using a mix of implicit and explicit methodologies to test our model. Study 1 provides cross-sectional evidence for the role of passion in political activism with individuals that are passionate about the

environmental cause (Study 1a) and the Democratic Party (Study 1b). Study 2 replicates Study 1a using an implicit measure of moral disengagement designed to assess the speed at which environmentalists dehumanize outgroup (vs. ingroup) members. Studies 3 and 4 consist of a double randomization design (Pirlott & MacKinnon, 2016; see also “experimental-causal-chain,” Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005) to provide causal evidence of the mediation relationship between passion, moral disengagement, and political activism. Study 3 replicates Studies 1–2 by experimentally manipulating OP and HP to demonstrate the causal relationship between passion and moral disengagement, whereas Study 4 manipulates moral disengagement to document its effect on political activism.

5 | STUDIES 1A–1B

The purpose of Studies 1a and 1b was to examine the relationship between passion and political activism. In line with our theoretical framework, we hypothesized that OP (HP) would be positively (negatively) related to moral disengagement (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996) which, in turn, would be related to people’s intentions to engage in violent behaviors. Only HP was hypothesized to predict peaceful behaviors. We tested the following model with environmentalists (Study 1a) and Democrats (Study 1b). Moreover, we intended to show that our predictions would hold above and beyond the influence of positive and negative emotions. We included these covariates because positive and negative emotions have been shown to be related to peaceful and violent activism, respectively (Gousse-Lessard, Vallerand, Carbonneau, & Lafrenière, 2013).

5.1 | Method

5.1.1 | Participants

Pilot data indicated large correlations ($r > 0.50$) among the variables and therefore large effect sizes were assumed across all studies. Assuming large effect sizes, 7 latent variables, 40 observed variables, and power set at 0.80, a sample size of 162 was suggested (Soper, 2018; Westland, 2010). Two hundred and nine Americans (115 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 33.01$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 6.46$) recruited on Mturk participated in Study 1a.¹ In Study 1b, 220 Americans were recruited via a panel service (119 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 37.73$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 11.80$) and were pre-screened for being a member of the Democratic Party.

5.1.2 | Procedure

In Study 1a, participants’ passion was measured using the passion scale adapted to the environmental cause; in Study

1b, the scale was adapted to people’s involvement in the Democratic Party. The passion scale consists of two 6-item subscales measuring HP (Study 1a: $M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.53$, $\alpha = 0.91$; Study 1b: $M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.48$, $\alpha = 0.92$) and OP (Study 1a: $M = 2.06$, $SD = 1.32$, $\alpha = 0.91$; Study 1b: $M = 2.01$, $SD = 1.13$, $\alpha = 0.86$). The HP subscale included items such as “the environmental cause (my involvement in the Democratic Party) is in harmony with the other activities in my life,” whereas the OP subscale included items such as “the environmental cause (my involvement in the Democratic Party) is so exciting that I sometimes lose control over it.” Participants rated their agreement on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 7 (*completely agree*).²

Moral disengagement was measured using seven items taken from Bandura et al. (1996). The scale included items such as “it is alright to beat someone who bad mouths your family” and “someone who is obnoxious does not deserve to be treated like a human being” (Study 1a: $M = 2.44$, $SD = 1.25$, $\alpha = 0.72$; Study 1b: $M = 1.94$, $SD = 0.93$, $\alpha = 0.82$). Participants rated their agreement on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

As in Gousse-Lessard et al. (2013), participants reported their positive (i.e., proud, happy, very excited, I’m having a blast; Study 1a: $M = 2.62$, $SD = 1.04$, $\alpha = 0.87$; Study 1b: $M = 2.62$, $SD = 1.07$, $\alpha = 0.92$) and negative (nervous, hostile, irritable, hateful; Study 1a: $M = 1.43$, $SD = 0.67$, $\alpha = 0.80$; Study 1b: $M = 1.36$, $SD = 0.54$, $\alpha = 0.79$) emotional experience when “sensitizing/educating people about environmental issues” on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*very slightly or not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*).

Intentions to engage in violent and peaceful behaviors to further the environmental cause (or the Democratic Party) were measured using five items related to violence (e.g., “physically attack a polluting factory’s representative” Study 1a: $M = 1.57$, $SD = 1.10$, $\alpha = 0.90$; “physically attacking Trump supporters” Study 1b: $M = 1.30$, $SD = 0.68$, $\alpha = 0.82$) and seven items related to peaceful political behaviors (e.g., “organizing fundraising activities for an environmental organization” Study 1a: $M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.55$, $\alpha = 0.89$; “organizing fundraising activities for the Democratic Party” Study 1b: $M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.83$, $\alpha = 0.94$). Participants rated their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not agree at all*) to 7 (*very strongly agree*).³

5.2 | Results and discussion

Expectation maximization (Dempster, Laird, & Rubin, 1977) was used to replace isolated missing values (0.002% of all data) so that a covariance matrix based on the entire sample could be generated for the structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis.

5.2.1 | SEM: Measurement model

The seven-factor measurement model was examined with a CFA using maximum likelihood estimation in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2007). In both studies, the item “It is alright to fight to protect your friends” was dropped because its factor loading was below 0.40. In Study 1a, the moral disengagement item (“It is alright to fight when your group’s honor is threatened”) was dropped for the same reason.

According to Marsh et al. (2009), and Marsh, Wen, Nagengast, and Hau (2012), a model with acceptable fit should have a comparative fit index (CFI) and incremental fit index (IFI) superior to 0.90, and models with excellent fit should have fit statistics superior to 0.95. Additionally, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residuals (SRMR) should be 0.08 for acceptable fit and 0.05 for excellent model fit. The CFA with all seven constructs correlated provided a good fit to the data, (Study 1a: χ^2 (587) = 981.32, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.07, CFI = 0.92, IFI = 0.92; Study 1b: χ^2 (765) = 1,270.59, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.07, CFI = 0.92, IFI = 0.92) and demonstrated that each latent variable is well defined by its items.

5.2.2 | SEM full model

The hypothesized model was tested by specifying 11 paths between the latent constructs: 2 paths linking OP to moral disengagement and violent behavior, 2 paths linking HP to moral disengagement and peaceful behavior, 2 paths linking moral disengagement to violent and peaceful behavior, and 6 paths linking positive and negative affect to moral disengagement, peaceful and violent behavior. A covariance was added between the standard errors of peaceful and violent behavior because they were correlated. We display the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all measures in Table 1. The results revealed that the hypothesized model fit the data well (Study 1a: χ^2 ($df = 588$, $N = 209$) = 982.96, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.07, CFI = 0.92, IFI = 0.92; Study 1b: χ^2 ($df = 621$, $N = 201$) = 1,017.35, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.07, CFI = 0.92, IFI = 0.93).⁴

In Study 1a, negative emotions and peaceful behavior ($B = 0.32$, $SE = 0.16$, $t = 2.02$, $p = 0.04$; 95% CI = [0.00, 0.63]) were significantly related, but not in Study 1b ($B = 0.37$, $SE = 0.34$, $t = 1.09$, $p = 0.27$; 95% CI = [−0.30, 1.04]). Furthermore, the relationship between positive emotions and moral disengagement (Study 1a: $B = 0.01$, $SE = 0.10$, $t = 0.18$, $p = 0.85$; 95% CI = [−0.18, 0.20]); Study 1b: $B = -0.06$, $SE = 0.09$, $t = -0.74$, $p = 0.45$; 95% CI = [−0.23, 0.11]), positive emotions and violent behaviors (Study 1a: $B = 0.08$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = 1.39$, $p = 0.16$; 95% CI = [−0.01, 0.17]); Study 1b: $B = -0.05$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = -0.83$, $p = 0.40$; 95% CI = [−0.16, 0.06]), and moral disengagement and peaceful behavior (Study 1a: $B = -0.09$, $SE = 0.09$, $t = -0.92$, $p = 0.35$;

TABLE 1 Means, standard deviations, and correlations (Study 1a)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3	4	5	6	7
Harmonious passion (1)	3.63 (3.99)	1.53 (1.48)	0.55 ^{***} (0.55 ^{***})	−0.04 (0.06)	0.49 ^{***} (0.63 ^{***})	0.08 (−0.04)	0.56 ^{***} (0.66 ^{***})	0.30 ^{***} (0.10)
Obsessive passion (2)	2.06 (2.01)	1.32 (1.13)	0.29 ^{***} (0.31 ^{***})	0.41 ^{***} (0.51 ^{***})	0.37 ^{***} (0.28 ^{***})	0.37 ^{***} (0.41 ^{***})	0.33 ^{***} (0.41 ^{***})	0.66 ^{***} (0.44 ^{***})
Moral disengagement (3)	2.44 (1.94)	1.25 (0.93)	0.05 (0.06)	0.05 (0.06)	0.47 ^{***} (0.37 ^{***})	−0.02 (0.11)	−0.02 (0.11)	0.45 ^{***} (0.51 ^{***})
Positive emotions (4)	2.62 (2.62)	1.04 (1.07)			0.08 (−0.02)	0.08 (−0.02)	0.52 ^{***} (0.56 ^{***})	0.29 ^{***} (0.12)
Negative emotions (5)	1.43 (1.36)	0.67 (0.54)					0.14 [*] (0.05)	0.57 ^{***} (0.51 ^{***})
Peaceful behaviors (6)	3.42 (3.63)	1.55 (1.83)						0.32 ^{***} (0.21 ^{***})
Violent behaviors (7)	1.58 (1.30)	1.11 (0.68)						

Note. Parameters of Study 1b are in parentheses.
^{*} $p < 0.05$; ^{**} $p < 0.01$; ^{***} $p < 0.001$.

95% CI = [-0.26, 0.08]); Study 1b: $B = 0.01$, $SE = 0.14$, $t = 0.11$, $p = 0.90$; 95% CI = [-0.26, 0.28]) was not statistically significant. As expected, in both studies, the relationship between HP and violent behavior (Study 1a: $B = -0.03$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = -0.61$, $p = 0.54$; 95% CI = [-0.12, 0.06]); Study 1b: $B = -0.02$, $SE = 0.04$, $t = -0.70$, $p = 0.48$; 95% CI = [-0.09, 0.05]) and OP and peaceful behaviors (Study 1a: $B = -0.19$, $SE = 0.13$, $t = -1.45$, $p = 0.14$; 95% CI = [-0.44, 0.06]); Study 1b: $B = -0.06$, $SE = 0.16$, $t = -0.39$, $p = 0.69$; 95% CI = [-0.37, 0.25]) was not significant.

More importantly, controlling for the influence of positive and negative emotions, OP was positively related to moral disengagement (Study 1a: $B = 0.38$, $SE = 0.13$, $t = 2.88$, $p = 0.004$; 95% CI = [0.12, 0.63]); Study 1b: $B = 0.30$, $SE = 0.10$, $t = 3.01$, $p = 0.003$; 95% CI = [0.10, 0.49]) and violent behaviors (Study 1a: $B = 0.50$, $SE = 0.08$, $t = 6.14$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI = [0.34, 0.65]); Study 1b: $B = 0.29$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 4.09$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI = [0.15, 0.42]). HP was negatively related to moral disengagement in Study 1a ($B = -0.23$, $SE = 0.10$, $t = -2.30$, $p = 0.02$; 95% CI = [-0.42, -0.03]), but not in Study 1b ($B = -0.04$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = -0.70$, $p = 0.48$; 95% CI = [-0.13, 0.05]) and positively related to peaceful behaviors (Study 1a: $B = 0.50$, $SE = 0.11$, $t = 4.60$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI = [0.28, 0.71]); Study 1b: $B = 0.61$, $SE = 0.10$, $t = 5.76$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI = [0.41, 0.80]). Moral disengagement was positively related to violent behaviors (Study 1a: $B = 0.12$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = 2.24$, $p = 0.02$; 95% CI = [0.02, 0.21]; Study 1b: $B = 0.22$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = 3.65$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI = [0.12, 0.31]). Figure 1 displays the results.

Bias-corrected 95% bootstrapped confidence interval estimates were calculated to confirm the significance of indirect effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). In both studies, results confirmed the mediating role of moral disengagement between OP and violent behavior (Study 1a: $B = 0.04$, $SE = 0.03$; 95% CI = [0.00, 0.13]; Study 1b: $B = 0.06$, $SE = 0.05$; 95% CI = [0.00, 0.22]). In Study 1a, the indirect effect between HP and violent behavior through moral disengagement was also significant ($B = -0.03$, $SE = 0.02$; 95% CI = [-0.09, -0.00]).

Taken together, the results of Studies 1a and 1b support the notion that OP is positively related to moral disengagement,

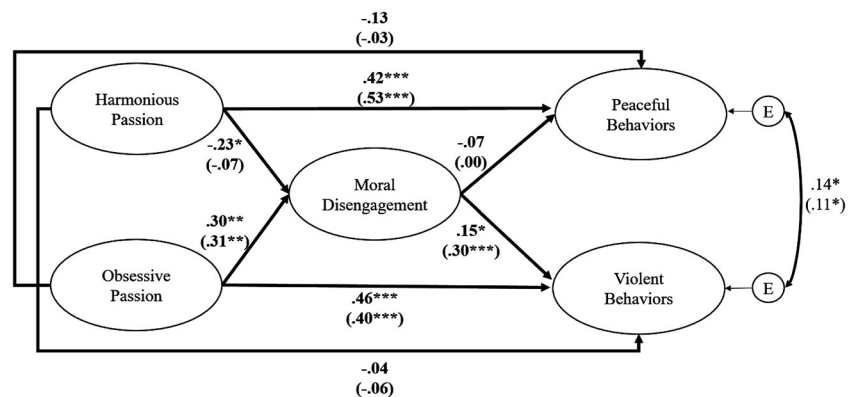
which in turn is positively related to violent political activism. HP, on the other hand, is positively related to peaceful activism. Replicating these results across two distinct ideologies increases the external validity of our findings.

6 | STUDY 2

The purpose of Study 2 was to further examine the psychological process that enables passionate activists to justify the use of political violence. Whereas Study 1 showed that OP is related to framing destructive behaviors as morally acceptable, Study 2 focused on one specific dimension of moral disengagement, namely, dehumanization. Research has shown that the degree to which one attributes human capacities to others is influenced by social motives such as social identity (Waytz & Epley, 2012) and outgroup threat (Hackel, Looser, & Bavel, 2014). In support of this notion, Hackel et al. (2014) had participants evaluate several continua of facial morphs made of inanimate dolls and human faces. They found that participants required more human-like features to attribute a mind to outgroup (vs. ingroup) members. Building on this work, we adapted this paradigm to measure how quickly people dehumanize those that disapprove of their political ideology. We predicted that OP would be associated with quicker dehumanization of outgroup members. In turn, outgroup (but not ingroup) dehumanization was expected to predict stronger intentions to engage in violent behaviors. As in Study 1, we predicted that HP would be positively associated with peaceful behaviors. Furthermore, the purpose of Study 2 was to rule out the alternative explanation that obsessive (vs. harmonious) passion is associated with more significant commitment to the environmental cause, therefore leading to greater dehumanization of outgroup members and support for violence. Our theory and previous findings (see Bélanger, Lafrenière, Vallerand, & Kruglanski, 2013a; Bélanger et al., 2013b), suggest, however, that the difference between harmonious and OP lies in the quality rather than the intensity of engagement. Therefore, we predicted that our theoretical model would hold controlling for people's commitment to environmentalism.

FIGURE 1 Results from structural equation modeling analyses, Study 1a (parameters of Study 1b are shown in parentheses)

Note. For clarity, covariances, indicators of latent variables, and control variables are not shown. Standardized paths are presented
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.



6.1 | Method

6.1.1 | Participants

A sample size of 125 was recommended by a Monte Carlo power analysis with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, large effect sizes, and power of 80%. Parameters were set to 1,000 replications and 20,000 Monte Carlo draws per replication. One hundred and seventy-two Americans (76 women; 74% of the sample was aged 18 to 39) were recruited on Mturk.

6.1.2 | Procedure

As in Study 1, participants completed the HP ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.55$, $\alpha = 0.92$) and OP ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 1.33$, $\alpha = 0.92$) scales adapted to the environmental cause. Then, participants completed a computerized task measuring people's perceptual tendency to dehumanize ingroup and outgroup members. The task was programed and administered via Inquisit Web and took approximately 5 min to complete. The task was described as a face recognition task where participants would need to make two types of judgments according to the videos shown on the screen. They were instructed that for videos showing a doll-like face morphing into a human face, they would need to indicate, by pressing the spacebar, the point at which the on-screen image is "human-like," meaning that the image *has a mind*. They were also instructed that for videos showing a human face morphing into a doll-like face, they would need to indicate the point at which the image *no longer has a mind*. The latter trials were utilized to measure people's inclinations to dementalize others.

Short, 16-s, morphing videos were created using QuickTime 7's image sequence function. For each video, 101 static images generated by Looser and Wheatley (2010) for the production of their morphing continua were sequenced at 6 frames per second to produce a fluid morphing continuum video. We created eight human-to-object videos and eight object-to-human videos (i.e. the reverse of the former videos). An additional eight videos (four of each morphing direction) were produced and used as stimuli for the practice trials.

After completing two practice trials of each judgment type, participants were then taken through a set of 16 experimental trials. For the experimental blocks, participants were told that the human faces presented were pictures of either *environmentalists* or *oil company executives*. Therefore, the 16 experimental trials were separated into the following four types of blocks: (1) *has mind* judgment of *environmentalists*, (2) *has no mind* judgment of *environmentalists*, (3) *has mind* judgment of *oil executives*, and (4) *has no mind* judgment of *oil executives*. The eight *has mind* videos and the eight *has no mind* movies were each separated into two sets, where one set of four movies was presented per block. The block presentation and sets of movies were fully counterbalanced across participants.

At the beginning of each block, participants were given instructions regarding the type of judgment they were required to make in addition to the type of faces that were presented. In an effort to more clearly indicate the types of faces displayed in the upcoming block, the on-screen instructions were juxtaposed over a picture of a large, clear, light bulb floating above green pastures and a clear blue sky (picture prime for environmentalist pictures) and over smoldering smokestacks (picture prime for oil executives). The dependent measure consisted of the time, in milliseconds (ms), at which the participants indicated their judgment during each trial.

Reaction data for trials faster than 1,500 ms (indicating a mistaken or accidental keypress given that the stimulus had not started to morph before this cut-off point) and greater than 16,000 ms (indicating a response *after* the videos finished playing) were eliminated (5.6%). A score of how quickly participants dehumanized ingroup members (fellow environmentalists: $M = 8,838.33$ ms, $SD = 1,918.37$) and outgroup members (oil executives; $M = 8,667.78$ ms, $SD = 1,821.20$) was computed by averaging the reaction times to videos in which human faces morph into doll-like faces. Lower scores (i.e., faster reaction times) indicate quicker dehumanization. One participant was excluded because they exceeded more than three standard deviations from the mean. Five participants were also excluded because they took too long to complete the experiment (3 SD above the mean), leaving 166 participants for subsequent analyses. After the computer task, participants completed the experiment by reporting their intentions to engage in peaceful ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.55$, $\alpha = 0.91$) and violent ($M = 1.58$, $SD = 1.08$, $\alpha = 0.90$) behaviors to further the environmental cause using the same scale as in Study 2.

6.2 | Results and discussion

Path analyses with observed (i.e., non-latent) variables were conducted to investigate the mediating role of dehumanization between passion and political activism. The model was tested with AMOS (Arbuckle, 2007) using maximum likelihood estimation procedures. We display the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all measures in Table 2. The results revealed that the hypothesized model fit the data well: χ^2 ($df = 2$, $N = 166$) = 3.10, $p = 0.21$, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.01, CFI = 0.99, IFI = 0.99 and no modification indices were suggested to improve model fit.

As shown in Figure 2, OP was related to quicker ingroup dehumanization ($B = -347.20$, $SE = 126.19$, $t = -2.75$, $p = 0.006$; 95% CI = [-596.38, -98.01]) and outgroup dehumanization ($B = -272.06$, $SE = 124.55$, $t = -2.18$, $p = 0.02$; 95% CI = [-518.01, -26.10]). Of note, the bivariate correlations between OP and these two variables were nonsignificant, suggesting a suppression effect,

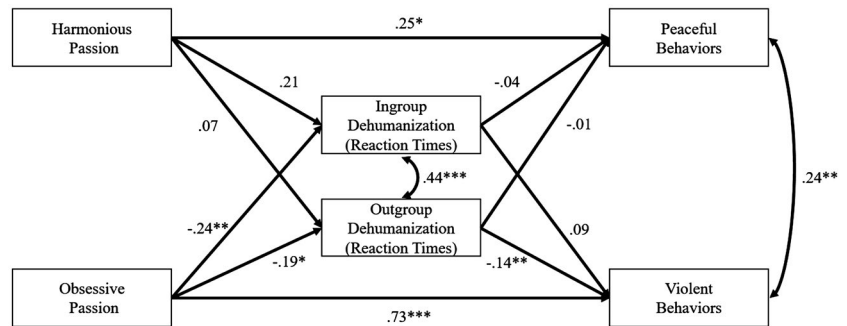
TABLE 2 Means, standard deviations, and correlations (Study 2)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3	4	5	6	7
Harmonious passion (1)	3.84	1.55	0.52***	0.24***	0.06	0.61***	0.33***	0.87***
Obsessive passion (2)	2.07	1.33		-0.03	-0.10	0.28***	0.68***	0.52***
Ingroup dehumanization (3)	8,838.33	1,918.37			0.46***	0.11	-0.02	0.24**
Outgroup dehumanization (4)	8,667.78	1,821.20				-0.01	-0.19**	0.07
Peaceful behaviors (5)	3.73	1.55					0.29***	0.62***
Violent behaviors (6)	1.58	1.08						0.30***
Commitment toward the cause (7)	3.81	1.49						

** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

FIGURE 2 Results from path analysis (Study 2)

Note. Standardized paths are presented
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.



whereby the prediction of the criterion variable is improved by reducing irrelevant variance in the other predictor variable. As discussed by Lancaster (1999), suppression effects should be interpreted with caution, but they are of interest given that they can reduce measurement error variance and allow “for a more concise estimate of the predictor-criterion relationship” (p. 4). OP was also positively related to violent behaviors ($B = 0.60$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = 11.50$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI = [0.50, 0.69]). HP was not related to ingroup ($B = 265.28$, $SE = 188.33$, $t = 1.40$, $p = 0.15$; 95% CI = [-106.61, 637.17]) or outgroup dehumanization ($B = 85.83$, $SE = 185.89$, $t = 0.46$, $p = 0.64$; 95% CI = [-281.24, 452.90]), but was significantly related to peaceful behaviors ($B = 0.25$, $SE = 0.11$, $t = 2.10$, $p = 0.03$; 95% CI = [0.03, 0.46]). Ingroup dehumanization was not related to peaceful ($B = 0.00$, $SE = 0.00$, $t = -0.61$, $p = 0.53$; 95% CI = [-0.00, 0.00]) or violent behaviors ($B = 0.00$, $SE = 0.00$, $t = 1.46$, $p = 0.14$; 95% CI = [-0.00, 0.00]). However, as predicted, quicker outgroup dehumanization was related to violent ($B = 0.00$, $SE = 0.00$, $t = -2.41$, $p = 0.01$; 95% CI = [0.00, 0.00]), but not peaceful, behaviors ($B = 0.00$, $SE = 0.00$, $t = -0.20$, $p = 0.83$; 95% CI = [-0.00, 0.00]). Commitment toward the environmental cause was not related to ingroup ($B = 234.15$, $SE = 197.02$, $t = 1.18$, $p = 0.23$; 95% CI = [-154.90, 623.20]) or outgroup dehumanization ($B = 137.57$, $SE = 194.46$, $t = 0.70$, $p = 0.47$; 95% CI = [-246.43, 521.57]), nor was it related to violent behaviors ($B = -0.07$, $SE = 0.04$, $t = -1.49$, $p = 0.13$; 95% CI = [-0.14, 0.00]). However, it was

positively related to peaceful behaviors ($B = 0.43$, $SE = 0.12$, $t = 3.47$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI = [0.19, 0.66]).

As in Study 1, bootstrapped confidence interval estimates were calculated to test the significance of the indirect effect. Results confirmed the mediating role of outgroup dehumanization between OP and violent behaviors ($B = 0.02$, $SE = 0.01$; 95% CI = [0.00, 0.07]).

Study 2 conceptually replicated and extended the results of Study 1 by demonstrating that OP is positively related to outgroup dehumanization. In turn, quicker dehumanization was positively related to greater intentions to perpetrate violent political actions against outgroup members. HP, on the other hand, was positively related to peaceful behavior. Of note, Notably, Study 2 conceptually replicated Study 1 using a behavioral measure of moral disengagement while controlling for participants' commitment to environmentalism. Thus, Study 2 addressed the alternative explanation that obsessive (vs. harmonious) passion is associated with greater goal commitment, and thus greater moral disengagement and support for violence.

7 | STUDY 3

In Study 3, we tested whether manipulating people's passion for a cause—the motivational root cause of activism—would influence people's intentions to engage in violent versus peaceful activism. To that end, Study 3 situationally induced an obsessive or harmonious mindset. This approach validated in prior research (e.g., Bélanger et al., 2013b; Bélanger et al.,

2019; Schellenberg, Bailis, & Mosewich, 2016) affords multiple methodological advantages, including making causal inferences with regard to the role of passion in activism and ruling out the influence of extraneous factors. We expected that participants in the OP condition would report greater moral disengagement than those in the HP condition, which in turn would predict greater support for violent behaviors. We also expected that participants in the HP condition would report greater support for peaceful behaviors. To rule out the alternative explanation that the experimental manipulation would increase commitment to the environmental cause, we included a measure of this construct and expected that the manipulation would not influence this variable.

7.1 | Method

7.1.1 | Participants

Assuming large effect sizes and power set at 0.80, a sample size of 70 people was suggested by 5,000 Monte Carlo simulations (Schoemann, Boulton, & Short, 2017). One hundred and fifteen Americans were recruited on Mturk (47 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 34.30$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 11.64$).

7.1.2 | Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions to induce different passion mindsets (see Bélanger et al., 2013b; Lafrenière, Vallerand, & Sedikides, 2013). In the HP condition ($N = 58$), participants were instructed to:

Write about a time when the environmental cause was in harmony with other things that are part of you, and you felt that the environmental cause allowed you to live a variety of experiences. Recall this event vividly and include as many details as you can to relive the experience.

Participants in the OP condition ($N = 57$) were assigned to a similar writing task but were instructed to:

Write about a time where you had difficulties controlling your urge to engage in the environmental cause, and you felt that the environmental cause was the only thing that really turned you on. Recall this event vividly and include as many details as you can to relive the experience.⁵

Then, as in Study 1, participants completed the self-reported moral disengagement scale ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.04$, $\alpha = 0.81$) and reported their intentions to engage in violent ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.28$, $\alpha = 0.89$) and peaceful ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 1.51$, $\alpha = 0.91$) behaviors for the environmental cause. To rule out the alternative explanation that the experimental manipulation would increase participants' commitment to the environmental cause, this construct was measured using two items, namely, "defending the environmental cause is important to me" and "defending the environmental cause is a passion." Participants rated the extent to which they agreed to each statement on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not agree at all*) to 5 (*very strongly agree*). Both items were correlated ($r_s = 0.82$) and thus averaged ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.35$).

7.2 | Results and discussion

Ruling out the alternative explanation that the experimental manipulation of passion increased participants' commitment to the environmental cause, an ANOVA indicated that participants in the HP ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.24$) and OP ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.43$) conditions did not report significantly different levels of commitment toward the cause $F(1, 113) = 2.97$, $p = 0.08$, $d = 0.32$.

Path analyses with observed (i.e., non-latent) variables were then conducted to investigate the mediating role of moral disengagement between passion condition and activism. The model was tested with AMOS (Arbuckle, 2007) using maximum likelihood estimation procedures. The experimental manipulation of passion was dummy coded (0 = HP; 1 = OP). We display the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all measures in Table 3.

The results revealed that the hypothesized model fit the data well: $\chi^2(df = 1, N = 115) = 0.05$, $p = 0.81$, RMSEA =

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3	4	5
Experimental condition ^a (1)	0.49	0.50	0.20*	-0.18*	-0.01	-0.16
Moral disengagement (2)	3.05	1.04		-0.05	0.40***	-0.05
Peaceful behaviors (3)	4.22	1.51			0.32***	0.68***
Violent behaviors (4)	2.09	1.33				0.22**
Commitment toward the cause (5)	4.72	1.35				

^a0 = harmonious passion; 1 = obsessive passion.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

TABLE 3 Means, standard deviations, and correlations (Study 3)

0.00, SRMR = 0.00, CFI = 1.00, IFI = 1.00 and no modification indices were suggested to improve model fit. As shown in Figure 3, all estimated paths were significant. Specifically, the experimental manipulation of passion was negatively related to peaceful behaviors ($B = -0.56$, $SE = 0.27$, $t = -2.02$, $p = 0.04$; 95% CI = [-1.09, -0.02]) meaning that participants in the HP condition ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.33$) reported greater support for peaceful activism than those in the OP condition ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.63$), $d = 0.37$. Furthermore, the experimental manipulation was positively related to moral disengagement ($B = 0.42$, $SE = 0.19$, $t = 2.23$, $p = 0.02$; 95% CI = [0.04, 0.79]) indicating that those in the OP condition ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.05$) reported greater moral disengagement than those in the HP condition ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.00$), $d = 0.40$. Moral disengagement was in turn positively related to violent behaviors ($B = 0.55$, $SE = 0.10$, $t = 5.41$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI = [0.35, 0.74]). The experimental manipulation did not have a direct effect on violent behavior ($B = -0.26$, $SE = 0.22$, $t = -1.14$, $p = 0.25$; 95% CI = [-0.69, 0.17]).

As in Studies 1–2, the significance of the indirect effect was tested using bootstrapping. The results confirmed the mediating role of moral disengagement between the manipulation of passion and violent behaviors ($B = 0.23$, $SE = 0.11$; 95% CI = [0.05, 0.53]).

Study 3 replicated Studies 1–2 using an experimental manipulation demonstrating the causal link between passion and moral disengagement. Consistent with our predictions, individuals in a harmonious mindset reported greater intentions to engage in peaceful behaviors to support the environmental cause. Those in an obsessive (vs. harmonious) mindset were more inclined to believe that mistreating others is morally acceptable and as a result reported greater intentions to engage in violent behaviors. Of note, OP had an indirect (but not direct) effect on violent behavior through moral disengagement. One limitation of Study 3 is that it did not include a control condition, therefore it is not possible to say if the observed group differences were driven by the harmonious or OP mindset (or both). However, these results replicate Studies 1a–1b and 2 and therefore suggest that OP enhances support for violence, whereas HP decreases it.

8 | STUDY 4

The purpose of Study 4 was to provide experimental evidence that moral disengagement impacts political activism—an

important step to demonstrate the causal effect of the mediator on the outcome variable (Bullock, Green, & Ha, 2010; Pirlott & MacKinnon, 2016). As suggested by Pirlott and MacKinnon (2016), we included a manipulation check to demonstrate the construct validity of the manipulation and measured other variables that could also have been influenced by the manipulation: (a) sensation seeking, defined as “the seeking of varied, novel, complex, and intense sensations and experiences, and the willingness to take physical, social, legal, and financial risks for the sake of such experience” (Zuckerman, 1994, p. 27); (b) cold affect, the lack of guilt and empathy, and (c) Machiavellianism, a measure of manipulateness, insincerity, and callousness (Christie & Geis, 1970; Rauthmann & Will, 2011). Prior research has shown that these constructs are related to antisocial behaviors and psychopathy (e.g., Neumann & Pardini, 2014; Williams, Paulhus, & Hare, 2007). In addition to these variables, (d) positive and (e) negative affect were measured to rule out their influence.

8.1 | Method

8.1.1 | Participants

Assuming large effect sizes and power set at 0.80, a sample size of 46 people was estimated using G*power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). One hundred and sixty-seven Americans (101 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 40.23$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 14.83$) were recruited via a panel service.

8.1.2 | Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions. In the moral disengagement condition ($N = 75$), participants were instructed to:

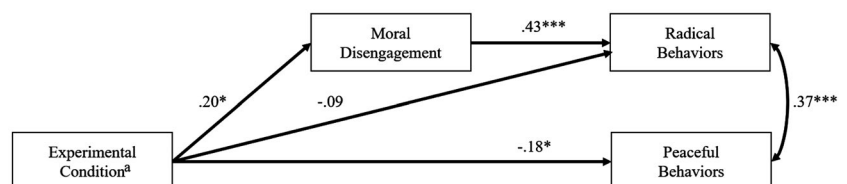
Think about people that do not care at all about the environment, e.g., pollution, biodiversity, and global warming. You probably met someone like that at some point, for example, the friend of a friend, a colleague, or saw someone like that online or on the television. Below, write about a time when you saw people like that, and you felt like they were superficial, had no personal depth, and that they were cold and indifferent about environmental issues. Recall

FIGURE 3 Results from path analysis (Study 3)

Note. Standardized paths are presented

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

^a0 = HP condition; 1 = OP condition.



and describe that time with as many details as possible- the whole story.

This experimental manipulation was developed based on research by Yang, Jin, He, Fan, and Zhu (2015) that showed that dehumanizing takes place when people are denied essential human features such as “cognitive flexibility, agency, openness, and individuality” (p. 1) which is akin to seeing them as “though they lack the capacity to feel (i.e., as if they were automatons)” (p. 2).

In the control condition, participants ($N = 92$) were given no such instructions and did not engage in a writing task to allow moral disengagement (i.e., the mediator) to vary freely (Pirlott & MacKinnon, 2016).

Then, all participants were instructed to complete a questionnaire. As in Study 1, the questionnaire included a measure of moral disengagement ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.26$, $\alpha = 0.83$). This served as a manipulation check. The other measures were as follows:

Sensation seeking was measured using Hoyle, Stephenson, Palmgreen, Lorch, and Donohew's (2002) eight-item scale ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.25$, $\alpha = 0.82$, e.g., “I would like to explore strange places” and “I like to do frightening things.” Participants rated their agreement to each of these items on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 7 (*completely agree*).

Cold affect ($M = 2.10$, $SD = 0.94$, $\alpha = 0.67$), the lack of affective experience, was measured using five items from the Self-Report Psychopathy Scale-III (Williams, Nathanson, & Paulhus, 2003). Sample items were “I try not to be rude to others” (reversed) and “I'm not afraid to step on other people to get what I want.” Participants rated their agreement to each of these items on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 7 (*completely agree*).

Machiavellianism ($M = 1.83$, $SD = 0.92$, $\alpha = 0.86$), the tendency to manipulate and deceive other people for personal gain, was measured using Dahling, Whitaker, and Levy's (2009) 16-item Machiavellian Personality Scale. The scale included items such as “I enjoy having control over other people” and “I believe that lying is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage over others.” Participants rated their agreement to each of these items on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 7 (*completely agree*).

Ten items taken from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) were administered to measure participants' situational emotional experience. Positive affect ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.84$, $\alpha = 0.80$) was measured with items such as “determined” and “inspired.” Negative affect ($M = 1.53$, $SD = 0.76$, $\alpha = 0.85$) was measured with items such as “afraid” and “hostile.” Participants rated the extent to which they felt these emotions at the moment using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*).

Then, as in Study 1, participants reported their intentions to engage in violent ($M = 1.52$, $SD = 0.98$, $\alpha = 0.80$) and peaceful ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.55$, $\alpha = 0.88$) behaviors.

8.2 | Results and discussion

We conducted a between-subjects MANOVA including two groups (moral disengagement vs. control condition) and eight self-reported measurements. As expected, results indicated that the experimental condition had an impact on moral disengagement. Specifically, participants in the moral disengagement condition ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.39$) reported greater moral disengagement than participants in the control condition ($M = 2.12$, $SD = 1.12$), $F(1, 165) = 4.57$, $p = 0.03$, $d = 0.32$. All other manipulation checks were nonsignificant (all $ps > 0.21$). The MANOVA also revealed that the experimental condition had the intended effect on participants' intention to engage in political activism: participants' intentions to engage in peaceful behaviors was nonsignificant, $F(1, 165) = 3.49$, $p = 0.06$, $d = 0.29$ and participants in the moral disengagement condition ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 1.16$) reported greater intentions to engage in violent behaviors than participants in the control condition ($M = 1.37$, $SD = 0.78$), $F(1, 165) = 4.89$, $p = 0.02$, $d = 0.34$. We display the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all measures in Table 4.

In sum, combined with the results from Study 3, Study 4 provides strong evidence in support for the causal effect of moral disengagement on political activism. As discussed by Pirlott and MacKinnon (2016), by randomly assigning participants to different levels of the mediator, double randomization designs satisfy the temporal precedence criterion, demonstrates covariation of the mediator and the outcome variables, and reduces the plausibility of alternative interpretations explaining the relationship between the mediator and the outcome variables. Moreover, Study 4 conceptually replicates Studies 1–3 using a different operationalization of the mediating variable, thus “strengthening the ability to infer that the construct of interest (here, the mediator) is responsible for the given pattern of findings” (p. 10).

9 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

The primary goal of our research was to shed light on individual differences that may explain why activists engage in violent versus peaceful political behaviors. Based on Kruglanski's et al. (2017) theorizing on motivational imbalance and the dualistic model of passion (Bélanger et al., 2013b; Vallerand, 2015), we hypothesized that OP is positively related to intentions to engage in violent behaviors, whereas HP is positively related to peaceful behaviors. Moreover, we sought to find the cognitive mechanisms linking OP to violent behaviors. We postulated that because OP is associated with the suppression

TABLE 4 Means, standard deviations, and correlations (Study 4)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Experimental condition ^a (1)	0.44	0.49	0.16*	0.14	0.17*	0.04	-0.07	0.03	0.09	0.01
Moral disengagement (2)	2.30	1.26		0.12	0.30***	0.28***	0.07	0.28***	0.05	0.18*
Peaceful behaviors (3)	3.51	1.55			0.45***	0.31***	-0.15*	0.18*	0.10	0.09
Violent behaviors (4)	1.52	0.98				0.27***	0.16*	0.38***	0.12	0.39***
Sensation seeking (5)	3.35	1.25					-0.09	0.35***	0.30***	0.07
Cold affect (6)	2.10	0.94						0.38***	-0.05	0.15*
Machiavellianism (7)	1.83	0.92							0.13	0.19*
Positive affect (8)	3.39	0.84								-0.09
Negative affect (9)	1.53	0.76								

^a0 = control condition; 1 = moral disengagement.

* $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$.

of alternative goals (Bélangier et al., 2013b, 2019), it would facilitate the deactivation of moral self-regulatory processes and thus be associated with activists' support for political violence. In contrast, HP was hypothesized to be negatively related to moral disengagement, and thus reduce activists' support for violence. We also hypothesized that HP would be positively related to peaceful activism.

The present research provides evidence in support of this theoretical perspective. In Study 1a, we demonstrated that the relationship between OP and the intention to engage in violent behaviors was mediated by environmentalists' tendency to disengage morally (i.e., to reframe destructive behaviors as morally acceptable). HP, on the other hand, was negatively related to moral disengagement, but positively related to peaceful behaviors, demonstrating that HP predicts greater attunement to moral values. This also highlights the protective nature of HP against violent extremism. Except for the negative relationship between HP and moral disengagement, Study 1b replicated Study 1a with members of the Democratic Party, thus increasing the external validity of our findings. Of note, Studies 1a–1b were analyzed using structural equation modeling demonstrating the factorial validity of our measures.

Study 2 provided a conceptual replication of our model using an implicit measure of dehumanization, which consisted of measuring people's propensity to dehumanize ingroup and outgroup members. We demonstrated that OP predicted faster dehumanization of ingroup and outgroup members. However, only outgroup dehumanization was positively associated with people's intentions to engage in violent political behaviors. HP, on the other hand, was positively related to peaceful behavior. These results provide additional evidence that mind perception is associated with social motives (Hackel et al., 2014; Waytz & Epley, 2012) and further contribute to this literature by demonstrating that OP

influences this perceptual phenomenon. Moreover, because this model was supported controlling for people's commitment to the environmental cause, these findings suggests that the distinction between harmonious and OP relates to the quality of goal engagement, not to its intensity (see Bélangier et al., 2013a, 2013b).

Studies 3–4 consisted of a double randomization design (Bullock et al., 2010; Pirlott & MacKinnon, 2016) to provide experimental evidence for the mediation relation. Replicating Studies 1a–1b and 2 with an experimental manipulation of passion, in Study 3 we demonstrated that individuals with an OP (vs. HP) mindset reported greater moral disengagement, which in turn positively predicted their intentions to engage in violent behaviors. Furthermore, the HP mindset increased activists' support for peaceful behaviors.

In Study 4, we provided further experimental evidence that moral disengagement is the psychological mechanism impacting political activism. First, we established the validity of this new manipulation by demonstrating that it increased moral disengagement, but did not influence other relevant psychological variables. Second, we provided evidence that the manipulation of moral disengagement significantly increased participants' support for violent behaviors, therefore conceptually replicating Studies 1–3. Taken together, given that passion, moral disengagement, and our dependent variables were operationalized in multiple ways (i.e., experimental manipulations, reaction times, and self-reports) and yielded results consistent across multiple studies, the present research provides strong empirical support for our hypotheses.

9.1 | Theoretical contributions

The main contribution of this work is that it provides evidence for Kruglanski et al.'s (2014), Kruglanski et al.'s (2017) proposition that extremism is fueled by a state of

motivational imbalance slanting one's personal investment toward a focal goal and away from other considerations. In contrast, motivational balance involves a more intricate tapestry of goals which constrains the type of means people can select for goal pursuit, thus resulting in more moderate behaviors.

The present research also contributes to the passion literature linking OP to violent behaviors (Rip et al., 2012). One major contribution is that we have demonstrated the causal influence of passion on political activism. This methodological improvement affords a greater understanding of the malleability of motivational imbalance and suggests that the driving force of passion can be rechanneled to different forms of activism by manipulating how the passionate activity is integrated with other goal pursuits. Specifically, momentarily highlighting conflicts between the passionate activity and other life domains resulted in the lifting of moral considerations that would naturally prohibit individuals from engaging in violent behaviors. On the contrary, our results indicated that restoring motivational balance, with a situational induction of HP, heightens people's moral considerations and thus promotes less antagonistic behaviors. Of note, the experimental manipulation that led to such changes did not ask participants to think about ingroup or outgroup members—a manipulation that could have induced animosity or specific negative emotions toward others—instead, it emphasized the extent to which the passionate activity was either in conflict or in harmony with other life domains. These results provide additional support for Kruglanski et al.'s (2017) theorizing that motivational imbalance, a feature of OP (but not HP), consists of a goal pursuit unconstrained by other considerations.

The present research also contributes to the literature on moral disengagement. One major contribution is that moral disengagement represents the cognitive psychological mechanism through which OP leads to violent extremism. Importantly, these effects were shown above and beyond the influence of emotions and goal commitment, thus enriching our understanding of political activism. Moreover, the present findings provide a crucial answer dealing with the nature of the antecedents of moral disengagement. Our findings demonstrate that passion for a cause is one of them. Importantly, we found that inducing an obsessive (vs. harmonious) passion mindset is related to greater moral disengagement. This is, to our knowledge, the first study to show that moral disengagement can be momentarily heightened—although, we reiterate that comparing the passion mindsets to a control group would be needed to better understand these effects. The development of an implicit measure of moral disengagement (Study 2) also makes a contribution to this literature by introducing a new measure to investigate this topic. Together, these new methods will allow researchers on moral disengagement to triangulate

this phenomenon from multiple perspectives and provide converging evidence for the role of moral disengagement in antisocial behavior.

10 | CONCLUSION

The present research borne out of the integration of the dualistic model of passion (Vallerand et al., 2003), moral disengagement (Bandura, 1990), and violent extremism (Kruglanski et al., 2017) allows a better understanding of the self-regulatory processes underlying political activism. Our results demonstrate that when passion is bounded, people work toward ideals with kindness and integrity. When passion is unbounded and overblown, people hurt others and ultimately perpetrate the very injustices against which they are fighting. Future research along these lines would appear promising with respect to providing a better understanding of extremism.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research did not receive support from any funding agency.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ENDNOTES

¹Across studies, the number of recruited participants exceeded the minimum sample size suggested by the power analyses to account for attrition and outliers.

²To determine if participants had a passion for the environment, participants responded to four items developed by Vallerand et al. (2003): (a) I spent a lot of time thinking about the environmental cause, (b) I like the environmental cause, (c) The environmental cause is important for me, and (d) The environmental cause is a passion for me. In Study 1b, these items were adapted to participants' involvement in the Democratic Party. Participants' responses were made on a scale ranging from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 7 (*completely agree*)—average scores of four and up on these items indicate being passionate about that cause (Philippe et al., 2010; Vallerand et al., 2003). Across studies, analyses conducted with or without participants that scored being less than moderately passionate yielded similar results. Thus, all participants were kept in the analyses.

³See online Supplemental Material for all items used in this research.

⁴In Studies 1a, 1b, and 2, removing the covariates from the analyses did not influence the significance of the paths or the adequacy of the model fit.

⁵See online Supplemental Material for example of essays.

ORCID

Jocelyn J. Bélanger  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3881-0335>

Pier-Eric Chamberland  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4619-3675>

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How to cite this article: Bélanger JJ, Schumpe BM, Nociti N, et al. Passion and moral disengagement: Different pathways to political activism. *Journal of Personality*. 2019;87:1234–1249. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12470>